

Article

Policy Environment: The Obstacles to Effective Public Policy Implementations in Nigeria

Abubakar S¹, Yushau Alfakoro²

Usmanu dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria.

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Corresponding Author:

Abubakar S, Usmanu dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria.

E-mail Id:

abubakaralfakoro@gmail.com

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A B S T R A C T

It is not a denying fact that public policy constitutes decisions and actions of government regarding issues and problems emanating from the society on either to act or not to act on them, it's also constitutes how governmental goals are translates into policies for developmental purposed. In every part of the world, public policy affects the life of the populace directly or indirectly regarding the several arrays of actions or decisions taken by the government regarding public issues. However, efficacy in public policies implementations has not been achieved based on the factors affecting the ecology in which public policies is been carried out. This paper tries to examine the factors affecting ecology of public policy implementations in Nigeria because it's a fundamental issue which could lead to failure in governance. The paper sourced its materials from secondary sources like journals, internet, articles and newspapers. After major findings, the paper concludes that proper policy formulation, proper consultation with the target group, equity, responsiveness, clear policy process and clear policy statement are part of the remedies that can lead to effective public policies implementations towards the attainment of the said goals and objectives.

Keywords: Public Policy, Society, Efficacy, Ecology, Governance

Introduction

In every society public policies are directed towards every aspect of individual live, and its affect the public (people) in numerous ways regarding the decisions of government on economic, political and social problems such as security, health, environment, transport, and housing etc, and all other problems emanating from the society in all its ramification. That's why Ladipo (1983: 513) as cited in Ogundiya (2012) defines policy as "a course setting involving decision of the widest ramifications and longest time perspectives in the life of an organization ". Since the primary aim of any responsible government is to maintain peace, security and provide a conducive environment for economic, political and social activities to thrive, alongside with balancing these elements the state, the market and the

community that are frequently in conflict with each other, therefore government needs to make policies regarding public problems when the need arises for continuity in governance. Public policy constitute a significant portion of our environment because it is formulated to carter for the wellbeing's of the citizenry, protect civil rights, liberties , reduce crime, ameliorate and also manage the whole range of social problems from life to death. Public policy is a very complex and cumbersome issue of government because it has advantages, disadvantages and sometimes confers pain or benefits that requires many processes that lead to its formulation. (Wildavsky, 1973:127) posited that every attempt to fix one problem creates more, that every purposive social action comes with its unintended consequences.

However, policy makers or official actors are been perceived by the public (Non official actors) to make policies that favors their interest or their party loyalist (Political Elite) in regards to public issues in which the larger population suffers the negative impact in proportion to small individuals who are in power who enjoys the benefit, That why Jide & Olumuyiwa (2015) buttressed that major decisions which affect society are taken by the elite, and these decisions usually reflect the interest of the elite rather than the wishes of the majority and to the detrimental of the public. So, these now triggers the public (masses) to influences public policies through actions like protest, strike, elections, and other windows of opportunities in other to also favor their interest or the general public regarding the target groups. Other obstacles affecting public policies includes greater scarcity of resources, dominance of one ruling party, ethnicity and tribalism, discontinued political institutions, declined institutional capacity, legal constraints and force from competitors or external forces, are parts of the factors affecting the ecology of public policy. (Ikelegbe, 2006 & Abbah, 2010) asserted that the scope and consequences of public policy is usually very pervasive and dominant particularly in developing countries like Nigeria which as a weak private sector. These makes the majority of citizens depends on government for Healthy, Education, Agriculture, Business, and Employment issues making the scope of their policies to cover all these sectors since there is no other channel to provide this functions now making every policies to have spillover effects on the citizens, the frequency of the concept has made it more ambiguous and confusing. Individuals, families, clubs, cultural groups, communities, government departments, small business organizations as well as the large ones, all talk about their policies. (Ikelegbe, 1994). However the paper look at the obstacles to effective public policies applications in Nigerian stressing that, nobody is excluded because due to the several arrays of the policies, it affect everyone in one way or another as far as he or she uses public goods like roads, drainage and street lights and depends on government for some basic social goods, services and also carry out is private business which government must regulates. The paper is divided into five parts the introduction, conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, obstacles affecting ecology of policy implementations followed by conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification

