

WHY NIGERIA'S PUBLIC POLICIES FAIL AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL: ANY HOPE IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC?

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Abstract

This article examines the imperatives of Nigeria's public policy formulation and implementation as basis for determining and measuring development. Why policies fail at the local government level, is a major objective that the paper seeks to achieve. This work evaluated various policies adopted by previous regimes with respect to infrastructure and found that, contrary to findings in other developed democracies, it is apparent that Nigeria's policies are not consistently useful to succeeding governments and by extension, her populace, due to their 'continuity deficiency'. In this connection, this article challenges the inconsistency in policy actions in Nigeria, with the view to situating feasible national policy framework in the fourth republic and, recommends the need for sovereign national conference, constitutional review and that, the government be more sensitive and responsive in formulation and implementation of public policy decisions that has direct impacts on the local populace.

Key words: local government; policy option; public policy; policy formulation; policy implementation

Introduction

Nigeria is a developing nation where only a small minority (elites or opportunists) of the ruling class benefit more from the country's natural wealth. It is on record that such a nation perform very poorly in terms of governance and control of corruption, as reported by the Corruption Perceptions Index of the World Bank Governance Indicators (Marshal, 2009), perhaps because, each succeeding regime put up policies that satisfy selfish interest far and above the notion of 'common good'. By 'common good', it refers to what a person cannot obtain by himself but receives thanks to his quality as social being while the essential purpose of all authority is established within a society is to serve the common good, characterized by justice, peace and security (Minnerath, 2008:48).

The above clearly demonstrates negligence to public policy debate. We may argue that the Imperialist style of administration misled the indigenous perception of governance because of the perception of an already established form of policy, which hitherto failed to bring about a negotiated or renegotiated form of policy to be pursued for the entire country, after independence. It further led to each political ruler fashioning out its kind of policy that best suits the intention of political associates, as noted earlier. In essence, policy can either be negotiated or renegotiated due to its efficiency and effectiveness (Brooks, 2002; Johnston, 1996). The thought of having the imperialist negotiating terms of public policy actions with the elites stemming from the major ethnic groups; Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo might not be in doubt. As such, policy writings favour re-negotiation rather than negotiation.

A core pre-condition for the successful implementation of regional autonomy (closely similar to local government experience in Nigeria), perhaps, the third tier independence, is the development of key capacities within local government and their partners to formulate and implement appropriate, locally-specific and targeted public policies, as well as evaluation of public policies, to improve future policies, plans, budgets and service delivery (Sutmuller and Setiono, 2011:1). When such mechanisms are not desirable it clearly underscores over-centralization of public policy which in effect negates the principle of decentralization, an offshoot of federalism discourse.

Local governments are made responsible for public administration, health services, education services, social services, economic development, improving the welfare of the population, providing them with social security and preserving the environment (Sutmuller and Setiono, 2011:1). Thirty-seven years after the introduction of local government autonomy in Nigeria, based on our assessment whether public services under decentralisation were better and did respond to local needs, with the answer being, they did not. Policy adjustments were made and resulted among others in the development and introduction of minimum service standards at the local level.

In response to the need for infrastructural development particularly at the local government levels in Nigeria presupposes the integration of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) clarion call for development and that of Nigeria's Vision 20:2020. This will in a way, give a better insight to the understanding of the subject-matter. First, there was a comprehensive policy statement for Africans by NEPAD in 2002, part of the statement, otherwise known as NEPAD Declaration is thus:

Africa faces challenges and the most urgent of these are eradication of poverty and fostering of socio-economic development, in particular, through democracy and good governance (NEPAD, 2002).

The declaration of NEPAD symbolises a feasible vision, but to what extent has it been incorporated and operationalized at the local government level. Second and similar to the NEPAD's position towards infrastructural development is the Nigerian Vision 20: 2020, being the latest in history of medium term plans for the country and promises to surmount some of the problem that marred the success of previous plans (Marcellus, 2009). It may be buttressed that the Nigerian Vision 20:2020 is a product of NEPAD's 2002 declaration.

