

An Assessment of Policy Implementation and Decision Making in Nigerian Public Service

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Abstract

The paper appraised socio-economic and political development in the public service, furthermore it analysed the challenges facing policy implementation in the public service as well as examined the role play by the human resources practitioners in meeting these challenges and operationalized policy in the public service.

Public service is the bedrock upon which the government is seated and balanced, it is the hub for the implementation of programmes, policies, plans and action of government. More importantly, the public service is the vehicle for service delivery and good governance.

Primary and secondary data were employed for the study. Primary data were collected through the

administration of questionnaire and conduct of in-depth interviews. Secondary data were obtained from relevant textbooks, official documents. The data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The findings of study indicate that the public policies has made those in political authority to be embodiment of the collective aspirations of the people and to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the people as well as uplift their material and physical conditions.

The paper concluded that public policy is meant to bring about socio-economic and political development to the public service.

Keywords: Policy formulation, public policy, public service, decision making, human

resources management

Introduction

Before addressing the challenges of policy implementation in the public service and the role which human resources practitioners can play in meeting these challenges, we intend to operationalise policy. The need for a thorough opinion of what policy entails arises, in part, from its “replace” in both academic discuss and the conduct of government business as well as its contested nature at the intervention of political science and public administration. Variously referred to in the literature as policy analysis, policy science, decision theory and decision-making, it is the subject of much theorizing and debate.

Another point which must be made is that “policy” is not just an academic discourse but is the essence of government in action. Government action is, or should be driven by specific policies, ranging from grand policies involving paradigm and it shifts to minor or incremental adjustment of existing policies or new policies formulated

within the ambit of the ruling paradigm. In this sense, policy is a very practical exercise which has long term implications not only on individuals but also on, groups, organization nations, and states.

Decision making could be seen as a process of identifying problems and developing alternative solutions out of which solutions are selected and implemented. Decision is however selections from among alternatives of a course of action in order to achieve the organization goals. (Anderson: 1975). Olaniyi (1998) sees decision-making as a process by which a solution is sought to a problem through the process of selective elimination of alternative solutions.

According to Ikelegbe (2006) sees policy formulation as an input from the totality of the environment that is internal and external environments of the organizations. These include demands, pressure, requests (for new products and price variation); petitions from members of the organization and clients), etc. These are normally directed to those who

formulate policies, for analysis, aggregation, and taking appropriate action to meet the needs and circumstance of each input. Dror (1973) sees policy implementation as the conversation of the various actions or decisions taken, sorting them out, and allocating adequate resources for implementation, according to the ranking (priority) of needs.

In view of the foregoing, the study examines the socio-economic and political development in the public service, furthermore it assess the performance of government in relation to its decision making vis-à-vis policy implementation challenges facing decision making.

Literature Review

According to Oribabor (2012), human resources constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nation's capital, and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources from social, economic

and political organizations and carry forward national development. Obviously, a nation which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

On the other hand, the human resources of a nation comprises men and women, who are under the ages of production or active services who engage in the production of goods and services and who are the greatest, and indeed, the most precious assets of the nation. This point was vividly captured by (Oribabor, 2012) who asserted that:

Human resources management constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nation's capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agents who

accumulate capital, explore natural resources; build social, economic and political organizations; and carry forward national development.

The indices of measuring national growth and development hinge on the conditions of the human resources which a nation processes (Ikelegbe, 1996).

Human resources constitute interactions of people with national resource that constitute the development process. The nation depends on man's resources for the supply of physical labour, technical and professional skills which are genuine to effective and efficient planning and implementation of development policies, programmes, projects, and daily activities.

Human resources practitioner vary widely according to the extent to which they are generalist (e.g, Human resource director or human resource

manager), or specialist (e.g head of learning and development, head of talent management, or head of reward), the level at which the work (strategy, executive or administrative) the needs of the organization, the context within which they work and their own capabilities, human resource practitioners is an increasingly popular euphemism for the management of social welfare programmes, many jurisdictions that had departments of welfare have replaced them with departments of human resources (Valokwu, 2006).

According to Fagbemi (2013) defined public service as the government parastatals, which are the operation arm of government ministries as well as department and agencies. Public service is the bedrock upon which the government is seated and balanced. It is the hub for the implementation of programmes, policies, plans and action of government. More importantly, the public service is the vehicle for service delivery and good governance. The quality of the public service largely

determines the pace of development of any nation (Ezeani, 2009).

