

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION: A REFLECTION ON THE DYNAMICS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

States are hard pressed due to limited financial resources to meet with the mounting demands placed upon it by its citizens, irrespective of how care is taken through the allocative system of the state's yearly budget to significantly capture adequately those demands, more so, the call for prudence and accountability in the use of state finance makes the situation even the more tasking. However, it is believed that effective evaluation presents the state with the necessary tools for achieving these purposes. Hence, programs and projects which are outcomes of the budget, designed to meet public demands must be carefully evaluated and implemented in order to make governance meaningful to the public as well as obtain value for monies spent by public authority while at the same time attaining the ends of prudence and accountability in program delivery. As such, the role of program evaluation and implementation to state progress cannot be relegated to the background. Hence, this paper examines the dynamics of these elements and how these processes combine to contribute effectively to achieving the goals of public program execution.

INTRODUCTION

The social contract theory defines and prescribes a symbiotic pattern of relationship between the state and the citizen. The two parties in the relationship are positioned to contribute to each other long term progress. Specifically, the State is to employ reasonably its resources in such a way that will expand the general well-being of the people who by the very nature of the invisible hand cannot aid them to meet their basic needs, particularly in a second best economy.

The second best economy is one in which the market system is incapable of achieving unaided a perito-optimal resources allocation. We find out generally that the market equilibrium resource allocation yield a lower level of welfare for everybody, than some resources allocation which are attainable with the resource and technological possibilities available to the economy (Ress,1976) in (Anderson, 1997).

This description presupposes that there are divergent shortcomings that characterize and inhibit the second best economy for which Nigeria is not excluded from. Under these circumstances, it is necessary for the state to intervene and meet the basic social needs by pushing the wheels of welfare liberalism to the frontiers that will allow for the obtaining of a broader positive view of freedom that links people to personal and national development. This kind of progress should open the avenues for the flourishing of the individual potentials, i.e. the ability of the individual to gain fulfilment and achieve self realization (Heywood, 2005: 46).

This imperative provokes the need for state intervention to some degree, however not excluding private involvement. With the new wave of neo-liberal thinking, state involvement in the economy is in opposition to the idea of a neutral economic order based on self regulating market that orders a strict distinction between government and the economy, although the roll back of the state has merely resulted in instability and unemployment (Heywood, 2005:184). The neo-liberal conditionality of the World Bank had informed the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the Nigerian state. The SAP conditioned focus of governmental reforms in Nigeria have provoked the roll back of the state via the privatization of public enterprises, yet with a by-product of less improvement in inefficiency, loss of employment and social dislocation (Moshi, 1991). This conclusion is not dissimilar with the conclusion

reached in the empirical work conducted by Sankey in 2001 on the impact of privatization on public enterprises in Nigeria (see Sankey, 2001). This situation points to the fact that the state must in some way involve itself in the correction of these dislocations through the platform of national development plan. The national plan is expressed through the instrumentality of public policy. It is through the public policy table that values of society are articulated and expressed through programs and projects which has far reaching implication on the people and the state. However, Naidu (2006:59) noted that "policies made and implemented by Government with a view to achieving certain goals are means to attain definite objectives of government. These policies designed are not only to have far reaching consequences in determining the future shape of society, they also affect people in their social, economic and political spheres of life."

Programs and projects are outcomes of government policies designed in response to perceived public problems. Public policies are tools used by government to confront public problems and redressing conflicting interest in society which is articulated in the yearly budget of government. These problems can be individually or collectively identified and perceived to be significant enough for which relief is sought via divergent means from the appropriate public authority. Programs and projects designed, approved and budgeted for action by government represent the authoritative allocation of values (Easton, 1979, 1989) i.e. benefit, reward, or penalty which is accepted in society and considered by the citizens (Heywood, 2005:4) to reflect their progressive aspiration. In this participatory process, the citizenry view democratically elected institutions as constituting both the enabling environment for social development and becomes the basic evaluative framework for judging the processes of policy making (Mkandadire, 2002:1) and governance.

