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MANAGEMENT OF POLICY LOPSIDEDNESS IN NIGERIA: SURE PATH TO NATIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

OYEDEJI Oluwasanmi*, AYANLEYE Priscilla Oluwakemi*

*Department of Liberal Studies, The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State

E-mail: oyedejioluwasanmi@yahoo.com

Abstract

It is a general consensus that formulation of robust national policy is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition for national growth and development, as policy “miscarriage” will no doubt truncate the dream of growth and development. This study examines how policy lopsidedness management can enhance Nigeria national growth and development. The study employed explorative research design with critical analysis of some purposively selected key sectors in Nigerian economy. Finding of the study shows that national policy lopsidedness has been a bane on growth and development of Nigeria economy. The study concluded that if appropriate national policy lopsidedness strategies can be put in place, Nigeria will no doubt experience the desired growth and development. The study amongst others recommended that national policy implementation continuity should be enshrined in Nigeria constitution irrespective of political party in government or regime type.

Keywords: Policy lopsidedness, Regime type, management strategies, policy miscarriage national policy.

Introduction

The desire to move the welfare level of the citizenry from the actual welfare level to the potential welfare level on the welfare ladder given the natural resources both physical and human manifesting in the socio-economic development of the nation remains cardinal to every government, both the developed and developing ones.

Less controversy abounds about the fact that national policy formulation (and implementation) as guide to achieving national objective and targets is one of the developmental tools in every economy, Nigeria inclusive. It is not an understatement however to opine that the degree of robustness and articulation of most policies formulated for implementation by the government “in the current time” determines not only the

likelihood of the success of the government but also forms the basis for the incoming or successive government.

Nigeria as a nation from independence with her successive government has no doubt embarked on the formulation of several policies targeted at achieving the socio-economic development yearning of the citizenry (Asogwa, 2012). Nevertheless, it is obvious that the socio-economic development of Nigeria, no doubt is not commensurate with the “content” of her various National Policies formulated by the managers of every successive governments given the failure of these policies (not in content, but implementation) to reposition or “fix” the economy.

According to Dur (1997), policy failure in Nigeria is more of implementation



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attributed to summersault than content given the quality of the Human Resource potentials with which the nation is endowed with. According to Ikelegbe (2006), policy implementation is the translation of policy contents, including intention and prescription into results and reality.

Some of the national policy and programmes embarked upon by Nigerian government include Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Structural Adjustment Program, Better life, Rural Women, National Economic Empowerment Strategy, National Economic Reconstruction Fund etc.

Some of the factors responsible for National Policy somersault in Nigeria include wrong priority, poor forecast, unachievable policy targets, poor policy conceptualization, and absence of reliable data and lack of continuity in policy implementation among others. Consequences of policy somersault among others in Nigeria include resource wastage, poverty and socio-economic backwardness.

The main objective of this paper, is therefore to examine the causes and consequences of National policy somersault in Nigeria with a view to proffering plausible solutions that will engender the much desired socio-economic development that has eluded the nation over time.

Other objectives include sectoral appraisal of some selected public policies and review of some relevant literatures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

What is Policy?

The concept "Policy" is no doubt a common term which its usage varies from

individuals to communities, local governments, state governments, National government and even continents. Given this variation in the usage, there is therefore a need for brief clarification of the concept.

According to free dictionary.com, a policy is a plan, a course of action as of government, political party or business, intended to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters. Policy is a definite course or method of action selected (by government, institution, group or individual) from among alternatives and in the light of given conditions to guide and, to determine present and future decisions. It is a projected program consisting of desired objectives and the means to achieve them.

According to Cochran (2014), policy is a purposive course of action devised in response to a perceived problem. It is the overall framework within which government actions are undertaken to achieve public goals.

Ozumba (2014), opined that policy is a deliberate system of principles to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. Obviously, policy refers to the actions and decisions of government in order to satisfy the socio-economic aspirations of the citizens. As earlier stated, in the introductory section of this paper, the overarching objective of every policy, all other things being equal should be to move the welfare status of the citizenry from the actual welfare state to the potential welfare position (Musgrave & Musgrave, 2012).

Gedifew (2021) sees policy as an articulated, deliberate plan of action, principles local content which encapsulates over all goals, aims as well as strategies for achieving rational outcome.



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In the view of Morris (2024), Policy is a product of governing process in terms of the selected goals of public officials and the impact on society of pursuing those goals.

Okpata (2008), policy somersault as the failure of government to achieve its desired intention(s) in a given programme or project due to some policy logistics.

In the view of Weaver (2010), defined policy somersault or reversal is a sudden change of direction in the implementation of such policy or outright abandonment. It also connotes the failure or inability of stakeholders in policy implementation to achieve the predetermined objective and targets of such policy consequent upon certain policy defaults. Consequently, policy somersault, policy reversal and policy failure shall be used interchangeably within the context of this paper for clarity purpose.

