
THE ROLE OF PUBLIC POLICY MAKING AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Any good governance is judged by the kind of policy implementation in place. Those people oriented policies enhanced good governance. This paper have even adopt system theory as it theoretical frame work of analysis. The theory state that every organization is made up of systems that interact in the light of the above, this paper examines the various policies put in place by the federal government to foster development of its citizen. Policies such like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the Green Revolution War Against Indiscipline (WAI). National Policy on education etc are of among other policies put in place by federal government to reposition the country's economy.

INTRODUCTION

Policy formulation, analysis implementation evaluations are very important aspects of organizational life and in the light of this, public institutions must participate in the systematic formulation of policies that affect the people/citizens. If policies are poorly framed, and implemented, members of the society are bound to suffer. In other words, where policies are poorly conceived and implemented, such policies may not be translate to development. The opening paragraph above is a pointer to the fact that development in the society can be effectively articulated through effective policy formulation and implementation. Development is thus a function of public policy. In Nigeria, at different instances polices have been made by different requires as either a response to public yearning or to cover the gap existing between the rich and the poor and improve the standard of living in the society. These police often take different forms: political, economic, education, social, agriculture, etc. and they differ from regime to regime. This paper seeks to analyze public policy making and how it has engendered the development agenda in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATION ON PUBLIC POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

The Concept of Public Policy: Human conduct is generally governed by what is sometimes loosely referred to as 'policy'. In this broad sense, everyone would seem to have one policy or another regulating one's behaviour or action. Thus, it is conceivable to talk of 'private' policies which help to regulate the conduct of people in their private domains. On the other hand, what makes policies distinctively public is that they are developed by governmental bodies and officials. Public policy as concept in politics does not have a straight forward definition. Rather it has a variety of uses. Coupled with this is the fact that the perception of the meaning, impact and significance of a policy may vary with the perspectives of participants and observers. For instance, economists talk of economic policies while educationists often refer to policies relating to education as educational policies.

According to Barret and Fudge (1981:5), when we talk of public policy, we refer to a policy which:

...Emanates from the public sector including both the institution of central and local government and State created agencies such as water and health authorities, commissions and corporation-it may be implemented through and directed at a wide variety of individuals and organizations which may or may not be part of the state apparatus, and which may be to a greater or lesser degree independent of state influence.

The implication of the above position is that any named public policy is designed to affect a particular targeted population in a geopolitically defined entity. In the words of Robert and Clark (1982:116) public policy is conceived from "goal-attainment" and "power configuration points of view. According to them, policy making process refers to the;

Series of steps taken by a government to solve problems, make decisions, allocate resources or values, implement policies and in general to do the things expected of them by their constituencies.

Put in other words, Jenkins (1978) defined public policy as:

A set of inter- related decisions by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should in principle be within the power of those actors to achieve.

The above definition appreciates the fact that there are mirages of problems in any named society. It is however the responsibility of the political leadership to decide on which of them that can be addressed at any point in time and how to achieve them within specified period of time. This is where the importance of planning also sets in. Furthermore, Chandler and Plano (1988:107) defined public policy as the strategic use of resources to alleviate national development problems. In a similar vein, Dimock, et al (1983:40) argued that "public policy is deciding at any time or place what objectives and substantive measures should be chosen in order to deal with a particular problem issue or innovation. It also includes the reasons they should be chosen". These two definitions see public policy from the management point of view. It considers the insatiability of human wants and the inadequacy of the resources to meet human wants. This calls for prudent management of the available resources to attain development in the society. It is therefore the ones of policy makers to decide who gets what, when and how?" (Easton, 1965). The foregoing shows that it may be possible for us to have some policy programs embracing economy as a whole, where as others may deal with a segment of the economy. However, in either situation, the economy as a whole is ultimately affected. On the whole, there are some commonalities with the above definitions of public policy: both definitions perceive the concept from goal attainment point of view; they also set public policy as a political inter play, they see planning as being crucial to public policy, making and implementation. By and large, one can submit that public policy is the

management of human and material resources by policy actors to address the developmental problems identified in a polity at any given time.

This means that public policy is targeted at bringing about development in the society. What then is development? To that are now turn.

The Concept of Development: The concept of development has been a subject of varied definitions. To some scholars, the term implies advancement, modernization, improvement, or progress. To others, it could only be seen in the light of specific spheres in life. Thus, the concept is, for instance to be understood in terms of economic, social, political and technological variables. Agreeing with this latter school of thought, Todaro (2003:83) views development as:

A multi- dimensional process involving major change in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty.

Todaro further identified three core values associated with development to include.

