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EDITORIAL

On behalf of the Editorial team and Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria we are glad to fulfil before you our promise of a Third Edition of the volume 3 of this journal. This has been as a result of hard work from our contributors, Editorial team and managers of the journals. It is our sincere wish that you will find this edition and its themes appropriate for the moment in terms of both the academic contents of the articles and their usefulness to public policy expectations. I employ scholars and public policy managers/practitioners to find time to look at these issues which if put into practical use will make our country a much more better place.

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PUBLIC POLICY AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA: AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

The issue of public policy is central to public administration and public administration is involved in the entire process of policy making and implementation. The negligence of public policy is at the peril of any state or organisation and this is because it is through public policy that the needs of the citizens and problems of any society is been taken care of. The objective of the paper is to introduce a discussion on policy making and policy implementation in Nigeria. Data for this study were sourced secondarily through textbooks, journal articles and online materials. The findings of this paper revealed that there are numerous factors that inhibit the effective implementation of policies in Nigeria and advocates the bottom-up approach of policy making and the sustenance of government policy as measures that will aid bridge the gap between policy making and actual implementation in Nigeria.

Key words: Public policy, policy implementation, government, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of public policies in any country cannot be overemphasised. This is because it serves as an instrument by which the government impact on the lives of the citizens. Such impact could be profound and indeed one of the factors that make a difference between governments is the nature of policies formulated and implemented by government (Obiyan, 2006). Public policy is simply an attempt by government to address a public issue by instituting laws, regulations, decisions, or actions pertinent to the problem at hand. Public policies in a modern society are indeed ubiquitous. They confer advantages and disadvantages; cause pleasure, irritation and pain; and collectively have important consequences for our well-being and happiness. They are "what government decides to do and what it decides not to do" (Dye, 2004). Therefore, the decisions of government to build roads; establish.

industries; employ graduates and the necessary social services are all outcomes of the demands made by the citizenry on the political system (government). Principally, public policy is a government action or proposed action that is directed at achieving specified desired objectives or goals (Ikelegbe, 2006).

However, what we see as public policies in Nigeria sometimes emanate from politicians during political campaigns, and this comes in form of promises which usually serve as the basis for their legitimacy, but they sometimes fail to implement such policies when they are finally voted into office. Various reasons account for this lack of implementation ranging from political, economic or social problems (Agagu, 2010; Eminue, 2009). Since independence, Nigeria as a country has formulated lots of policies, which ranges from the agriculture policy, educational policy, privatisation policy, monetisation policy, vision 2010, seven point agenda and vision 2020. Unfortunately, most of these policies tend not to have been properly implemented (Agagu, 2010; Eminue, 2009; Jinadu, 2000; Gberevbie, Ayo, Iyoha, Duruji and Abasilim, 2015). This situation shows that it is never enough to bring up a policy but the hallmark of every policy is the ability of government to rigorously pursue its planned action to a realizable end. This is in line with the thought that emphasis has shifted gradually from the initial formulation process to actual implementation because it is not enough to actually formulate without effective implementation (Egonmwan, 1991)

This paper seeks to introduce a discussion on policy making and policy implementation in Nigeria. While discussing this, the paper will also examine the challenges confronting policy implementation in Nigeria, and also suggest ways in which policy making and actual policy implementation in Nigeria can be achieved.

PUBLIC POLICY AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUALIZATION

The Concept of Public Policy

The term public policy has several connotations depending on the context within which it is used and also the person defining it. It is important to state here that, even though there are various definitions of what public policy is, these definitions helps us to know the boundaries of public policy rather than conflicting definitions. Though some definitions limit the conception of public policy to what government actually do, others

defined it as the intentions of government. Yet some definitions include not only the actions of government but also the inactions of governments (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1970; Sharkansky, 1970; Lowi, 1972; Dror, 1973; Jenkins, 1978; Gordon, 1986; Starling, 1988; Dye, 2004).

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

...Emanates from the public sector including both the institution of central, 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. This position is in line with the definition put forward by Dye (2004), he sees public policy as whatever government choose to do or not to do. The implication of this definition is that the citizenry could make demands on the political system (government) on the establishment of industries, but it is the decision of government to either yearn to the demand of the citizens or ignore such. There are myriads of problems in any named society which government is faced with the challenge of solving. 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 a given time. Carl (1975) defines public policy as a proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realize an objective or a purpose.

