

National Development Planning and Sustainable Development in Nigeria (1962-2017): A Case for Incremental Policy Option

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Abstract

This research paper examines the nexus between national development planning and sustainable development in Nigeria from 1962-2017. The aim of the study is to x-ray the factors militating against successive implementation of several development plans in Nigeria over the years under review. To obtain the data for the study, secondary data analysis design method was employed. From the data collected and analysed, the following findings were made: (a) weak institutions and governance system; (b) dearth of reliable statistics; (c) gaps between policy formulation and implementation; (d) inconsistency in plans formulations and implementations; (e) unstable governments and polity; (f) over ambitious nature of most plans; (g) financial corruption and other related offences; (h) poor project evaluation and monitoring; and inadequate skilled but disciplined personnel; these collectively inhibited national development planning and sustainable development in the country. In conclusion, we recommend that in addition to other solutions proffered, significant attention must be given to the option of *incremental policy* and its implementation strategy as evidences from the US and Europe, as contained in empirical literature show positive results.

Key words: National, development, planning, sustainable development, Nigeria, incremental, policy and option.

1.1. Introduction

The idea of development planning enjoys considerable currency among virtually all sovereign nations of the world. It is a widely held tradition among national policymakers and development planners to roll out development plans in order to direct the socio-economic activities of states towards the desired end. Nigeria, therefore, is not an exception in this regard. However, the history of development planning in Nigeria shows that the process dated back to the era of colonial rule; consequently, between 1946 and 1955 a *Ten Year Development and Welfare Plan* was rolled out by the colonial administrators so as to put the colonial Nigeria on the part of development. This plan was considered the first ever attempt by the colonial authority to chart a comprehensive path to the prosperity of Nigeria and its citizenry. The plan was

intended to meet the colonial welfare and development needs; it was estimated to cost \$184 million (Akoche & Oono, 2007, p. 74).

As argued by the authors of the **1962-68 national development plans**, the colonial plan was not a plan in the true sense of the word... but a series of projects which has not been coordinated or related to any overall economic target (Library of Congress, n.d; FRN, 1960). Between 1951 and 1960 there were policy revisions as the plans were reformulated due to identifiable lacuna and policy inconsistencies. In 1960, the British granted Nigeria political independence; this development meant that Nigerian leaders or elite were to take responsibility for planning for the future and prosperity of their country. Thus by 1962 the government of the federal republic of Nigeria rolled out an ambitious plan know as the **first National Development Plan 1962-68**. In the words of Waziri Ibrahim, the then Federal Minister of Economic Development, the Government of the Federation of Nigeria regarded the plan as the foundation stone upon which the future economic and social growth of the country would be based (FRN, 1962). Specifically, the plan sought to, not only raise the standard of living of all the people of Nigeria, but also transforms the national economy of the country into a modern, diversified and virtually self-sustaining system (FRN, 1962). The plan among other things was intended to effect, by direct and indirect means, the greatest volume and the best possible allocation of resources for economic growth in order to reach the goals set by the peoples through their Governments. Later in the review of literature, the detail objectives of this plan shall be highlighted.

The Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970, to some extent truncated effective implementation of the plans objectives. Major projects, infrastructures, and institutions were damaged or ravaged by the war; therefore there was a need for reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. Thus, a four year national development plan was rolled out between 1970 and 1974. This plan was referred to as the second national development plan. There were also the third and fourth national development plans between 1975-1980 and 1981-1985 respectively. In the 80s, particularly from the early 1980, oil price crashed down in the international oil market causing a short fall in the national revenue generation capacity. This development forced the military regime in power to review and redirect the nation's economic development policy. It was observed that previous national development plans were characterised by high level of inconsistencies and weaknesses arising, partly, from poor implementation and funding challenge and lack of continuity in the plan's execution. To underscore or justify the need for national economic policy modification, the then military Head of State stressed as follows:

