



RESEARCH PAPER

Conceptual Analysis of Public Policy Failures in Nigeria: Tract to Economic Underdevelopment

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the conceptual issues of public policy failure in Nigeria and how it affects economic development. The study discussed the general overview of public policy, the need of public policy in Nigeria. The study analyzed the concept of public policy and economic underdevelopment. The paper reveals, among other reasons, why public policies are not effective in Nigeria and the public policies that failed in the country over the years. The paper also outlined the consequences of public policies failure in Nigeria. The study was based on the thesis of elite theory. The study concludes that constant changes of government in Nigeria, high level of corruption among government officials of these public policies agencies among others affected the smooth operations of public policies in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that there should be continuity in public policy implementation even where there is change in government as government is a continuum; and parochial and primordial interests should be avoided during policy formulation and implementation in the country. There should be capital punishment in the country constitution to address the issues of corruption in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS Economic, Policy, Public, Underdevelopment

Introduction

In any society, governmental entities enact laws, make policies, and allocate resources. This is true at all levels. Public policy can be generally defined as a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives. Individuals and groups often attempt to shape public policy through education, advocacy, or mobilization of interest groups. Shaping public policy is obviously different in Western-style democracies than in other forms of government. But it is reasonable to assume that the process always involves efforts by competing interest groups to influence policy makers in their favor (Anderson, 1997).

A major aspect of public policy is law. In a general sense, the law includes specific legislation and more broadly defined provisions of constitutional or international law. There are many ways that the law can influence how survivors of violence against women are treated and the types of services they receive. Likewise, legislation identifies areas in which research grants can be funded and often determines the amount of funding allocated. Thus, it is not surprising that public policy debates occur over proposed legislation and funding.

Public policies are part of the routes which governments in modern nations, both developed and developing, use in the attainment of many goals thereby achieving the much needed progress and advancement of their citizens in particular, and communities, towns, and countries in general. Public policies, which are the aggregate product of

decisions, often times, are aimed at executing and implementing plans whether short or long term, to refocus the direction of the generality of a particular society of nation (Ikelegbe, 2006). However, in Nigeria, public policies most often, are either meant to fail from the beginning or failed midway for so many reasons. Public policy failures in Nigeria have left the country to become one of the underdeveloped countries of the world. This is in spite of her enormous material resources at her disposal to become a great and prosperous nation. For quite some time, so many policies and programmes, enunciated by the federal government, failed to achieve the desired objectives. Some of the policies meant to be implemented with other levels of government state and local governments equally failed to achieve their objectives. Many times, the policies and programmes are either never executed half way or are jettisoned due to 'inbuilt failure' or by sheer deliberate failure. As a result, the citizens and the entire country suffer from the policy failures to the detriment of the general development of the country.

Literature Review

Conceptual Issues

Public policy is an institutionalized proposal to solve relevant and real-world problems, guided by a conception and implemented by programs as a course of action created and/or enacted, typically by a government or nonprofit organization, in response to social issues. Beyond this broad definition, public policy has been conceptualized in a variety of ways (Rinfret, Scheberie, & Pautz, 2018).

A popular way of understanding and engaging in public policy is through a series of stages known as "the policy cycle". The characterization of particular stages can vary, but a basic sequence is: agenda setting, formulation, legitimation, implementation, evaluation (Lassance, 2020). Officials considered as policymakers bear responsibility to reflect the interests of a host of different stakeholders. Policy design entails conscious and deliberate effort to define policy aims and map them instrumentally. Academics and other experts in policy studies have developed a range of tools and approaches to help in this task.

Underdevelopment is low level of development characterized by low real per capita income, wide-spread poverty, lower level of literacy, low life expectancy and underutilisation of resources etc. The state in underdeveloped economy fails to provide acceptable levels of living to a large fraction of its population, thus resulting into misery and material deprivations. We need to note here that underdevelopment is a relative concept but it sustains absolute poverty (Escobar, 1995).

Characteristics of Underdeveloped Economies

It is difficult to find an underdeveloped economy representing all the representative characteristics of underdevelopment. While most of them are poor in nature, they have diverse physical and human resources, socio-political conditions and culture (McMichael, 2012). Some of the common characteristics displayed by most of the underdeveloped countries in the world are as follows:

Low Per Capita Income: Almost all underdeveloped countries of the world show low per capita income in comparison to developed countries of the world.

Slow Growth Rate of Per Capita Income: Low per capita income and slow growth rate of per capita income are characteristics of these countries.