Importantly, the rural areas, inhabited by the 774 local government areas in Nigeria; serve as the base for the production of food and fibre (Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005: 91). They are also seen as the major sources of capital formation for the country, and a principal market for domestic manufacturers (Olatunbosun, 1975). In a more popular parlance, the local government belongs to the grassroots, thereby terming it to be engaged with infrastructural development at the primary level within the nexus of a three-tier level of infrastructural development. These three levels are Local, State and Federal Governments. The arrangement best fit local governments because they produce raw materials rather than finished goods.

Unfortunately, the infrastructural capacity expected to be used for development has been comatose by leadership crisis tied to policy matter in Nigeria. This therefore suggests that unless the issue of leadership crisis is critically addressed, there cannot be meaningful infrastructural development in Nigeria. That is why Hendrickson observed:

The resolution of political power is central to the corporate existence of any group of people, no matter their primitivity or civilization. In traditional Africa, power was conceived of essentially in non-material terms, except in those few places where primitive accumulation bequeathed privileges on the wealthy (and powerful) or where a subject group wallowed under the suzerainty of a more powerful group (Hendrickson, 1989:57, cited in Ali, et al, 1989).

What is expected in our infrastructural development drive at the local government level is a desire and systematic movement to utilizing the available infrastructure judiciously and effectively rather than destroy them. For instance, it has been expatiated that, in a situation where the growth of infrastructure has not followed a rational and co-ordinated path, growth and development has been stunted (Olaseni and Alade, 2012:65).

From the foregoing therefore, improper policy placement or priority has been the bane of poor infrastructural development in Nigeria, which in a way, the public policy formulation and implementation systems have continued to deepen. There are however surrounding issues that bother on the discourse. The issues include the following:

1. Conceptual Clarifications: Local Government in Nigeria, Infrastructural Development, Policy Formulation and Implementation
2. Theoretical Framework,
3. Infrastructural Development as a Correlate to Industrialization,
4. Any Hope for Local Government Areas towards Effective Public Policy Formulation and Implementation in the Fourth Republic?

Concept of Local Government in Nigeria

The concept of local government as put forward by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the 1976 Local Government Reforms Guideline, no doubt provides essentially, both theoretically intelligent and service centred bases to the local populace. It posits of representative councils with substantial control over local affairs, for the provision of services and implementation of projects in their localities so as to complement the efforts of both State and Federal governments being the major rationale of decentralisation. In the same vein, the definition specifically recognizes the need for Local Government autonomy as the substantial control of local government areas as it categorically aimed at looking into staff, institutional and financial matters (Nigeria's 1976 Local Government Reforms Guideline).

Conceptualizing local government further, it is observed that Nigerian government is one of the few governments in the world over, except for Brazil that have elevated local governments to a third tier of government (Erero, 1998). Going by this, State governments do not have either legal or political right to exercise absolute control whatsoever over local government areas. It is expected that local government like the State should enjoy equal degree of control within their prescribed jurisdiction without any fear or interference from any quota.

The United Nations Office for Public Administration defines local government as:

a political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) State, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the powers to impose taxes or to exert labour for prescribed purpose. The governing body of such an entity is elected...
(Adamolekun, 1983).

A local government is a political and administrative unit that is empowered by law to administer a specified locality (Answers.com, 2011). Essentially from the definitions, what appear apparent are: that local government is enabled to function based on constitutional strength, and it is saddled to perform prescribed or specific tasks within its territorial jurisdiction.

In view of Esman and Uphoff, their definition of local government is likened to an organisational development of:

Local organisations are necessary, if not a sufficient condition for accelerated development which emphasizes improvement in the productivity and welfare of the majority of the rural people (Esman and Uphoff, 1984:29).

There is a definition of local government that gives credence to the idea of decongesting the central (federal) government which is characterized by the regulation of human life and activities, emanating from the view of Belmont as thus:

hedge against undue centralization which might have become dangerous to the liberty or bury the State under the load of an excessive amount of business in the centre. The idea of decongesting the national government is a most practical issue. At an age when the functions of government seem to be expanding and when government is continually being pressed to regulate more and more human life and behaviour ... be it central, intermediate or local (Belmont, 1966:35).

