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CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AS A PIVOT FOR UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria has developed wonderful policies over the years, but the difficulty is that only a small part of these various policies have been implemented. There has been no meaningful progress to show for it. This indicates that the creation of policies should not be the primary concern in Nigeria, but rather their successful execution, because only policies that are well executed may result in nation-state development. In contrast to the past, this study investigates the factors that are more likely to stymie efficient policy implementation in Nigeria, as well as the panacea to the issues. The study revealed that policy summersaults in Nigeria are caused by, among other things, corruption, inadequate policy financing, a lack of consistency in government policies, a lack of political will, insufficient human and material resources, and a lack of clarity of purpose. The implications or repercussions of the public policy summersault on citizens in particular and Nigeria in general were noted, including decreased patriotism, underdevelopment, and non-human capital development. Thus, the study recommends that corrupt public servants be severely punished for crimes against the state; budgetary allocation be increased; legislation be enacted to ensure that policies are continued to be implemented by successive governments; attention be paid to Nigeria to ensure loyalty to the political party in power; adequate human and material resources be provided through training and retraining of human capital; and, finally, patriotism be instilled.

Keywords: Public, Policy, Challenges, Underdevelopment

Introduction

Nigeria has several public policy concerns. Health, education, housing, transportation, agriculture, communication, commerce, and many other contemporary challenges such as kidnapping, unemployment, banditry, terrorism, ethnic conflict, herdsmen/banditry clashes, and governments formulating policies to aid in eradicating these challenges are possible. According to Achebe (1983), Nigeria's challenge is one of leadership. It is apparent that the sort

of leader required in Nigeria is one that is willing to include her unique challenges into government policy formation procedures.

One key issue for poor countries such as Nigeria is the issue of policy execution. Cochran (2015) defines policy as "political decisions on the implementation of programs to attain social goals." In developing nations, the implementation problem is the rising gap between policy goals and outcomes. The implementation gap presents itself as a widening of the gap between declared policy

goals and their execution. In Nigeria, the divide between policy conception and implementation cannot be closed because successive administrations set policies that are unreachable during their terms.

According to records, Nigeria has started well-structured developmental, social, and economic policies over the years in order to set the nation state on a path of meaningful growth. Many of which did not see the light of day due to poor or non-implementation: Vision 2010, 2020, The Seven Point Agenda, Poverty Alleviation Programme, National Space Policy in 2001, Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal in 1990, Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission in 2000, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in 2003, Independent Electoral Commission in 2011, and many others.

Currently, the most pressing concern confronting Nigeria is one of development. This is due to the continent's continued underdevelopment despite the existence of vast mineral and human capital. Many years after the end of colonialism, most sections of Nigeria continue to face issues such as high poverty rates, a lack of basic infrastructure in all sectors of the economy, unemployment and underemployment, high mortality rates, political insecurity, and insecurity of lives and property. Underemployment in Nigeria is the result of inadequate policy execution rather than a lack of development visions and programs. As a result of the above, the government's involvement in development is realized to a considerable degree through the effective execution of public policies, programs, and projects (Abah, 2010).

Conceptualization

Ujo (2011) defined "public policy" as a governmental action or non-decision meant to address numerous social issues such as abduction, armed robbery, electoral violence, and oil bunking.

The two most important aspects of this concept are governmental decision-making or non-decision-making and societal concerns. The government either makes a choice to solve a specific problem or refuses to make a decision. The structure of government is linked to public policy. In Nigeria, for example, each of the three levels of government has the authority to enact public policy on problems within its constitutional competence.

Dye (1995) defines "public policy" as "what the government does, why it doesn't, and what difference it makes." Cochran (2015) defines public policy as decisions made to execute programs in order to attain social goals.

A public policy is made up of a plan of action or a program, as well as a declaration of objectives, or a map and a destination. The objectives describe what we hope to accomplish with policy and who will be affected by it. Plans or programs for public policy define the procedure or steps required to attain policy objectives. They instruct us on how to proceed.