Economic Inequalities: High inequality of income and wealth is another common feature of underdeveloped countries. In these countries, large percentage of national income is shared by a small segment of the society while a large segment of the society gets barely enough to survive. Economic inequality exists even in developed countries but it is not as much as found in underdeveloped countries (Seligson, 1990).

Low Level of Living: Level of living in the underdeveloped countries is low because of low per capita income. Low level of living of the people of underdeveloped countries is also reflected in Human Development Index prepared by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). HDI of developed countries is very high whereas for underdeveloped countries it is very low.

Low Rate of Capital Formation: Rate of capital formation is very low in underdeveloped economies due to low income levels and high incidence of poverty.

Backward Techniques of Production: Underdeveloped economies use outdated technology for production. Lack of capital leads to less spending on research and development (Irogbe, 2005).

High Growth Rate of Population and Dependency Burden: These countries are characterized by high growth rate of population and high dependency burden.

Low Productivity of Labour: Underdeveloped economies are characterised by low labour productivity due to low level of skill set.

Underutilization of Natural Resources: Natural resources are underutilized in underdeveloped economies. Their capability to exploit them is very low.

Large Scale Unemployment: Large scale unemployment is another characteristic feature of underdeveloped countries.

Dominance of Agriculture: Large section of people in underdeveloped economies depends on primary sector for employment. But the primary sector is not well-developed in those countries.

High Incidence of Poverty: Low per capita income results in high incidence of poverty in underdeveloped economies.

Infrastructural Backwardness: Economic infrastructure and social infrastructure are almost at their bottom level in underdeveloped countries.

Low Volume of Foreign Trade: Underdeveloped countries export primary products like, agricultural goods, minerals, petroleum oil, etc., and import finished products, especially consumer goods. Terms of trade are grossly unfavourable to underdeveloped countries.

Economic Underdevelopment: The economic underdevelopment of a country can be measured on its balance sheet and by its gross national product; but in human terms it is the standard of living (as measured by comparative per capita figures) and the vital statistics for birth, health and death, that show what poverty brings. Economic underdevelopment not only means that the health of the people is affected, but also that local education and training and the importation of technologies for increased productively cannot be paid for. Thus there is no way out; and underdevelopment

continues, maintained by expensive loans and inappropriate technology transfers (Rodney, Babu, Harding, & Vincent, 1981).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Features of Public Policy

Broadly, we might say that a public policy is simply what government (any public official who influences or determines public policy, including school officials, city council members, county supervisors, etc.) does or does not do about a problem that comes before them for consideration and possible action.

Specifically, public policy has a number of key attributes:

- i. Policy is made in response to some sort of issue or problem that requires attention.
- ii. Policy is what the government chooses to do (actual) or not do (implied) about a particular issue or problem.
- iii. Policy might take the form of law, or regulation, or the set of all the laws and regulations that govern a particular issue or problem.
- iv. Policy is made on behalf of the "public."
- v. Policy is oriented toward a goal or desired state, such as the solution of a problem.
- vi. Policy is ultimately made by governments, even if the ideas come from outside government or through the interaction of government and the public.
- vii. Policymaking is part of an ongoing process that does not always have a clear beginning or end, since decisions about who will benefit from policies and who will bear any burden resulting from the policy are continually reassessed, revisited and revised.

Why Public Policies in Nigeria are Not Effective

Changes in Government: Changes in government have contributed significantly against the successful implementation of government policies in Nigeria. Ajakaiye (2003) states that frequent changes in government from incessant military coup in the past and frequent changes in the administration in the present democratic era contribute to no small measure the ineffective implementation of public policies, as each succeeding government administration would undo and reject what it met instead of the common slogan that government is a continues process. Here though plans are made to accommodate little variations, in Nigeria, new administration finds it absolutely difficult to continue with the policies of the previous administration. This has led to many abandoned projects which litter the country's landscape today.

Corruption: Edoh (2003) sees corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, reiterating that this has become a common act in Nigeria as it has destabilized the political system drastically; where government funds are being misappropriated by the leaders who only put the interest of their family and friends at heart while ignoring the masses. In support of Edoh's view, Chimobi (2010) explains

further that corruption has eaten so deep into the government and economy that everyone seems to be blinded by it and has almost become an accepted way of life in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the government's income is generated mostly from natural resources, and this income instead of being used for development purposes, is then circulated among the political office holders and their families, leaving the rest of the people to wallow in poverty. The situation has gone so bad that elected leaders practically ignore the affairs and well-being of their people who elected them into office as they mismanage and embezzle funds meant for the implementation of policies that would impact on the lives of the citizens with impunity. Chimobi (2010) adds further that this leads to bad governance, and there are several issues involved with bad governance in Nigeria which include; use of wrong policies, adaptation to wrong policies and implementation of those wrong policies, which has increased poverty and inequality as well as contributed to the suffering of the citizenry.