Ikelegbe (2006) posit that public policy “is a course of action and a programme of actions which is chosen from among several alternatives by certain actors in response to certain problems.” What this implies is that, policy actors have several alternatives from which they choose. The actors could be either the government, private organisations or individuals. Public policy is aimed at solving a particular problem. Hence, we can say that public policy “is an action or inaction taken or not to be

taken by government, private organisations or individuals” (Arowolo and Egugbo, 2010). They further posited that the basic feature of public policy is that it has to do with the government. It is an action taken by public authorities. It involves a wide range area of societal life and is taken daily to solve social problems. It covers such areas as: education, social welfare, health, defence, transportation, communication, foreign affairs and housing. Agagu (1997) conceives of public policy as government decisions with regards to ways of handling various problems or issues that are seen as requiring collective rather than individual actions. While Anderson (2006) corroborated this definition by asserting that public policy is a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern.

The definitions given can fully be understood when the various typologies of public policy are examined. According to Lowi (1972), there are three major types of public policies. These are “distributive, redistributive and regulatory policy. *Distributive policies* has to do with the apportionment of new resources, benefits, favour or patronage to individuals, segments of the population, institutions, associations or organisations. Put differently, this type of policies are favours, benefits or patronage policies dispensed to a small number of people with the 'unfavoured' receiving theirs later (Eminue, 2009; Arowolo and Egugbo, 2010). The main aim of this type of policy by political leaders is to increase support and patronage and reduce dissent and conflict. Examples of distributive policies are free education, rural electrification program, water scheme, and so on. While *Redistributive policies* are concerned with “changing the distribution of existing resources the rearrangement of policies which are related to bring about basic social and economic changes in the economy and society” (Sapru, 2011). These policies are aimed at ensuring consistent support for government. It is meant to co-opt the dissatisfied (those who are aggrieved) to ensure some neglected population benefit. They benefit particular segment or category of the population. Such as the unemployed, homeless, disadvantaged or advantaged, working or retired (Eminue, 2009; Arowolo and Egugbo, 2010). Regulatory Policies refers to “laws or policy outputs that regulate distribution, behaviours, practices, activities and actions” (Ikelegbe, 2006). That is, it has to do with those laws or policy outputs (that is authoritative decisions) that put restrictions and check on behaviour, directions, rules and legal framework on activities in various spheres of

life (Eminue, 2009; Agagu, 2010; Arowolo and Egugbo, 2010).

Policy Implementation Defined

Implementation is the most important stage in public policy making process. It is at this point that policy either fails or succeeds. Implementation is the process of converting human and material inputs, including informational, technical, human, demand and supports into outputs in the form of goods and services (Eminue, 2009). Akindele, Olaopa, Asaolu and Oladele (2006) holds that policy implementation is what happens once a law is passed. The implementation process consist of a series of governmental decisions and actions that attempt to turn already determined mandates into reality. This process involves the outputs of public policy, such as the funding or actual service being delivered. This definition implies that, for there to be effective policy implementation, viable administrative structures must be put in place and there must be political will on the part of the government in power.

It has been claimed that Nigeria has often formulated “good” policies but they often got bungled at the implementation stage (Eminue, 2009; Arowolo and Egugbo, 2010; Gberevbie, Ayo, Iyoha, Duruji and Abasilim, 2015). The late Indian Prime Minister, Pandhit Nehru, lamented a similar situation in India saying:

We in the planning commission and others concerned have grown more expert in planning. But the real question is not planning but implementation the plan. That is the real question before the country. I fear we are not quite as expert at implementation as at planning” (cited in Egonmwan, 1991).

