

WHY POLICIES FAIL IN NIGERIA

AN EVALUATION OF AGRICULTURE POLICIES MADE FROM 1972-1985

Olanrewaju Olaoye^a

^aSchool of Social Sciences, University of Lincoln, United Kingdom

^aCorresponding author: olaoyelanre@yahoo.com

© Ontario International Development Agency. ISSN 1923-6654 (print),
ISSN 1923-6662 (online). Available at <http://www.ssm.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

Abstract: This paper shall examine why policies fail using as a case study the failure of agriculture policies in Nigeria from 1972-1985. It shall examine how factors such as lack of proper policy formulation, implementation and evaluation led to policy failure in the agriculture sector in Nigeria. Furthermore, the role of socio-political and economic factors affecting policy making shall be evaluated. In order to seek possible solutions to the problem of policy making in Nigeria, this paper shall evaluate relevant policy frameworks recommended by scholars for furthering the policy cycle. Consequently, this paper shall establish the best possible framework that can be used to avert policy failure in Nigeria. Theories of public policy that are used in writing this paper include the theory of agenda setting, inheritance before choice theory, deliberative process theory, and the rational policy transfer theory.

Keywords: Agriculture, formulation, implementation, policy

I. INTRODUCTION

The ambiguity of the term 'policy' is problematic as it means various things according to the context in which it is used. Policy can be defined as an action or inaction by an institution, body or individual to address a given problem. It is a course or strategy formulated to meet an end. Shar-kansky [14] supports the definition above by defining policy as a proposal, ongoing programme, the anticipated goal of a programme, or refusal to take decision. Thus, once a policy is conceived to meet an end, its cycle has been kick-started. However, the extent by which a policy can be adjudged to have failed or succeeded is dependent on how far the policy has met its goals and the reasons by which it was formulated. This paper shall apply theories of scholars such as, Rose [12], *Inheritance before choice*, to explain why policies fail as observed in Nigeria from 1972-1985.

Policy shall be discussed in this paper at the organizational and institutional levels. Arguments shall centre

on public policy which is a proposed cause of action of the government or any of its agencies [5]. Hence, this paper shall use the word policy in a governmental context to mean public policy. Friedrich [5] argues that successful policies are piloted by tactful and mindful people that assess the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses while taking a decision in favor of the one seen as most beneficial. Hence, for a policy not to fail, it must not run against natural conditions and human factors. For example, a policy going against the constitution of a state is bound to fail unless it changes the constitution positively. Nigeria's public policy making from the 1970's to the 1980's was piloted by military generals with poor public administration skills and knowledge about the policy-cycle. It was no surprise that most of the policies made by the various regimes failed.

II. PAPER STRUCTURE

This paper is segmented into six sections. The first section gives an overview of the theoretical arguments of scholars about how policies fail and the basic conditionality for ensuring the success of any given policy. The second section examines the case study of agriculture policy failure in Nigeria. The third section gives a historical summary which explains why agriculture policies failed in Nigeria from 1972-1985. The fourth section clarifies possible ways of making policies work in Nigeria. The fifth section is a paper review which summarizes the findings of this paper and presents a conclusion that recommends a policy cycle which is participatory. By achieving a participatory policy cycle, individuals and groups would not be able to fully manipulate the policy process for their own end.

III. THEORETICAL REVIEW

To comprehend the failure and success of any given policy, Rose [12] argues that politicians, on assuming office, inherit the policies and commitments of past governments. Thus, the consequences of accepting

these inherited policies facilitate change(s) which more often than not cause(s) policy failure for both existing and planned policies. Public sector institutions play a central role for Rose's [12] theorization as the institutions' institutionalize the legacy of past government. Consequently, the policies inherited by a new government are non-negotiable with existing public institutions even as policies continue without regard to personalities. The result of this for policy makers and politicians is inheritance of policy before choice [12].

In order to establish further evidence on why policies fail, Sabatier, [13] in his theory of advocacy coalition framework examined the core values of coalitions and external anxiety. Sabatier [13] argued that in virtually all political systems, policy subsystems will involve coalitions from different levels of government within a country and increasingly from other countries. Furthermore, Sabatier [13] argued that external factors such as the constitutional structure, socio-cultural values, and the natural resources of a political system affects the policy cycle thus facilitating either the success or failure of any given policy. Various coalitions have deep core belief(s) which unite them and further their resistance to change. Due to the rigidity of the deep core belief of coalitions, policy change is resisted and subsequently, there is policy failure [13].