Agbazure (2020) defined policy lopsidedness as a situation in which an organization, government or its agency is unable to realize her stated objectives or goals in the pursuit of her various programmes during implementation.

Policy somersault, “miscarriage”, failure or reversal has been synonymously used in extant policy literatures as will equally be applicable in this study.

Empirical Review

This sub-section of the study reviewed some relevant empirical studies with reference to public policy somersault in Nigeria.

Odusola (1997) investigated the effect of structural Adjustment Policy programme on poverty level in Nigeria using eclectic appraisal approach. The study found that contrary to the World Bank’s assertion that

poverty was more endemic consequent upon the failure of the policy thrust of the programme.

In the study carried out by Asogwa (2012) on the impact of public policy implementation in Nigeria using Enugu State as a case study using documentary study approach, it was found that public policy implementation in Nigeria fails as a result of poor reference management occasioned by high level of corruption there permeates the public sector of the economy.

Emma and Ugwanyi (2013) examined the hindrances to effective public policy implementation by bureaucrats in Nigeria using content analysis approach. The study shows that the corrupt political atmosphere where bureaucrats operate have significant negative effect on public policy formulation in Nigeria.

In the study of Philip (2014), where the politics of public policy and problems of implementation in Africa, using integrated approach was examined, it was found that quite significant numbers of public policy failed in Nigeria as a result of the failure of the policy makers to consider the interest of the vast majority that will be affected by the policy.

Ozumba (2014) investigated the implementation of public policy in Nigeria socio-political system using sectoral analysis approach. The study concluded that public policy fails in Nigeria due to some identified factors among which is the lack of central coordinating member.

Ekhaton (2015) investigated the process of Budget formation and public policy implementation in Nigeria using content analysis approach. The study found that majority of public policies somersaulted or



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failed even from formulation stage while others failed at the implementation stage.

Yusuf, et al (2017) investigated the effect of erratic policy making and implementation in Nigeria using incremental model analysis. The study found public policy somersault in Nigeria has always been counterproductive on the achievement of the policy goal set by the government.

Theoretical Review

This section of the study reviews some relevant theories with reference to public policy formulation and implementation.

The Planning Theory:

Planning Theory is characterized by the top-down and consensus – seeking approaches,(Philip, 2014). It is the planning theory that drives the implementation of policies. By implication, all planning for public policy to implementation originates from the planning theory (Stephen, 2015). It is a collaborative and process-oriented theory which involves several actors over a range of time covering the scope of the policy. The theory sees public policy as more of integration, co-operation and consensus of ideas and relevant factors affecting the policy.

The Incremental Theory:

This theory relies on gradual and progressive decision-making process in policy formulation. The theory was propounded by Lindblom in 1959. Previous policies are accepted as relevant and good basis or framework for new policy.

Group Theory:

This theory argued that public policy formulation and implementation is a product of conflict of interests and opinions

between and among various different groups making up the society. The resolution of the varied societal opinions, agitations and ideas via shift and compromise forms the basis for public policy makers.

The Elite Theory:

This theory premised the evolvement of public policy on the assumption of few informed elites formulating policy for relatively large uninformed populace. The demand and agitations of the uninformed elites are not germane in formulating public policy.

Theoretical framework

Theoretically, the study was anchored on Group theory model (Gurgul, 2013). The theory sees public policy formulation and implementation as a product of conflict, compromise and interests between and among the public policy authors and stakeholders. These actors consist of the political class, the bureaucrat, community leaders and other interest groups. Each group and class invests her resources of all forms in order to have overriding influence on other competing and conflicting group(s).

It is worth noting however that, in most cases, group or class with overriding influence is/are not always in the majority. This has no doubt accounted for serial somersault of public policy in as much as the policy is bound to lack general acceptability. Conversely, a public policy is adjudged successful if it has general acceptability premised on the inclusiveness of the interest of the majority stakeholders. It is therefore pertinent that public policy should be a product of compromise and consensus among the players and not only that of overriding influence.



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**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopts explorative research design using document analysis approach to qualitatively explore cases of reported policy Somersaults, causes and consequences in Nigeria. The adoption of this approach hinges on its dynamic characteristic making it useful in central or exclusive research. (Duffy, 2005 Ozumba, 2014)

An eclectic appraisal of National Policy somersault in selective sectors in Nigeria

Nigeria has embarked on the formulation and implementation of public policies both at the sectoral and sub-sectoral levels since independence. Such policies are meant to ultimately improve the welfare status of the citizens among other rationales.

