

## Public Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The paper examine and analyze the importance, problems and factors influencing public policy formulation and implementation. It dwelt further on the policy reforms and determinant of policy issues and features as a guide to effective public policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria. The study equally revealed that there is lack of full practice of federalism in Nigeria as enshrined in the 1999 constitution rather what is obtained now is synonymous to unitary system of government. Consequent upon that, in spite of the importance of public policy formulation and implementation as a critical factor in the management of government affairs in Nigeria, yet there are no standard formats or generally accepted guidelines towards such. It is against this background, that the bureaucrats has a way of constituting obstacles or frustration in the way of policies formulated by the political officials, especially those policies on which they hold divergent opinions or are not of direct benefit to them. A synonym for this sense is the bureaucratic decision making process. As a result of this since independent, the country has been facing challenges of managing her resources due to the different styles of governance in the implementing of various aspects of government public policies, programmes and actions. The study recommends among other things the need for government to be very proactive, sensitive in formulating and implementation of public policy decisions that has direct impact on its citizenry.

**Keywords:** Public Policy, Policy reform, policy implementation

### Introduction

Most developing countries that are practicing federalism do not really practicing it as supposed to be rather what they refer to as federal state is synonymous to unitary system of government. A good example of such country is Nigeria which seems to be having a mixture or varieties of decentralization practices of administration evolving in various countries based on some factors such as social, religious, economical, cultural, political influence amongst others. Nigeria as a Federal State has been facing challenges of managing her resources due to the fact that each State in the country is having different styles of governance in implementing various aspects of actions, information and programs. This is so because, each state and local government claiming autonomy based on the Local Government Policy of 1976 as contains in the 1999 constitution. Consequently, today there is no standard formats or generally accepted guidelines towards definition of government public policy. Some define public policy as simply 'actions of the government' while other put it as a stated principles which guided the actions of government.

Public policy is an attempt by government to address a public issue by instituting laws, regulations, decisions, or actions pertinent to the problem at hand. Numerous issues can be addressed by public policy including social such as schools, economical such as industries, cultural such as Arts, political such appointment etc. However, in respect of these definitions, public policy is the process of formulating and implementation of government developmental policies or activities and programs for the benefits of its citizenry.

This means, Policy formulation is a decision making process as put down by a political scientist (Easton 1957). He interpreted political dynamics in terms of a continuous process, a system of interaction. To him, a political system is an interrelated set of activities, roles, and institutions that operates within an environment which provides inputs to the political system and then translates these inputs into policy outputs. Government policy makers decide what should be done in order to respond to people's demand for economic, social, political and developmental progress of the nation. These Policies are therefore critical key in the management of government affairs as no good policy comes from the Government without being criticized by either individuals or group in spite of the fact that government always weigh the merits and demerits of any policy before getting them implemented.

Therefore, for a policy to be accepted by people, it must undergo series of policy formulation processes and scrutiny. In certain situation, policies formulated are even tested before implementation so as to see the reaction of the public on the policy(s). Policy formulation is followed by policy demand, policy decision and policy statement. While, Policy statement is a government formal guidelines that provides specific policy roles for its people. According to Egonmwan (1991) a policy statement is the formal expression as articulations of public policy which include legislation statutes, decrees, presidential

orders, administrative rules and regulations and court opinions. It could also be statements and speeches made by public officials indicating the intentions and goals of government and what and how it would be done to realize them. One should note that policy statements are sometimes ambiguous and conflicting.

However, when a policy statement is issued by government it means that such policy had already been formulated. To this end, Policy formulation is the cardinal principle upon which government implements its developmental projects. Whenever a policy has been formulated and implemented, the implementation of the policy requires a feedback. The feedback therefore serves as check and balance mechanism to assess or evaluate as to whether the policy has been accepted by the people or not. It could also be an indicator to how the policy has changed the lives of the people for a better or worse. For example, when in January 2012, President Jonathan announced the full withdrawal of petroleum subsidy in January, 2012. The outcome of that policy was mass protest by Nigerian labour congress (NLC) and civil societies. Therefore, the scope of government policies are enormous among which include; Education policy, Agricultural policy, Health policy, Defence policy, Industrial policy, Transport policy, Wage policy, Business policy, etc.