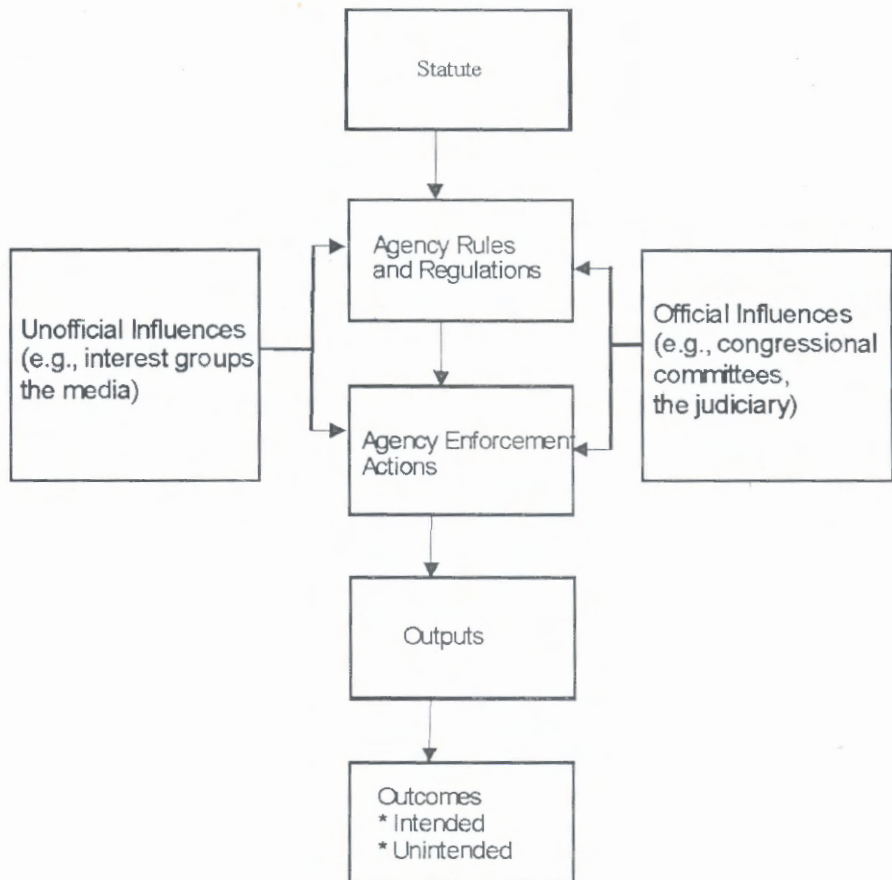
The point being made here is that implementation stage in the public policy process is very crucial. This is the point where the intentions of the designers of the policies are often undermined by a constitution of powerful forces of politics and administration. The analysis and assessment of the implementation process is a pre-requisite for a successful public policy implementation.

Ikelegbe (2006) observes that implementation involves the committal of funds, the establishment of structures and methods, the hiring of personnel, the administering or executing of activities, and the security of policy goals, services and other intended outcomes. On the other hand,

implementation refers to the process of converting human and materials inputs, including information, technical, human, demands and support, and so on into outputs in the form of goods and services. Certainly, in Nigeria, implementation is generally a function of administration and politics in co-operation with people. But the problems are that little attention is given to the subject of policy implementation by policy decision makers in Nigeria. There is the need for capable policy leadership to convert inputs-goods and services and tension capable of violating implementation.

According to Eminue (2009), policy implementation process is interminably linked by three key concepts: tension, institutionalization and feedback. A new policy, which aims at transforming an unpalatable situation into a desired or qualitatively superior state of affairs, necessarily generates tension within and between administrative implementing organizations, the target groups and the environment. For instance, tension may arise within an administrative implementing organization whose personnel lack the necessary skills or following a hostile reaction or reception from the target audience for implementing a policy. The management of its tension will therefore determine the degree of success of policy implementation. Second, the implementation of a new policy is usually expected to lead to institutionalization (thus raising questions regarding the survival of such institutions). Third, in the process of actually implementing a new policy, tensions generated could be fed back to the implementation process in the form of new demands which are subsequently processed and transformed into some policies that, in turn, have to be implemented – a process which made Adamolekun (1983) to conclude that “the formulation and implementation of policies are not completely distinct phases of activity.” For effective implementation of policies Anderson (2006) has succinctly delineated processes and has also outlined the internal and external influences that condition policy implementation. This is clearly shown in figure 1 below:

Figure 2: Public Policy Decision and Implementation Process



Source: James Anderson, 2006

The diagram above shows clearly policy implementation process from the statute which is government standing order, the agency which put down rules and regulations. These agencies could either be official e.g. National Assembly or the Judiciary. It could also be unofficial agencies which influence government decisions and actions such as the pressure groups and organized media. To get the policies into action, these agencies must enforce it through mobilization for actual implementation. For instance, the decision to construct the East-West road, it must be seen that the contract has been approved, take off grant given and contractors mobilized to the sight for the work proper. This enforcement of the decision culminates into policy outcome which are tangible manifestation of the decision to actually implement A, B and C policy. The last stage in

this process is the outcome of such implementation how the output is viewed in terms of accomplishment of the purpose for which it was implemented. However, these outcomes could be intended or unintended in terms of either solving the lingering problem or not.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY FAILURE IN NIGERIA

Several reasons have been advanced for policy failures in Nigeria. For Honadle (1979) the problem associated with policy implementation as that of social carpenters and masons who fail to build to specifications and thus distort the beautiful blue print. Here he was equating policy with a building plan. He held that:

Implementation is the nemesis of designers, it conjures up images of plans gone awry and of social carpenters and masons who fail to build to specifications and thereby distort the beautiful blue prints 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 and administration team...

This statement above portrays to us how relevant the stage of implementation is in the policy making process and those charged with the responsibility of implementing these policies. It goes further to show that no matter how nice and beautifully designed a programme blue print is, a defective implementation process will ultimately result in poor implementation and subsequent failure of the policy.

According to Eminue (2009) the following are some of the reasons why policy fails in Nigeria:

- **Top-Down Approach:** public policy fails to achieve its set goal because of top-down approach rather than bottom-up approach. This implies that policies emanates from the top and are sent down to people at the grassroots who are the beneficiaries of such policies without the beneficiaries partaking in the initiation, execution, monitoring and evaluation processes. The participation of the beneficiaries will make them own-up the project and protect it against vandalism. This approach to policy implementation is not only donor-driven, sector-specific and restrictive in scope, it is also based on the belief that rural or poor people are ignorant. The

approach presumes that the educated elites outside the community know more about the needs of the people at the rural community. The result of this could range from hostility which may lead to destruction of lives and property and subsequent stoppage of work. Public policy and implementation process should not be top-down but needs-motivated, people-supported, community-involved and bottom-up process.

- ii. **Inadequate Data:** The dearth of data or relevant information is responsible for most policy failures in Nigeria. Nigeria lacks the culture of record-keeping and information-gathering. Most planning ministries or agencies work without data: even when data is available, most of the time they are unreliable and defective. Stolper (1966) in his book *planning without facts* identified the greatest problem associated with Nigeria's First National Development Plan (1962-1968) as that of lack of facts or data and opined that this condition could be remedied by organizing the collection of more and better statistics, since the basic problem is that it is quite unclear precisely what question should be asked; sometimes these questions are asked wrongly and it is by no means certain that answers always exist. Commenting on how planning in the absence of adequate information has adversely affected national development in the African continent. This assertion by Abiodun (1984) caps it all when he states that:

For most African countries, the most crucial concern is how to rapidly improve our economic conditions as well as enhance the quality of life of our people. Accordingly, with or without data, we have conceived, planned and executed a variety of major development schemes. The unknown element in such circumstances is the future of such projects and programmes, launched through plans that are beset by inaccurate projections and a chain of uncertainties even before the schemes were completed. In this connection, (one is) unaided of the Central African Kariba Dam Project which was designed with inadequate data: a flood 21 times greater than the estimated maximum probable flood came when the dam was still under construction. The dam failed, bringing untold hardships to the people of that region.

