
PUBLIC POLICY IN NIGERIA: AN IMPLEMENTATION PARADOX

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ABSTRACT

Is this the hardy days of public policy implementation in Nigeria? Why it is that public policy implementation cannot record remarkable success in Nigeria? This paper examines public policy in Nigeria and noted that it is an implementation paradox. This is against the backdrop of the fact that despite the lofty public policies initiated by different administrations to promote development, success in most cases has been elusive due to low degree of implementation. The paper concluded that lack of political will/attitude to public policy implementation, poor implementation design, conception and discipline, poor program leadership and management, lack of resources, corruption, sectionalism and ethnic biases, egocentrism and duality/multiplicity of public policies, cultural and religious factors, selective and non-implementation budgets and misplaced priority are the paradoxes of public policy implementation, which has continued to militate against public policy success in the country. The paper suggested that until public policies are implemented to achieve the lofty goals for which it was made, the general aspiration for Nigeria to join the league of developed nations in 2020 will be unattainable. This calls for a change of attitude on the part of policy implementers and the target beneficiary of public policy.

Keywords: Public Policy, Implementation, the Nigeria state

INTRODUCTION

The entity called Nigeria was born in the year 1914 as a British colonial construct, but after decades of colonial domination, attained independence in 1960 and republican status in 1963. It can be argued aptly that since independence the country has recorded limited successes in the area of public policy implementation. It is a fact that society is ordered, steered and directed towards desired end or goals by the state through policies. Public policies therefore play crucial role in the state and are equally instrumental to the development, or underdevelopment of any given state. Whereas, there has been no lack of public policies in Nigeria since independence, the paradox of public policy implementation has continued to militate and mar the realization of public policy objectives in the country. The reason being that, most government policies either terminates prematurely only at the formulation stage, or are purposely designed not to be religiously implemented, or simply mal-implemented to benefit a few individuals, or a section of the society. The paper adopts the qualitative research methodology. Data was sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was sourced from personal observation, while secondary data was sourced via relevant books, article and newspaper publications. And deductive analysis was adopted for data analysis.

The main aim of this paper, therefore, is to critically examine public policy implementation in Nigeria. Its relevance hinges on the fact that public policy affects all and sundry, including academics, analysts, governments and the public in general. In this paper therefore, we will argue that public policy implementation is a paradox in Nigeria considering the fact that despite the lofty public policies formulated and implemented over the years in the country much is yet to be achieved. In order to do justice to this, the paper is structured into four sections, which includes: the introduction; conceptual clarifications (the Nigerian state, public policy and implementation), the implementation paradox and the conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications

In order to understand the main focus of this paper, it is imperative that related concepts are clarified:

The Nigerian State: First of all, what is the state? There is no fundamental straight jacket definition of the state which is acceptable for all men and all purposes. Therefore, scholars conceptualize the state from different perspectives, which ranges from force (Gerth and Mills, 1991: 134), or legitimate force (Weber, 1945, 16), to morality or ethical entity (Hoffman, 1995, 72), divine idea as it exists on earth (Hegel, 1956: 34), to supreme coercive power (Green, 1941:121), etc. Due largely to the controversy and contentions surrounding an acceptable definition of the state, it has been described as one of the most problematic concepts in politics (Vincent, 1987: 3) and for some, it has become unnecessary to add their own definitions (Easton, 1971: 106-115). Yet, in simple parlance, the state refers to a group of people, occupying a define territory, living under a government and incorporating sovereignty. Similarly, in another account, even widely held too, the state is defined in terms of five attributes; a public institution separated from the private activities of society, the existence of sovereignty in unitary form, the application of law to all who live in a particular society, the recruitment of personnel according to bureaucratic as opposed to patrimonial criteria, and the capacity to attract revenue (tax) from a subject population (Dunleavy and O'Leary, 1987:2). A normative analysis of the state defined it in terms of a system of rules which embody a system of rights (Hamlin and Pettit, 1989: 2). As "the crowning point of the modern social edifice" and the character of the state "reveals it as a method of imposing principles of behavior which regulates the lives of men." (Laski, 1961). The state is the most inclusive organization which has formal institutions for regulating the most significant external relationships of men within its scope (Anifowose, 1999: 85). Thus, it is the organization which exercises coercive authority over the inhabitants of a territory. Political power is exercised through the state.

