



THE MYSTERY OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

For many years in Nigeria, there have been good policies that have been formulated, but the problem is that only a few of these numerous policies are effectively implemented to the last letter. To this end, there is no much and significant development to show for this policies so far. This out rightly suggest that, it is not mere formulation of policies is the problem of Nigeria, but the problem of implementation of these policies, as it is only effective implementation of these brilliant policies that can bring about sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Looking at this background, this study seeks to discuss the reasons that militate against effective implementation of policies in Nigeria and suggest solutions to this recurring problem. Frequent changes in government, corruption, lack of human and material resources, not having standard leadership programme, tribalism and ethnic fractions and lack of political will to policy implementation are the absurd of policy implementations. This study is of the opinion that until policies in Nigeria are implemented, there will be no sustainable and attainable development. Based on this, there is need for our policy makers and implementers to have a change in attitude towards policies in Nigeria.

Keywords: Mystery, Policy, Analysis, Implementation, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Nigeria is faced with many challenges. Oguejiofor (2004) noted that outside the geographical disadvantages and the unfortunate amalgamation by our colonial masters which has made peaceful coexistence and stability unrealistic, ranging from religious intolerance, kidnapping in major cities, cybercrimes among rising unemployed youths, the menace caused by the dreaded Boko-haram in the North and the rising unemployment rate hitting the country are serious problems affecting the country. Based on this, Achebe (1983) suggests that, the problem of Nigeria is the problem of leadership. The country needs brilliant leaders that will not only make policies, but also implement their numerous policies for the development of the country.

Policy implementation has been described as a major problem confronting Nigeria in its efforts to achieve national development. Implementation often turns out to be the graveyard of

many policies. From experience in this country, little attention is paid to the subject of policy implementation by policy makers. In most cases, it is often taken for granted that once a policy is adopted by the government, it must be implemented and the desired objectives of the policy be achieved. It is sad to say that in this country little attention is paid to the problem of implementation of policies in Nigeria. Huge amount of resources are spent on designing and preparing plans for all kinds with little or no thought given to the complex chain of reciprocal interactions and variables required and this can be seen usually in the widening gap between intentions and results.

The need for enhancing the development process in Nigeria is 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 at the same time implement these formulated policies effectively. But, it is so unfortunate that there is no significant development to show an improvement from where we were before and now, as Nigeria has continued to remain in the category of the least developed countries of the world.

This is a typical situation in Nigeria, where the intention of the designers of Policies are often underlined by constellation of powerful forces of politics and administration coupled with the prevalence of high level of corruption. The resulting failures that has affected major policies in developing countries (like Nigeria) have help to direct attention to the need for planning explicitly, management of policy implementation in which adequate attention is paid to such factors as political and institutional capacity to execute and operate development projects. It also led to the emergence of theories and models particularly during the period of the United Nation second development plan decade in 1970, when emphasis shifted from plan formulation to plan feasibility. These theoretical constructs have been designed to help policy makers, especially towards better understanding of the problems of policy implementation (Egonmwan, 2009).

THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC POLICY

It is pertinent to begin our discussion of policy implementation with various views of how people view, understood and perceived public policy. Different authors and definition of public abound and it may simply be futile to discover which is correct or appropriate. Though, many scholars regard policy implementation as a separate activity which takes place after policy has been formulated. Although this view is held because there is little to appreciate of the fact that building support for policies is an integral part of designing them. This widely held view on separation of policy design from implementation has been attacked by scholars like Pressenca and Wildavsky (1973) as fatal from any sense of direction. They argued that the separation of policy formulation from implementation is fatal. It is not better than mindless implementation without a sense of direction, though we can isolate policy formulation and policy implementation for a separate discussion (Egonmwan, 2009).

Henri (2006) was able to trace back public policy to 4000 years to the city of Babylon and was able to define it as a course of action adopted and pursued by the government towards the accomplishment of set objectives. In like manner, Ross (1969) suggested that policy should be seen as a long series of more or less related activities and their consequences for those concerned rather than as a discrete decision

In like manner Anifowose and Enemuio (2005) defined public policy as “purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”. They further stressed that, at a broader level, it is concerned with the relationship of the government units to its environment. Dye (1979, p. 1) 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, most at times in form of taxes. Thus, policies may regulate behaviour, organize bureaucracies, distribute benefits, extract taxes, or all of these at once.

On crucial point to note from the above conceptualization is the concept of 'non-decision'. The reason is that the decision of the government to ignore a problem or make changes in a policy decision because it tends to favour the perpetuation of the status quo. Secondly, there may be divergence between what government decide to do and what they actually do which captures reality in Nigeria context. Also contributing into the understanding of the concept of policy, Lowi (1970, p. 315) emphasized the importance of the concept of coercion in thinking about policy. According to him, policy involves deliberate coercion or in other words statements intended to delineate the purpose, means, subject and objects of the exercise of coercion within the context of power relationships in organizational structure. Lindblom cited Lowi (1970, p. 317) proffers a general meaning which defines policy as any output of any decision makers.