Public policy like many other concepts in social science has no one generally accepted definition. However, some scholars have tried clarifying the concept Dimock et al (1983:40) sees public policy as deciding at any time or place what objective and substantive measure should be taken in order to deal with a particular problem. In the word of Carl (1975) defines public policy as a proposed

cause of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacle and opportunity which was proposed to utilize and overcome challenges and difficulties. Governments are faced with challenges affecting its administration, whether or not if governments can tackle these issues is dependent on the quality and effectiveness of her policies regarding the issues affecting its administration. However for it to gain the support of its citizen, justice, equity, fairness and consultation must be the key. According to Anderson (1975), it is a set of goal, oriented action taking by government. Dye (1975: 1) defines public policy as what government chooses to do or not to do. Going further Chandler and Plano (1985: 40) defines public policy as the strategic use of resources to alleviate national problems or governmental concern. We can see that public policy is usually made up of problems and challenges that have national concern. According to Abdulsalami as cited by Yakubu and Obasi (1998), Define public policy as the hard patterns of resource allocation represented by projects and programs design to respond to perceived public problems or challenges requiring government action for solution. Anifowoshe & Enema (2005), Posit that public policy is a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with problems or matter of concern. Henry (1999) asserted that public policy is what public administrators execute. To Ezeani (2006) it is the proposed cause of action which governments intend to implement in respect of a given problem or situation confronting it. Lastly public policy according to Dike (1987) defined public policy as the government program contains either in nation's laws or in a public statement by a competent functionary of government.

From all the above definitions it is been cleared that all the aims of public policy are directed towards the public in other to amend, settle, intervene or give solutions to contending public issues. So public policy is the deliberate actions of government focus towards ameliorating issues between the citizens and their environment by those competent authority saddled with the responsibility of doing so in other to be a responsive government.

Theoretical Framework

Theories are view, with which people make sense of their world experiences (Halvorson, 2002). To Faris (1968), theoretical framework is a system of network of prepositions, facts and assumption that is used in explaining certain phenomenon. This research work is situated within the perspective of the framework of David Easton system theory.

System Theory

The system theory was first propounded by (David Easton: 1965) another scholar who made enormous contribution was (Talcott Parson: 1950), Easton in his analysis of the

system theory focused on the political system as the center of analysis, and viewed the political system as the interaction and response to demands in the society in which authoritative allocation are made and implemented. The political system is viewed as an open and adaptive system which takes and gives, which includes the political system and the environment. Buckley, "that a system is open means not simply that it engages in interchanges with its environment, but that this interchange is an essential factor underlying the systems viability, its reproductive ability or continuity, and its ability to change". The political system receives; input in form of challenges and support which the political system is expected to manage through its mechanism and support it receives from the environment in form of election, abiding by the laws and payment of tax. These challenges, issues and opinions are referred to as demands or input. The political system must be able to convert the demands into policies and sent back into the system as an output and get responses about the result through the feedback mechanism, in which it comes as new demand or support of the policy. The output comes in form of laws, rules, or judicial decisions. To Easton, demand is referred to as the claims for action that individuals and groups make to satisfy their interests and values while outputs are seen as decision or action of authority that are critical. According to the theory, it is not every action that comes into a political system that reaches the agenda settings it must pass through the filtering processes to reach the agenda settings before government can consider it has a contending public issue, before policies or actions are taken on the problems. From the ongoing discussion on the system theory, it is noted that it has a strong emphasis on the pluralistic nature of public policies. As a tool of analysis, it interprets and explains the widest facts and practices in public policies where decisions and actions are used in deciding the applicability to particular situations. Applying this theory in regards to the obstacles of public policies. the political system however as failed to process the demands leading to demand inputs overload or outputs failure as a result of e.g lack of competence, different interest among authorities and lack of resources which these can lead to the collapse of the system. To Easton the political system as "a goal setting, self transforming and creatively adaptive system" that can reshape the environment. The political institutions are not working as a whole, because the official actors have different behavioral objective. Demands are not been processed into outputs so it now leads to excess demand which has lead to overloading and if not tackle the system will collapse, so if the community want to continue to survive the most receive support from the system and these depends on what the political system does to the people(output). The nation as a whole system is make up of different tribe, ethnic group and religious group but there