Policy formulation involves the processing and conversion of demands and inputs from the environment of the political system which have attained the agenda status into policy. Before the demands come out as public, particularly its goal and the strategy for its achievement are clearly stipulated. The importance of goal setting lies in the fact that the success of any policy depends on it. If unrealistic goal are set, such policies are set, such policies are bound to fail. That is the more reason why government is always assisted at this stage by other policy makers like professionals, policy scientist etc. the output of policy formulation are usually expressed in legislative Act, Decrees, Law which make know the adopted policy and strategies for implementation (Wisdom, 2012).

According to Adeleke (2012) sees decision-making as central to all activities of a manager in the work environment. A policy, while involving a purposive course of action, also

involving the conscious making of decision on some issue, the implementation and the enforcement of the decision. Decision making is the actual selection from among alternatives, a course of action. It is at core of planning because a plan cannot exist unless a decision has been made.

Policy implementation is the phase when the adopted public policy is operationalized; it involves the organization of human and material resources towards the interpretation and actualization of public policy. It is the process of giving effects to policy so that the objectives could be achieved. Policy implementation is officially and ideally the institutional responsibility of the bureaucracy. Usually, it is at this stage that people become aware of the existence of new policy. During this stage of implementation four important issues deserve adequate notice. The first is the policy to be implemented must be clear, specific and unambiguous. Second is that of the organization saddled with the implementation of that policy, and thirdly, the target group to be affected.

Finally, notice must be made of the environment within which the entire implementation process will take place. In Nigeria, public policy is implemented by a complex system of administrative agencies such as the legislature whose approval is needed for political appointments, the courts are to enforce laws and regularize dispute such as 1981 revenue allocation bills. In fact court can nullify the implementation of a particular policy through their decisions (Stokey, 1979).

The policy process, according Anderson (1979) is a purposive course of action followed an actor or actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. The importance of this definition is that, it differentiates a policy from a decision.

Friedrich (1963) defined policy as a proposed course of action of a person, group or government within a given environment, providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to utilize and overcome in an effort

to reach a goal or realize an objective or purpose.

Ikelegbe (2006) defines policy as a course setting, involving decisions of the widest ramifications and largest time perspective in the like of an organization. Decision-making is central to every organization as there must always be “tasks” to be done for the effective running of the organization. Much of human behaviour is simply a reflection of the decisions people make and the processes that regulate and control these choices or understand and predict human behaviour. Some disciplines such as economics, statistics and operations research, approach decision-making from a normative standpoint with a fundamental interest in how choices or decisions should be made. Others including psychology, sociology, political science and public administration are fundamentally concerned with understanding and predicting human behaviour, including those areas of behaviour that are the result of human choice and decisions. Decision-making process is

therefore critical not only for the explanation of individual behaviour but also for the behaviour of complex organizations.

Organizational decision-making involves both cognitive and social processes. The events that intervene between the identification of problem for occasion for decision-making and a solution or decision are both intrapersonal and interpersonal. It is the interpersonal or social aspects of decision-making that are of most relevance to policy making processes. But in another way, policies have wider ramifications and longer time perspective than decisions. Useful definitions of decision state that it is a conscious choice between two or more alternative. This definitions is useful to the extent that it encompasses both the simple decisions we make in everyday life, e.g. what dress to wear, and the more wide-ranging decisions that a government or wielders of state power do make and which tend to affect the lives of most citizens if not all (Adamolekun, 2004)

There are three traditional stages in the policy process. These are policy formulation; policy implementation; and policy evaluation. Policy formulation is the development of necessary and acceptable courses of action in the form of legislation, executive directives or judicial pronouncements all add up to what we refer to as policy formulation. In modern governmental systems, policy formulation is considered the responsibility of those who wield the instrumentalities of government (either by election, selection or both). Nonetheless, it is also recognized that modern government is to replicated for the wielders of governmental powers some to master. As such, the unelected government officials who are variously referred to as administrators, public servants, or bureaucrats, have been recognized as key players in the policy formulation process thereby agreeing with the British view as summed up in the declaration of the North cote-Trevelyan Report of 1854 to the intent that:

It may safely be asserted, as matter now stand, the government of the country could not be carried on without the aid of an efficient body of permanent officers, occupying a position duly subordinate to the crown and parliament, yet possessing sufficient independence, character, ability and experience to be able to advise, assist and to some extent influence those who are from

time to time set over them (Erero, 2007).

Theoretical Concept

Several theoretical approaches such as class theory, Elite theory, Group theory, System theory, institutionalism theory among others, could be useful for discussing issues under consideration. However, system theory and class theory holds the key for analyzing human resource practitioners and public service policy implementation in Nigeria. Man's capacity for innovation and order is clearly demonstrated by his continuing attempt to conquer his environment and make it a more comfortable and less hazardous place to live in. In absence of such qualities, probably human life would have been equivalent to Hobbes (1651) description of human life as being "nasty, brutish, solitary and very short". With the rapid increase in size and complexity of groups, associations and institutions, the need for a more efficient administrative machinery arises in so far

as the attainment of organizational goals is concerned (Omoleke, 2004).