Furthermore, the state is the object of political competition and its nature defines the character of policies in society. One can poignantly assert that, the fundamental role of the state is the maintenance of social and political order in society. This however has been a subject of debate and contention between Liberal and Marxist scholars. The basic argument here is centered on how and in whose favor the state imposes order. Liberal scholars stated

that the state is a legal or public force, which uses its monopoly of coercion to police and guide the society impartially. That is, the state is apolitical and neutral in the exercise of power; therefore, it does not promote one interest against the order. It refutes the contention of the Marxists that, there is a ruling class that benefits more from the state (Ekekwe, 1986:10) Be that as it may, the Marxist view of the state contends that the state favors the interest of the ruling class that controls it. The state therefore is an instrument for class domination. Engels, in Alapiki (2004:30) describe the state, as "an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another, it is the creation of "order", which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes.

As stated earlier Nigeria is a product of British colonial construct and the state that was bequeathed was a capitalist state. The Nigerian state like other capitalist states in the world promotes the interest of the bourgeoisie (the ruling class) which controls it, and experience has shown that the state plays this role through legislation (Okodudu and Girigiri, 1998:34). Therefore, the laws and policies that emanates from the state reflects the interest of the dominant cum ruling class, to the detriment of the teaming masses. This implies that, state policies are always detrimental to the people it purportedly exist to serve. Following a critical performance evaluation of the Nigerian state, several scholars have described the Nigerian state: as exploitative, cruel and irresponsible (Ake, 1981, Okowa, 2005), weak, captured, dependent and hegemonic (Orugbani, 2002), illegitimate, oppressive and repressive (Okaba, 2003), privatized and lacks autonomy (Ake, 2001), and the Nigerian state is a failed state (Soyinka: 1999). And just because the state lacks autonomy, it is being privatized and used as an instrument for the pursuit of parochial interests, against the pursuit of the public good. The idea is that, corrupt elements and amoral personalities in the state capitalize on the non-autonomous and weak nature of the state to wickedly direct state resources to their selfish interest cum aggrandizement. That is, in most cases, state resources in the civic public are diverted to infamous channels in the primordial public which benefits only a few categories of people in the society (Ekeh, 1975). These various descriptions of the Nigerian state have come to bear in the area of public policy.

Public Policy: Different definitions of public policy abound, and it may simply be futile trying to discover which is correct or proper. One of the widely quoted, but simple definitions of public policy is that by (Dye, 1975:1), where he defines public policy as "what government chooses to do or not to do." He went further to explain that:

Governments do many things. They regulate conflicts within society, they organize society to carry on conflicts with other societies, and they distribute a great variety of symbolic rewards and material services to members of the society and extracts money from the society, most at times in the form of taxes. Thus policies may regulate behavior, organize bureaucracies, distribute benefits, and extract taxes or all of these things at once (Ibid).

One crucial point to note from the above conceptualization is the concepts of “non decisions”. The reason is that a decision by government to ignore a problem, or make changes is in a sense is a policy decision because it tends to favour the perpetuation of the status quo. Secondly, there may be a divergence between what governments decide to do and what they actually do. Public policy is a future oriented inquiry into the optimum means of achieving a given governmental objective. Thus, it is a governmental programme found in a nation’s laws or in public statements by a functionary of government. There are other definitions of public policy. Similarly, public policy is a government programme of action which stands for various degrees of goal articulation and normative regulations of government activities, that is what government intends to do or achieve and how it intends to do it (Egonmwan 2004). According to Sharkansy, (1970), public policy refers to important activities of government. The reality however is that public policy embraces all governmental activities or outputs as it affects members of the society, and cannot be limited only to important activities of government. Public policy is also defined as a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern (Anderson, 1975). It is a series of goal-oriented actions taken by government actors (Leichter, 1975:19). Public policy also connotes official statements determining the plan of action or what the government wants to do (Mlekwe, 1976). Whatever the form it takes, however, public policy is what public administrators execute (Henry, 1999:292).