The economic crisis that faced the nation since 1983 has revealed that fixed five years plans were not the best suited to cope with the attendant problems of economic management and adjustment under conditions characterised by numerous uncertainties, fairly rapid changes as

well as pressing issues that call for urgent solutions (Babangida, 1990). Following this development, a rolling plan covering 1990-1992 estimated to gulp the sum of 144.2 billion naira was formulated and implemented. The plan was meant to further drive home government policy of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which had commenced since 1986. SAP brought with it a range of macro-economic dislocations such as import and export disequilibrium, heightened national debt profile, unsustainable economic growth and the plummeting of the local currency occasioned by the perennial devaluation of the naira as against the dollar, rising spate of inflation, burgeoning unemployment, 'high interest rate due to high demand for money by speculators and rising poverty condition' among others issues (Ogbimi, 1998). Since the implementation of the first rolling plan between 1990 and 1992, the military regimes that followed continued to roll out similar plans covering two years period each until 1999. This means the government, of the period, had the vision for national development but achieved little success. The series of plan implemented provided direction and focus about what to accomplish by the government for the benefit of the citizens. More so the plans were conceived to target *incremental* improvement in the national economy, but with little success.

It is generally argued by some policy analysts (Babangida, 1990; Ogbimi, 1998; Ogwumike, 1995; Ake, 1996; Ikelegbe, 2006; Onah, 2010) that many problems militated against effective implementation of the various national development plans in Nigeria over the years. These included corruption, lack of feasibility study and effective project analysis, poor coordination of development efforts, uncertainties in the economic and political environments occasioned by frequent regime change, lack of consultation with local communities and the private sector before formulation and implementation of the plans, shortage of specialised or skilled personnel to handle the execution of the plans intentions, dearth of reliable or valid statistical data to aid planning and execution, over ambitious estimates, balance of payment problems, volatile nature of the international economic environment and government bureaucracy and lack of continuity in policy execution process among others (Ehikioya, 2015; Ake, 1996).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Since 1962 to date, successive governments in Nigeria have formulated and implemented series of national development plans or policies with the aim of putting Nigeria on the part of sustainable development; but evidence on the ground shows that only marginal success has been recorded so far. The question is why is Nigeria still lagging behind, in terms of economic development, in spite of the huge investment made so far? This study is an attempt to examine what the challenges are and what can be done to ameliorate them. However, we have proposed that one practical solution would be to consider the option of *successive incrementalism* as propounded by Charles Lindblom.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The general aim of this study is to examine the nexus between national development planning and sustainable development in Nigeria; and to justify the need for an incremental policy option for accelerated national development. However, the specific objectives of the study include the following:

1. Examine the nexus between national development planning and sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria.
2. Explore the challenges to effective national development planning and implementation in Nigeria during the period under review.
3. Evaluate the efficacy of incremental policy option in tackling the challenges in the implementation of national development plans in Nigeria.

1.4. Research questions

Based on the above sets of objectives, the following research questions are posed:

- a) What is the nexus between national development planning and sustainable development in Nigeria?
- b) What factors hinders effective national development planning and implementation in Nigeria?
- c) c) How can incremental policy option positively enhance the implementation of national development planning in Nigeria?

1.5. Conceptual explication

For a better understanding of the subject matter, we consciously chose to provide operational definitions for the following concepts as implied in the study:

Planning

In the context of this study planning implies the act or process of deciding in advance what is to be accomplished and the means by which it can be achieved. "Planning involves selecting missions and objectives and deciding on the actions to achieve them" (Wehrich, Cannice & Koontz 2008, p. 92; NOUN, 2004).

Plan

A plan is a course of action or a framework of action detailing a set of objectives to be pursued and the means for accomplishing them.

Economic planning

This may be defined as a conscious and calculated attempt by the government to coordinate economic decision making within a foreseeable future and to influence, direct, and when or where necessary control the level and growth of a nation's principal economic variables

(income, consumption, employment, investment, saving, export and import) to achieve some predetermined development objectives (Todaro & Smith, 2009)

Development

Development in this context means sustained economic growth resulting in positive transformation of the general standard or condition of living of the people as measured over a given period of time.

Development Plan

Development plan refers to a written plan of action or strategies detailing what is to be accomplished, how to accomplish it, and for whom to accomplish it. The ultimate purpose is to ensure that economic growth is attained and sustained while living condition of the citizenry is improved in remarkable proportions.

Sustainable Development

This may be described as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet its own needs (UN, 1987).