Parkinson [11] gives another perspective as to why policies fail while arguing on the deliberative process. An argument was made on the basis that the failure or success of any given policy is influenced by its institutional setting and the extent to which a deliberative approach is used in the policy cycle. Parkinson [11] also argued for the use of deliberative advocates (gate keepers) at various key points in the policy process to engender a successful policy making cycle.

IV. CASE STUDY OF AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN NIGERIA

The failure of five agriculture policies shall be examined in Nigeria from 1972-1985. The history of agriculture in Nigeria is the history of the people as Nigeria is an agrarian nation. It is no wonder that agriculture served as the main stay of the economy during the first decade after independence, and accounting for about 71% of foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria. The first half of the 1960's thus witnessed the era of the groundnut pyramids of the North, the palm-oil of the east, and the cocoa plantation of South-West Nigeria [1].

It can be noted that the successes achieved in Nigeria's agriculture sector after independence were mainly from the legacies of British colonial rule. The administrative system coordinated by the governor-

general used an export driven policy system to produce raw materials for the export market in servicing British industries and European markets. Thus, mechanized agriculture was practiced for the aim of servicing British interest, European interest and the Commonwealth.

During the years toward the end of the first decade after independence, it became clear that Nigeria's government could not manage or cope with the Westminster bureaucratic structure bequeathed to her due to the absence and malfunction of necessary institutions. In addition, the civil war which began in July 1967 furthered a geometric decline in the country's agriculture research programme and developments thus leading to failures of agriculture policies. Each regime made its agriculture policy thus practicing the principle of choice before inheritance, as opposed to inheritance before choice which allows for policy continuity due to the roles of institutions which institutionalizes various policies [12].

Five agriculture policies were made between 1972 and 1985. They include: National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) 1972-1973, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) 1976-1980, Green Revolution Programme (GRP) 1981-1983, Go Back to Land Programme 1983-1985, and a restoration of the elements of NAFPP after the military coup in 1985. The policy goal of NAFPP was to make Nigeria self sufficient in food production. Consequently, land reform and mass literacy policies were recommended for farmers. The policy goal of OFN which was initiated by another regime was to increase food production on the premise that availability of cheap food would lead to higher nutritional level which would affect national growth tremendously. OFN lasted till when another regime took over power. The policy goal of GRP had the twin goals of curtailing food importation through boosting crop production, and promoting big mechanized farming. By 1983, another military regime toppled the civilian government and subsequently introduced the 'Go back to land' programme which aimed at making farmers out of all Nigerians. Two years later, in 1985, another regime took over power through a coup, and introduced the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) to facilitate rural development [9].

V. WHY AGRICULTURE POLICIES FAILED IN NIGERIA (1972-1985)

Cognizance must be taken of the processes in which agriculture policies were formulated and implemented in Nigeria in the period 1972-1985 as it was marred by gross irregularities. The arguments of this paper on why policy fails traverses micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. The factors that caused agriculture

policy failure in Nigeria from the 1970's-1985 range from: complexity of the policy making process, problems emanating from organizational staffing; lack of the use of technical tools of analysis, impacts of domestic socio-political factors, incompatibility of the policies with the political system; technological gaps, negative effects of variations of policy transfer, effects of international factors such as the processes of globalization; and lack of feedback and policy learning.

A significant reason for agriculture policy failure in Nigeria in the period 1970s-1985 was the complex and unpredictable nature of the policy making process which lacked policy design that should have mapped programme expectations. The NAFPP of General Gowon's regime became a colossal waste as nothing tangible was achieved by the policy due to its diverse goals. Bad agriculture policies were made while the ones that had good goals had implementation problems. For example, the OFN agriculture policy which had the goal of increasing food production expended much material resources on ill-prepared agriculture undergraduates who were meant to teach farmers about how to farm. The result was failure of the policy as the undergraduates were only teaching the farmers' the theory of agriculture ignoring the vital practical aspects [9].

The various regimes also cowed the opposition and denied the populace the opportunity to make inputs into the policy process. The resultant effect was policy failure as there was no ownership by the people who were meant to be stakeholders in the policy making process. However, the various regimes would have avoided the policy failures if they had used a participatory process that managed competing interest.

The inability of the various regimes in power from the 1970s to 1980s to have a meritocratic system of recruiting the best hands for a government job also furthered the failure of agriculture policies. The act of policy making became the preoccupation of unskilled and less educated politicians who had little or no knowledge about policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The socio-political system which was ethnocentric furthered ambiguity and inconsistency in establishing due process. At various times, some government officials were above the law thus aiding gross misconduct and misappropriation of government resources. As Anda [2] puts it in his review, "the failure of the political class to pursue their rivalry with moderation and in the spirit of compromise." in addition to administrative disorganization have caused the failures of policies in Nigeria especially the agriculture policies made from 1970 to 1985 [2].