The literature on public policy can be bisected into two broad streams. The first is an attempt to analyze the process of public policy making and implementation; its endeavor is descriptive rather than prescriptive. This can be categorized along six emphases; elitism, groups, systems, institutionalism, non-institutionalism, and organized anarchy, which falls under the descriptive orientation (Henry, 1999:294). On the other hand, the second stream attempts to analyze the outputs or effects of public policy. This involves an attempt to prescribe ways to improve the content of public policy by improving the ways public policy is made. In this context, models of the instrumentalism, rationalism and the strategic planning readily comes to mind, which are prescriptive biased (Ibid). But we will not want to be bothered with the explanations and appropriateness of these theories, models and postulations. Ordinarily in an ideal situation, the public policy making process is divided into different phases or stages, which rightly includes problem identification, policy initiation, deliberation and formulation, implementation and the policy evaluation stages accordingly. The adopted policy is only a statement of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards and requirements; it is basically a carefully drafted set of exhortations, directions and hopes. Therefore most public policies require actions and enforcement mechanisms to effectuate them. The special character of public policies stem from the fact that, they are basically formulated public by authorities. This implies that those persons, who engage in the daily affairs of a political system, are recognized by most members of the system as having responsibility for these matters and take decision that are accepted as binding most of the time by most of the members, so long as they act within the limits of their roles (Anderson, 1975). The argument is that, public policy has to do with actions taken by public authorities.

And due to the fact that, it is a product of governmental process and activities, it affects a large spectrum of issues and sectors of the society which governments have something to do. This includes the economy, housing, defense, transportation, health care, education, welfare, etc. And expressions of public policy embraces, laws, judicial decisions, executive orders and rules government budgets, local ordinances, administrative decisions, organizational directives or any rule of conduct behind which stands the enforcing power of the principal system. Public policies are in essence designed to resolve societal problems, particularly those considered to require public or collective action. Again public policies can be categorized as been distributive, redistributive, regulatory and constituent respectively in accordance with the purpose they are created to serve in the society.

Implementation: Public policy implementation is the act and process of converting a policy into reality or simply enforcing the policy. That is, it is the process of translating policy mandates into actions, and policy goals into reality. It refers to the actions taken to accomplish the intents, objectives and desired outcomes of a policy. The implementation process consists of the implementing organization, the socio-political and economic environment, the policy target group, the policy objectives, the enumerated methods of implementation and the policy resources (Sharkansky and Meter, 1975: 71-81). It hopes that "by concentrating on the implementation of program, as well as the initiation, we should be able to increase the probability that policy promises will be realized" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984:6). Paradoxically, implementation is in many ways a slippery subject (Majone and Wildavsky, 1979: 164). This stems from the fact that, vague and contradictory policies are difficult to implement. Furthermore, the issue of where implementation starts from and where it ends is not a settled matter (Ingram, 1992: 463), but it is commonly seen as a stage. Schneider, (1986: 716) suggests that implementation is "after the adoption of a policy and before the routinization of operations, activities, and tasks that are governed by the policy". It appeals to democratic instincts to mark the start of implementation following the completion of policy making (Ingram, 1992: 464). Browne and Wildavsky, (1984: 208) view implementation as a process of mutual adaptation in which policies and program adapt to their environment and each alter the other. However, (Elmore, 1982) suggested "forward mapping" framework by beginning with the origin of a policy and mapping out compliance with the original mandate, but (Williams, 1982) suggested "backward mapping" which involves the implementer closest to the problem and traces backward the influence on action. Whichever the approach adopted, the essence is to improve public policy. Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973: viii) expressed their fears thus:

People now appear to think that implementation should be easy; they are' therefore, upset when events do not occur or turn out badly. We would consider our effort a success if more people began with the understanding that implementation, under the best of circumstance is exceedingly difficult. They would, therefore, be pleasantly surprised when a few good things really happen.

By and large, a number of factors adversely affect implementation. Pressman and Wildavsky, (1984: 147) considers law and multiplicity of decision points, Van Meter and Van Horn, (1975: 445) went beyond structural issues that dominated federalism to uncover the policy relationships; inter-organizational communication and enforcement activities related to policy, and McLaughlin, (1976) mentioned the implementer closest to the action and the immediate environment. Yet, Bardach, (1977: 268-283) stresses the external monitoring of the implementation process, Browning, Marshall, and Tab, (1984: 237) noted the time dimension, Mazmanian and Sabatier, (1982:22) faulted seventeen independent variables put under three heading; tractability of the problem, the ability of the statute to structure implementation, and the non-statutory variables. The list is endless. However, factors affecting implementation are likely to vary according to a particular policy, but nonetheless, they all presumably sets to improve the implementation of public policy. We will now turn to the implementation paradox of public policy in Nigeria.