- i. Life-sustenance:** Which implies the ability to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, health or protection.
- ii. Self-esteem:** This means a sense of worth, and self respect; not being used as a tool by others for their own ends.
- iii. Freedom from servitude:** Implies a fundamental sense of freedom-an acceptance from alienating material conditions of life and from servitude to nature, ignorance, dogmatic beliefs, etc.

In fact, viewed purely from an economic angle, a society develops economically as its members increase greatly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity is dependent on several factors. First, is the extent to which the members of the society understand the laws of nature: This is science. Secondly is the extent to which that understanding is put into practice by developing tools that is technology and finally the manner in which work is organized, that is entrepreneurship (Udombana, 2003). Development should be seen as a strategy that aims at eliminating poverty, unemployment and inequality. The point is that the absence of food, shelter, clothing and good health is often as a result of low levels of income, unemployment or generally the presence of acute poverty. Development then is the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment within the context of a growing economy. Going by the above explanations, it should be pointed out that in addition to viewing the concept of development from strictly economic variables such as savings, investment, and income, non-quantifiable and non-economic variables such as people's attitudes towards life, work and authority should equally be taken into consideration. Development thus represents a whole gamut of change through which an entire system moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory, and towards a situation of life or condition regarded a situation of life or condition regarded as materially and spiritually better. And since man is the centre of development, for development to have

true meaning it must have to do with a progressive improvement of the quality of his life and or standard of living.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

This discourse adopts the systems theory as a framework of analysis. David Easton (1965) popularized the systems paradigm for the analysis of political life. According to Easton, a political system is that system of interaction in any society through which binding and authorization allocations are made. He analyzes political activity by employing the paradigm of the biological system "whose life processes interact with each other and with the environment to produce a changing but nonetheless stable bodily state." (Ham and Hill, 1985:13). Viewed this way, therefore, public policy is the response of the political system to forces brought to bear on it from the environment. Systems theory portrays public policy as an output of the political system. But systems theory is also a process theory of public policy. Certain key concepts are central to the understanding of public policy from the systems theoretic framework. First is the concept of system which in the words of Dye (1997:35) "implies an identifiable set of institutions and activities in society that functions to transform demands into authoritative decisions requiring the support of the whole society" A crucial property of a system is the interestedness of its parts or elements. Furthermore, it is assumed that a system will respond to its environment and will seek to preserve it. Second, is the concept of inputs, which refers to the forces generated in the environment that affect the political system? In puts can take the form of demands and support. Demands involve actions by individuals and groups seeking authoritative allocations of values from the authorities. Support comprises of actions rendered in favour of government such as obedience to the law and payment of taxes. Inputs are generated from the environment. The environment is any condition or circumstance defined as external to the boundaries of the political system.

Inputs are fed into the black box of decision making, otherwise called the conversion box, to produce outputs. Outputs are the decisions and policies of the authorities. Within the systems framework, allowance is made for feedback. This is the mechanism through which the outputs of the political system influence future inputs into the system. According to Anderson (1975:19). "The concept of feedback indicates that public policies (or outputs) may subsequently alter the environment and the demands generated there in, as well as the character of the political system itself". Systems theory is a dominant paradigm in orthodox theorizing about public policy. In general, systems theory provides a convenient framework for capturing the complexity of the policy making process and is to the extent a valuable tool for organizing our inquiry into the causes and consequences of government action. In addition, system theory poses a number of questions on the relationship between the environment and the political system and how the characteristics of the political system, in turn affect the content of public policy. There are, however, problems with the use of systems theory in policy analysis. Much of these problems derive from the processual assumptions of the theory. The impression that is conveyed to the effect that policy making proceeds in a systematic way, beginning with input and on to output, can hardly be

sustained in the real world of policy making. While not denying the relevance of the environment for the generation of inputs, the fact remains that demands and support as basic materials for public policy are sometimes initiated within the political system.

A fundamental assumption of systems theory is stability, an assumption that is implied in such notions as pattern maintenance, equilibrium, etc. Much value is inevitably placed on the imperative of order and predictability. It is for this reason that systems theory is, not without some justifications, labeled an ideological endorsement of the status quo. The implication of this characterization is that stability becomes a goal which is pursued at all cost even if it means suppressing legitimate demands, the utility of systems theory is even more worrisome in situations where stability is a problem and the policy making machinery is in dire need of change.