#### **The Role of Bureaucrats in Public Policy Formulation and Implementation**

In Nigeria and across the world in general, the word bureaucracy is one of the most frequently, used by many authors in modern writing about organization. This is because the public bureaucracies are entrusted with public property and they are charged with responsibilities of specific method of allocating resources within a large organization. A synonym for this sense might be bureaucratic decision making. Furthermore, they are also referred to as essentially civil servants primarily established to help in the formulation and implementation of government's policies. Therefore, if you ever wonder as a Nigerian why sometimes that governments do things that no one seems to be interested or understand in your particular state, local government or your village in spite of huge population, political or economic activities, and yet you don't feel the presence of federal, state or local government. While, if you take statistics or compare the area with others, you would discovered that there were more presence of government better than other areas. Then why does such happened? Who are responsible in shaping government decision making and implementation. Furthermore, have you ever wondered to know who these bureaucrats behind the political scene charged with the responsibility of helping the governments in taking and sharpening decisions that affect policy making process?. The answer is that they are called season civil servants who have a strong background experience as administrators in critical thinking skills as well as decision-making abilities. Thus;

*It is ironic that bureaucracy is primarily a term of scorn. In reality, bureaus are among the most important institutions in every part of the world. Not only do they provide employment for a very significant fraction of the world's population, but they also make critical decisions that shape the economic, educational, political, social, moral, and even religious lives of nearly everyone on earth...The ability of bureaus to outlive their real usefulness is part of the mythology of bureaucracy... (Downs, 1967);*

In spite of the important roles of the civil servant in Nigeria in achieving many of government's laudable policies and programmes, however, not much of such are fully and excellently implemented or achieved but in many instances, as many of them have been marred by poor implementation strategies (i.e. bureaucratic procedures). This become so, as the civil service has a way of putting obstacles or frustration in the way policies are being formulated by the political officials, especially those policies on which they hold divergent opinions or are not of direct benefit to them. As such, they employed so many varieties of tactics "to thwart such implementation". From the fore-going, as stated by Okotoni (2001) that we can summarize the role of the federal bureaucracy as coordination of federal ministries, advising the political officials, formulation and implementation of government's policies, gathering and supplying of data for policy makers, ensuring continuity of services and public relations services. All the roles highlighted above are so crucial to the smooth running of any administration to the extent that one may be tempted to conclude that bureaucracy is indispensable in public Policy formulation and implementation.

#### **Framework for the Analysis of policy formulation and implementation**

In this paper, the term policy, public policy and government policy simply mean the same and will be used interchangeably in the course of analysis. Dror (1973) stated that public policy refers to important actions of government, while Dye (1976) on the other hand defined Public Policy to mean whatever government chooses to do or not to do. Furthermore, Dike (1987) defined public policy as government programme contained either in the nation's laws or in a public statement by a competent functionary of government. A public policy is mostly referred to by policy professionals as government programme of action or anything government chooses to do or not to do for its citizens, while other scholars believe that policy is what government does and not what government intends to do or what government says it is going to do. Therefore public policy can be viewed as an action rather than intention. Before going into decision making process in public policy,

the frequently asked questions are:-a) What is policy formulation, how was it determined or formulated, why was policy formulated, why policy A was chosen over B, was the policy selected a good one and will it achieve the goals of the policy, If yes, why has the policy succeeded, If No, why has it failed, how can we sustain or improve the quality of policy making, implementation and monitoring to achieve its target?

The following framework for analysis is to help examine a certain policy and establish a context. The framework for analysis described below, which has been developed according to the theory of Stokey and Zeckhauser, will serve as a guideline as cited by Rabah (2007): this means;

**Establishing the context:** What is the problem? What is the underlying problem that must be dealt with? What specific objectives are to be pursued in confronting the problem?

**Laying out the alternatives:** What are the alternative methods of solving the problems and what are the possibilities for gathering further information both short and long term?

**Predicting the consequences:** What are the consequences of the alternative actions? What techniques are relevant for predicting these consequences? If outcomes are uncertain, what is the estimated likelihood of each by predicting the outcomes to be certain?

**Valuing the outcomes:** By what criteria should we measure policy success in pursuing each policy objective?

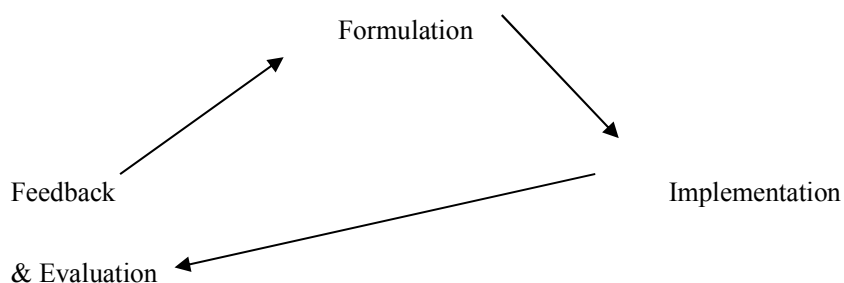
**Making a choice;** make a choice based on all the alternatives and consequences available by drawing all the aspects of analysis together. What is the preferred course of action? In other words which policy is most preferable and will yield a better outcome and at what course