THE IMPLEMENTATION PARADOX

We must reiterate the fact that, Nigeria is presently swimming in the ocean of abject poverty, absence of basic social amenities and excruciating underdevelopment, not because, there are no good public policies to ameliorate the situation, but because policy implementation is the Achilles heel of the Nigeria state. An historical excursion into the annals of public policy in Nigeria reveals that, if all the policies formulated in the country over the years were implemented accordingly, Nigeria, no doubt, would have been on a fast lane of development. It is however a paradox that, most of these public policies only exists on paper and are never implemented to actualize the objectives of such policies. The culture of non-implementation of public policies is therefore in a very high degree in the country and virtually affects all levels of government. For instance, it is pitiable to note that some projects conceived in the First National Development Plan in the country are still not implemented. This non-implementation of public policy has since become the norm or a recurrent decimal in our national life. Public policies are thus debased to mere rhetorics with no iota of commitment. A cursory look at the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, which was also reflected in earlier constitutions of the country; 1979 and 1989, shows unrealistic and unrealizable aspirations on the part of public policy goals. For example, Chapter 11 contains the "fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policies." Section 15- which are the political objectives and 15 (5) states that "the state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of office." Section 16 contains the economic objectives and 16 (2) states that "the state shall draft its policy towards ensuring that: ... (d) that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum wage, old age care and pension, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens." These have become mere declaration of intent, which the ruling parties in various tiers of government in the country can not respect. Thus, the implementation paradox of public policy in Nigeria is multidimensional, and we shall proceed to identify and explain some of them:

Lack of Political Will/Attitude to Public Policy Implementation: Public policy implementation or delivery is negatively or positively affected by the attitude or behavior of the implementers. That is, if they are negatively disposed to a policy, there will be lack of commitment to the implementation process. It has been stated above that the Nigerian state is privatized, dependent, weak and lacks autonomy. Therefore, despite the availability of public policies that stands to better the lot of the average Nigerian, the state unfortunately lacks the political will to positively realize such policy objectives. The argument is that, even though the set objectives of government policies stand to benefit the public, the cabal that holds the top echelon of government hostage, at any point in time, will jeopardize or frustrate the implementation of public policies. In the energy sector for instance, Nigeria with a population of over 140 million people presently generates only a miserable 1,500 mega watts capacity. And despite the sinking of a copious 13.2 billion American dollars in the sector by former President Olusegun Obasanjo regime between 1999-2007, no tangible result was achieved (Egbulefu, 2009:16).

Poor Implementation Design, Conception and Discipline: Planning is of paramount importance no matter what your venture might be. Therefore, the design of the modes and methods of implementation of a policy is critical to implementation success. Wrong choices of means and methods could mar implementation chances and cause policy failure. This is because the instruments, methods, knowledge, technology, equipment, models and modes of delivery utilized in implementing a policy determine whether implementation and performance would be successful or not (Ikelegbe, 2005:183). The Nigerian State in most cases, down plays the crucial issue of implementation design of public policies. This trend translates to the advent of public policies without clear-cut modalities or mechanism of implementation. Policy objectives are therefore in most cases misinterpreted or worst still abandoned. A case in point was the set up of a "truth commission." Truth commissions are based on the understanding that knowledge of what happened in the past will lead to reconciliation in the future and has the likelihood to make people forget their uncharitable past so as to move the state forward (Gibson, 2004:201). Nigeria has suffered from military dictatorship (1966-1999) with a brief interlude between 1997-1983. Immediately on assumption of office as a democratically elected civilian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, instituted the Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission (HRVIC) in 1999, popularly called the Oputa Commission, which was patterned after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, which was ruled by apartheid regimes between 1958-1994, with the aim of providing an accurate record of who was responsible for heinous crimes such as extra-judicial killings, disappearances, massacres and other human rights abuses that occurred in the country from January 15, 1966 to May 29, 1999. It was expected that the commission would establish a framework for truth recovery about the country's past and in the process facilitate national reconciliation (Onyegbula, 2001:28). However, the commission fell short of the expectations. The key missing link in the Oputa Commission in Nigeria was that:

The establishment of the commission and its terms of reference have been interpreted in diverse (and sometimes bizarre) ways by Nigerians. This derived from the fact that most Nigerians were not consulted before it was established. This left ample room for speculation, skepticism and it ultimately created a number of problems. This is one of the reasons why the commission has no report to date (Albert, 2005:120).