Culture and Values: Nweke (2008) argued that most policies of government are abstract things that do not give values in return. He states the example of the Festival of African Culture (FESTAC 77) which he says engulfed a huge sum of money that could have been channeled into other sectors so as to enhance growth and developments in the economy. If public policies do not have values, after implementation, the impact will not be felt by the people thereby making the implementation of such public policies ineffective. Since people have numerous needs, governments abandoning their immediate needs to go for those without values to the people look ineffective after its implementation.

Paucity of Data and Reliable Statistics: Public policy planning relies basically on data but in Nigeria like in other developing countries, accurate data is a very scarce commodity and since the success of any policy depends on the reliability of underlying data such as popular census, national income or output, available resources etc. it is difficult to come up with effective policy intentions with inaccurate data. The clearest illustration of the problem of data in Nigeria is the fact that since independence till date, nobody has been able to answer the simple question of how many are we in Nigeria (Ugo et al, 2009). They argue that a county that does not know its population would definitely not be in position to determine the other vital statistics necessary for planning; like birth rate, death rate, number of school age and other demographic changes in the population which are essential for planning. In Nigeria, a comprehensive national data base is lacking and conflicting statistics abound in Nigeria as a result of the lack of collaboration and coordination between various federal agencies involved in data collection in such circumstance, the planning exercise will be reduced to a mere guesswork.

Ambiguous Goals: Ambiguous goal is one of the challenges to effective implementation of public policies in Nigeria. Nweke (2008) contends that when policies are vague and unrealistic, they enhance the failure of such public policies, stressing that a policy that aims at achieving its goals should make such clear and realistic as clarity of policy goals are very important since it reduces conflict and confusion. In addition to goal clarity, public policy goals must be realistic and simple, showing the achievability of the desired goals. He notes that most policies are made for purposes of the selfish 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 the possibility of their effective practical implementation. The above reasons prompted Okoli, and Onah, (2002) to note that most public policy making objectives in Nigeria are directed towards 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, and for these, most public policies in Nigeria are either inappropriate or lack well defined objectives for their effective implementation.

Undue Political Interference: Another constraint to effective policy implementation in Nigeria is undue interference by government officials and political office holders. Though it is the duty of government to make policy, but it demands that after formulating the policy, the government should give the implementing agencies or personnel the free hand to implement such policies without unnecessary interference. Such control and directives are mostly motivated by personal, group or political interests. Once this is the case, the strategies and processes of the implementation is always altered which definitely result to unsuccessful public policy outcome. This situation is getting worse as the headship of such agencies are appointed by the political office holders as political patronage thereby totally neglecting experience, skill and commitment. This prompted Ugoh, and Ukpere, (2009) to note that public policies in Nigeria are marred by political interest.

Poor Ambitions Nature of some Public Policies: Another factor that constitutes an impediment for the effective implementation of public policy in Nigeria is over ambitions nature of some public policies. Some Public policies actually tend to be over ambitions, sweeping and overly fundamental in nature Makinde, (2005), stressing that in most cases, the formulation of such over ambitions policies is not borne out of sincere effort to bring about rapid development but just to boast the ego of the political leaders to attract the admiration of the electorates. Examples of such public policies are policies that have their main objectives in the provision of free education or free health services to all the citizens especially in some states of the federation. For such policies, the government will be aware that there are no adequate resources, both financial, material and human resources for the effective implementation. Such public policies have witnessed very ineffective implementation resulting in deterioration in quality and standard of service that some people prefer to send their children to private primary and secondary schools and to seek medical services from private hospitals irrespective of the high cost in those private places.

Lack of Mass Commitment: Ajakaiye (2003) and Onokerhoraye (2007) argue that policies are initiated and implemented without consulting the people, hence the public apathy towards its implementation and since these policies are meant for the people but they are not even aware of the existence or objectives, they do not feel duty bound to contribute to its success and this had led to the failure of most government policies in Nigeria

The Thesis of the Elite Theory

This model posits that contrary to the belief that pluralism has in-built mechanism for ensuring equity in the share of power and influence in the society, in reality public policy is by and large the mirror image of the ruling elite's interest. Vilfredo Pareto in his book "mind and society" argues that "persons of ability actively seek to confirm and aggrandize their social position". The elite group is divided into governing and non-governing ones. These few that possess unique qualities such as skills, material wealth, cunning and intelligence have the rights to supreme leadership, while the bulk of the population (masses) is destined to be ruled. Thus social classes are formed (Dlakwa, 2009).

