

NIGERIA AND THE ENIGMA OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

Over the years in Nigeria, numerous brilliant policies have been formulated, but the paradox is that only a negligible part of these numerous policies are implemented. To this end there is no apparent and significant development to show for this. This suggests that mere formulation of policies should become not the major issue in Nigeria but rather their effective implementation, as it is only effectively implemented policies that can bring about national development. Against this background, this study undertakes to unearth the reasons that militate against effective implementation of policies in Nigeria and the solutions to this perennial problem. Corruption, lack of continuity in government policies, inadequate human and material resources, poor leadership programme, sectionalism and ethnic biases and lack of political will/ attitude to policy implementation are the paradoxes of policy implementations. The study shows that until policies are implemented, development of our nation will be unattainable. This calls for a change of attitude on the part of policy implementers and the target beneficiary of public policy.

Introduction

Nigeria is besieged by many problems. Oguejiofor (2004) noted that outside the geographic disadvantages, and unfortunate amalgamation by the colonialist which has made peaceful co-existence and peaceful stability a mirage, contemporary issues,

ranging from religious intolerance, menace of Boko-haram in the North, kidnapping in the south, cyber-crime among the youth and general un-employment in the country are serious challenges in the country. Notwithstanding these, Achebe (1983) believes that the problem with Nigeria is the problem of leadership. In line with Achebe's position, it is believed that the kind of leader that is needed in Nigeria is the type that will have the will to implement her numerous policies because political will should be the key factor to government policy formulation strategies. Achebe (1988) also said as much in his speech while arguing for the need of effective implementation when he said:

In my view the basic problem with efforts to bestow pre-eminence on system is, however, their inability to explain how an abstract can bring itself into being automatically. Would the system drop the sky operate itself? p.1

The system would not drop from the sky and operate itself until a willing and effective leader implement policies that were hitherto formulated. This is only when we can think of a meaningful development. The need for enhancing the development process in the development in Nigeria is ever becoming more crucial and urgent. The pace at which this can be realized is hinged on the ability of the government to formulate appropriate policies and very importantly on the capability of the leaders to effectively implement the formulated policies. Over the years in Nigeria, numerous brilliant policies have been formulated and implemented. Yet there is no apparent and significant development to show for that as evidenced by the fact that Nigeria has continued to remain in the category of the least developed countries of the world. To this regard, Ugwuanyi and

Chukwuemeka (2013) suggest that mere formulation of policies should become not the major issue in Nigeria but rather their effective implementation.

Ebiefia and Paki (2013) observes that policies therefore play crucial role in the state and also instrumental to the development and underdevelopment of a 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 cum mar the realization of public objectives in the country. The reason being that most government policies either end prematurely only at the formulation stage; or are purposely designed not to be religiously implemented or simply mal- implemented to benefit only a section of the society. The burden of this paper; however is to critically explore the reasons that militate against effective implementation of policies in Nigeria and proffer solutions to these perennial problems in Nigeria

CONCEPT CLARIFICATION:

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 definition of public policy is that Dye (1979:1), where he defines public policy as “what Government choose to do or not to do. He went further to explain that:

Government do many things, they regulate conflicts within society, they organize society to carry on conflicts within other societies, 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, extract taxes, or all of these things at once....(Ibid)

One crucial point to note from the above conceptualization is the concept of “non -decision”. The reason being that the decision by government to ignore a problem or make changes in a sense a policy decision because it tends to favor the perpetuation of the status quo. Secondly, there may be a divergence between what government decide to do and what they actually do which captures reality in Nigerian context. Egonwan (2004) sees Public policy is a future oriented inquiry into the optimum means of achieving a given governments programme found in a nation’s laws or in public statements by a functioning of government. Other conceptualization of public policy includes; it is a government programme of action which stands for various degrees of total articulation and normative regulations of government activities, that is what government intends to do to it.

Shankansky (1970) contends that, public policy refers to important activities of government. The reality however is that public policy embraces all government 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) defined public policy is a series of goal- oriented actions taken by government actors. According to Leichter, (1975) Public policy also connotes official statements determining the plan of action or what the governments want to do. Mlekwe, (1976) noted that it is indeed factual that, the special character of public policies stems 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 role. The argument is that, public policy has to do with the fact that, it is a product of government process and activities; it affects a large spectrum of issues and sectors of the society which government have something to do. This includes the economy, housing, defense, transportation, health care, education, etc. and expression of public policy embraces, laws, judicial decisions, executive orders and rules government budgets, 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 being distributive, regulatory and constituent respectively in accordance with the purpose they are created to serve in the society.

The Enigma Of Policy Implementation:

Nigeria is presently swimming in the ocean of abject poverty, absence of basic social amenities and excruciating underdevelopment, not because there are no good policies to ameliorate the situation, but because policy implementation is the Achilles heel of the Nigerian state. Studies reveal that if all policies formulated in Nigeria over the years were implemented accordingly, she would have been on a fast lane of development. It is however a paradox that, most of these 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.