Incremental policy

An incremental policy is that policy option or model which advocates a conservative approach to policymaking; to this end it emphasises successive limited comparison. It views existing policy as variation of old policy choices. It sees the policymaker as one who lacks the brain, time and money to fashion out a truly separate policy alternatives. Thus, the policy or decision maker conducts a small, or piece-mill efforts in public policymaking and implementation (Henry, 2009, p. 263; Sapru, 2004, p. 74). The incrementalist builds on, or modifies existing plan or policy to suit prevailing problems instead of outright abandonment of previous plan or policy.

Public policy

Public policy refers to governmental action or course of action taking in the pursuit of a conscious purpose. It is a purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in order to address a problem of concern. It is a course of action adopted and pursued by the government (Henry, 2009).

2.0. Methodology

2.1. Design of the study

Essentially, this study adopts the qualitative research design approach. The specific method used is *secondary data analysis*.

2.2. Sources of data

Data for this study are collected from secondary sources. Secondary data are essentially data sourced from already documented or profiled materials. These include publications of

governmental and non-governmental organisations, journal articles, books, newspapers and magazines, and also web pages (internet).

2.2. Data collection technique

Basically, the data for this study were collected by the researcher through accidental sampling of secondary data. Accidental sampling is a non-probability sampling technique. Wherever the researcher came across information or data relating to the topic under investigation he simply taps into any piece of such data considered relevant to the research questions.

2.3. Method of data analysis

Data for this study were analysed qualitatively. Information or data sourced were categorised and analysed according to themes. Tables and figures derived from secondary source were further subjected to analysis and re-interpretations.

3.0. Review of literature

A large body of literature exists on the subject matter of economic or national development planning in Nigeria. In fact both empirical and conceptual literature abounds in the library and the internet. However, for the purpose of this study, we would only examine the available empirical literature; the reason is that we wished to make inferential deductions based on the findings of those literature and our findings so that we might make logical conclusion.

3.1. Empirical Review

As already mentioned, empirical literature is critical to this study because we partly rely on their findings to make inferential deductions as far as this study and its methodology are concerned. Thus, the review takes the following patterns:

3.1.1. Development planning in Nigeria

It has become a norm for modern states to plan their development trajectory. This is imperative because available but scarce resources must be channeled in the most efficient manner towards meeting the targeted goals. “Even in a liberalised economy, development planning is necessary for guiding priority setting and resource allocation” (Government of Republic of Gambia (RG), 2006).

The literature on development studies and development economics is replete with analysis on the role, importance and purpose of national development planning. According to Iheanacho (2014) successive governments in Nigeria have adopted development plans as an appropriate strategy to address development challenges in the country. Tordoff (1993) observes that there is a general consensus that the instrument for both diagnosis and remedy to development is the “development plan”. In the same vein, Adedeji (1989) remarks that the economic aspirations of Nigeria since independence are perhaps best exemplified by her various development plans. The basic objective of planning in Nigeria therefore, is to accelerate the rate

of economic growth and the rate at which the level of living of the population can be raised; it is also to give her an increasing measure of control over her own destiny (FRN, 1962).

Since the past five and half decades, Nigeria has embarked on series of development plans to fast-track the rate of economic growth and improves the standard of living of the people. The first real effort culminated in the emergence of the “Ten-Year Development and Welfare Policy 1945-1956.” This development plan was essentially authored by the colonial authority with the objective of promoting colonial interest as against Nigerian interest (Iheanacho, 2014; Onah, 2010; Egonmwan and Ibodje, 2001). As argued, the Ten-Year Plan and the subsequent Revised Plan covering the period 1951- 1956 were not development plans in the true sense of the word; **why?**

First and more appropriately, they constituted a series of uncoordinated projects which had not been related to any overall economic target (FRN, 1962). Secondly the main emphasis of these plans was on building up the transport and communication systems; this was chiefly meant to aid easy flow of raw materials to Europe and North America. Thirdly and finally too, one major error which frequently permeated these plans was that entirely new and unrelated projects were readily substituted for the original programmes without proper analysis and coordination with other projects. This means there was a gap between policymaking and continuity; in essence the plans lacked incremental application.