Hayner (1994) suggested the effectiveness of a truth commission to such factors as timing, representation, authority, scope and budget. There are also issues such as leadership, resource availability, official mandate and methodology (Gibson, 2005). The philosophy of a national reconciliation commission is crucial to the understanding of its conduct, process, structure and overall outcome. In addition, the Oputa Commission had administrative and constitutional defects. According to Okafor (2003:2), the Oputa Commission was "an obfuscate panel whose goal was ill-defined, has been vacillating across the country with exaggerated optimism, listening to individuals and groups; their agonies and miseries suffered as a result of bad government and its vampire operatives that illegally seized the mantle of governance." Thus, Nigeria lost another opportunity to unity its factionalized and fractionalized polity due to poor policy implementation design, conception and discipline.

Poor Program Leadership and Management: It is a truism that program leaders could be quite facilitative of implementation. They steer, direct and motivate program efforts. That is, an able, committed and enthusiastic leadership could build and strengthen the commitment devotion, loyalty, support and enthusiasm of staffs in program implementation. As Levin and Ferman, (1985) suggests that, leadership can be the significant political hidden hand that guides disorganized and disparate interests to converge in support of implementation policy. Unfortunately, the Nigerian state mainly parades an array of misfits for highly sensitive public positions. And this ugly scenario led to the inability of program leaders to create favorable environment for policy implementation. In a dispensation where square pegs are put in round holes and merit sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity, policy objectives cannot be positively realized.

Lack of Resources: It is not as if Nigeria is a poor country in terms of material and human resources, but it is the formulation of wrong policies at the right time and discriminative or segregate funding of some policies that has led to the problem of lack of resources. This is because when most public policies are formulated, adequate provision of resources is not made to implement them. The Primary Health Care program, for instance stand to benefit massively the rural population and urban poor in the country, but resources are not appropriated to make it a success. There is thus politics of implementation because, the resources needed for adequate implementation are not provided to realize policy objectives. Policies such as the National Youth Service Corps scheme, National Immunization Program, Universal Basic Education and Transport Policies etc has continued to suffer set back due to the above trend.

Corruption: This is also a major issue in the politics of public policy implementation in Nigeria. When corruption penetrates the implementation process, public policies become mutated and the desired goals may not be achieved. Most public policies are formulated and funds appropriated for, but corruption like an octopus has continued to entangle, ruin and make impossible the implementation process. Due to corruption, Nigeria is still under the yolk of excruciating poverty despite the several efforts being made to alleviate poverty. For instance, the sum of 50 billion naira was allocated to the National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) created by the President Olusegun Obasanjo administration, but paradoxically, the level of poverty instead of decreasing is rather on the increase. The fact remains that resources appropriated for the implementation of public policies are criminally diverted to private ends, hence frustrating the implementation process. It is also sad to note that most public policies only exist as conduct pipes to drain state resources by corrupt elements. For instance, the National Poverty Eradication Program was designed to pay the sum of three thousand naira monthly to some category of the unemployed in Nigeria to better their living condition. The program was however hijacked by corrupt politicians and instead of the poor benefiting from the scheme, the pay roll was filled by ghost names, unwarranted party loyalists and their children. Just because the state lacks autonomy and is dependent, those who control state power use it to enrich themselves and their cronies, which is detrimental to policy implementation. Service to the state in an uncorrupt manner is replaced with personal aggrandizement; therefore state resources are looted every now and then. Another clear case of corruption in Nigeria, which has run through the vein of every regime, be it military or civilian, is the massive corruption in the implementation of the annual budgets. Surprisingly, the examination of 2008 Appropriation Bill by the National Assembly led to the discovery of unspent funds of #450 billion from the 2007 budget, which was in sharp contrast to the about #25 billion presented in the budget. The sum was captured for re-appropriation in the 2008 budget. Again, the scrutiny of 2009 Appropriation Bill led to the return of #350 billion as unspent funds from the 2008 budget. In four years (2008-2011), the country was saved about #1 trillion unspent funds. This was possible due to a presidential directive for ministries and other government agencies to return unspent funds to the treasury. Hitherto, these unspent funds were pocketed through bogus end-of-year contracts that were not executed or frivolous capacity building spree (Aluko, 2011).