The machinery of government which create the environment for politics to take place within the polity, and by extension defines its legitimacy, operate within a complex web of interrelationship predicated on the principle of separation of power for which the policy making process is inherently political, and is characterized by negotiation, bargaining, persuasions and compromise (Waldt, 2001:91). This web of network relationship have been functionally differentiated by Woodrow Wilson as cited in Bryner (2007) when he observed that policy making is carried out by political function while the enforcement of policy is that of administration. Although, this framework assumes a simple linear relationship between policy formulation and implementation that largely mirrors the separation of power where the legislature makes the policy choices and the executive branch (and local government) implement (Bryner, 2007:191) is however a limited structure of the policy process framework in actual practice. A clear understanding of this functional differentiation does in no way reduce the conflicts that tend to impinge on the successful pursuit of genuine state policy.

Policies when legitimized becomes laws that help administrators to act in line with legal requirement in the realization of desired objectives. Public administration as an integral part of the State is primarily responsible for the collective organization and peaceful attainment of community life "the good life" which the political community strive to make available to its citizens. The pursuit of this goal "the good life" (social, economic, and political) has impact on the administrator in a variety of ways, causing them to consider in a political context, information and action that reflects the diverse conditions, attitudes and values that are prevalent in a plural society. It is by this political process that individuals and groups exercise the right to access the decision maker with the resulting adjustments and compromises, for which the accountability of public administrators in a representative democracy is put to the most sophisticated test, and the angle from where decision of public interest is honed (Rosen, 1998).

The existence of scarcity and heterogeneity in Nigeria calls for the cautious determination of who gets what, when and how at different levels. It also presupposes that programs and projects decided upon should differ significantly depending on the communities benefiting, the nature of the problem, and the resources available to the determining public authority. Whatever the kind of package agreed upon should symbolize government's way of responding to public demand as they arise from time to time. It should represent a beneficial interface between the people and the State in the political and social community.

Programs are a complex sets of goals, policies, procedures, rules, tasks assignments, steps to be taken, resources to be employed, and other elements necessary to carry out a given cause of action and normally supported by a capital budget (Harold and Heinz, 1988:661). Programs and projects are directed at reducing poverty and fighting 'unfreedoms' in society. Removing these limitations is of the essence because if nothing is done about fighting grinding poverty, then, lasting peace and stability are a distant dream in any polity. The government that is incapacitated to deliver on these essentials; that government is best which does not govern at all; as it is not just physical survival of the state that is the issue, but the capacity of the state to empower its citizens to meet the legitimate needs for food, health, clothing, education, shelter that is non-negotiable. It is thus required that the government, as the initiator of socio-political and economic progress and change, using whatever methodology, must make the process accessible to all as well as participatory.

For this ends to be achieved, the plan (captured in programs and projects) must not be left on the policy table, but empowered by a budget for its realization. In this pursuit, implementation and evaluation are evidently crucial elements that must not be dispensed with if the ideal goal of meeting social demand is not to be compromised. Evaluation and implementation are important tools in the tool box needed for fine-tuning the wheel of holistic change that will in turn expand citizen's potentials. As Aligwekwe (1986:209) argues, "development should be seen first and foremost as the unfolding into concrete reality and putting into progressive usefulness the potentialities of man and human nature to the extent that it satisfies the socio-economic needs and aspirations of man."

The significance of programs and projects to socio-economic life of the people and national development cannot be over-emphasized. It therefore becomes "de rigueur" to take absolute care in the process of evaluation and implementation of projects and programs vis-a-vis the acquisition of relevant knowledge relating to the subject matter in order to have a good ground to reach the right goals. However, if implementation and evaluation are not properly carried out, using the appropriate knowledge, the likelihood of deviating is boundless.

IMPLEMENTATION

In ordinary parlance, implementation conjures to mind such cliches as action, to carry out, accomplish, fulfill, produce or complete (Starling, 2008:392). It is the process of putting into practice the decision into action or to act on a particular preferred policy (solution) option (Schultz, 2004:224). Sabatier (1986) sees it as carrying out a prior decision, which involves the careful mobilization of men, material and money alongside the allocation of mandate to the appropriate executing agency to perform. From a process angle, it comes after the adoption of a policy that activates the routinization of operations, activities, and the tasks that governs the policy (Schneider, 1982:716) by bring together men and materials in a cohesive organizational units and motivate them in such a way as to carry out the organizational stated objectives (Barret and Fudget, 1981:13).