First National Development Plan (1962-1968) was launched after the attainment of independence in 1960 and by 1962, the first National Development Plan (1962-1968) was launched. The objectives of the plan were among others: (a) to bring about equal distributions of national income; to speed up the rate of economic growth; to generate savings for investments purpose and also to reduce dependence of the national economy on external capital for the development of the nation; (b) to get enough capital for the development of manpower; (c) to increase the standard of living of the masses particularly in respect of food, housing, health and clothing, and to develop the infrastructure of the nation (Onyenwigwe, 2009). It had a proposed total investment expenditure of about N2, 132 million. The public sector was expected to invest about N1, 352.3million while the remaining investment expenditure of N780 million was expected to be made by the private sector (Obi, 2006; Iheanacho, 2014). Although this plan made some milestone in Nigeria’s chequered development planning history (as the plan facilitated the execution of some major projects including the Nigerian Security and Minting Plant, the Jebba Paper Mill, the Sugar Mill, Niger Dam, the Niger Bridge at Onitsha, Kam-ji Dam and Port Harcourt Refinery) it however failed to accomplished major objectives because fifty percent (50%) of resources needed to finance the plan was to come from external sources; unfortunately only fourteen percent (14%) of the external finance was received (Ogwumike, 1995).

Additionally, the collapse of the First Republic due to military interregnum and the emergence of the civil war also disrupted the plan implementation (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011)

After the civil war in 1970, **the second national development plan (1970-1974)** was launched, the plan priorities were in agriculture, industry, transport, manpower, defence, electricity, communication and water supply and provision of social services (Ogwumike, 1995). This plan also coincided with the post-war reconstruction policy known as the 3Rs- that is, *reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation*.

The core objectives of this plan included the following: a United, strong and self reliant nation; a just and egalitarian society; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and a free and democratic society (Onyenwigwe, 2009).

Although the Second NDP also attached importance to agriculture, industry and the development of high level and intermediate level manpower, the plan was however beset with the implementation virus as was the case with preceding plans. Onah (2010) alludes to this fact that “the high priority given to agriculture and industry was not matched with action during the implementation of the plan”. One of the basic tenets of Second NDP is the indigenisation policy. Indigenisation policy was purposively designed to encourage Nigerians to participate fully in the commercial, industrial and financial activities of the Nigerian economy.

In **the third plan**, covering the period **1975-1980**, emphasis was placed on rural development and the need to revamp agricultural sector by putting it on the path of economic growth and prosperity; this came about on the heels of declining agricultural outputs which hitherto served as the major contributor to the GDP of the country (Oseni, 2013). The third NDP had a projected massive investment of N30 billion which was later increased to N43.3billion. This represented ten times that of the Second Plan and about 15 times that of the First Plan (Obi, 2006). The objectives of the plan were: to increase per capita income; promote even distribution of income; reduce the level of unemployment; increase the supply of higher level manpower; diversification of the economy; balanced development and indigenisation of economic activities (Obi, 2006).

The approach of the plan was to utilise resources from oil to develop the productive capacity of the economy and thereby permanently improve the standard of living of the people. Therefore, the plan was premised on the need for the public sector to provide facilities for the poorer sections of the population including electrification, water supplies, health services, urban housing and education (Egonmwan and Ibodje, 2001).

The fourth plan (1981-1985) recognised the role of social services, health services, etc. The plan was aimed at bringing about improvement in the living conditions of the people. The specific objectives were: to increase the real income of the average citizen, more even

distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups, increased dependence on the country's material and human resources, a reduction in the level of unemployment and underemployment (Ogwumike, 1995).

During these periods, Nigeria's enormous oil wealth was not invested to build a viable industrial base for the country, as much as it failed to launch a productive agricultural revolution to alleviate mass poverty. For instance, the Green Revolution Programme that replaced Operation Feed the Nation failed to generate enough food for the masses. In the recent past, various strategies for development have also been tried with little or no result; among these were the structural adjustment programme (SAP) which was anchored on the rolling plans of 1992 up to 1999; vision 2010, national economic empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS), vision 20:2020 amongst pockets of other development programmes.

Besides the general challenges confronting the national development plans examined above, one common disease inherent in the plans is that they lacked continuity or *incremental application*. Each regime would usually abandon previous programme or plan of the preceding regimes; in the process scarce resources are either misapplied or misappropriated or both. This practice does not guarantee sustainable improvement in the nation's quest for development.