THE PUBLIC POLICY MAKING PROCESS

Public policy is a process that involves several stages. These are the formulation stage, the implementation stage and the feedback and or evaluation stage (Olaniyi, 1998). The public policy formulation stage is where the government or policy actors take decisions as to what is to be done and how it is to be achieved. This is done in reaction to the information received in form of inputs. The process involve identification of a problem a situation, the collection of relevant facts, analysis of the alternative solutions, selection of the alternative that appear to have maximum chance of success and the largest amount of nationality behind it, and indicates with varying degrees of explicitness how the particular objectives may be achieved (Dimock, et al 1983).

The public policy implementation stage comes after a policy has been made operational through the passing of legislation and the committing of resources to it. Thus, implementation may be viewed as a process of interaction between setting of goals and acting geared towards achieving them. The stage involves translation of goals and objectives of policy choice into concrete achievement through various programmes. Hence, it is often said that policy implementation is programme implementation. This explains why Egonmwan (1991) described it as the stage where you grapple with reality. The feedback and evaluation stage is the stage of comparison between the intended outcome of policy and actual achievements on the basis of experience gained during the implementation stage. When there is so much discrepancies between expected and actual effects of policies, this could lead to a reformation of policy based on evaluation or assessment of the solution. Consequently, evaluation can be described as the ability to locate mistakes and to remedy those errors to avoid serious or adverse consequences (Olaniyi, 1998). On the other hand, feedback in political context means any information about the impact of past and present policy choices to make decisions. The essence of feedback is to ensure modifications. The media plays crucial roles in feedback process in public policy making. Thus, lack of press freedom can undermine the feedback process.

A REVIEW OF SOME MAJOR PUBLIC POLICES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the ways by which successive governments in Nigeria have been trying to better the socio-economic conditions (development) of Nigeria and narrow the gap between it and advanced countries of the world is to formulate and execute policies in fact direction. In fact, it can be asserted that the adoption of these policies have become a political contest and any new regime will fail to evolve its own strategy will be deemed by Nigerians as lacking national orientation. Consequently, as a way of falling into this type of trap, a new regime may go to the extreme abrogating a good programme of its predecessor. However, in some instances, experiences have shown that it may not even come out with something new or better. Cases in point were the Green Revolution programme of Alhaji Shehu Shagari is government in the second Republic (1979-1983) which replaced Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) programme of General Murtala- Obasanjo regime introduced in (1976]. Both Green Revolution and Operation Feed the Nations were agricultural programmes. Also the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) established by General Ibrahim Babangida was replaced by the Olusegun Obasanjo's (1999-2007) regime with the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), both programmes aim at eradicating or reducing poverty in the Nigerian society. There are so many policies introduced by successive governments in Nigeria. Some of these are:

1. Development plans which were:

- a) The first National Development Plan (1962-1968)
 - b) The Second National Development Plan (1970-1974)
 - c) The Third National Development Plan (1975-1980)
 - d) The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985)
2. The National Youth Service Corps Scheme (1973)
 3. Operation Feed the Nation (1976)
 4. The Green Revolution Programme (1979)
 5. War Against Indiscipline (WAI) (1984).
 6. War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI-C) (1994).
 7. The National Policy on Education.
 8. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (2004).
 9. The Seven Point Agenda (2007).

The National Development Plans: Arising from the fact that Nigeria is lagging behind in the development agenda, the government embarked on National Development Plans (NDPs) to accelerate development in the country. It is however, amazing to note that all these plans did not really transform into real development in Nigeria in spite of the huge investment. In other words, despite the fact that the National Development Plans have lofty programmes, yet they did not contribute much in solving the development problems of the country (Olaniyi, 19980)

The National Youth Service Corps: The National Youth Service Corps was one of the mobilization strategies adopted by the administration of General Yakubu Gowon (Rtd) to

integrate Nigeria. However, its focus was on the youth's. The Decree that established the scheme was Decree No 24 of May 22, 1973. What warranted the introduction of the scheme was the pre 1966 activities was played in highly tribal zed manner, Unfortunately, the NYSC has not been able to curb the problem of National integration or National Unity as the problems of tribalism, nepotism, and lack of oneness still persist in Nigeria. It means therefore that where there is no unity, development is practically arrested.

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN):The operation Feed the Nation was an agricultural revolution policy introduced by the regime of Murtala/Obasanjo in 1976. It was a mobilization strategy designed to address the nation's food problem arising from the fact that the country's agriculture was import oricuted and that no society can develop with out food security. It was also aimed at re- structuring the consumption habits of Nigeria towards a self- reliant economy. The programme was also introduced to reduced excessive reliance on the oil sector. Unfortunately, however, the OFN did not achieve the desired results as the country contributed to rely on food importation, even today e.g the importation of foreign rice. Added to these areas the fact that the government failed to give the rural farmers the much needed proper incentives like soft loans, fertilizers which was most often diverted, and the poor poisoning improved crop seeds and animal breeds, etc. Most painful was the failure to attain the objective of diversifying the rename base of the country from oil, Nigeria is still relying heartily on oil and a slight depression in world oil price affects the entire frame of the Nigerian economy as we recently theses in the ongoing global financial meltdown. Most reproaching is the non-existence of an agricultural programme in the country. This policy lacked consistency and continuity.