According to Onah (2006:151), implementation revolves around those activities directed toward putting a program into effect and involves the performance of those core activities which leads directly to the realization of the project activities. To Jones (1977:139), for implementation to be successful set of action there are core sets of activities that must be in place. These core activities are:

- i. Interpretation - the translation of program language into an acceptable, visible and understandable language
- ii. Organization – the establishment of units and methods for putting a program into effect and
- iii. Application - the routine provision of services, payments, or other agreed upon program objectives or instrument. The integrator of these core sets of activities for effective implementation is what Pressman and Wildasky (1973) refer to as the ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain that will lead to obtaining desired program result.

As simple as policy making and implementation (solution) may seem, implementation does not reflect the character of ease of action. In the view of Starling (2008:393-415), it is a process that is cushioned by complexities. This difficulty do arise due to:

- a. the complexity of joint action or as a result of multiplicity of participants and multiplicity of perspectives (Pressman and Wildasky, 1973:99).
- b. as a result of the implementation game that is inherently characterized by political conflict, i.e. conflict among actors that primarily root on the pursuit of self interest (Winter, 2007:132). If these conflicts are not properly mitigated the poor pattern of relationship tends to distort implementation from its lagislative goal. The third issue area is that of management, the intricacy here is centered around the question of who will manage the program, the method to adapt, and the means to execute the program.

To put program and project into effect Thompson, (2004:715) observed that the underlisted elements must be in place. These are: organizational structure, management systems, policies and procedures, action plan and short term burdget, and management information system. These elements provides the foundation upon which effective implementation can be assured. Denhardt and Denhardt (2009:210) has provided a more elaborate criteria for effective implementation. To him, once programs and projects (policy) have been agreed upon;

"You must put them into operation . Financial and human resources must be allocated and mobilized, organizational structures and system must be devised, internal policies and procedures must be

developed. During implementation, you may be involved in issuing and enforcing directive, disbursing funds, awarding grants and contracts, analyzing programmatic and operational problems, taking corrective action, and negotiating with citizens, business, and those in other public and non-profit organization" (see also Bryner, 2007:191).

These collection of activity area have been summed up by Henry (2007:358) as the allocation of 'money and mandate'. Implementation is not a straight-jacket affairs. It involves an element of flexibility, which must be applied in line with changing circumstances or built into the programme framework in order to achieve effective implementation. Equally too, Mazmanain and Sabatier (1983:22) had observed that effective implementation will be based on the strenght of the statute, clear delineation and ranking of unambiguous objectives, leadership capabilities, constituency support, technical and political support. Apart from the above requirements, Bardach (1977:286-83) noted that external monitoring is a crucial variable to effective implementation process. In summary, effective implementation should be couched on the anvil of political will, flexibility and continious improvement as the process progresses.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK, STRATEGY AND TECHNIQUE

In the extant literature on implementation, implementation models and strategy has centered around the 'top-down' (Mazmanain and Sabatier, 1986) and 'bottom-up' (Lipsky, 1980, Winter, 1986). The top-down model is built on an official legislation, normally a law as the standard of evaluating and enforcing implementation. The top-down model is defined by three variables; the tractability of the problems addressed by the legislation, the social and political context, and the ability of the legislation to structure the implementation (Guy, 2007).

Here officials follow the implementation down through the system, often with special interest in higher level decision-making. They would typically assume a control perspective on implementation, trying to give good advice on how to structure the implementation process from above in order to achieve the purpose of legislation and to minimize the number of decision point that be vetoed (Guy, 2007:132)

Top-down scholars view implementer, as agent for policy maker and tend to play down issues such as power relation, conflicting interest between individuals and agencies responsible for making policy and those responsible for taking action (Barret and Fudge in Olaninyi, 2001:34). The control structure built into this framework exclude engagement of civil society in the process of implementation. This framework gives government agency in the implementation process an overriding power by clearly neglecting other contributing bodies. The control mechanism structured into the relation to avoid conflict does not eliminate it due to the lopsided intergovernmental relation that is innate in the pattern of program implementation. Despite the straight forward outlook and optimism this model present, it is cracked by the inability of outside forces to influence the structuring process. Secondly, the neglect of the role of street level bureaucrat, who play prominently in shaping community value as a result of legislative mandate.