3.1.2. Sustainable Development

Since the convergence of the world summit on environment and development chaired by Gro Harlem Bruntland in 1987, the idea of sustainable development (SD) gained currency in development discussion and literature. Taking environmental factors into account, SD assumes that development is sustainable insofar as it meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UN, 1987). Relating the above to development planning, we could say that sustainable socio-economic development is a function of sound national economic planning. Most countries of the world have adopted SD models in order to transmit development efforts beyond the present to future generations. This requires careful planning and implementation strategy. Some countries (E.g. US, Europe and East Asia) have witnessed success in this direction; however most parts of the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) are still grappling with severe implementation strains.

SD has been associated with three core pillars: social, environmental and economic (Global Learning, n.d). These pillars represent three basic assumptions about SD: they are (a) it must have equality across society, (b) it must not degrade the environment, and (c) it must result in economic growth (Global Learning, n.d). Thus, all three pillars must be present for a country to develop sustainably.

4.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is rooted on the theory of *incrementalism* or the *science of muddling through*. Incrementalism or incremental decision-making was a coinage of Charles E. Lindblom (1959). Lindblom adduced a number of terms to incrementalism; they include: *the science of muddling through; branch approach to policy-making; successive limited comparisons, and disjointed incrementalism* (Lindblom, 1959). This model of policy-making originally came as critique of the rational-comprehensive model by Herbert Simon. Deriving inferences from his American background, Lindblom holds the opinion that the ideal approach towards making a sound public policy was to take it step-by-step, and by small degrees. Public policy must proceed through a succession of incremental changes (Sapru, 2004; Lindblom, 1959); and previous policy must be considered satisficing and legitimate (Henry, 2009). Lindblom further argues that:

Policy is not made once and for all; it is made and remade endlessly. Policy-making is a process of successive approximation to some desired objectives in which what is desired continues to change under reconsideration (Lindblom, 1959).

In the view of Lindblom, the science of policy-making requires incremental conservatism; the policymaker considers only marginal changes to existing policy. Instead of outright rationality and comprehensiveness in the art of policy-making, it is more rational and effective to implement marginal changes and modification to prevailing policy. Indeed experiences from most parts of the developed world (USA, UK, Germany etc) have shown that public policy-making takes incremental route more than rational-comprehensive dimension.

In spite of the merit associated with the principle of incrementalism, a number of problems are believed to have undermined its efficiency in the science of policy analysis. Firstly, and like Dror argues: incrementalism is profoundly conservative and is suitable in those situations where policy is deemed to be working or is satisfactory, or where problem are quite stable over time, and where there are resources available (Sapru, 2004). Secondly, this model of decision making as argues by Ikelegbe (2006) is subjective; “it fails to realise that new values need to be incorporated as policy-making process progresses, or entire new decision need to be made”. Again it fails to observe that at all levels of the society, fundamental decisions are made from time to time. These limitations notwithstanding, incremental decision-making remains a powerful model for analysing public policies, particularly for its emphasis on the political realities in decision-making (Ikelegbe, 2006).

5.1. Discussion

The goal of every nation is to offer her citizens the utmost she can within the limits of available resources. That is why the mission/vision of government, corporate entities, agencies and other bodies are couched around this philosophy. It follows therefore that

policies designed by nations - social, economic, technological, environmental and agricultural or political – are geared towards ensuring that the challenges facing society are minimised if not completely obliterated in order to ensure the common good of all. However the quantum, types and modalities for implementing these policies vary from one society to another (Omoregbe & Odigie, 2017).

Experience has shown that Nigeria is a fantastic maker of public policies, but is often a loafer when it bothers on implementation. As earlier observed, a number of intervening variables were at play against the success of public policy-making and implementation in the country; development planning is therefore, not an exception. Among the myriad of reasons given for performance of NDPs in Nigeria are: inconsistencies in plans implementation and bad governance, inadequate funding, monumental corruption in high places, frequent regime change and political violence, inadequate statistical data on which most policies are based, unhealthy political rivalry, lack of adequate but skilled personnel and lack of intensive feasibility studies amongst other challenges. We therefore, elect to state that of all the problems highlighted above, the *non-incremental* nature of the formulation and implementation of the NDPs was a huge cog on the wheel of progress as far as Nigerian experience has shown.