Decision theory involves elements borrowed from theories concerning information processing within individuals and includes such activities as searching for alternative solutions, giving sequential attention to goals, and changing the level of aspiration. It can be agreed however, that the process of problem-solving and decision-making; when carried out in an organizational context are different from the same processes carried out by individuals in at least one aspect.

The Nigerian Experience in Policy Formulation and Decision Making

The Nigerian experience from the pre-independence period to the present shows that the administrators have played and continue to play roles in policy formulation whether in the “corridors of powers” or in the “bedroom of power”. There are other actors who play roles in the policy formulation process in Nigeria and these include; international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, the big powers, traditional rulers

and donor agencies among others, then, the policy formulation experience in Nigeria would be negative. We have, as a nation, witnessed more policy failures than successes (Coker, 2002).

According to Adamolekun (2005), policy implementation refers to the activities that are carried out in the light of established policies. In the opinion of Egonmwam (1993) it refers to the process of covering financial, material, technical and human input into outputs-goods and services.

Akhakpe (2005) defines policy implementation as a stage of policy making between the establishment of a policy (such as the passage of a legislative act, the issuing of an executive order, or the promulgation of a regulatory rule) and the consequence of the policy for the people whom it affects. It also involves a wide variety of actions such as issuing and enforcing directives, disbursing and hiring personnel, etc (Akhakpe, 2005).

Babawale (1996) opines that implementation is what happens after laws are passed authorizing a programmes,

a policy, a benefit, or some kind of tangible output. And that the term refers to the set of activities that follow statements intent about programme goals and desired results by government officials. Implementation encompasses actions (and non actions) by a variety of actors, especially bureaucrats, designed to put programmes into effect, ostensibly in such a way as to achieve goals.

The need for clarity and specificity in the policy to be implemented is an obvious prerequisite for effective implementation. With regard to the implementation organization, the structure of the organization and the quality of its personnel. in examining the target group to be affected by the new policy, the environment within which a settled policy is to be implemented, the important point to make is that there are factors in the environment that will influence how the policy is implemented as well as be influenced by the implementation of the policy (NOUN, 2012).

Three sets of activities involved in the evaluation of policies. The measurement, comparing outputs or performance against the desired results, and correcting any deviations or inadequacies. A policy can be evaluated by the policy makers, those in charged with implementing the policy, members of the public affected by the specific policy under consideration and outside experts or consultants. The public's measurement of policy is usually a subjective exercise a determination of the content to which specific policy outputs fulfills the expectations of different groups. The comparison that one individual or group or individuals carries out will not necessarily be the same as that of another individual or group. This means that different and sometimes contradictory verdicts can result from the public evaluation of policies (Erero, 2007).

Policy Failure: The Nigerian Example

A lot of factors account for the failure of public policy in Nigeria among which the following could be easily identified. The first has to do with the

problem of administrative confusion and incompetence. Rather than employ trained experts to administer complex projects that are vital to economic development selection of project coordinators are based on other considerations like political, ethnic, religions etc. Hence a well laid out project that would have been tremendously beneficial to the social are burgled and sacrificed at altar of nepotism consideration. Related to administrative problem is lack of adequate support for government policies by civil servants and bureaucrats. This is usually the case in most developing countries where the civil servants are poorly remunerated thereby exposing them to corrupt practices which in turn stifle the effective implementation of government policies. Another factors, has to do with long delays in execution. This has led sometimes to project abandonment after huge sums of money has been expended on the initial take off (Coker, 2002).

According to Akhakpe (2005) he identified another problem of frequent

policy changes arising from change of government. This has led to restructuring or even outright cancellation of policies adopted by previous government. This scenario has been a conduct pipe through which human and material resources are wasted in Nigeria. It also leaves the public in a state of uncertainty as to what actually constitutes government policy at a point in time. However, the several lacks of funds to execute necessary developmental projects is another issue of concern. The problem of information is another one. Without proper information about a problem, no meaningful can be formulated. More often than not, information made available policy makers are distorted or falsified occasionally. This affect the choice of policy options which may end up not achieving the desired goal (Olaniyi, 1998).