has been several religious crisis and ethnic crisis which as serve as obstacle to effectiveness of public policy indicating the component parts are not working as a system, The issue of marginalization by one group by another shows a sign of problem between the component part, There is no uniformity due to lack of oneness each government goes and comes with is policy which has made our political intuitions unstable, The legal system is faulty immunity or preference is been giving by judges in rulings of some cases which is not to suppose to be, Some part of the state do view some policies from regional, cultural our personal interest for example sitting of companies, learning institutions and development projects in a part of the country. So in system theory any problem affecting the component parts affects the whole system unless, Nigerian states works together as a whole it will overcome its obstacles to it public policies. If not it will lead to the collapse of the system from all signals of indications. To (Fashagba & Oshewolo, 2014), before this process degenerates, there are usually early warning signals such as sudden demographic changes, economic shocks, rising unemployment rates, destabilizing elections, a rise in societal intolerance, and an increase in the number of demonstrations, among numerous other developments. So which of these signals is not visible in the Nigeria state?

Ecology of Public Policy or Policy Environment

Ecology of public policy means an environment where public policy operates, Public policy cannot exist in a vacuum there has to be an environment where the policies is to be made. Public policy is view as a product of a system it influences and also being influenced back (David Easton, 1965: 62). Policy demands come from the environment (people) before it is integrated into the political system as input for processing, known as the policy process. However, the environment is not static that means its dynamic (Anatol Rapoport 1966:130). And keeps on changing based on economic, political, social, and structural factors (David Easton, 1965:507). Below are the factors affecting the policy environment in Nigeria, but after discussing the different types of policy environment below;

Political Environment: Every public policy is influenced by the type and nature of its political environment, there exist different political culture amongst societies which comprises of their beliefs, values, norms, attitude and there level of participation towards the political system, it also informs them about what they expect from the government and what the government also expect from them. The political environment will determine the nature of their participation and extent to which they can involve in policy decision of government and it a continuous process that pass from one generation to another through the agent of socialization form their political history, family, peer group etc. It also portrays how the citizen feels about how the

government responds to their problems which is referred to as the national mode. However, the political parties, civil societies, public opinion, and the elite play a vital role in the political environment as far as public policy is concern. According to (Collinson: 2003) 'Political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes within a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time.' The political leaders has not been responding to the demands of the people and the political parties is been characterized by several electoral violence. That why (Gberevbie, Shodipo & Oviasogie, 2013) poist that The leadership structure in Nigeria is also said to be poor due to the inadequacies in accountability and transparency of public affairs managements in the nation.

The Structural Environment: The structural environment has to do with the government structure obtainable in the country i.e. in Nigeria that operate a federal system of government in which powers are shared between the three tiers government i.e. Federal, state and local government that are responsible for public policies making according to their area of jurisdiction as enshrined in the constitution. Federalism according to Tekena (2011) is that form of government where the component units of a political organization participate in sharing powers and functions in a cooperative manner through the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity, among others, which tends to pull their people apart. Structural environment also portrays the functions of the arms of government which includes the executive, judiciary and legislature were the executive arm execute or implement policies, legislature makes laws and the judiciary interprets and punished offenders. Also, the separation of power but not water tight and the principle of checks and balance among the arms, rules how government goes about their activities so they influence the public policy and also constitute policy ideas. However there is lack of coordination among these tiers of government which led to lack of consensus and affect policies. Dye says, "both structure and policy are largely determined by environmental forces, and that tinkering with institutional arrangements will have little independent impact on public policy if underlying environmental forces social, economic, and political -remain constant".

Social Factors: the social factor is made up of the nature and composition of the population it entails the social structures such as ethnic groups and gender other factors such as age, race, sex and population size, workforce, immigration and emigration, these trends have a great influence on public policy which needs to be given adequate consideration in policy making in other for balance and equity in public policy making. Unemployment is so alarming that majority of the citizens is unemployed. The incidence

of unemployment in Nigeria especially in this 21st century is getting deeper and wide spread, cutting across all facets of age groups, educational strata and geographical entities (Obadan and Odusola, 2010). The population has not yield any positive advantage it only had up to the numbers of problems that why, (Wusu and Ahiadu, 2006), stipulated that any population growing rapidly is capable of retarding socioeconomic development. So this is the case of Nigeria population.