Shankansky (1970) contends that public policy refers to important activities of government. The reality however is that public policy encompasses all the activities of government as it affects members of the society. Public policy also connotes official statements determining the plan of action or what the government want to do. 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 point is that, public policy 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.

Basu (2006) has identified certain elements that differentiate public policy from other policies, they include:

- Purposive or result oriented action rather than random behaviour is the hallmarks of public policy;
- Public policy is based on law is authoritative. It has legal sanction behind it, which is potentially coercive in nature and is binding on all citizens;
- Public policy may be either positive or negative in form. Positively, it may involve some form of government action regarding any issues or problem, negatively, it may involve a decision by government officials not to take action on matter on which government opinion, attitude or action is asked for. Public policy refers to the action or decisional pattern by public administrator on particular issues over a period rather than their separate discrete decision.

As a course of action, public policy involves a number of activities that are carried out sequentially in distinct stages as follows:

- Goal formulation involving multiple group with varying and often conflicting objectives;
- Problem identification and definition;

- Agenda setting involving attempts by individuals and groups to influence policy decisions;
- Policy execution by administrators after formal adoption i.e. policy implementation;
- Policy evaluation that is concern with estimation, assessment or policy appraisal.

THE MYSTERY OF IMPLMENTATION OF POLICY IN NIGERIA

A concern with implementation emerged as an outgrowth of the renewed interest in the substance of policy among post behavioural era. Scholars such as Ololube (2018a,b) and Alasomuka and Ololube (2020) argued that it is imperative and legitimate for policy content to characterize policy making processes and progress.

Public policy implementation has been described as one of the major problem confronting developing countries. Egonmwan (2009) argued that relatively, the successful implementation of public policy is difficult in first world countries, it is more difficult in the third world countries, and may be most difficult in reform oriented governments in the third world such as Africa and Latin America and most usually it is the problem of widening gap between intention and result. Weimer and Vinning (1992) buttressed this point, by drawing the analogy between implementation and marriage, that if policy adoption is courtship, then implementation is marriage.

Implementation scholars exhibit wide difference on a number of crucial issues. Where implementation starts or end is riot settled. While implementation is commonly referred to a stage, boundaries are not clear. Authors vary in their selection of critical factors affecting implementation. Criteria for evaluating implementation success are conflicting. Moreover, the simplest, most straight forward path for implementation has proven to be difficulty.

Nigeria is presently swimming in the ocean of abject poverty, absence of basic social amenities and painful level of under-development. All these problems are because we do not have good policies to remove the country from these dying situations, but because the policies are not fully implemented. Several studies have showed over the years that, the major problem we have with developmental growth in Nigeria is not policy making, but implementation. That has made Nigeria not to be on the fast lane of development. It is however a paradox that, most of these policies only exist on mere words and paper and are never implemented to actualized the objectives of such policies. The culture of non-implementation of public policies is therefore in a very degree in the country and virtually affects all levels of government.

A number of implementation scholars make a conceptual distinction between policy formulation and implementation, which for them means carrying our prior decision chronologically. Separating policy from administration and the function of legislative bodies and administrative agencies are deeply entrenched American values related to popular accountability and limited bureaucratic discretion. And it appeals to democratic instincts to mark the start of implementation following the completion of policy making.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY IN NIGERIA

Many scholars have identified factors that are significant in the analysis of policy implementation. The characteristics of implementing agencies, predisposition of implementers and resources are crucial to policy implemantation. Ololube (2018b) emphasized that the amount of interest, commitment and support evidenced by principal policy analysis and implementation actors had a major influence on the progress and success of it.

As implementation studies have multiplied, the list variables affecting them have gotten longer. The most comprehensive treatment can be found in the work of Egonmwan (2009), who identified the following factors:

- **The Context of Policy:** Implementation of public policy involves various actors at various levels, each having a particular interest in the programme. Thus, the power base and strategies of actor involved in implementation can influence the course of implementation. The characteristics of the various institutions and regimes as well as compliance culture of the people equally influence the implementation process and response of the people.
- **Content of Policy:** The implementation of a programme is influenced by the interest affecting the content of a programme to the extent that policy implementation seeks to introduce changes in social, political and economic relationship. Those whose interests are threatened by such policy are bound to oppose it. And those who stand to gain from it are bound to press for it. Also policy implementation is affected by the degree of behavioural change programme envisages, for its intended beneficiaries.
- **Programme Implementers:** The more active, the expert and personnel possessed by the implementing agency, the greater the support of the political elites received by such agency and the greater access to resources it has, the more it is likely that such agency can implement programmes successfully.
- Basically and very critical is that the bureaucracy in Nigeria operates under ineffective and corrupt political leadership. The leadership corruption for instance, affects the content and quality of policy at formulation stages. For instance, policies are more often than not, made for purposes of the selfish and egoistic interest of the political leaders and sometimes only to attract public acclaim and attention with less regards to their appropriateness in addressing given problems or the possibility of their effective practical implementation by the public bureaucracy. Indeed, most policy making goals in Nigeria are subjected to the personal rewards and interests of the political leaders and their colleagues with the result that a policy is judged more on its political merits with the real development need rarely factored into consideration. For these, most policies in Nigeria are either inappropriate or it lacks well defined objectives for effective implementation. It is based on this, that Okoli and Onah (2002) state that policy implementation in Nigeria take the form of learning process or trial and error.
- Another factor that hinders policy implementation is the over ambitious nature of some government policy. According to (Mankinde, 2005), some policies in Nigeria are over ambitious, sweeping and over fundamental in nature. It is sad to say that, the formulation of such over ambitious policies is not borne out of their sincere effort to bring economic growth and development, but to boost the ego of the political leaders. An example of such over ambitious policies is policies having as their basic objectives the provision of constant power supply (electricity) to all citizens. For such policies, there is usually poor funding for the public bureaucracy to effectively implement them. For instance, the policy of constant electricity has witnessed such a very weak implementation which has resulted in the epileptic power supply that most part experience darkness constantly.
- Most of the agencies or institutions that are entrusted with the task of implementing government policies do not possess the requisite manpower, knowledge and financial resources to implement these policies effectively. On the area of poor funding, Government do not allocate much funds in the budget for the implementation of such projects (Ikelegbe, 2006; Dick, 2003). To effectively implement government policies in

Nigeria, the implementing agency needs adequate funds and timely manner and such not being the case in Nigeria, in part, the failure of certain public policies to achieve desirable ends, (Nweke, 2006; Ikelegbe, 1996). Though, government in their benevolent manner can give out sufficient funds to execute a policy, but the corrupt activities within the public bureaucratic organization do not allow for the judicious use of such fund to effectively implement such policies. Still on this, coupled with inadequate funding, public policies implementation has been hit by inadequate manpower resources. The public bureaucracy in Nigeria do not, indeed have adequate qualified manpower and professionals, technical or managerial competence and expertise (Aluko & Adesopo, 2002). This is counterproductive as the capabilities of government in terms of expertise and skills determine to a large extent the success or failure of implementation of policy in Nigeria (Ikelegbe, 1996). It is not worthy that inadequacy of personnel as it relates to expertise and skilled manpower is as a result of the recruitment policies in Nigeria. The application of the principle of Quota System or Federal Character results to employing people into position when they do not meet up the requirements and skills.

- Also, the difficulty of putting personal interest aside, tribalism and influence of primordial values in the conduct of official business by bureaucrats is another serious issue when it comes to policy implementation in Nigeria. In this context, if the bureaucrats are not disposed to a particular policy that is formulated, they will not approach the implementation of that policy with zeal and enthusiasm. Ikelegbe (2006), in this respect said that, positive effects will induce enthusiastic implementation while the contrary may mean that implementation may be resisted, thwarted and even sabotaged. The zeal with which bureaucrats in Nigeria implements policy depends on how they see the policy as affecting their personal, ethnic and organizational interest and aspiration (Makinde, 2005).
- Another limiting factor to effective policy implementation in the country is the undue pervasive political interference and influence on the public bureaucracy (Amucheazi 1980). In the context of Nigeria, political leaders are the ones who formulate, control and also implement the policies. This is not wise as such control and implementation are done selfishly and of personal interest. This is more so as in extreme cases of such political control in Nigeria, the bureaucrats are not even allowed to take actions on routine administrative matters without consultation and consent of the political authorities. This has resulted to too much time and energy wastage on implementation of policies in Nigeria. Very worrisome is the fact that the political influence on the bureaucracy is becoming tighter as promotion to top position in any government agencies is based on political patronage or loyalty and not on the basis of relevant, experience or seniority.
- Abrogation of a policy affects their implementation in Nigeria. It is observed that new political leadership is concerned with making its own impression on public programmes and projects. For this, certain policies or programmes which are already being effectively implemented are shelved by the succeeding administration (Nnamdi, 2001). President, Governors, Ministers, and Chairmen in Nigeria exhibits the tendency to link their administration with distinct social and economic policies or programmes. Consequently, the policies of preceding administration are rarely pursued by succeeding ones and such personalistic styles of administration help to explain why so little attention is paid to the issues of maintenance of projects or programmes created or initiated by preceding regime. An instance of this tendency for a succeeding regime to discontinue the implementation of the policy of a predecessor was the abrogation of the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) policy of General Olusegun Obasanjo and the introduction of Green

Revolution by Alhaji Shehu Shagari who succeeded him. When General Mohammed Buhari came into power, he also discontinued the implementation of the Green Revolution in traduced by Alhaji Shehu Shagari and introduced the Go back to land Policy”. When General Ibrahim Babaginda took over power, he again abandoned the policy of “Go back to Land and introduced the Directorate of Foods, Roads and rural Infrastructure (DFFRI). It is note- worthy that the various policies as were respectively abrogated and introduced, had as their basic goals to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production and to curtail food importation (Egeran, 2011).