The constraints of Policy implementation in the Public Service:

The Role of Human Resource Practitioners previously, reference was made to 'human inputs' on 'personnel'

as critical to the policy process. Also, policy or public is concerned with people. People make policies, people implement policies, people evaluate policies and people are either the beneficiaries of public policies or those who are adversely affected by public policies. If the above a correct portrayals policy, then Human Resource Practitioners have role to play in the policy process but most importantly in policy implementation (Okotoni, 2004).

Ubeku (1975), see Human Resource Management from two different perspective, first, he identifies Human Resource Management (HRM) as a function or responsibility of every manager (administrator) or supervisor who has people under him all of whom are working towards the achievement of desired goals. Secondly, he refers to HRM as a function in an organization which is performed by a particular department, the personnel department.

Ubeku (1975) asserts that good management of people is vital to the success of any organization and this is done not by a department known as the

personnel department, by individual managers under whom the employees work. Every manager who depends on the productive efforts of other people has a personnel responsibility which must not be delegated to other departments. It is in these sense of seeing every manager, administrator and supervisor as playing the HRM function that we can appreciate their role in policy implementation (Ubeku, 1975).

The Challenge of Managing Tension

Usually, the purpose of a new policy is to bring about some kind of change in a given situation. It is in this process of transforming an actual situation into a desired state of affairs (usually assumed to be somewhat qualitatively superior that tensions arise. This means, then, that the process of policy implementation generates tension. This tension will be noticeable both within and between the implementing organization, the target group and the environmental factors. For example, tension can arise within an administrative implementing organization whose personnel is

inadequate for implementing a policy assigned to it. The management of this tension, wherever it occurs, determines to a great extent the success of policy implementation (Ikeiegbe, 2006).

The Constraints of Institutionalization

Although, the implementation of a new policy does not necessarily lead to the creation of institutions, in reality, new institutions, are sometimes created to implement the policy. The problem then is that personnel in the traditional implementation agencies resent this and do everything to sabotage the policy. It is also a vote of no confidence in existing institutions. To avoid the problems that arise from this, it is necessary to either institutionalize the new organization fairly quickly or ensuring that existing institutions are strengthened to perform adequately especially through training and development of personnel (Ikelegbe,2006).

The Challenge of Politics

In every regime type, the policy process is often political or politicized. This extends to the implementation stage. It is the duty of the administrator

to know how to manage politics for the good of the citizens.

The Challenge of Managing Feedback

In the process of actually implementing a new policy, new tension might be generated that could relate back or are fed back to the implementation process. Sometimes, in the course of policy implementation, new demands emerge that have to be transmitted to the policy making machinery. Such demands are then proceed and transformed into one or policies that in turn have to be implemented. In other word the formulation and implementation of policies are not completely distinct phases of activity, there is no definite and to the policy implementation process (Erero, 2007).

Methodology

The study covered Ekiti, Ondo and Osun States which were randomly selected from the six Stats in the southwestern Nigeria. The study population comprises top civil servant in the selected state from Grade 14 above (15 per State), Community Leaders (15 per State), Members of Civil Societies

(10 per State) and Human Rights, Activist (10 Per State), totaling 160 respondents. Two major research instruments were employed namely; questionnaire and interviews. A set of questionnaire was administered on the respondent of Civil Servants, Community Leaders, member of the Civil Societies and Human Rights Activist or order to elicit information on assessment of the performance of government in relation to its decision making vis-à-vis policy implementation challenges facing decision making in the public service. The questionnaires which

were administered personally by the research recorded a total of 150 valid and completed copies that were retrieved representing 100% completion rate. Interviews were conducted with the top management (The Chief of Staffs, Head of Civil Services and 9 purposively selected Directors of the selected States. These Officials were selected for interview because of their official position and direct involvement in day-to-day decision making at the state and federal levels. The information from the interviews further enriched the quality of data for the study.

Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: The Actors in Public Policy Formulation, Implementation Responses

Political Executive		Legislature		Bureaucratic	
Frequency	Percentages (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
150	100	150	100	150	100

Source: Fieldwork, April, 2012

From the Table 1, all the respondents, 150 (100%) believed that Political Executive, Legislature and Bureaucratic are the major actors in policy

formulation and implementation at the state level. Other actors as listed by the respondents at times include interest

Group Ruling Class, Special Commissions/Panels.

The significance of these data on the fact that policy formulation and implementation is not individualistic and that decision are jointly made by major actors such as the Executive (Governors, Deputy Governors, and other members of the Executive Council) members of House of Assemblies, as well as top

Management Staff of the Ministries. These set of people are playing important roles in policy formulation and implementation in the selected states, since policy formulation and implementation is central to smooth running of the government therefore, these set of state officials have to take part in policy formulation and implementation.