Due to the fact that the policy making process in Nigeria from the 1970s to the 1980s lacked technocrats and skilled bureaucrats, technical tools of analysis such as Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) and Cost Effective Analysis (CEA) were lacking in the policy making process. The government officials were not interested in evaluating the success or failure of their policies. Thus, it was not a surprise that the agriculture policies failed. In addition, the various agriculture policies made constrained the participation of the organized private sector in embarking on mechanized farming as the government made policies that stressed state ownership of farms and settlements while neglecting independent small farm holders [8].

The impacts of domestic socio-political factors also played a prominent role in the failure of agricultural policies made in Nigeria from 1972-1985 as the conflicts and political violence that traversed the polity trickled down to irregularities in the policies made. The civil war which began in 1967 furthered the destruction of the few agricultural developments made through the establishment of various research centers by USAID. Frequent takeover of government by the military is another reason why policy failed in Nigeria as the military truncates the democratic process while making undemocratic change to the process of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. The exit of USAID from Nigeria further put a hold on research activities in the agricultural sector. Consequently, governments became unstable in their policy making process. Crisis of ownership and dearth of commitment on the part of succeeding administrations gave way to policy inconsistency and policy failure. In addition, the policies failed because the regimes failed to perceive when their policies were failing in order to present opportunity for policy learning.

For the agriculture sector to thrive in any country there must be in place the appropriate technology needed to kick-start and consolidate the development of crop production and animal husbandry. While the various regimes in Nigeria before 1985 made policy statements to achieve good goals such as providing food for all Nigerians and for the export market, the technology needed to achieve the various goals was not available. For example, although the General Obasanjo's administration made attempts to establish Universities of Agriculture and Technology, these institutions suffered from inadequate funding occasioned by corrupt practices and lack of mechanized equipments that would have developed the Nigerian agricultural sector to make Nigeria self sufficient in food production. Furthermore, in reference to Evans [3], the inability of the various regimes to possess the necessary expertise to tackle technological challenges, and their failure to engage in lesson drawing

from successful exemplars that have developed their agricultural sector also enhanced the failure of the agricultural policies made in Nigeria till the 1980s.

While the various regimes made little or no effort towards engaging in rational policy transfer, the bequeathed policies from the British colonial state led to incessant clashes between state officials and stakeholders who felt their interests were not protected by the various policies. Various agriculture credit unions were more often in confrontation with the government over high tariffs levied on equipment and inputs for the agriculture sector. Getting land for agriculture was an onerous task for farmers while the politicians-cum-farmers got certificate of occupancy of large expanses of land for speculative purposes such as securing loans for their private businesses [9]. This disproportionate act also militated against improved agriculture thus causing policy failure.

Corruption increased geometrically due to lax rules of the game as material resources found their ways into the pockets of politicians and privileged hands [8]. In short, due process and ideas were ignored in the policy transfer process as government officials paid more attention to receiving gratifications. Consequently, corruption aided the failures of the agricultural policies of Nigeria before 1985.

The inability of the various regimes to have an appropriate feedback process which would have transformed early policy failure into a learning point also facilitated the failures of the various policies made. Public opinion was at its lowest ebb in Nigeria from the 1960s to the early 1990s as the various military regimes censored the media. Hall [6] argues that the media and press are cogent for policy sustainability and success as they mirror public opinion in evaluating and contributing to the policy cycle. While all the policies existed during the regimes that initiated them, there was neither a deliberative process for making inputs to the policy cycle as advocated by Parkinson [11], nor was there a primary role for ideas in the making, implementation and evaluation of the various policies. Thus, it was not a surprise that the various agricultural policies made failed.

Having discussed the reasons why policies fail using Nigeria's agricultural sector as a case study, this paper argued that policy failure differs across different socio-political settings and the factors causing these failures are relative. While Rose [12] argues for inheritance before choice as to why policies fail in some socio-political settings, the Nigerian policy system practices choice before inheritance as the takeover of government by a regime means a change in most government policies.

Furthermore, the inability of successive governments

to ensure policy continuity causes policy failure in Nigeria. Besides, the attitude and "getting rich quickly" syndrome of some Nigerians, especially politicians, have turned the opportunity of serving the state through policy making into the opportunity of getting rich by all means. The domestic working environment characterized by different problems such as job insecurity and victimization has given way to "brain drain" thus depriving the policy making process of the needed think-tanks and policy entrepreneurs.