- iii. **Policy Instability:** In Nigeria change in government automatically results in change of public policies and programmes of government. Different governments in Nigeria when they assume office comes up with their own road-map of development neglecting what the previous government had hitherto started. Regimes as well as policies change too rapidly in Nigeria especially during the military era. Every government in power wants to start on a clean slate thereby throwing overboard the policy thrust of his predecessor-in-office. Erratic policies are inimical to growth while policy stability tends to promote progress and engender planning and effective implementation. Classic case of policy instability were National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) introduced in 1974 to mobilize peasant farmers, large-scale agricultural enterprises and agricultural co-operatives in the use of high-yielding inputs and improved agronomic practices in the country. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). An agricultural policy introduced by the regime of Murtala/Obasanjo in 1976 was yet another agricultural policy. It was a mobilization strategy designed to address the nation's food problem arising from the fact that the country's agriculture was import oriented and that no society can develop without food security. When President Shehu Shagari assumed power, the programme was shelved and another introduced tagged The Green Revolution in 1979. We can categorically say that between 1974, 1976 and 1979, Nigeria has had three different agricultural development programmes and none was sustained. All these policies of government were marred by inconsistencies which led to their abrupt end.
- iv. **Compromise in the Implementation Process:** Compromise seeks to alter basic policy goals are made during implementation which is detrimental to successful execution of programmes. During the Second Republic Shehu Shagari's low cost housing policy failed because of the conflict between the Federal Government and the other units as to who should execute the project at what level. Most of the times, policies are determined on the basis of political loyalty. In some cases they are used for political handshake. In Nigeria, no matter how sound a policy is, it cannot be implemented in a political vacuum. In the First Republic, the establishment of a Steel Rolling

Mill was shelved on political grounds. This led to a split for Aladja for the South and Ajaokuta for the North. This could not ensure the expected result (Eminue, 2009).

- v. **Absence of Political Will:** Leadership has much to do with the success or failure of any government policy or programme. No matter how sound a policy or plan or action may be, it cannot be successfully implemented in a political vacuum. A stable political climate and firm resolve are essential for its implementation. In most cases, political leadership fails to mobilize the grassroots' support needed for success. In Akwa Ibom State, the Ibom Science Park project failed because the administration of Obong Victor Attah that initiated the project could not complete it before leaving office. This is a project that the foundation was laid and structures raised up to the roofing stage and would have generated employment for the teaming unemployed youths and would have also contributed to the IGR of the state but was abandoned by his predecessor because of lack of political will and self-ego.
- vi. **Inadequate Identification of Social Problems:** The inability to identify what social problems are and what the people really wants is a serious challenge to successful policy implementation. It leads to faulty solutions which may even worsen an already bad situation. Hence, where the root causes of social problems are not correctly and accurately identified, and if policies are based on wrong prognosis, correct policy strategies will not be adopted and the objectives of policies may not be achieved. Identifying the problem and having a feasibility study before embarking on implementation is very needful in solving matters of social concern.
- vii. **Unrealistic and Overambitious Policy Goal:** Policies failed in Nigeria because of the unrealistic and overambitious nature of the policy goals. Some politicians because of want of what to say in a bit to gain legitimacy make overambitious policies which are never realizable. For instance, the immediate past governor of Akwa Ibom State now Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio during his second term electioneering campaigns promised to establish industries in each of the 31 Local Government Areas of the state. This was never realized, not even a single industry was establishment in the entire state. Such policies cannot work as they will lack adequate

financial, manpower, technical resources, institutional and organizational capabilities and the necessary political will.

CONCLUSION

Above discussion leads to the conclusion that public policy is simply the action and inactions of government which pertains to how societal problems are been taken care of. This is so because every policy by government is geared towards solving societal problems and these actions or inaction of government brings about either satisfaction or dissatisfaction to the citizens. While policy implementation has to do with the execution of government decisions, it is more than expressing government decision about any matter of concern to the process of carrying out government decisions.

However, it is found that despite the desire to bring about government desires to realities, policy making and implementation in developing countries and Nigeria in particular still face some barriers that impedes on effective policy making and implementation. Some of which as earlier mentioned, factors like top-bottom approach to policy formulation, policy instability, dearth of data and corruption. It is in recognition of the negative effective of poor implementation of government policies that this paper set out to examine the problems of policy implementation and suggest ways to bridge the existing gap between policy making and actual implementation in Nigeria.

In line with the findings of this paper, we recommend that the target beneficiary of any government policy and programme be involved and their inputs considered in the policy-making process. Every government policy despite change of power (government) should be sustained in other to examine the success or failure of such policy before similar policies could be introduced. On the whole, there must be political will on the part of the leaders to actually do what they pronounce as public policies of government. When the above mentioned are put in place, Nigeria would have charted a pathway for successful and improved government policy implementation in Nigeria.

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