Honadle (1976) identifies the problems associated with policy implementation as that of social carpenters and masons who fails to build to specification and thus distort the beautiful blueprint. He was equating policy with a building plan. To this he said;

Implementation is the nemesis of designers; it conjures up images of plans gone awry and of social carpenters and masons who fails to build to specifications and thereby distort the beautiful blueprints for progress which were handed to them. It provokes memories of "good" ideas that did not work and places the blame on the second (and second-class) member of the policy an administrative images....."p.6

The above quotation shows the importance that is attached to policy implementation and those that are responsible for implementing these policies. It also shows that no matter how beautiful the blueprint of a programme is, a defective implementation of it will make nonsense of the whole programme. Unfortunately, the situation as described by Honadle above is what goes on in most developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. As stated by Egonmwam (1971), "implementation in these countries often turns out to be the graveyard of policy where intentions of the designers of the policies are often undermined by a constellation of powerful forces of politics and administration in cooperation with the people. Little attention is paid to the subject of policy implementation by policy decision makers while it is often taken that once a policy is adopted by government it must be

implemented and the desired goal achieved". The above lapse has often resulted in poor policy implementation, which in effect, gives rise to a gap in implementation. There is policy failure when there is a sizable gap between a policy decision and its implementation. Such a gap is characterized, for instance, by the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer in spite of stated policy goals to the contrary. Implementation gap thus manifests in the "widening of the distance between stated policy goals and realization of such planned goals. Egonmwam (1991). This gap is what is widely seen all over the country.

FACTORS THAT HINDERS EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLIMENTATION IN NIGERIA

Lack Of Polictical Will:

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 the policy, there will be lack of commitment to the implementation process. Since Nigeria state is dependent, weak and lacks autonomy. Therefore despite the availability of polices that stand to better the lot of the average Nigerian, the state fortunately lacks the political will to positively realize such policy objectives. The argument is that, even though the set objectives of government polices stand to benefits the public, Egbulefu (2004:16) observed that; the cabal that hold 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 generates only a miserable 1,500 megawatts capacity. And despites 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.

Corruption and ineffective political leadership:

The leadership corruption and ineptitude, for instances, affect the content and quality of policy at formulation stage, for instance, policies, more often than not are made for purposes of the selfish and egoistic interest of the political leaders and sometimes only to attract public acclaim and attention with less regard to their appropriateness in addressing given problems or possibility of the or effective practical implementation by the public bureaucracy. Indeed, most policy making goals are subordinate to the personal rewards and interests of the political leaders and their colleagues with the result that a policy is judge more on its political merits than with the real development need rarely factored into consideration. For these, most polices in Nigeria are either in appropriate or lack well defined objectives and programme for their effective implementation. It is perhaps for this that Okoli and Onah (2002:14) state that implementation of polices in Nigeria take the form of “learning process in trial and error”. In this context, policies or programmes are haphazardly implemented and even sometimes abandoned or dismantled midway because the basis for formulating the policy was not, in the first instance, predicated on existing data, realities or need. Indeed Makinde (2005) observed that in Nigerian there are usually no comprehensive policy standards and procedure” (p.63)

Concerning corruption Udo Etuk (2004:121) wondered if Nigerian leaders have ever sat down to do some practical thinking or some soul-searching on the damage that this monster of corruption is doing in Nigeria. Because when corruption penetrates the implementation process, public policies becomes mutilated 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, Nigerian 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 then President Olusegun Obasanjo administration, but paradoxically, the level of poverty instead of decreasing is rather on the increase. The fact remain 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 conduit 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 Nigerian 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, 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 fund 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. Aluko, (2011:16) said that 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.

Over-ambitious and unrealizable policy goals:

Most people are impatient and over- zealous, to the policy formulated by the government, as such they hardly wait to see the aspect of it as they would just be condemning it without waiting to see it materialize. Equally, some of the programs and polices of government are unreliable due to the complexity of the programs. A good example of over- ambitious policy is the “free education for all” in some of the southern states in Nigeria. The rate at which private institutions are being established in Nigeria shows that the public has lost-confidence in public schools due to its ineffectiveness. Even many of those who are sometimes considered as illiterates in that society now prefer to send their children to fee-paying primary and secondary school. They seem to have lost confidence in the free primary and secondary institutions. This is a pointer to the inability of government or its agents to successfully implement the free education policy to its comprehensiveness.

Lack of continuity:

Implementation problem can arise from the policy itself when such a policy emanates from government rather “than from the target groups. By this, it means that planning is top-down and by implication, the target beneficiaries are not allowed to contribute to the formulation of the policies that affect their lives. This is usually what happens in most developing countries as it happened in the case of the Better life Programme (BLP) and The family support programme (FSP) in Nigeria. The programme was targeted at rural women in Nigeria with the aim of creating awareness in women through mobilization so that they can realize, utilize and develop their potentials for more fulfilling life and national development. The programme, however, transformed to the family support in 1994 after General Sani. Abacha became the head of state in November 1993. The family support Programme under Mrs Miriam Abacha focused on the family as a whole. The main objective of the programme was to improve and sustain family cohesion through the promotion of social and economic well-being of the Nigerian family for its maximum contribution to national development. While one may wonder at the need for the change of name when both programme seem to share similar focus, the reason may not be far-fetched. It may be traced to the ego of our leaders as the fact that the government of Abacha toppled that of Shonekan. The interim government of Shonekan was put in place by general Babangida in 1993 and that administration was to carry out the programme of Mrs Babangida, i.e the better life programmes. Therefore, for general Abacha’s wife to make a name for herself , it was necessary to initiate new programme or, at least, change a few areas in the existing one and then give it a new name rather than continue with the programme initiated by the wife of the head of the previous