The Green Revolution: The green revolution like its predecessor or (OFN) was an agricultural scheme initiated by the Shehu Shagari regime in 1980. At the inception of the programme, subsidies in various forums were given to local farmers. Again, the green revolution programme did not attain its objectives because it was highly politicized. This explains that, public policies should be nationally oriented without subject to societal vices.

War Against Indiscipline (WAI): War against indiscipline (WAI) was a social mobilization programme introduced on march 19, 1984 by Generals Bahari /Idiagbon regime. What informed the introduction of the scheme is seen in the maiden broadcast of General Buhari to the people of the country on December 31st 1983. In it he described the administration of administration of Shehu Shagari as an "inept, insensitive an corrupt" regime.

War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI – C): The policy of War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI-C) was introduced by the regime of General Sani Abacha in 1994. WAI-C blends with the spirit of WAI and MAMSER. In fact, it retains most of the institution arrangements of the letter. However the focus of WAI-C was on fighting corruption in the Nigerian society. The underlying philosophy of WAI-C is seen in the fact that one should be conscious of the public position he/she occupies because the officer can be called to question at any time. In the end however, the WAI-C did not succeed in wiping out

corruption in the society. Nigeria has still remained the most corrupt and indisciplined country ever.

The National Policy on Education: The National Policy on Education in Nigeria over the years is anchored on five main national objectives of Nigeria which are:

- i. A free and democratic society;
- ii. A just and equalitarian society;
- iii. A united, strong and self – reliant nation;
- iv. A great and dynamic economy; and
- v. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Unfortunately, over the years, the education policy has failed to achieve meaningful results. The most recent deception of the policy is anchored on universal basic Education, which insists that the State should only give their citizens basic education-how to read and write- but whoever chooses to further must bear the responsibility. This has led to the under funding of the education sector, especially the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Our submission here is that since education has a dynamic linkage with development it neglect tantamount to under development.

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS): The Nigerian government under the President Olusegun Obasanjo adopted the policy reforms embodied in the National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (NEEDS) as a development framework. The key instruments of NEEDS are therefore.

- i. Privatization, deregulation and liberalization to the economy;
- ii. Infrastructural development especially electricity, transportation and water;
- iii. Mobilizing long-term savings and investment;
- iv. Effective regulatory regimes; and
- v. Targeted programmes to promote the private sector growth and development (The Federal Government, 2004).

A critical review of the NEEDS Policy would reveal that it failed to achieve the desired development in the country. Onunaiyu (2004:6) contends that;

...the so-called economic reform measures are neither structural nor institutional, but patchy bits of incoherent regulatory framework to keep friendly, the hordes of dubious foreign creditors and other external interested parties to the bazaar and auctioneer economy;

Needless to add that; the so-called poverty alleviation strategies of the NEED Policy has remained a mirage.

The 7 Point Agenda: As soon as he was sworn-into office as the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Umaru Musa Yar Adua declared his administration's 7- point Agenda, aimed at positioning the Nigerian State and its peoples on the pedestal of development. The major policy thrust of the 7- point Agenda are:

- a. Critical Infrastructure;
- b. Niger Delta;
- c. Food Security;
- d. Human Capital Development;
- e. Land tenure and home ownership;
- f. National Security and Intelligence; and
- g. Wealth creation (Federal ministry of Information 2007).

A closer examination of the 7- Point agenda reveal that the policy thrust in terms of its theoretical assumptions and expectations is imperative. However, the policy thrust is more of a myth rather than reality in terms of meeting the realistic development aspirations of the masses of the Nigerian people. The myth of the 7- point agenda lies in the following factors;

- i. The policy's flawed interpretation of the root causes of Nigerian crisis.
- ii. The policy also arises from neo-liberal praxis. It is anti-people.
- iii. It relies on the dictates of foreign capital just like previous policies like NEEDS.

In our view, the 7 point agenda is simply a ruse. It is unrealistic because the so-called peace attained in the Niger-Delta is a peace of the grave yard.