Sectionalism and Ethnic Biases: Sectionalism cum ethnicity has also continued to mar public policy implementation in Nigeria. Experience has shown that, some national policies are implemented fully in some parts of the country, but simply abandoned or marginally implemented in other areas. The Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) headed by General Mohammadu Buhari, for instance, constructed a lot of good roads in the northern part of the country, but nothing tangible was done on road construction in the Niger Delta where the fund was derived from. In terms of health care, the former Yobe State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Mamman Mohammed, for example said "drugs and other consumables worth over N7,528 billion supplied by the PTF to the state in 2003, under the Bamako Initiative Scheme expired and became useless before they were sold" as they were more than what

the state required. He went further to state that "the yearly drug requirement of the state is N1 million only, but PTF supplied a total of about N198 million worth of drugs and hospital consumables to about ten General Hospitals in Yobe state between 2001-2003 (Etekpe, 2007:73). Juxtaposing the Yobe state experience with the Niger Delta and south east states of the federation reveals that those areas suffers from gross inadequacy in the supply of drugs, but Yobe state was simply favored because the chief implementation officer was from the northern extraction. Furthermore, it is a fact that the implementing officers of policies do so to benefit their immediate ethnic groups and abandon same policies sited for implementation in other areas. In essence, compromises made during implementation that seeks to alter basic policy goals are detrimental to the successful execution of program. That is, in any situation whereby actors in the implementation process are self centered or motivated by self aggrandizement, policy objectives would be difficult to be realized maximally.

Egocentrism and Duality or Multiplicity of Public Policies: The dependent and weak character of the Nigerian state more often than not, has led to egocentrism and duality of policies. Instead of continuing with policies that are advantageous to the masses, every administration wants to implement a new policy. And this has always translated to duality/multiplicity of policies which exist to achieve same objectives. Duality negatively impacts on public policy implementation in several ways. It may generate competition and rivalry among staff of the program, as each program would strive for more visibility and attention. They may seek to castigate, undermine and out place each other, which might be unhealthy for stable and successful implementation. There are also cases where by the Federal Government will formulate national policies without consulting the other tiers of government; state and local governments, but only to direct them to implement such policies without adequate enlightenment and education. Pressman and Wildavsky, (1984: 147) suggested that multiplicity of decision points introduces overwhelming complexity of joint action, which stifles policy intent. Similarly, one area where there is multiplicity of policy is in the health sector. The 774 local governments act independent of the 36 states in the area of health. Likewise, the state governments act independent of the federal government. Any time money is appropriated for health; these monies are spent by these different tiers of government doing the same thing, duplicating functions and programs. For example, a local government may build a primary health centre, the state and federal governments may do the same thing. Perhaps, this is so because health is in the recurrent list and all levels of government legislate, and as such there is no National Health Act that will enable the local, state and federal governments to know their responsibilities in the health system (Chikwe, 2011).

Cultural and Religious Factors: The state which has monopoly of the coercive use of force ought to regulation all facets of the society, but in the Nigerian context, the state in some instance plays the culture and religious card to undermine the implementation process of public policies in some parts of the country. For instance, the purported link between polio

immunization and infertility that have continued to limit the polio eradication process in northern Nigeria and the imposition of the Sharia Law in some of the northern states when constitutionally Nigeria professes to be a secular state are potent issues that constitute as cultural and religious problems on policy implementation in the country.