government. This may explain one of the reasons why it is possible to find abandoned project all over Nigeria. In addition to the above, there is what Egonmwan (2004), called “planned indiscipline”. This occurs when originally planned projects are abandoned without convincing reasons thus resulting in distortion of original plan. Abandonment of projects may also arise from ego tripping, change of regimes which results in lack of continuity as explained earlier. Perhaps, the most important point of to emphasize in respect of policy implementation is the extent to which success or failure in implementation depends on the activities already carried out as the policy formulation stage. For instance, a resounding failure might occur if, because of the sophisticated techniques adopted in the analysis of alternative that culminated in a policy choice, the implementation is taken for granted. Ademolekun (1984) suggests that the best way out is to approach the implementation process with maximum flexibility taking into consideration the fact that many assumptions and probabilities characterize policy formulation techniques. As a matter of fact, he clearly stated that the formulation and implementation of polices are not completely distinct phases of activities and that there is no definite and to policy implementation. He arrived all this that conclusion as a result of new demands that usually emerge after new tensions might have been generated as a result of implementation of new polices. Sometimes, new demands emerge that have to be transmitted to the policy making machinery: they are then processed and transformed into one or more policies that in turn have to be implemented. And, this may become cynical.

Sectionalism and ethnic basis:

Sectionalism and ethnicity has also continues to mar public policy implementation in Nigeria. Experience has shown that, some national policies are implemented fully in other part of the country but simply abandoned or marginally implemented in other areas. The petroleum trust fund (PTF) Headed by General Mohammad Buhari, for instance, constructed a lot of road in the northern part of the country, but nothing tangible was done on road construction in the south where the fund was derived from. This was possible because the chief implementation officers of polices was from northern extraction. Furthermore, it is a fact that the implementing officers of polices do so to benefits their immediate ethnic group and abandoned same policies sited for implementation in other areas. In essence, a compromise 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.

WAYS OF ENHANCING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

In the first place it is evident that if we know the causes that destroy states, we shall also know the causes which preserve them...'
Aristotle Politics V,8:1.

It is on this assertion that we give some recommendations that will enhance policy implementation in Nigeria if applied.

Political will:

Political will should be the factor to government formulation strategies. Political will means support for a policy by top government functionaries. This is because government sometimes formulates policy but lack the political social and economic will to implement it. Good example are the fights against indiscipline and corruption in Nigeria where many instance, corrupt officers are seen all over the affairs of the government without being arrested and prosecuted.

Needs of the people:

In formulating a policy, the policy formulators require a good and thorough understanding of the local needs and problems of the people. Emphases should be given so the needs of the people, their capacities and total commitment programs.

Stakeholders:

In policy formulation, stakeholder must first be identified by taking more account the interest of the stakeholders. Government policy depend on the agencies of government for support and government should show position attitude to the policy by ensuring adequate measure to empower the stakeholder, civil society and other interested parties with the required pre-requisite information on the policy for their benefits.

Specific target group:

One could say that no single government policy plan is sufficient to meet the needs of the people. It is often better to target specific groups for a better policy implementation. In a summation of policy on developmental issues, it must be seem as a search for

improving the life of the specific target group by government and with the support of people.

The culture of discontinuity of policies in cases of changes in government or organizational leadership should be discouraged specifically, recommend that the national and state assemblies should enact law that will guarantees continuity of policies made forwards growth and development. This is necessary because, even though government comes and goes, policy remains and should continue the implementation of existing policies, unless fundamental development render their continued implementation impossible or unnecessary. Indeed, if every leader who comes into power implements put the ones in place before their tenure, Nigeria will grow. The culture of discontinuing a policy once there is a change in government should be discouraged because even though government comes and goes, administration is continuous. There should be continuity in policy except if the policy is found not to be useful to the people.

Provision should be put in place for adequate monitoring of projects, as poorly monitored projects will only yield undesired result.

Nigerians should vote honest, capable, detribalized leaders into elective elective offices. This type of leaders will be objective in handling the affairs of our nation and will have the will to fight this monster called corruption.

Conclusion:

The overall objective of every government is to being about a qualities improvement in the standard of living of its citizens and to promote growth and development generally realizing these noble objectives entails not only the formulation of policies but also the effective implementation of such formulated policies by policy

implementers. Given the number of policies that have been formulated in Nigeria since independence the nation is supposed to have witnessed tremendous level of social, economic and political development. The reverse has, however, been the case and this underscores the fact that there has not been effective implementation of those policies in Nigerian. In essence, there has been a wide gap between the development goals of a policy at the formulated stage and realization of such goals on implementation. To close this gap, there is the need for effective enhancement in the extent of policy which Nigeria implements. It is crystal clear at this juncture 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, 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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