THE PROBLEM OF POLICY MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

So many policies have been initiated in Nigeria which aimed at generally improving the standards of living in the country, but Nigeria has not witnessed any remarkable change even with the presence of these acclaimed 'good policies.' Loosely speaking one could say the persistent failure of public policies in Nigeria could be first located at the point of policy making stage. Most public policies in Nigeria are made by the leadership that most often take hasty decisions which are not even in the interest of the citizens. To the extent that the policy choices do not reflect the policy demand of the society. Moreover, the political leadership that we have is inexperienced in the art of policy making. Their inexperience leads to half baked policy statements. Another problem area is the frequent policy changes arising from change of government or regime type, outcome of feedback and evaluation and existence of time. For instance, a new government or regime may restate, restructure or even cancel a policy earlier adopted by its predecessor and adjudge it as not being too good enough.

However, the political executive might have taken this action to suit his own type of government, an example of this was the operation feed the Nation of 1976 which re-emerged in a different guise of green Revolution programme of 1979, WAF during general Buhari which re- surfaced in 1994 during Gen Abacha as WAI-C and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) during General Babangida which has now been in the form of National poverty Eradication programme. Frequent policy changes is however an expensive venture for a government because it leads to wastages of human and material resources. It also makes the public to be confused about the policies of the government. In essence, it is an attribute of a government that has lost national orientation. Problem of information; without proper information about a problem, no meaningful policy can be formulated. More often

than not, information coming to the desk or table of the policy makers are often distorted or even falsified occasionally. The consequence of this is that the policy option adopted by policy makers may not be the best or correct one and what will happen eventually is that they will end up not achieving the desired goal of development.

One of the causes of the poor policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria is the institutional flaw in the political system. There is simply a poor followership, the citizens are not properly oriented and informed of existing policies, their rights are not fully protected or made known to them to give them enough sense of belonging to support policies. Their nationalistic feeling is met with economic and political depression. Added to the above problems the dys-functional nature of the bureaucratic framework. This is bureaucracy that lacks expertise discipline and commitment and capacity to give professional advices to political leaders to enable them make informed policies. On the other hand if the bureaucracy lacks the capacity to implement the policies of the political leadership, those policies, however well intentioned, will not be implemented in an effective manner.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

Arising from the foregoing analysis, we put forth the following as realistic way forward for effective policy making and its implementation in Nigeria. To begin with, for policy making to be adjudged as being good, it must in the beginning be designed to satisfy the generality of the citizenry. Any policy which is intentionally designed to satisfy a particular interest group or individual on a selfish ground is totally unacceptable. Policies should be properly weighed, both the positive and negative effect considered, so that when it is implemented it will receive the support of everybody. Experts should be permitted to formulate policies on projects which are highly technical. The practice whereby ruling elite embrace all the decision making responsibilities to themselves should be avoided. Specialists should be invited to make policies that really require professional flavour. Furthermore, there should be proper allocation of funds to approved policies; when funds are not well allocated to policies undergoing execution; they are bound to suffer failure. It is to this fact that public policies should be followed up at reasonable instances to take inventories of development so that effective evaluation could be made.

The resources of research provide the pass for the success of public policies. Any policy that is not well researched on is probable to meet the rock at the stage of implementation. The effect may be stunted development. Any nation that pursues effective policy making and implementation does not play a second fiddle with research. That is why Sam (1999:66) puts it that a country should pursue a consistent and lasting policy for research in all facets of life, including the overriding need to set –up a special camp of researchers no strategically designated areas of the country for the full time profession of data gathering analyzing and implementation. In as much as consistency and continuity is very important of public policies, a stable government and peaceful economic conditions are leverages to policy excellence. There is also the call for honest, committed and intelligent leadership at all levels and the availability of adequate high middle level manpower in all areas of discipline to man the

services and institutions in both the public and private sectors of the economy. Finally, public can be improved upon and development attained if the country is realistic and committed to the fight against corruption which has eaten deeper into the fabric of the society.

CONCLUSION

The point which has been established in this paper is the valuable need for public policies in the society. The indispensability of these policies calls for a strong government wills dedication to duty and the feeling of the masses and how they live. Good policies which are executed to the letter help to improve the standard of living and bring about growth and development. In the final analysis, public policies can be made to reflect the interests of the vast majority of the people of Nigeria. A crucial aspect of this process is the accommodation rather than the repression of the political expression of dissent. The capacity of the ruling class in Nigeria to mobilize the vast majority of the people around national purposes and policies is contingent on this accommodation. That the ruling class has not been sufficiently sensitive to this necessity is primarily responsible for the continuing failure of policy decision in the country. This calls for a realistic reform of the entire system for development to take place.

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