In a more formal sense, Ikelegbe (2006) defines public policy as the integrated course and programs of action that the government has established, as well as the framework or guide that it has created to steer action and practices in specific issue areas. A public policy, in essence, is a course-setting activity that provides the government with the direction, lead, and path to achieve specified goals or objectives. According to Ezeani (2006), "public policy" is the suggested course of action that a government wants to undertake in response to a certain problem or scenario. According to Egonwan (1991), it is a governmental action plan.

According to Ozor (2004), the notion of "public policy" is important to the functioning and operations of both commercial and public organizations. A policy choice developed by an individual or private institution is referred to as "Private Policy," whereas one developed by the government or its institutions is referred to as "Public Policy." However, the word "policy" as it is employed in

this study refers only to those created by the government and hence considered public policies. In general, researchers have approached the topic of policy from a variety of perspectives. Some consider policy to be an action, while others consider it to be a decision. However, some interpret it in terms of the breadth of activity.

Literature Review

Policy: A policy is defined by Pearce and Robinson (2003) as "a design to direct the thoughts, choices, and subordinates in achieving a firm's plan." They noticed that policies should logically be drawn from corporate, business, and functional strategies with the primary goal of aiding strategy execution.

Policy is defined as a "broad statement of knowledge that drives managers' thinking in decision making" by Weihrich, Cannce, and Koonts (2008). They guarantee that decisions fit within specified parameters that generally do not need action but are meant to help managers in decision-making, according to them. The use of judgment is at the heart of policy. According to Dye (1995), policy is "what the government does, why it does it, and what difference it makes" (Dye, 1995).

Government Policy: According to Ujo (2011), public policy is governmental decision-making or non-decision-making meant to address different societal problems such as abduction, armed robbery, electoral violence, and oil bunking. This concept emphasizes two key elements: political decisions or non-decisions, and societal concerns. The government either makes a choice to solve a specific problem or refuses to make a decision. The structure of government is linked to public policy. In Nigeria, for example, each of the three levels of government has the authority to enact public policy on problems within its constitutional competence.

According to Egonmwan (2000), public policy is a governmental program of actions that stands for varying degrees of goal articulation and normative control of

government operations that entails what the government aims to do and not do (goals) and how (meanings) it intends to accomplish it (implementation). Obikeze and Obi (2004) describe "public policy" as "essentially governmental activities and programs of action aimed at resolving societal problems."

As a result, Sharpansky (1970) defines public policy as the important operations of the government. This definition focuses only on action and does not provide a comprehensive picture of what policy comprises.

According to Ikelegbe (2006), public policy is more precisely described as "the government's integrated course and program of action, as well as the framework or guide aimed at leading activities and practice in specific issue areas." With the definitions of policy and public policy provided above, it is necessary to clarify what policy and policy execution are.

Implementation: When all of the laws and norms necessary to give effect to policies that have been established have been put in place, the next logical stage is policy implementation. Thus, implementation refers to the process of turning inputs (financial, information, resources, technical, human needs, support, and so on) into output products and services, including symbolic values such as titles and national prizes that encourage behavior changes in beneficiary groups.

Anderson (2003) defined public policy implementation as "everything done to take a law into effect, to apply it to a specific population in order to achieve its objectives." He went on to say that the study of public policy execution is concerned with the agencies and individuals that they employ, as well as the political support and resistance they may face.

Another definition supplied by Mark (2007), as quoted in Ujo (2011), is the carrying out or execution of a program that has been enacted by legislation or by executive or judicial order.

It is the stage at which the previous planning, design, and analysis plans and analyses are put to the test in the harsh light of reality, and where policy content and the impact on people may be dramatically altered or even disregarded by the political and administrative process.

In Nigeria, implementation is typically the responsibility of the government and politics working together with the people. As a result, "implementation entails a process of bringing a policy aim forward through administrative and political procedures."

The term "implementation," as defined by American writers, refers to all acts concerning the execution of a piece of law. The term was likewise agreed upon by German experts.

Implementation is the process of transforming inputs (financial, information, material, technical, human needs, support, and so on) into outputs (goods and services), including symbolic values such as titles and national awards that encourage behavior changes in beneficiary groups. It is the stage at which prior preparations, designs, plans, and analyses are put to the test in the harsh light of reality, and where policy content and people's effects may be significantly altered or even negated by the political and administrative process. In the third world, implementation is often the responsibility of administration and politics.