Economic Factors: Nigeria operates a capitalist economic system but claim to operate a mixed market economy. The means of production and distribution are controlled by some group of rich people (Bourgeoisies) at the expense of the poor (proliterate) which are the majority; many governments own establishments have been prioritized through commercialization policy. The society is been divide into classes which includes the rich, average and the poor in which there is inequality in recourses distribution. There was an increase in income disparity after the economic growth which Nigeria experienced between 1965-1975, and this income inequality has increased the dimension of poverty in the country (Oluwatayo, 2008,:1). The country depends on crude oil as is major source of revenue. In 2008, the oil and gas sector constituted about 97.5 percent of their export revenues, 81 percent of government revenues and about 17 percent of GDP. Such an economy in which majority of citizen lives in absolute poverty, (Chimobi, 2010) asserted that severely poor people lack the most basic necessities of life to a degree that it can be wondered how they manage to survive.

Factors Affecting Policy implementations in Nigeria

In Nigeria there are myriad of problems affecting the ecology of public policy which includes.

1. Scarcity of resources
2. Legal constraint
3. Dominance of ruling elite
4. Ethnicity and Tribalism
5. Unstable political institutions
6. Declining institutional capacity
7. Forces from competitors
8. Large territory size

Scarcity of Pesources: In Nigeria one of the problems that hamper effective public policy is the scarcity of funds to carry out quality research work on some of the problems or the inability of the policy formulators to follow the policy process diligently. Furthermore, they intermittently isolate some of the processes involved in public policy due to lack of adequate resources vice vise the cumbersome nature at arriving at a quality policy that will reflects the yearnings and aspiration of the people. Lack of funds does not always

allows the formulators to get to nitty-gritty of the policies involved as such you will discover that the policy only solve the problem at the periphery in turn solving the symptoms than the causes. These if care is not taking might lead to social and political inequality. Also, scarcity of recourse like green pasture land is also not adequate and if adequate not managed, like the current issue of farmers and herdsmen was as the result of scarcity of land for farming and grazing of animals. In many case, insufficient financial resources has resulted to situations where laws could not be enforced, services were not provided and reasonable regulation not developed and applied (Makinde, 2005).

Legal Constraint: Many public policies suffer legal constraint because; formal and lawful procedures were not followed in the process of policy formulation. Some public policy violet fundamental human right and lack court proceedings and order which make the policy not welcoming and also consultations were not made for free hearing in other to know the will of the public in response to a particular public policy. It should be noted here that the citizens have the right to be consulted upon because policies starts and ends with the masses in other words everything revolves around the masses.

Ethnicity and Tribalism: it is worrisome that after over 58 years of independence in Nigeria the issue of ethnicity and tribalism still lingers in the heart of Nigerians. Many public policy are been believe to be formulated in other to serve the interest of a particular ethnic group or tribe because his or her people are in control of power and resources. For example the anti grazing law was set to be made for the benefit of some particular group at the expense of others, also states around borders are not happy with the ban on importation of rice and oil bunkers stressing that it is their major source of their ethnic revenue. Makinde (2005), in this respect, contends that the zeal with which bureaucrats in Nigeria implement policy depends on how they see the policy as effecting their personal, ethnic and organizational interest and aspirations. However these as cause a major setback in much policy created to serve a purpose in the country. Many minority ethnic group seems they are been marginalize by the three major dominate ethnic group, The numerically and politically majority ethnic groups are the composite Hausa-Fulani of the north, the Yoruba of the southwest, and the Igbo of the southeast. The numerical and hegemonic strength of these three ethnic groups within the Nigerian federation has meant that Nigeria has a tripod ethnic structure, with each of the three majority ethnic groups constituting a pole in the competition for political and economic resources. (Abdul raufu: 2007). So each group clamors for equal representation in the distribution of the national cake so these as created a lot of ethnic jingoism. It is imperative to note that Nigerian belongs to all Nigerians were by primordial sentiments

has to be eschewed for development to thrive. No matter how brilliantly conceived, no matter how artfully contrived, government action usually also requires societal support. And one of the oldest methods of securing such support is to draw a wide segment of society into the government to convey and to merchandise a policy.(Krislor 1974: 4-5).