Scholars of the bottom-top model like Lipsky (1980) and Winter (1986) have rejected the position of the top-down model. They are of the view that implementation-evaluation framework should take its definition from the prespective of the standard defined by the evaluator and the problem to be solved. This model is systematically identified with the many actors that are impacted by the problem being solved by promoting a network relationship among them (Hull and Hjern, 1987). It is also necessary that the researcher is able to convince others about the appropriateness of his problem definition (Guy, 2007:133). This model promotes the relevance of public-private partnership in the initiation and execution of public programs as well as its role in reducing significantly conflict in intergovernmental relations.

Another strand to the program implementation framework is that encapsulated in the straight forward approach. This approach predicates implementation within the spheres of the particular problem to be solved and the factors affecting the implementation process. However, some have contended that the broad-scope approach is relevant because it takes care of all participants in problem identification, needs and impact by ensuring that implementation outcome is useful to the end user. It has been observed that the straight-forward and the broad-scope frameworks is better and realistic as it gives administrative agencies clear goals that guide the process of implementation and at the same time the statute embody

sufficient flexibility to allow the agencies to set its own timetable for specific action (Wagner, 1986). On the whole, the flexibility framework has been put forward as a response to the implementation controversies and criticism in the implementation literature (Ingram, 1992:473- 478) that often does not fit in adequately to the desirability of adjustments when the need arises during implementation, which by and large, create bottlenecks and become a cog in the wheel of project implementation.

Under certain conditions and environment, irrespective of how careful implementation may be executed, certain elements influence adversely the implementation process which makes it impossible for program executors to achieve their purpose. This often upset executors as expected events turn out badly, although some policy problems are seldom solved (Wildasky, 1979). The turn of events may be as a result of administrative complexities, the lack of political will for enforcement, and sometime allowing imperfect people to use flawed procedures to cope with insoluble problems (Wilson, 1989:375).

EVALUATION

The existence of resource scarcity on the part of the government, poor infrastructures and yet increasing public demand from the citizens requires that public expenditure should not only be effective but ensure maximization of benefits by the end users in the light of the value derived from the program provided to targeted groups in society. Its value can only be arrived at based on a careful evaluation (assessment) conducted on the programme(s) to be implemented by the state as a response to the targeted group need. Evaluation is concerned with estimation, assessment, or appraisal of a program (Anderson, 1997:272). To Alkin (1970), it is the process of ascertaining the decision area of concern, selecting appropriate information, and collecting and analyzing information in order to report summary data useful to decision makers in selecting alternative. Meeting these requirements imposes upon public authority the need to adopt a framework that will aid government and program planners in ascertaining the right choice to be made, the implication of that action, and the subsequent impact of that choice on the resource of government and the people. Proper implementation should mirror the necessity of building within the process the goal of rationality, although rationality is seldom a goal that can be achieved easily in the face of limiting factors such as the urgency of needs, resource scarcity, paucity of information, the complex nature of political compromise and the nature of the problem in question.

Evaluation goes beyond the "decision-judgement perspective" to an analytical process of estimating the value of a program, the efficiency and effectiveness of the solution of a given option in response to the problem being responded to by government, the methodology and means for achieving a given action. Efficiency should evoke in our mind the relationship between input and output, usually expressed in a ratio per unit of output. While effectiveness is outcome-oriented capturing the degree of objective to be achieved. The reasons for evaluation have been aptly captured in these lines;

Program-decision makers may turn to evaluation to delay a decision; to justify and legitimate a decision already made; to extricate themselves from controversy about future directions by passing the buck; to vindicate the program in the eyes of its constituents, its funders, or the public; to satisfy conditions of a government or a foundation grant through the ritual of evaluation. In short, evaluators may be motivated by self-service as well as public service and by a desire to use analysis as ammunition for partisan or personal political purpose (Anderson, 1997:275).