"Implementation," according to Pressman and Wildavsky, is described as "a process of interaction between goal-setting and goal-attainment activities." Most public policy researchers believe that the implementation stage of the policy process is focused on putting policy purpose into action. The implementation phase encompasses everything that occurs between the announcement of a policy and its actual impact. It is critical to examine implementation not just in terms of its consequences but also in terms of its influence on the target population.

Neglect of Implementation Analysis in Planning and Policy Formulation in Nigeria

According to experience, policymakers in Nigeria pay little attention to policy implementation since it is commonly assumed that once a policy is enacted by the government, it must be executed and the desired goals attained. The library shelves are brimming with classic material on planning and policy formulation, but little or no attention is paid to the issues of actually getting things done. Large amounts of energy and money are also expended in the preparation of various plans, with little or no consideration given to the intricate chains of reciprocal interaction necessary to accomplish public policy. Worse, there appears to be little grasp of what policy execution entails, especially among those directly involved in the creation process. Contextual mapping of the implementation force field is uncommon, and all of the important components are not well grasped. However, no ground for a new project or the signing of a loan with an international organization draws official or media notice. Unless, of course, things go extremely horribly, the lengthy, sluggish process of addressing the variety of difficulties that occur throughout project execution is rarely in the spotlight.

Types of Public Policy Implementation Activities in Nigeria that Result in Development

According to Jones (1984), as referenced in Ujo (2011), implementation entails three core activities: organization, interpretation, and application.

To begin, there must be an organization or group of organizations with the necessary resources, personnel, funds, and facilities to carry out the program. New programs are frequently allocated to existing organizations, and new organizations are occasionally formed to carry out new programs. either to underline the significance of the new programs or to express unhappiness with current agencies, for example. In Nigeria, the Obasanjo Administration approved the Fiscal Responsibility Act in 2007 to serve as the foundation for legislation to provide for prudent management of the nation's resources, long-term macroeconomic stability of

the nation's economy, and greater accountability and transparency in fiscal operations within a medium-term fiscal policy framework. Following years of fiscal mismanagement and consequent macroeconomic instability, the legislation aims to institutionalize restraint, transparency, and accountability in the administration of Nigeria's resources.

The interpretation activity is the second step in the implementation process. The National Assembly enacted legislation that usually needs additional explanation. Because the National Assembly cannot predict all possible outcomes in some sectors, it delegated responsibility to agencies to establish rules. In other cases, the issues are so technically difficult that the National Assembly defers to bureaucratic competence. When the National Assembly fails to make problematic judgments within written law, administrators are forced to make them when the legislation must be interpreted and executed. The election law example is pertinent here. The Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Administration of Nigeria approved the creation and functioning of the Independent National Electoral Commission under the Electoral Act 2011 (INEC). Election procedure, election crimes, election petition, election procedure at local government, Commission employees, political parties, legal status, and the formation of the Independent National Electoral Commission Fund are among the items addressed.

These provisions did not cover every area of election administration. The Electoral Act empowered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to issue regulations in areas not covered by the Act. During the 2011 election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) issued a slew of electoral-process laws. They contain the deadline for submitting a list of candidates to run in the election as well as the election schedule. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had to move the poll by one week due to a delay in the supply of sensitive materials.

The final implementation is the application of the rules once the rules are in place. An application can also switch between programs. For example, General Olusegun

Obasanjo's military regime (1976–1979) instituted a new education strategy known as 6-3-3-4. After several years of implementation, the policy was replaced with another.

An analysis of the implementation literature reveals that the majority of initiatives fail to meet their declared aims. As a result, most government programs appear to have little good influence, if any at all. The problem is that establishing a policy or program may necessitate developing unrealistic expectations.