5.2. Non-incremental nature of Nigeria’s public policies: The bane of NDPs failure

Beginning from the era of Nigeria’s independence in 1960, specifically from 1962, to the present, it’s been a harvest of one development plan or the other. The figure below illustrates, graphically, the historical trajectory antecedent to Nigeria’s development planning paradigms.

Figure1. Development policies/plans in Nigeria since independence according to regimes

Regime (s)	Period Covered	Nature of Development Policy/Plan
First Republic (Alhaji Abubakar, Tafawa Balewa)	1962-1968 (Originally scheduled to end in 1966 but extended due to the first military coup d’état in January, 1968)	First National Development Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Export promotion • Import substitution
Military Era I (General Yakubu Gowon)	1968-1970 1970-1974 (plan later extended 1975)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil war era • Second National Development Plan. This plan embodies the 3Rs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reconstruction ➤ Rehabilitation ➤ Reconciliation
Military Era II (Gens. Murtala Muhammed & Olusegun Obasanjo)	1975-1979	Third national Development Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenisation policy • Land Use Decree • Operation Feed the Nation

		(OFN)
Second Republic (Alhaji Shehu Sagari)	1979-1983	Fourth National Development Plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Revolution
Military Era III (Gen. Muhammadu Buhari)	1983-1985	War Against Indiscipline (WAI)
Military Era IV (Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida- aka IBB)	1985-1989	Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP): SAP was a Bretton Woods economic recovery policy
Military/Interim Government Era (IBB/ Chief Ernest Shonekan)	1990-1992 1992-1995	Three years National Roll Plans following the suspension of SAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First National Rolling Plan 1990-1992 • Second National Rolling Plan 1992-1995
Military Era V (Gen. Sani Abacha)	1996-1998	Vision 2010
Fourth Republic (Chief Olusegun Obasanjo)	1999-2007	Streams of economic development programmes/ strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Poverty Eradication Programme (PAP) • National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and its complementary implementations organs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ States Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS) ➢ Local Economic Empowerment and development strategies (LEEDS)
Fifth Republic (Alhaji Umaru Yar' Adua/Goodluck Ebele Jonathan)	2007-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven-Point Agenda • Vision 20:20-20 • Sure-P and a number of other development programmes.
Sixth Republic (President Muhammadu Buhari)	2017- 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (N-ERGP) • National Social Investment Programmes (NSIPs)

		Note that: The implementation of this plan is on-going while this study is being carried out.
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Source: Omorogbe & Odigie (2017). *Social Change: An Introductory Text*, Benin: Lucosem-PHI; pp 110-112. Note that the Author of this paper has modified or enlarged the above table with additional data.

A cursory look at the table above gives an on-the-spot assessment of the trends or dimensions of public policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on national development planning. As illustrated in the table above, we could see that development planning/public policy-making in Nigeria, over the years under review, has been highly inconsistent and *non-incremental* in terms of formulation and implementation.

In our view therefore, we elect to say that the fluid nature of our national policy-making system is a function of amalgamated causes; prominent among which are: (a) frequent regime change occasioned by incessant political violence - often master-minded by perennial military coups; (b) policy inconsistency and poor governance regimes; (c) paucity of data on which most policies are based; this often lead to wrong assumptions and inaccurate predictions about policy outcome; (d) non-commitment to the provisions of the guiding documents and lack of disciplined implementation; (e) corruption, financial/material profligacy and lack of transparency on the part of officers entrusted with implementation of public policy; and (f) the non-incremental approach to plan/policy implementation in Nigeria (Omorogbe & Odigie, 2017).

Of all the factors identified above, and which we have stated repeatedly in this study, the *non-incremental* approach to development planning and public policy-making and implementation in Nigeria is pervasive and fundamental to development planning failure in the country. Evidently, as the table above illustrates, Nigeria's chequered history of policy-making/national development planning has been characterised by inconsistency and fluidity. Frequent regime changes, particularly due to incessant military coups, preponderantly led to policy flirtation. Illustratively, and based on our everyday experience, we know for certain that the phenomenon called *growth* must accedes to or obeys the law of *incrementalism* for development to take place either in humans/animals or plants as they case may be. For instance, when a seed is planted it would require water or moisture for it to germinate; and when that happens, the seedling must be nurtured to maturity by constantly weeding off grasses and pruning the parts of the plants not required for a healthy growth. Where and when necessary, fertilizer may be applied to increase growth or yield; this entails step-by- step method. Either qualitatively or quantitatively, growth must be *incremental* for a healthy development to occur. This is lacking as far as Nigerian experience in development planning is concern. Rather than

build on existing policies or make incremental changes or modifications to them, so as to suit prevailing circumstances, Nigerian policymakers, flirtatiously engage in futile experiment with one policy option or the other.