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the local government as the tier of government is abysmally treated unfairly by the first and second tier of government because the local government have not been allowed full autonomy, a view that is contrary to the various definitions asserted above.

Concept of Infrastructural Development

Scholarly documentation on 'infrastructural development' abound (Frischmann, 2007; Hirschmann, 1958; Kahn, 1979; Oluwa, 2012; Pendse, 1980). Such documentation varied in environment, scope, discipline, and mode of analysis. As observed in Canning and Fay (1993), it was concluded that developing countries showed a high rate of return on transport infrastructure comparable to those of developed countries. This evidence appears not too far from the reality because of inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigeria, particularly among the rural communities in the various local government areas.

There is a high degree of agreement among scholars that infrastructure determines and drive development in any society (Abosedra, et al; 2009; Akinwale, 2010; Akinyosoye, 2010; Frischmann, 2007; Pendse, 1980; Mandel, 2008; Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005). In spite the degree of agreement among scholars on the importance of infrastructure for the development a locality, it is imperative to demystify the concept of infrastructural development.

As noted earlier, conceptualizing infrastructural development demands a robust clarification.

First, what are infrastructural facilities? According to Hirschman (1958), they refer to those basic services without which primary, secondary and tertiary productive activities cannot function. In its wider sense, infrastructural facilities embrace all public services from law and order through education and public health to transportation, communications and water supply (Kahn, 1979). We may therefore define infrastructural facilities to mean essential instruments and platforms provided by a given government towards the survival and healthiness of its citizens. These instruments can however be regarded as component of development, without which, there cannot be meaningful development that can be sustained.

Second, is to look at infrastructure as physical systems. They can be described as the basic physical systems of a country's population, including roads, utilities, water, sewage, etc. These systems are considered essential for enabling productivity in the economy. Developing infrastructure often requires large initial investment, but the economies of scale tend to be significant (www.investorwords.com/2464/infrastructure.html). They are physical systems because they can be easily seen and handled, but require huge financial provision for their effective actualization.

Third, how infrastructures can be classified? According to Akinwale (2010: 209), major infrastructures can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Energy/ Power Infrastructure: Electricity, gas and petroleum pipelines.
2. Transportation Infrastructure: Surface roads, rail system, ports and aviation.
3. Water Infrastructure: Pipe water and irrigation.

4. Communication Infrastructure: Mass media, internet, phones, and postal services.

Classificatory outlook becomes necessary in the foregoing so as to understand, identify and explain the kind of infrastructural need that is/are in short or abundant supply in a local government area. This will help to channel specific attention to infrastructural providers; government or non-governmental agencies.

Fourth, is the contextual definition of development? There is no gainsaying that developing countries are dependent in nature, strongly cajoled by the economic and political interests of industrialized countries, yet, they determine development and underdevelopment (Kunhen, 1987:19). In this connection, Kunhen (1987:4) asserts that ‘development’ refers to:

expansion of market and an increase of production including agriculture. The possibility of structural hindrances is not included in the line of thinking, as are market dependencies.

Succinctly put, the term ‘development’ refers to the conscious action by utilizing in a co-ordinated way the resources available to a given political unit (Bernstein, 1978). Therefore, ‘infrastructural development’ at the local government level could imply the conscious desirability of surmounting the age-long marginalization, neglect and deprivation for a better life at the grassroots. Infrastructural development is informed by the urgency to providing for the felt-needs of the local inhabitants. In essence, infrastructural development is desirable in as much as it is targeted towards improving the living standards of the local populace

Concept of Public Policy Formulation and Implementation

To conceptualize policy formulation and implementation presupposes an examination of public policy because the two in one concept is subsumed under public policy analysis. Public policy issue is a subset or particular realm in politics, while its analysis is a subdivision of politics, a field affiliated to Political Science. An exemplification of public policy is argued by Snyder (1996), “that the formulation and execution of public policy is one of the major areas of future growth in Political Science,” and by extension, local government. By policy, we mean a “set of decisions taken by a political actor or group concerning the selection of goals and the method of attaining them, relating to a specified situation” (Roberts and Edwards, 1991:98).