Table 2: The Level of Involvement of Different Actors in the Policy Formulation and Implementation and Implementation at the State Level.

Actors	Options	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Political Executive	Excellent	100	100
	Fair	00	00
	Low	00	00
	Total	150	100
Legislature	Excellent	95	63.3
	Fair	55	36.7
	Low	00	0
	Total	150	100
Bureaucrats	Excellent	10	6.7
	Fair	98	65.3
	Low	42	28
	Total	150	100

Source: Fieldwork, May, 2012

Table 2 shows that 150 (100%) respondents believe that the Political Executive Contribute to policy formulation and implementation to excellent. This is because most of the

public policies relating to the state and federal governance and administration emanate from the political executive, and all policies, even after it after have been passed into the law by the Legislature,

must be approved by the Executive before it could be implemented. As touching the Legislature, 95 (66.3%) of the respondents believed that Legislature contribute to policy formulation and implementation in the state to excellent, while 55(36.7%) of the respondents believed that they contribute to fair extent. The reason for this according to them is that political executive do influence public policies. The executive achieve this normally by inducing the legislature arm.

Regarding the Bureaucrats contribute to policy formulation and implementation to fair extent 98(65.3) and low extent 42(28%), while excellent extent to (6.7%). The reason given by the respondents was that the Bureaucrats are used in compiling areas where public policies are needed to be made, they are at the “policy formulation and implementation place just to watch,

and not to act”. The respondents equally added that, the above listed actors do not have the same opportunity to contribute to public policy and not all of them are free to contribute to policy formulation and implementation without fear or intimidation.

The significance of these data rested on the fact that no all the perceived actors are actually acting. There is “super actor” which is the Executive. Due to the executive powers and wealth they can turn anything to suit their whims and caprices. The executive do influence legislature to her side and could easily lord herself over the bureaucrats. The bureaucrats only administer policies determined usually by the political executive and legislature which can be jettisoned in political arena. The bureaucrats are just observers and onlookers of decision making in the state.

Table 3: The Constraints Forcing Policy Implementation in Nigeria

Factors	SA	A	D	SD
Corruption	150 (100%)			
Change in government	100 (66.7%)	50 (33.3%)		
Bad Leadership	150 (100%)			
Favoritism	150 (100%)			

Lack of Political Kill Funding Complexity of Programme chosen	126 (84%)		70(46.7%) 110 (73.36)	80 (53.3%) 40 (26.7%)
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Source: Fieldwork, April, 2012

Table 3 above presents the challenges facing policy formulation and implementation at the state level. It can be seen from the table that 150 (100%) respondents strongly agreed that corruption among the major actors of public policies making is a serious factor that inhibit policy implementation at the state level. This shows that all the respondents believed that corruption is a serious threat to socio development in Nigeria. On change of government 100 (66.7%) indicated strongly agreed and 50(33.3%) also indicated that change in government also constitute a challenges to policy implementation, it is noted that there is no continuity of programmes in Nigeria’s system of governance. As the administration goes, so its programme except on rare occasion where new administration continue with its predecessors Programme.

The respondents 150 (100%) indicated strongly agreed to the fact that bad leadership is a challenge to policy implementation, that is bad leaders make bad decision making. Furthermore, all the 150 (100%) respondents indicated strongly agreed that favouritism also constitute a challenge to policy implementation. The major actors due to personal interest do favour themselves and their “God fathers and Leaders” in any decision making. Similarly, 126 (84%) and 24 (16%) respondents respectively indicated strongly agreed and agreed that lack of political will is one of the challenges facing policy implementation. The political will is one of the key factors government policy formulation and implementation.

On funding 70 (46.7%) and 80 (53.3%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that fund is not a barrier but corruption and

favoritism. The respondents explain further that Nigeria is rich, only that the wealth is not judiciously utilized.

Finally, the respondents believed that complexity of programme chosen is not a challenge to policy implementation 110 (73.3%) and 40 (26.7%) respondents indicated disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively the respondents based their argument on the fact that there is no project of development that can be too complex in Nigeria considering the huge income being derived on daily basis from oil exploration not to talk of other area of income generation to Nigeria. Also, insincerity on the part of political leaders and polarization of policy implementation and decision making process is another challenges as pointed out by the respondents.

Conclusion

In the political realm, public policy is meant to bring about socio-economic and political development. The goal is to promote the well-being and welfare of the people, but there is no gain saying that a cursory look at the Nigerian society today will show that not

much has been achieved in terms of uplifting the human and materials conditions of society. However, skilful or professional management of public policy making and analysis has not always being the hallmark of the public sector management and administration in a developing country like Nigeria.

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