The inconsistent manner in which public policies are formulated and implemented in the country call to question whether the leaders who formulated them in the first place, were truly committed to the implementation. The answer to the question, and based on the Nigerian experience over the year, is a positive no; in fact experience shows they were not very mindful of the implementation which is key to actualising plan's objectives.

6.1. Answers to research questions

Having come thus far we would want to, at this stage, provide answer to our research questions. First, we sought to know what the **nexus between national development planning and sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria is?** The common argument or consensus among scholars and corporate entities, based on their individual or corporate experiences, is that a well formulated and implemented development plan is a *sine-qua-non* to sustainable socio-economic development in any nation (FRN, 1962; Adedeji, 1989; Tordoff, 1993; Republic of Gambia, 2006; Iheanacho, 2014; Omorogbe & Odigie, 2017). Evidences from Europe, US and the Asian tigers proved that there is a correlation between effective national development planning and sustainable socio-economic development. Thus, a well planned economy is likely to attain the desired level of socio-economic development. On the contrary, a poorly planned economy is likely to meander through its way; this has grave implications for national development. Nigeria is a case example of country with poor attitude towards national development planning.

Our second research question sought to know **what factors challenge effective implementation of national development planning in Nigeria.** As highlighted severally in this study, the challenges to effective implementation of national development planning in Nigeria include amongst other factors the following: dearth of reliable statistical data on which to base plan, inconsistency in plan formulation and implementation, non-commitment to the provision of the guiding documents and lack of disciplined implementation, frequent change in government often characterised by political violence, financial corruption and related offences, over ambitious nature of most plans, shortage of funds due to over reliance on oil revenue, inadequate skilled but disciplined personnel, poor plan evaluation and monitoring, weak state institutions, and more damning is the absence of *incremental* implementation of national development plans in the country over the years.

7.1. Conclusion

Based on empirical literature examined and analysed, we found that the poor performance of national development plans in Nigeria over the period under review has been a function of several but inter-related problems: (a) weak institutions and governance system; (b) dearth of reliable statistics; (c) gaps between policy formulation and implementation; (d) inconsistency in plans formulations and implementations; (e) unstable government and polity; (f) over ambitious nature of most plans; (g) financial corruption and other related offences; (h) poor project evaluation and monitoring; and inadequate skilled but disciplined personnel. However, these problems notwithstanding, we conclude that positive results shall be witnessed, if *incremental policy option* is implemented to the later. This requires discipline and commitment to plan's goals or objectives by the implementers.

7.2. The way forward

This study examines the nexus between national development planning and sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria. The paper makes a case for incremental policy-making option. From the literature examined or the data collected, it is understood that besides the problems confronting the success of national development planning in the country, the inconsistent or *non-incremental* manner in which implementations of the plans were conducted was huge bait for their failure over the years. Based on this understanding the following recommendations are made to serve as possible panacea to the problems:

- (i) Urgent, yet thoughtful, consideration must be given to *incremental* implementation of national development planning/public policy in Nigeria. This will ensure continuity and incremental changes in policy formulation and implementation as the situation demands.
- (ii) Corruption must be vigorously fought to a logical standstill. Where scarce resources are drained through corrupt acts it would be difficult to invest funds into any meaningful development projects. The on-going war against corruption may be sustained.
- (iii) For any meaningful development to take place, the country requires a stable polity devoid of political violence. The prevailing democratic rule must be allowed to function in consonance with the principle of the rule of law.
- (iv) There must be good governance and accountability on the part of those who are entrusted with public resources.
- (v) There is need to enhance our statistical data by making them accurate and reliable.
- (vi) There is need to put in place an effective evaluation and monitoring system. This is to ensure that resources are applied expediently in line with plan's objectives.

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