Defining policy in this context corroborates with the view this view, “it is a fiction rather than the actual realization of how policy is created, but has been influential on how people look at policy in general” (Robert, 1987).

A policy option made by an individual is known as “private policy” because it affects the person alone and no any other person. Barret and Fudge (1981:5) argued that we talk of “public policy” when a policy:

Emanates from the ‘public sector’ including both the institutions and central and local government and state created agencies such as water or health authorities, commissions and corporations – it may be implemented through and directed at a wide variety of individuals and organizations may or may not be part of the State apparatus, and which may be greater or in lesser degree independent.

Going by the above assertion, it implies that policy takes critical consideration of factor(s) affecting a particular “target population” in a geo-politically defined territory.

Public policy however, acknowledges the fact that “planning” forms the bedrock of public policy. Planning is explained by Chandler and Plano (1998:92) as:

Conceiving meaningful goals and developing alternative choices for the future action to achieve these goals. Planning involves a systematic procedure for the reduction of many alternatives to an approved course of action. It determines not only goals but the sequential order in which they are pursued for maintaining control.

In essence, policy analysis or public policy analysis may be used as a term to describe the detail examination of a particular public policy system at any and/or all the stages of policy making process. The processes are policy identification (need), policy studies, policy demands, policy decisions, policy outputs and policy outcomes (Olaniyi, 2001:19-20).

The unrealistic nature of effective policy actualization at the local government in Nigeria is not unconnected to Theodore Lowi (1964) argument, who identified the distributive, redistributive and regulatory policies being purposes or types of policy, of which analysis could be based on the number of purposes or types of policy, could be based on the number of people affected by a policy and their relationships with another, on one hand, and the expected outputs on the other hand.

Pertinent to this article is to clearly define these terms ‘public policy formulation’ and ‘public policy implementation’. Public policy formulation is referred as that part of the process by which proposed actions are articulated, debated, and drafted into language for law or policy (The Policy Circle, 2013). Public policy implementation can be to as the carrying out of basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute, but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983).

We may end this section by noting that the unrealistic nature of effective policy actualization at the local government in Nigeria is not unconnected to Theodore Lowi’s (1964) argument, who identified the distributive, redistributive and regulatory policies being purposes or types of policy, of which analysis could be based on the number of purposes or types of policy, could be based on the number of people affected by a policy and their relationships with another, on one hand, and the expected outputs on the other hand.

Infrastructural Development as a Correlate to Industrialization

Since there is profound relationship between infrastructural development and industrialization, the paper highlight on issues that bother on industrialization. Intuitively, infrastructural development is an essential basis or springboard to industrializing a nation. However, achieving industrialization has remained a major challenge since the independence of Nigeria in 1960 (Iwuagwu, 2009). The challenge is apparent due to inadequate facilities that can be useful for developmental purposes.

Capturing ‘industrialization’ as a term, it refers to a process of reducing the relative importance of extractive industries and of increasing that of secondary and tertiary sectors (Adejuge, 2004). Evidence of this, is commonly pronounced in manufacturing capacities.

Argument to raise the industrial base of Africa has been put forward. Industrialization had been argued to raise productivity, creating employment, reducing exposure to risk, enhancing income-generating assets of the poor and helps to diversify exports. The argument is well supported with the type of transformation in Southeast Asia within few years (China, India, and Malaysia as existing instances), instances of what sustained industrialization could be found in one, two or more economies and adopted into a given economy (Iwuagwu, 2011:3).

In Nigeria, industrialization was perceived to soar high during the oil boom era (1973-81) and reached a ridiculous decline in 2000, from 11% to 5% , export was barely 0.4% while import of manufactured goods was about 15% of GDP or more than 60% of total inputs (Ikpeze et al, 2004).