VI. MAKING POLICIES WORK IN NIGERIA

In order to make policies work and sustainable in Nigeria, it is imperative to consider domestic socio-political conditions while integrating lessons drawn from successful policy systems with home grown solutions. In addition, this paper argues for a primary role for ideas and the media so as to ensure windows of opportunity are created in the process of bargaining which must be deliberative and participatory. In maintaining the inflow of ideas into the policy stream, there must be a developmental plan as to how policy makers will be recruited based on meritocracy, and how the policy making sub-system of the government will be insulated from politicians who may want to manipulate the policy cycle for their own ambitions.

Consequently, a holistic approach to ensure a successful policy cycle will use appropriate lesson drawings from successful exemplars in collaboration with domestic (homegrown) administration rooted in transparent institutions which are focused towards promoting the public good. There must also be the presence of mediating institutions for example, policy think-tanks and organization that will bridge policy issues emerging from above (statesmen) and emerging from below (organized civil society).

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has suggested possible ways on how policy failure can be addressed in Nigeria's agricultural sector. Possible solutions include the need for a holistic policy cycle which uses deliberative and participatory processes to ensure policy objectives are met. Also, the implementation of policies must be done through institutions that exist beyond the lifespan of the initiators of such policies while there must be frequent evaluations to ensure that the cost and benefits of policies are subject to public opinion so as to create ownership.

Furthermore, the appropriate technologies needed to achieve policy goals must be transferred to mitigate policy failure during implementation as Nigeria and most developing countries still suffer from inadequate technologies needed for actualizing policy goals. It is

also pertinent that policy makers conduct a SWOT analysis of policies at various times to gauge the workability of policies, use performance measurement indicators to judge the performance of policies against its goals and frame of reference, and use a logical framework of analysis to evaluate policy performance. More important is the need to entrench good governance and democracy as they constitute the bedrock for creating the required socio-political environment needed for successful policy making and establishing institutions that will consolidate the policy making cycle so as to avert policy failure.

In conclusion, scholars, and stakeholders in Nigeria's policy cycle should endeavor to take a global view of policy making while drawing lessons across different socio-political systems as contemporary theorizations of the policy making process is Anglo-American centric. To this end, people who can assess the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses while making a decision should be recruited to pilot the policy cycle. In addition, top-down and bottom-up approaches should be used logically to facilitate the act of policy making while research should be made a recurrent activity in the policy system to mitigate policy failure.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adetunji, O. (2007) *Restoring the glory of agriculture*. Abuja, Pesther Brands Ltd.
- [2] Anda, M. (1998) Review: Nigeria. *African Studies Review*, 41:1, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/view/524684?seq=3>
- [3] Evans, M. (2004) Policy transfer in global perspective (ed.) England, USA, Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- [4] Eyestone, R. (1971) *The threads of public policy: A study in policy leadership*. New York, Bobbs-Merrill Company
- [5] Friedrich C. (1963) *Man and his government: An empirical theory of politics* New York, Toronto, London; McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- [6] Hall, P. (1993) Policy paradigms, Social learning and the state: The case of economic policy-making in Britain. *Comparative Politics*, 25:3, 278-288.
- [7] Hill, M. (2005) *The public policy process*, (4th ed.) England, Pearson Education Limited.
- [8] Johnson, G. & Okigbo, B. (1989) Institution Building lessons from USAID's Agricultural Faculty Development in Nigeria. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 1214-1217, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/view/0002-9092/ap040114/04a00230/0> accessed on 25/07/08.
- [9] Maduagwu, A. *Alleviating poverty in Nigeria*. Africa Economic Analysis, available at: http://www.afbis.com/analysis/alleviating_poverty.htm accessed on 03/08/2008.
- [10] May, P. (1992) Policy learning and failure. *Journal of Public Policy*, 12:4. Available at: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0143814X%28199210%2F12%2912%3A4%3C331%3APLAF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-J> accessed on 25/09/08.
- [11] Parkinson, J. (2004) Why deliberate? The encounter between deliberation and new public managers. *Public Administration*, 82:2, 377-380.
- [12] Rose, R. (1990) Inheritance before choice in public policy. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 2:3, 264-267.
- [13] Sabatier, P. (1998) The advocacy coalition framework, revisions and relevance for Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 5:1, 99-103.
- [14] Sharkansky I. (1978) *Public Administration: Policy making in government agencies* (4th ed.), Chicago, Rand McNally College Company.