- In Nigeria, policy formulators focus on very few variables that influences the problem identified. In most cases, they focus on only the political and economic variables failing to include the social, administrative and external environmental factors and variables. Hence, right from the start, the policy is formulated with deficiencies.
- Again, there is lack of participation by the target group. By participation, we mean the target group which is meant for, is given much room to contribute in policy formulation and implementation. However, in Nigeria and most African countries the target group is usually left out at the policy formulation stage. Only high officials of the government and policy actors are made to participate. The policy so defined, therefore fails to be client-oriented and gets out of touch from the local people. Ownership of the policy becomes difficult.

WAYS TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

After several considerations and discussions, it is imperative to sort out ways to effectively implement public policies in Nigeria. Below are some of the ways to effectively implement government formulated policy:

The culture of not continuing previous policies by past regime should be totally discouraged. This can be effectively done if the National Assembly should enact a law that will guarantee continuity of policies and projects by the outgoing leaders. For this will mean growth and development in the country. This is very important because, even though a government come and go, the policy will continue to be effectively implemented.

There is need to have a focused, articulated and purposeful political leaders at the head of every government (either at the Federal, State and Local level). It is expected that the democratization process in Nigeria will aid and hasten the coming into existence of such visionary and purposeful leadership that will be more inclined to developing appropriate policies to address the problems in Nigeria.

Also, Government should embark on programmes that will be aimed at improving the working conditions of the public bureaucrats as this will help to build their desire and enthusiasm to implement government policies. This can be done by improving their pay packages, giving them conducive environment to operative without interference and also allow proper use of allocated fund for implementing policies.

In formulating a policy, the policy formulators require a good understanding of the problems and needs of the people. This will help to implement a policy properly knowing fully well their problems and their needs.

There is need for leaders of government to reduce their interference and infiltration into bureaucratic activities in Nigeria. This will certainly ensure that bureaucrats in authority are allowed to exercise their control, make decisions and be able to function freely, applying some basic ideals of weberian model of bureaucracy in their administrative process and procedures.

There should also be provision for adequate monitoring of policies and projects; this will help to properly implement public policies. Poorly monitored projects will only yield undesired results of these policies and this will result to constant underdevelopment of the country.

CONCLUSION

The aim of every government is to make sure that every citizen's benefits from the dividend of democracy and improvement of standard of living which is as a result of economic growth and development. Knowing this mind will mean that government will not only focus on formulation of policies, but very importantly on the implementation of policies. With the number of policies formulated since the inception of this country, several policies has been implemented and it is expected that, these policies should have brought about tremendous growth in our country in the area of social, economic and political development. But, unfortunately that has not been the case for Nigeria since we started making policies.

Essentially, success in implementation of public policy must-be evaluated within the context of particular problems and critical factors affecting implementation varies and succeed prone policies are not also obvious. Effective implementation is said to be partially preordained by good leadership that can be significant political hidden hand that guides disorganized and desperate interest to converge in support of implementing policy. External monitoring of the implementation process is also a crucial variable when it comes to effective implementation of policy.

Effective and successful policy implementation is very important to the development of a nation, it is the foundation that facilitates socio-economic and political progress of Nigeria and this can only be obtainable through a continuous political commitment and clear definition of responsibilities and coordination, but also through genuine commitment to completely eradicate corruption from the country.

Base on all these obstacles affecting policy implementation in Nigeria, it is crystal clear to assert that policy implementation in Nigeria is seriously undermined by the government's attitude to policy implementation, lack of resources, corruption, sectionalism, tribalism and even misplacement of priorities. This call for a change in attitude on the part of those who are entrusted with the implementation of policy in Nigeria, so that we can turn a new leaf.

Allowing bureaucrats to exercise control and authority over implementation task means there should be conscious effort by the government to reduce political interference over bureaucratic activities in Nigeria. Such a solution will help the bureaucrats in authority to exercise improved control and authority and function freely to apply some basic ideals of organisational theory during administrative processes. Also, it will help to overcome bureaucratic issues that are responsible for the even implementation of policies in Nigerian.

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