Series of effort had been made by different government and regimes in Nigeria to industrialize. The classifications are the following:

1. Development Plans – [1962-1968; 1970-1974] (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1962; Federal Ministry of Information, 1970).
2. Structural Adjustment Programme [SAP] (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1986).
3. Policies of Deregulation, Commercialization and Privatization (Federal Ministry of Industries, 1988).

A more elaborate categorization of governmental efforts geared toward industrialization is offered by Mufutau (2013), ‘periods and strategies of industrialization in Nigeria are categorized into five:

1. The Pre-Independence or Colonial Era (Before 1960);
2. The Post-Colonial Era (1960-1970);
3. The Oil-Boom Era (1970-1980);
4. The Oil-Doom Era (1980-1993), and
5. The Era of Visions, Agenda and Transformation.

Analytically, industrialization and/or industrial development in local government areas as purposively examined in selected local government areas revealed that industrialization is yet to gain enough ground. For instance in the Southwest Nigeria, Okitipupa local government is one of the eighteen states in Ondo State, established in 1991. This local government area can only boast of two industries; Okitipupa Oil-palm Plc and, Oluwa Glass Factory. The local government area appear to have low infrastructural facilities (Coastal News, 2010), with a sharp contrast to Nnewi North local government area of Anambra State in the Southeast Nigeria that has relatively rapid industrialization over the last decade, can boast of twenty medium to large scale industries (Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters, 2011).

Given this scenario, there is a long way to go at industrializing the local areas because Nigerian federalism practices really need to decongest the centre through industrialization at sub-component units. Rather, Nigeria’s mechanism over the years had been ‘cluster industrialization’ as against the ‘spread industrialization’ advocated for in this work. Industries have been located and remain in big cities of Lagos, kano, Rivers, Anambra, Abia and Oyo States respectively, leading to ever-increasing rural-urban migration with attendant high criminal rate.

Theoretical Framework: Local Level Institutions (LLIs) Approach

Studies revealed that much work have been done in the bid to theorize ‘development’, the product are unending theories (Rostow, 1960; Prebisch, 1959; Lewis, 1965; Hagen, 1962; Mydal, 1957; Jorgenson, 1966). Based on the available texts, it has been observed that most of the writings lack concise theoretical explanations while others are deficient of cultural application (not culture-bound), leading to an increasing quest for an African-Based theory of development. Not only is that, most theories of development are Western originated as they continue to advance modern technologies over the traditional one. This further explains why Elites accept the norms and values of the industrialized countries and cooperate in maintaining a status quo (Kunhen, 1987; Ekeh, 1975).

In search of an African theoretical foundation, came the Local Level Institutions approach (LLIs). This work however adopts LLIs approach for its relevance of scope and convenience. The approach has been reported to become overtime, the repository of indigenous knowledge systems and foundation by which local society organizes itself (Donnelly-Roark et al, 2001).

Much has not been documented about LLIs approach as it was a working policy paper for Africa and developed by the Environment and Social Development Unit of World Bank (Donnelly-Roark et al; 2001:2). This approach can be aligned with the African Peer Reviewed Mechanism (APRM), which was established in 2003 as a development framework for monitoring of agreed norms of political, economic, and corporate governance in Africa (Herbert and Gruzd, 2010; Killander, 2008). Surprisingly, Nigeria has been slow and unstable in implementing the APRM despite her colossal role in its formation (Balogun, 2008; Jinadu, 2008).

The Local Level Institutions are participatory-oriented approach with three functional categories viz; value institutions, production institutions, and service-asset management institutions (Boulding, 1973). The LLIs approach has found its application in Burkina Faso including its principles while the result revealed that emerging development incorporates growth and lowers inequality (Donnelly-Roark et al, 2001: 32).

Since the LLIs approach became successful in Burkina Faso, this paper therefore posits that LLIs approach would be very suitable and effective for industrial development at the local levels, if given serious research attention in Nigeria. The attitude exhibited with respect to APRM cannot be brought into its adoption and eventual implementation. With a large size of 774 local government areas in Nigeria, the highest of its kind in Africa, the approach has the potential for wealth creation, revenue generation, alleviation of poverty, mass production and sustain growth among the local populace. This approach emanated from the general belief in Nigeria that states and local government areas creation can serve as an engine of growth by enhancing development within their jurisdiction.