Selective Cum Non-implementation of Budgets: Budget implementation have become a different ball game in recent times, and has assumed a recurrent decimal often resulting to criticism and counter criticism between the executive and legislature (Nigerian News World, 2008 October 20: 21). Whereas in an ideal situation, budgets are religiously implemented to actualize set goals, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Prior to now, some government ministries, departments and agencies after idling away their time for a full year would just amorally share among a category of their workers money appropriated for projects in the budget they fail to execute. At other times, frivolous contracts were hurriedly awarded in the closing days of the year, just to ensure that money was spent. The alleged sharing of 300 million naira by ministers and top officials of the ministry of health, headed by Professor Adenike Grange is a reference point. However, due to the presidential directive to prosecute those involved in the sharing of unspent funds, the new trend is the return of unspent funds to government coffers at the end of the fiscal year. For instance, in December 2008, about 450 billion naira, more than 50% of the capital vote was returned to the treasury as unspent funds, while the important projects the money was budgeted for litter the country uncompleted (Tell, 2008 December 22). Again, by October 2010, only 50% of the federal government's budget had been implemented, a decline from the 61% implementation in 2009 budget (Adigun, O. (2011). The logic therefore is that, policies are formulated and funds appropriated for, but deliberately never implemented, perhaps to deceive the public. In Nigeria the various levels of government routinely carry out yearly budgetary rituals, but consciously politicized the implementation process for no just course.

There is also the issue of selective implementation of budgets. And in this case only policies and program that directly benefit the government or its loyalists are selected for implementation, while others are simply abandoned or poorly implemented. The East West Road, which links the south-west to the south-east and south-south, has been in deplorable condition for decades, causing hardship to commuters, but nothing has been done to improve the condition of the road. On the contrary, the present administration has awarded contract of over 300 billion naira to increase the number of lanes in Kubwa and Airport roads in Abuja with over 50% of the money paid. In essence, public policies are enacted for purposes other than implementation, thus in most cases, they are only symbolic.

Misplaced Priority: Most public policies in Nigeria are squarely a reflection of the personal interest of the political class rather than the demand of the citizens, as such policies lack public support in terms of implementation. This is attributed to lack of political sensitivity. Experience has shown and there is no denying the fact that, most public policies that are speedily implemented in the country turn out to be misplaced priorities. The logic is that

policies are implemented based on what the implementing officials stands to benefit from the process. For instance, a community might be in need of a functional hospital, link roads, portable water and classroom blocks etc. But, due to the politics of public policy implementation and the personal benefits that might accrue to the implementing officials, government will proceed to build a VIP Toilet without the provision of water in a community that can not boast of a guaranteed source of water supply. Again, it was observed that a federal government development agency, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) contracted and supplied electric transformers to communities not connected to the national grid. In essence, public policies are therefore implemented in areas that does not necessarily need them and in other cases simply very difficult to implement.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the issue of public policy implementation paradox in Nigeria was exhaustively discussed. It commenced with an introduction. The paper used the qualitative research method and data was obtained from books, newspaper publications and personal observation and the contents were deductively analyzed. Furthermore, the major concepts in the study; the Nigerian state, public policy and implementation were examined. It was however noted that the state is the object of political competition and it defines the character of public policy. The Nigerian state, over the years, has been described as exploitative, cruel and irresponsible, weak, captured, dependent and hegemonic, illegitimate, oppressive and repressive, privatized and lacks autonomy, and a failed state (Ake, 1981, Okowa, 2005, Orugbani, 2002, (Okaba, 2003, Ake, 2001, Soyinka, 1999). These various descriptions aptly depict the failure of public policy implementation in the country. This signifies public authority failure in Nigeria considering the fact that, public policy is mainly formulated public by authorities. The amount of interest, commitment and support evidenced by the principle actors had a major influence on the prospects for success (McLaughlin, 1976: 167-180). As noted, that if all the public policies that have been formulated in the country since independence were implemented, Nigeria would have been on the fast lane of development. Nigeria's policy of none-implementation is a policy in itself as decision or non-decision of government is a public policy.

It is crystal clear at this junction to assert that the public policy implementation realm in Nigeria is seriously being undermined by the impure fire of lack of political will/attitude to public policy implementation, poor implementation design, conception and discipline, poor program leadership and management, lack of resources, corruption, sectionalism and ethnic biases, geocentricism and duality of public policies, culture and religion, selective and non-implementation of budgets, and misplaced priorities. These are the paradoxes of public policy implementation that has bedeviled Nigeria in the past and the present. It is therefore apt to suggest that until public policies are implemented to achieve the lofty goals for which it was made, the general aspiration for Nigeria to join the league of developed nations in 2020 will be unattainable. This calls for a change of attitude on the part of those entrusted with the task of implementing public policies to turn a new leaf, and the general public who are the

prime target beneficiary of public policy, to agitate for the implementation of public policy to achieve its desired goal.

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