(i) Agricultural Sector:

Agriculture no doubt remained the mainstay of Nigerian Economy before the inception of mass exploration of crude oil which led to the neglect of the sector. It is on record that significant proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria used to come from Agricultural sector during the pre-oil boom era. Consequent upon the noticeable dwindling contributory impact of the Agriculture sector to economic growth of the nation and astronomical rise in poverty level due to the neglect of the sector, successive governments in Nigeria has been coming up with various agricultural policies and programmes aimed at rejuvenating the sector. Some of such policies include cooperative schemes, farm settlement scheme, Integrated Agricultural Development Performance in 1970s, Operation Feed the Nation, Rural Banking Scheme (1997), Land Use Decree (1978), Gowon Revolution (1980), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (1986), Better Life Programme (1987) Family Support Programme (1994),

National Fadama Development Programme (1999), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (2004), Agricultural Transformation Agenda (2011-2015), National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) in 2018. In August, 2022 The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) launched an agriculture policy called the National Agricultural Technology and Innovation (NATIP), a 6-year (2022 – 2027) frame policy thrust to enhance food security in Nigeria.

In spite of all these policies and programmes, poverty emanating from food and other Agricultural product shortages for socio-economic Development remained unabated.

Somersault or “miscarriage” of National policies in this Sector has been attributed to many reasons among which are poor policy forecast, hijack of policy implementation by “Pen-Farmers”, insufficient and inaccessible credit facilities by practicing farmers, and lack of political will for proper agricultural policy implementation among others.

(ii) Education sector:

The desire of Nigeria to have a functional and domestically applicable education has led to the emergence of several policies on education. Such policies include Universal Primary Education (1976), National Policy on Education (1977), Universal Basic Education, (1999) with its various modification and re-modification, National Policy for Information Technology(IT), 2001, Education It will not be an understatement however to opine that in spite of avalanche of lofty policies put in place in the sector, the little or no tangible development have been achieved in terms of positioning and repositioning of the sector for the realization of the national objective as affecting the sector. Achievement of inclusive education in



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Nigeria has remained a day dream. Nigeria has the world highest number of out- of-school children. Statistics on education remains frightening and discouraging. Allusion to the decadence in this sector is the 2024 JAMB University and other Tertiary institution admission cut- off marks that was ridiculously set at 140 and 100 for university and other tertiary institutions respectively. Reasons adduced to somersault/ miscarriage of these policies include inadequate data, corruption, inadequate monitoring and evaluation at all levels, lack of political will by the economy managers among others (Okoroma, 2003; Odunkoya, 2009; Akindolu, 2012; Folahan, 2022).

(iii) Power Sector:

It is not an understatement to describe the power sector as a pivot of Socio-Economic development of a nation. Nigeria as a nation has spent stupendous amount of money at ensuring efficiency and effective power supply in Nigeria since independence, and especially in the last three decades. Various policies as affecting the sector were put in place. Notable among the policies are National Electric Power Authority Reformation Act (1990), National Electric Power Policy (2001), National Energy Policy (2003), Privatization and Commercialization Policy (2004), Electric Power Sector Reform Policy (2005), Renewable Electricity Policy (2006), National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcements Policy (2007), Roadmap for Power Sector Reform Policy (2010), Nigerian Power Sector Content Development Policy (2014) and recently, Roadmap to incremental, steady and Uninterrupted power Supply Agenda (2016) and the “Electricity Act, 2023” .

However, it is saddening to note that the output of the sector measured in term of energy supply for Nigerian citizens is still

far from been commensurate with the National efforts and commitments invested in the sector as all the policies put in place to transform the sector remained unproductive and retrogressive.

There is no doubting the fact that various policies put in place to revamp the sector has somersaulted.

Reasons for National Policy Lopsidedness in Nigeria

Many reasons and factors have been advanced for National policy lopsidedness in Nigeria, resulting to gap between policy objectives and policy achievements.

The factors include:

- (i) Poor definition and articulation of policy goals: Most a time, majority of the enacted policies lack clarity of goal definition and well articulated objectives resulting to erratic implementation and somersault.
- (ii) Too high and unachievable policy targets. Available resources may not be enough to achieve the set goals/targets.
- (iii) Unhealthy Political Rivalry and Instability: Another factor that responsible for policy failure in Nigeria is unstable political structure coupled with unhealthy rivalry between and among the political parties and government regimes leading to lack of continuity in policy implementation and outright policy abandonment.
- (iv) Insufficient capital to finance the policy associated programmes and projects.
- (v) Lack of reliable data resulting to use of fictitious data
- (iv) Non-inclusiveness of public interests in policy formulation.
- (vi) Overlapping functions of institutions and agencies



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- responsible for policy implementation
(vii) Official and unofficial corruption.

CONCLUSION

Efficient Resource Utilization that will lead to national growth and development must no doubt be anchored on articulated policy framework. Good governance that will engender national development is premised on policy guidelines. Failed National Policy is synonymous with failed government. This accounts for socio-economic backwardness of the Nigerian Economy as the economy has experienced policy failure in time past. If appropriate policy lopsidedness management measures can be put in place, Nigeria will no doubt be on a path to “genuine growth and development” not only in Africa as a continent, but also at the global level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the damaging effect of public policy lopsidedness in Nigeria and the urgent need to stem it and its ugly consequences, the following recommendations will be helpful:

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