Public Policies That Failed in Nigeria

Among the public policies which have failed in the country include the following:

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN): This policy was formulated in 1976. Its functions, amongst others were to provide sufficient food for all Nigerians; to facilitate agricultural credit from commercial banks to farmers. The policy was abandoned soon after the civilian administration of Shehu Shagari came on board in 1979.

Green Revolution: it was formulated in 1979 and used to replace the Operation Feed the Nation. This policy did not achieve the desired results due mainly to structural defects occasioned by political parochialism. It ended up as mere slogan or symbolic policy.

Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Cooperation: it was formulated in 1987. Its functions include the provision of insurance cover for businesses engaged in agricultural production. The policy objectives were merged with NICON in 2000. This policy did not see the light of day before and after it was merged with NICON. It was a policy designed to fail right from its formulation as it was never implemented.

National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA), formulated in 1989. Its functions included, amongst others, a) to provide strategic public support for land development b) to promote and support optimum utilization of the nation's land resources for the accelerated production of food and fibre c) to encourage the evolution of economic size villages d) to provide gainful income and employment opportunities for rural people e) to address the special problem of the nation's rural majority etc. The policy was phased out and its functions performed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD). There is nothing to demonstrate that the policy has not failed.

Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank: formulated in 2000, its functions include the provision of credit for the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products.

Forestry Development Programme, formulated in the year 2000, the objectives include the provision of tree seedlings and other forestry development facilities to local community participants in the country's five ecological zones.

Roll Back Malaria, formulated in 2001, the policy was meant to eradicate harmful effect of malaria parasites.

National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), enunciated in 2004. This policy evolved from the stand point of Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations to address human development problems. It was also on the basis of Nigeria's long-term goals of poverty reduction, wealth creation, and employment generation, elimination of corruption, good governance and value-orientation. All the efforts and purported machineries put into this policy were wasted as was a mere symbolic policy. It never functioned at any of the three levels of government meant to implement it.

Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure: This policy was enunciated in 1986 for the following purposes: a) to coordinate and streamline all rural development activities in the country and to accelerate the pace of integrated rural

development. b) To promote a framework for grassroots social mobilization c) To mount a virile programme of development, monitoring and performance evaluation To provide rural areas with access roads and potable water e) To improve rural sanitation, literacy and technology. The policy was targeted at the rural areas. It was to make rural areas more attractive to live in so as to stem migration to urban areas. It was also to change for better, the rural ways of life and modes of production in order to meet the challenges of increased agricultural and industrial production. The functions were absorbed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

National Directorate of Employment: This policy was enunciated in 1986 for the following purposes: a) to provide vocational skills development programme to secondary school leavers and graduates from tertiary institutions. b) Special public works programme. c) Small-scale Enterprises programme. d) Agricultural Employment programme the policy was targeted at the youths in particular so as to provide skill for the unskilled; that to enable the youths acquire vocation. The policy, though still ongoing, is almost in comatose as it is not addressing youth employment and vocational skills. It is not doing enough to stem unemployment and enhance skill acquisition among youths. Many youths are not aware of the policy so as to key into it.

Better Life for Rural Women: It was enunciated in 1987 to improve the living conditions of rural women in the country. However, it was later replaced with the Family support Programme which became comatose and failed woefully after the regime that enunciated it.

National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE): It was enunciated in 1989 to provide basic education for nomadic herdsmen and fishermen; train nomadic teachers; provide infrastructure for the nomadic schools. Additional programmes were targeted towards girl's education, women and children in exceptionally difficult circumstances, and adult literacy. The policy was targeted at the nomadic people, particularly those whose occupations are nomadic in nature. The programme was absorbed by the Universal Basic Education policy. But there are no signs that the policy is functioning as planned. This is because the herdsmen who are the real target of the policy are not getting the education they ought to have.

Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), enunciated in 1992, it was formulated to provide access to credit for micro entrepreneurs at the grassroots levels; encouragement of job creation, local raw materials utilization, and development of indigenous technology. It was targeted at cooperative societies and informal associations to enable Nigerians have access to credit. The policy has been phased out while the functions were absorbed by the National Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB).

Family Support Programme (FSP): It was meant to promote the welfare of women and children. It was mainly focused on the health needs of women and children. Like the FEAP, the policy has been phased out while the functions were absorbed by the National Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB). It is also a failed policy.