The implementation process evolves with time. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) presented various approaches for implementation: successful implementation (very easy, non-controversial problem); progressive degradation (where implementation is first effective but subsequently degrades); and incremental advances in implementation (cumulative increment) (rejuvenation). Implementation is a complicated, ebb-and-flow process. According to an important examination of lawmaking, programees are frequently allocated to more than one agency at more than one level of government (Ujo, 2011). Operation Feed the Nation (CFN) was established in 1976. Its functions included, among other things, providing enough food for all Nigerians and facilitating agricultural finance from commercial banks to farmers. The strategy was abandoned immediately as Shehu Shagari came's civilian administration took over in 1979.

The Eco-Revolution (GR) It was created in 1979 to replace Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). This approach did not provide the anticipated effects, owing mostly to structural flaws exacerbated by political parochialism. It turned out to be more of a phrase or symbolic policy (Samson and Stanley, 2014).

Challenges militate against effective policy implementation in Nigeria.

The majority of difficulties arise during the execution of public initiatives. Many policies fail as a result of such obstacles, because implementation is the interplay of defining goals and taking measures to achieve them

(Olaniyi, 2001). The conventional expectation is that implementation will be simple when resources, knowledge, money, and materials are available. This is not always the case. Policy implementation, according to Barrel and Fuge (1981), is dependent on elements such as understanding what to do, the availability of resources, the capacity to marshal and control these resources to accomplish the intended objective, and the amount of collaboration between the implementation agencies. As a result, issues that arise during policy implementation include the following: Agency duplication in terms of implementation (b). coordination failure among implementation agencies, as well as a communication breakdown (Olaniyi, 2001).

The following are the policy implementation issues in Nigeria in the past and present:

Inadequate Resources: Nigeria is endowed with both material and human resources; nevertheless, the design of the wrong policies at the wrong time, as well as the discriminatory funding of some programmes, has resulted in the issue of insufficient resources. This is due to the fact that most public policies are not adequately resourced when they are developed. The Primary Health Care (PHC) program, for example, has the potential to help a considerable part of the country's rural population and urban poor, but the resources necessary for proper policy implementation are not supplied to meet policy objectives.

In many impoverished nations, intended beneficiaries are not permitted to contribute to the creation of policies that are of importance to them. When a policy is imposed by the government rather than by the target groups, implementation difficulties might occur. Lack of compliance stems from ego, government change, and godfatherism, all of which lead to project abandonment. This might explain one of the reasons why abandoned projects can be found in Nigeria.

Corruption: Corruption has an impact on the context and quality of policy at the formulation stage since public

officials develop policies based on their own selfish objectives and sometimes just to draw public attention. Most Nigerian policy objectives are focused on the personal benefits and interests of political leaders and their godfathers, resulting in a policy that is rated more on its political advantages than on its actual developmental gain.

Most political leaders abandoned too many goals that lacked concentration and technical know-how from the start of their tenure in government. Most of the time, they utilized them to purchase time while pretending to labor for the impoverished.

Analysis of Needs: For efficient policy implementation, it is necessary to understand the masses' sufferings and how the policy would benefit them, as well as the correct channeling mechanism.

Political incompetence: a guy who is not disciplined cannot discipline his home. Most of our political leaders are not self-disciplined. That is why they lack the resolve to talk and do something. When senior government officials and politicians threaten the execution of such public programs, it is implied that the specified aims of government policies stand to benefit the public.

Other challenges of public policy implementation include: a lack of well-defined programs for achieving objectives; poor implementation strategies; a lack of clear designation of responsibility; the selection of an inappropriate organizational structure in policy implementation; a lack of clear definition of responsibility; political opposition during implementation; compromises during implementation capable of defecating policy purposes; political insensitivity to demand; and a lack of a clear definition of responsibility. To name a few, the obstacles challenging the execution of governmental policy in Nigeria result in underdevelopment.