#### **Government Policy Formulation, Implementation and Monitoring Process**

The public policy making process is an integral part of Policy Formulation, Implementation and Monitoring Process. Egonmwan (1991) stated that policy making is a sequential pattern of action involving a number of functional categories of activities as follows:

- i) Policy formulation- this is done after the government has acknowledged or identifies the existence of public problems and the need to do something about it. Here, policy makers need to take or decide on what course of action to be done, when as well as how it could be done.
- ii) Implementation- this is the second stage, after a public problem had been identified and made its way to the policy agenda, and various options has been provided, what remains is putting the decision into action or practical terms.
- iii) Feedback and evaluation- After one and two points above had been done; the next step is to assess the outcome of the decision. The outcome comes in two forms, negative and positive. Negative comes in a form of violence, demonstrations, mob action etc. Example, the decision of the federal government to withdraw oil subsidy or the outcome of April, 2011 presidential general election. While, positive comes in a form of solidarity, jubilations, commendation etc. example, the general increase of federal civil servant salaries taking (18) thousand Naira minimum wage, Monetization etc. The diagram below explain process of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation

Figure 1.



**Fig.1 policy formulation, implementation and evaluation**

Policy formulation, implementation and monitoring are difficult in a situation where the policies and strategies for the implementation and monitoring are empirically not sound. When policy formulation is not sound then it will be

difficult to implement especially if there is no broad based public and political support for the programme. Even where some policies are good, the implementation and monitoring become a difficult task. Thus, the formulation, implementation and monitoring of government policy is a dynamic process which is subjected to internal, external and other unpredictable factors such as intra and inter-sectarian as well as local problems. Policy formulation and government developmental planning should not be in isolation giving attention to a particular government agency, board or ministry but rather should be multi-sectarian. Government policy formulation, implementation and monitoring requires professional skills, such professionals provide the empirical data and statistical analysis of the data gathered and formulate sound policy for understanding of the policy makers and the public support to get it implemented. These professional policy analysts provide the monitoring skills in the implementation process so as to gather the required impetus that will get the policy to be successful. Monitoring of Government policies after implementation as a project or programme could be in linear or non-linear model form.

#### **Policy, Policy Reality, Policy Research and Policy Reform**

There is a difference between policy, policy reality, and policy research and policy reform. The distinction between policy and policy reality is that, a policy is an instrument that provides for the policy to become a reality. A policy may just be on paper but when implemented it become a policy reality. A policy research is a research undertaking on a particular policy either before or after implementation. But for a policy research to be meaningful it must have clear objectives, by so doing its priorities can be properly identified and strengthened.

A policy research objective addresses the following questions which needed answers; What is the policy ought to be?, What instruments will work efficiently for the policy. And how do we implement the policy effectively. Policy makers will answer the question(s) using problem-solving approach. The problem solving approach sometime needs institutional reform or change.

#### **Policy reform**

Policy reform is a condition that prevails on policy makers to make changes on a policy after discovering some lapses. These lapses necessitate for a reform. Most government functionaries especially politicians find it difficult to accept a policy reform even if the policy is likely to fail. One should ask even in the face of a visible policy failure in Nigeria, would Nigerian bureaucrats, politicians in Government voluntarily relinquish power because the policy they formulated and implemented has failed? The answer is vehemently No, because it has become part of our culture in Nigeria. But one ought to look at the policy performance when implemented and suggest for institutional reform for a better and viable policy.

However, effective policy implementation cannot be separated from management and monitoring. This requires all staff to be policy-result oriented and adhere strictly to management procedures for the policy implementation. Another difficult area in government policy formulation and implementation is the issue of quality of personnel. Staff to formulate the policy has no adequate qualification or expertise to formulate a policy neither do they have the skills of monitoring the policy. These policies are manned by mediocre who are conservative in their disposition to policy implementation, in such a way that, they insist in maintaining the status-quo. By so doing, they played down on any attempt to introduce policy reform/innovation that will take care of emerging development in the new challenging world. Little does this set of government bureaucrats realized that the world keep on changing as they approach every policy issue as if the world is static.

Having discussed the difficulties in attracting qualified personnel with multi-disciplinary expertise, when salaries are very meagre in the State Government in Nigeria and the civil service constraints which may be quite unnecessary and counter-reproductive so much exist in the Government Ministries, Boards, and Agencies that hinder the effective government policy implementation and monitoring.