National Commission for Mass Literacy: it was meant to promote adult literacy in the country, especially adults who are illiterate. The policy ought to be absorbed by the UBE, but the policy has gone into oblivion as it has also failed. Factors Responsible for Public Policy Failures in Nigeria The above policies, some of which were meant to

alleviate poverty in the country failed due largely to the following factors: (a) Those that were aimed at poverty alleviation were mostly not designed to alleviate poverty (b) All the policies lacked a clearly defined policy framework with no proper guidelines for poverty reduction, rather, were meant to enrich the pockets of political appointees and stooges. (c) All the policies suffered from political instability, political interference, policy and macro-economic dislocations (d) they also lacked continuity as different regimes, both military and civilian, enunciated different policies. (e) Poor governance leading to abandonment of projects. (f) Lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (g) Ineffective targeting of real beneficiaries. This led to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries or targets. (h) Unwieldy scope of policies and programmes which resulted in resources being thinly allocated to projects. (i) Overlapping of functions of the agencies/institutions which ultimately led to institutional rivalry and conflicts. (j) Lack of mechanisms in the various policies and programmes and projects to ensure sustainability. (k) Poor human capital development and inadequate funding. Implications of Policy Failures No doubt, public policy failures have many consequences and implications for the country. As the consequences affect individual citizens, so it affects the generality of the country

The Consequences of Public Policy Failures

The consequences of public policy failures in Nigeria include less patriotism by citizens of a country. Many Nigerians have suffered from public policy failures which resulted in the non-improvement of their lives and wellbeing. Due to non-implementation of policies which can impact meaningfully on their livelihood, they become poor or poorer. For example, various policies and programmes which would have improved the rural dwellers failed after the euphoria that greeted the policies. Another disadvantage is failure of Agricultural and Cooperative Bank to guaranteed credit and loans to farmers and agricultural businesses. The policy when it was reactivated were never meant for the poor and average Nigerians as the conditions or requirements to access credit were beyond the reach of the people except the well-to-do.

The citizens feel that they are not part of the society as they feel ostracised by the leadership and government. This is because most of the policies, especially the poverty alleviation policies, that would have given the poor, low income group and the average citizens, sense of belonging failed and when they were sparsely implemented the policies never benefited many citizens. Hence they do not have sense of belonging in their own country. They will feel unpatriotic. Holistically, the country is the worse for policy failures because the failure of public policies is an encouragement of underdevelopment. A country whose citizens are not developed cannot progress. A people that are developed can also develop their nation. Citizens that cannot feed themselves cannot work to improve their country. It is what the country gives to her citizens that the citizens give to their nation.

Non-improvement on Human Capital: Public policies, besides solving the problems of the people, are also meant to improve on the human resources of the society. It is human capital that is the fulcrum and lever of nations. Public policy failures hinder the development and improvement of human capital. Public policy failures are waste of human and materials resources that were put into it during and after enunciation. The entire process of public policies is no mean task. If the policies failed to achieve its desired results, then the colossal resources in both human and financial put into it from formulation to the implementation stages are waste. The resources could have been

devoted to other areas which need more attention in the country. It is the people's resources or commonwealth that are used in making and implementing policies. Conclusion Public policy failures are hindrances to the progress of the country. Policies need to be properly formulated and must as well be properly monitored so as to avoid failures. This is because the failure of public policies, to a large extent, is a failure of government and governance. The people's welfare ought to be anchored on public policies in order to improve on their wellbeing. Wellbeing is one of the essences of human existence and the existence and purpose of government at all levels. The failure of public policies speaks volumes of government, especially on the negative aspect. Proper care should be taken to avoid policy failures; else the government would never gain the trust of the people because governments exist for the people. Policy Implementation is always the problem of the governments of the country

Conclusion and Recommendations

Public policy is a dynamic process that is described by a course of activities carried out with the aim of achieving predetermined objectives. Public policy thus consists of all the constellations of activities carried out by governmental agencies, or their representatives, with the sole purpose of achieving stated objectives. The process of policy formulation and implementation varies from one country to the other. In Nigeria for instance, adequate attention is given only to government and their agencies for the formulation and implementation of public policy such as fiscal policy, monetary policy, trade policy and other sub-public policies. There were many public policies by the Government over the years but most of these policies failed due to constant changes of government and lack of continuity of policies, corruptions among others. The study recommends that there should be continuity in public policy implementation even where there is change in government as government is a continuum; and parochial and primordial interests should be avoided during policy formulation and implementation in the country. There should be capital punishment in the country constitution to address the issues of corruption in Nigeria.

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