Any Hope for Nigeria's Local Government Areas in the Fourth Republic towards the Direction of Public Policy Formulation and Implementation

In this section, attempt is made to examine how the grassroots may possibly get some measure of attention with respect to public policy actions. In this connection, factors influencing public policy formulation are highlighted and hence narrowed down to Nigeria. It is worthy of mention, failure in policy actions are not inevitable but, local government may decide to push for a 're-negotiation policy' when critically dissatisfied.

Consensus abounds on factors influencing effective public policy implementation (Elmore, 1978; Aminu et al 2012). Elmore identifies four ingredients effective public policy implementation. These are: i). clearly specified tasks and objectives that accurately reflect the intent of policy; ii). a management-plan that allocates tasks and performance standards to subunits; iii). an objective means of measuring subunit performance; and, iv). a system of management controls and social sanctions sufficient to hold subordinates accountable for their performance. Further, failures of implementation are, by definition, lapses of planning, specification and control (Elmore, 1978:195).

Four factors are also identified to be influencing policy formulation in Nigeria such as needs of the people, stakeholders, specific target group and political will (Aminu et al, 2012:60-61). However, the failures are determined by excessive demand for policy outputs, over-ambitious, accurate and inaccurate theory or causation of social problem, vagaries of implementation of policies, failure of political institution (Aminu et al, 2012:61).

In a situation of critical dissatisfaction about policy actions by local governments, they may choose to explore 're-negotiation policy' as noted earlier. Thus, the concept of natural distribution is supplemented by the concept of "renegotiation expectations" (Brooks, 2002). This is because there has

never been any form of agreement by citizens and rulers on to how to properly design and implement public policies, particularly at the grassroots in Nigeria, even the idea for sovereign national conference on the current situation of the country is nothing but a mirage.

Four stages of contractual agreements for re-negotiation are identified in this article (Johnston, 1996). The first stage is a disarmament contract that establishes the limits of behaviour enabling individuals to leave the predatory state of nature and find a society. The basis of this agreement is said to be the status quo current at the time of agreement, that is, the natural distribution of goods established by the mix of predatory and defensive activities in which the parties have engaged up to the time of agreement. The second stage is constitutional contract. This stage establishes parties' right of ownership over resources including human capacities as well as nonhuman resources. This stage opens a field for a legitimate distribution by virtue of its acceptance by the parties involved. The third and fourth stages constitute what Buchanan calls a post-constitutional contract. The parties establish a proactive state to enforce the rights on which they agreed in the constitutional contract.

Renegotiation process becomes inadequate, inefficient and not-useful without the adoption of collective bargaining as demonstrated in the Berneheim, Ray, Fairrell and Maskin (1989) analysis:

Solutions/concepts for games with perfect observability after each stage of game between periods in which case a reformation of solution concept would have to contend with such issues where "punishments" occur even when no true dealing or cheating has occurred, and when it is common knowledge among the players that no cheating has occurred.

However, negotiation processes over the years limit opportunities for public scrutiny as well as for the establishment of accountability mechanisms. However, negotiations or renegotiations often occur in remote areas and/or cases where affected populations do not have a say or a voice in the process. The episodes of the Aba women riot, Nigerian Civil War (Biafra), the Isaac Boro led war against the Nigerian State over resource control, the annulment of June 12 Presidential elections, subsidy removal on fuel price, insurgence of Boko Haram had at one point or the other championed their various causes with a view to achieving the notion of 'common good', but never found their ideal policy implementation match, despite proactive negotiations.

Conclusion

It is evident that public policy formulation and its implementations are more federal-state governments driven', yet they are inconsistent in terms of delivery as epitomised by recurring incomplete projects. This article therefore recommends that for hope to be given to the grassroots is to ensure that there is a sovereign national conference, constitutional review, and that government becomes more sensitive and responsive in formulation and implementation of public policy decisions that has direct impacts on the local populace.

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