Implications of Public Policy Summersault

Failure of public policy has resulted in a slew of summersaults harming the people and Nigeria as a whole. These are some examples:

- i. Failures in public policy are a waste of the human and material resources that were invested in them during and after their development. The entire procedure is not easy. If the policies fail to provide the anticipated results, the enormous human and material resources invested from the formulation to the implementation phases are squandered. The resources may have been used to focus on other areas that require more attention. The resources of the masses, or common wealth, are used in policy formulation and implementation. Stanley and Samson (2014)
- ii. Public policies are designed to develop society's human capital while also addressing populist issues.
- iii. Human capital is the fulcrum and level of a nation. Human resource development and enhancement are hampered by public policy failures.
- iv. Underdevelopment: An undeveloped country cannot feed or employ its people. When residents are prosperous, they will be productive by giving their fair share to the country's growth and progress.
- v. To a considerable degree, what a country offers its people reflects the level of its development; suffice it to say, the status of any economy is immediately mirrored in the lifestyle of its people.
- vi. Citizens' patriotism is dwindling. The majority of Nigerians are no longer interested in what is going on in the country as a result of somersaulting public policy execution.

Methodology

This study is anchored on a qualitative research method involving the utilization of secondary data collection from articles, newspapers, reports, textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, conference papers, and commonly used internet materials. A systematic literature search was conducted to collect and examine the challenges of

public policy implementation as a pivot for underdevelopment in Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

The outcome of the study demonstrated that policy implementation is the most vital stage or level of the policy making process in Nigeria. An investigation also shows that fantastic policies are made in Nigeria but poorly implemented or not even implemented at all. The result of the lack of effective implementation of these policies, such as social, economic, and political, is that the country has remained underdeveloped. In essence, there has been a wide gap between the development goals of a policy at the formulation level and the realization of such goals in implementation. To close this gap, there is a need for an effective increase in the extent of policies that Nigeria implements. It is evidence at this juncture that to agree that the policy implementation realm in Nigeria is seriously being undermined by the impure fire of lack of political will for public policy implementation, poor implementation design, conception and discipline, lack of human capital and material resources, corruption, sectionalism, ethnic biases, geocentrism and duality of public policies, culture and religions, selective and no-implementation of budgets, and misplaced priorities. As it was found out during the study, these reasons show glaringly why public policies in Nigeria do not perform as intended. The result of this is underdevelopment, which bedeviled Nigeria in the past and present.

This study suggests that until public policies are effectively implemented to achieve the lofty goals for which they were formulated, the general quest for Nigeria to join the league of developed countries in the next twenty years will be unattainable. This study thus calls for a change of character on the part of those entrusted with the responsibilities of implementing public policies to turn around poverty and the general public, who are the sole target beneficiaries of public policy, to agitate for the implementers of these policies to achieve the desired goals outlined in the formulation of these policies.

Conclusion

The overall objective of every government is to bring about a qualitative improvement in the standard of living of its citizens and to promote growth and development generally. This noble objective 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 Nigerian nation state is supposed to have witnessed a tremendous level of social, economic, and political development. In essence, there has been a wide gap between the development goals of policy at the formulated level and the realization of such goals' implementation. To close this gap, there is the need for an effective enhancement in the extent of policy that 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 for public policy implementation, poor implementation design, conception and discipline, lack of human capital and material resources, corruption, sectionalism and ethnic biases, geocentrism and duality of public policies, culture and religions, selective and non-implementation of budgets, and misplaced priorities. These are the paradoxes of public policy implementation that have bedeviled Nigeria in the past and present. It is this apt to suggest that until public policies are implemented to achieve the lofty goals for which they were made, the general aspiration of Nigeria to join the league of developed countries in the next twenty years will be attainable. This calls for a change of attitude on

the part of those entrusted with the task of implementing public policies to turn a new left and the general public, who are the prime target beneficiaries of public policy, to agitate for the implementation of public policy to achieve its desired objective.

Recommendations

As a result of the above finding, the study makes the following suggestions

- i. Corrupt public officials should be caught and punished harshly for their crimes against the state.
- ii. Budget allocation should be increased on purpose since public policies are not adequately supported to allow for sufficient execution by implementers.
- iii. Legislation should be enacted to ensure the continuity of public policy execution by subsequent governments.
- iv. Priority should be given to the execution of public policies for the benefit of citizens rather than party allegiance. Public policies fail because the focus is moved away from the public who elected them and toward the party in power.
- v. It is more difficult to find suitable staff to manage policy execution than it is to maintain party allegiance.
- vi. The process of implementing public policy should be made easier for implementers.
- vii. Patriotism, not geocentrism, should be used to enact public policy.

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