#### **Factors Influencing Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria**

There exist many factors that influence the success of government policy formulation and implementation. These are:  
**Needs of the People:** In formulating a policy, the policy formulators require a good and thorough understanding of the local needs and problems of the people. Emphasis should be given to the needs of the people, their capacities and total commitment of the local actors in the Community in supporting government programmes.

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

**Specific target group:** One could say that no single government policy plan is sufficient to meet the needs of the

people. It is often better to target specific groups for a better policy implementation. In a situation of policy on developmental issues, it must be seen as a search for improving the life of the specific target group by government and with the support of people.

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

**Determinants of Policy Success or Failure**

Ingram and Mann (1980) recognize six factors as the main determinants of success or failure of policies:

**Excessive demand for policy outputs,** this is due to the high increase in population of the country as a result, there is high increase in scope of government policies and programmes and it continue changing day by day and area by areas. For examples, the demands for the construction of more roads, dams and boreholes, health care delivery and hospitals, industries, schools to mention but a few are too enormous. Today, many communities are left unattended without social services and marginalized particularly the rural areas. The resources of the government are getting inadequate to meet the demands of every community in the country.

**Over-ambitious;** and unrealizable policy goals, most people are impatient and over overzealousness as such policy formulated by the government, people hardly waits to see the aspects of it as they would just be condemning it without giving it. Similarly, some of the programmes and policies are unrealizable due to the complexity of the programmes. For example, in April, 2011, the federal government of Nigeria through the Independent National Electoral commission (INEC) promised the nation of organizing free, fair and credible election and at the end of the 2011 General Election, the outcome resulted into post election violence across some part of the country.

**Accurate and inaccurate theory or causation of social problems,** here many people make mistake by assuming that there is no difference between theories and policies. Theories are assumptions mainly good for laboratory or pilot test but not necessarily good for the larger populace. In Nigeria and indeed all over the world, many governments came in with a conceivable style of administration. In Nigeria for example, when President Goodluck Jonathan came into power in May, 2011 with transformational agenda and promised to tackle the problems of power, corruption, insecurity etc. Today, Nigeria is not only one of the most corrupt countries but also unsecured ranging from, kidnapping, bombing, arm robbery and destruction of government properties etc.

**Types and effectiveness of policy instrument chosen,** these are the actual devices government have at their disposals for implementing policy among policies. For example, mass campaign using people to stop vandalising electrical cables and pipelines. Public policy is a kind of sloppy governance, which is working outside of actual law provisions, and is often unconstitutional. The variety of policy instruments to policy makers to address a policy problem is limited only to their imaginations. Many of such schemes are either pitched at high level of abstraction making them difficult to apply in practical terms or dwell on the idiosyncrasies of particular tools, thereby limiting the range of the descriptions and explanation.

**The vagaries of implementation of policies,** this relate to changes in the activities of the programmes as well as changes in schedule of implementation. Furthermore, the continue change in administrations which at the end lead to policy adjustment is considered as one of the major problems affecting policy implementation because most programmes initiated by a particular administration are hardly completed by another administration after the termination of that government rather; the incoming government would come in with its own agenda. Example, the previous government both military and civilian administrations came in with their established programmes, among these are; Code of Conduct Bureau by the Murtala administration in 1975, Ethical Revolution by Shagari's civilian administration in 1979, War Against Indiscipline and Corruption by General Buhari administration in 1984, Mass Mobilization for Self Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery by General Babangida in 1985, Failed Bank Tribunals by General Abatcha in 1994, Anti-Corruption Bill by Obasanjo in 2000. From 2007, the administration of Yar'adua has made it a cardinal policy to observe rule of law to enhance public accountability and stamp out corruption and indiscipline in the Nigerian society. While President Jonathan came in April, 2011 with programme called transformational agenda.

**Failure of political institutions,** by political institutions here, we mean these institutions or organizations of the state, society or subsystem. However, some of these institutions exist in a mutually undefined relationship



### Conclusion

In conclusion, there is no standard, formats or universal solution to Government policy formulation and implementation as any public policy adopted or implemented depends on the impact of the institutional arrangement of the government and the acceptability of the public. It is important to know which condition made a public policy feasible and how this policy changes will affect the life of the people and its environment. To this end, the problem of public policy formulation is amongst the most difficult task that individuals, business organizations, governments and nations faces in determining the best policy(s), its implementation and the difficulty of deciding which issue(s) should the policy address. Government should therefore handle the issue of policy formulation and implementation with caution so as not to make a costly mistake as it is difficult to reverse a policy after implementation.

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