Unstable Political Institution: in a democratic federal system like Nigeria many governments goes and comes with is polices the institutions of government are not static each administration create its own ministries, departments and agencies and if he likes he dissolve it by the end of its tenure. Ibietan & Ekhosuehi (2013), the lack of coordination and harmonization of programs/policies both within the tenure of an administration and those succeeding it has been the impediment to development. These as lead to lack of consistency in public policy leading to frequent change in public policy which has lead to layoffs and also redundancy in some organizations. Government officials did not feel committed to the national plans of their predecessors and subsequently sought to change by introducing major projects not incorporated in the original plan or introducing new ones (Oladapo, 2004).

Declining institutional Capacity of Government: the institutions responsible for carrying out day to day affairs of government are declining in terms of their ability in formulation and implementation of government activities. Their nonchalant attitude to government work is increasing because one factors or the other such as lack of remuneration, check and balances, monitoring and other related factors. To revive these, we need vibrant institutions to be managed by capable hands irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation. the public bureaucracy in Nigeria do not, indeed, have adequate staff in terms of overall numbers and more importantly in terms of specific areas of professional, technical or managerial competence and expertise (Aluko&Adesopo; 2002).

Forces from Competitors and External Forces: several polices are influence by those who have interests on the policies. The different group keeps on influencing the policies of government so as to favor their own interest which make some policy not to reflect the wishes of the people by lobbying and paying of bribe in other for their set of polices to prevail over that of other groups these has lead to termination or formulation of many policies. Marume (2016) poist that the external pressures and actors, consisting of international and regional organisations, non -governmental organizations and significant others contribute to policy formulation through their own influences; the provision of information and data to the supply of technical assistance. Amongst the main influential, external sources of government policies are the donors, through their expertise, aid, and technology.

Large Territory Size: Nigeria has a population of over 158.3 million as at 2010 with a natural growth rate of 2.4 percent; it is the eight most populous country in the world (Population Reference Bureau PRB, 2010). It border with Niger, Cameroun, Benin, Chad and Atlantic Ocean in the southern part. Occupying a landmass of about 923,768 km² and with over 450 ethnic groups making up the federation is a developing country with perhaps 60 to 70% of the population still living in the countryside and 40% of GDP coming from agriculture (Blench, 2003). A country with a large territorial size requires several public policies for customs, immigration, drugs laws enforcement agencies and other related security personnel in which these policies and functions may overlap each other thereby causing pluralities and duplication of functions.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is crystal clear from this discussions that public policies are directed towards surmounting problem, issues, chaos and challenges confronting the government, however the environment in which public policies are carried out has served as the obstacles or barriers to effectiveness of the policies. Policy formulations have been good but the implementation processes have been the problem because of the environments surrounding public policy was not logically and carefully studied and followed before the formulations. The system theory as framework of analysis utilized in this paper has proved useful in exposing the environment of public policy and overcoming it obstacles. So from the discussion of public policy, to the careful study of the policy environment, lastly to the factors affecting public policy will no doubt provide an illuminating understanding of the research paper. Government should make policy statements clear to the people in other to understand what the intended public policy entails because, it is directed and will have impact and effect on the masses there by government should embark on consultations with the masses or target groups before the policies. Policy process should be carefully and logical followed in other to study the causes, nature, implications and consequences of the policy because these without doubt will determine the acceptability and workability of the policies. Equity, fairness justice, should be done in regards to policies that have group's interest i.e. class interest, social interest, ethnic interest, religious interest etc, because these to large extent will determine the acceptable of the policies and support to the government of the day. Also, public institution should be check and asses regarding policy formulations, recruitments, implementation and in the performance of their assign duties, to ensure the follow the rules and regulation concerning the carrying out of their responsibility as enshrined in their laws, charter, and in the constitution of the country. Lastly the spirit of continuity should be preached to avoid dumping of

policies due to change in government or due to disparities in parties in other to reduce wastage, redundancy, and miss appropriation of funds, for development, peace, harmony and sprit of oneness to strive in our darling Nigeria.

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