Program evaluation as a functional act, seek to identify the extent to which specified objectives are to be achieved, being achieved or have been achieved, impact on the targeted population and unintended consequences (Onah, 2006:161). It also involves the process of selecting the evaluators, what is the problem, and designing the evaluation. (Henry, 2007:171-172). These activities should be directed at contributing immensely to the understanding and improvement of program development and implementation. Generally, evaluation as an area of differentiated activities requires, according to Jones (1977:174), should first define the specification of what is to be evaluated (program), the methodology to be used for collecting data on the object of evaluation, and thirdly, the analysis of the information to be made available so that conclusion may be drawn as to the effectiveness of the program in question.

According to Curtis and Watson (1993:4), there are four action area for which evaluators must bear in mind when conducting program evaluation. These are:

- a) Define the problem precisely and then the program objectives (see also Jones, 1977:187)
- b) Performance measurement (against standard objectives)

- c) Impact indicators, appropriateness assessment (justification for the project)
- d) Institutional evaluation (Curtis and Watson, 1993; World Bank, 2002).

Similarly, the American Evaluation Association has set defined guideline standards for effective program evaluation. These processes involve identifying and including evaluation stakeholders, providing valid, reliable, and timely information; and protecting the rights of individuals (especially the program clients) involved in the evaluation (Palmer, 2004:340). Fundamental to evaluation approaches is the necessity for evaluation to capture precisely the causal chain linkages from input to impact. It is imperative that during program evaluation there should be continuous environmental and strategic analysis of opportunities and threats that may strengthen program success or that may constitute a limiting force to the success of the program.

Radodi (1982) as cited in Onah, (2006:161) opined that evaluation is really an appraisal of a project performance which is undertaken at periodic interval either before or during implementation.... This process of assessment could also be in form of outcome evaluation, process evaluation, cost-benefit, cost effectiveness analysis, and impact evaluation (Starling, 2008:247). Evaluational activities are classified in the context of program impact evaluation, program strategy evaluation and project monitoring. These activities are performed to identify the effectiveness, efficiency, predictability, equity, public participation, and even acceptability of a government program.

Theoretically, Suchman (1963:12) framework for evaluation has been developed to guide the assessment of valued programmed objectives. The process of evaluation begin with value formation and the desirability of such program to the beneficiaries. Step two is that of goal setting and while the third stage is to determine the standard of measuring the goal to be attained. This step should be followed by the planning of activities that will direct the action area to be taken to actualize the already set objectives. The fifth step should be the putting of the activities into effect. This stage involves the provision of men, material and means necessary for program achievement. Finally, the process will terminate with the determination of whether the program is worthwhile and will achieve its intended purpose.

Accordingly, Guba and Lincoln as quoted in Sapru (2006:196) maintained that there are four typology of evaluation, which include Technical, Descriptive, Judgmental, and Responsive. These typologies can be utilized to determine particular choice outcome with the Suchman (1963) evaluative criteria of effort, effect, process, adequacy of performance, efficiency and effectiveness serving as the bases of measurement. Evaluation as a sensitive area of program action, should always be undertaken from a context that will aid the making of the right decision about the use of resources, which also has implications for the acquisition, distribution, and loss of... power (Henry, 2007:170). Similarly,

Evaluation has always had explicitly political overtones. It is designed to yield conclusions about the worth of programs and in so doing, is intended to affect the allocation of resources. The rationale of evaluation research is that it provides evidence on which to base decisions about maintaining, institutionalizing, and expand successful program and modifying or abandoning unsuccessful ones.

Notwithstanding too,

Evaluation is a form of negotiation rather than a search of objective truth, where stakeholders are the primary focus of inquiry ... and contribute their input to all stages of evaluation, from defining the terms of investigation, its goals and design; to data collection, analysis and interpretation. In this way, evaluation is a learning process and the evaluator's role is to mediate and facilitate learning and change (Sapru, 2006:196).

Program evaluation is brought to a close with the writing of a comprehensive report to the authorizing authority about the program that has been evaluated and implemented. The report serves the purpose of accountability as well as specifying program conclusion. Be that as it may, program evaluation can be a fruitless enterprise if there are uncertainty over program objectives, inadequate information acquisition and feedback, official resistance, under funding and non release of funds among others. A more inposing problem is the one espoused by Anderson (1966: 86-90) that "a status confer upon an agency only legal authority to take action on some topics. How effectively the agency is, what it actually does or accomplishes, will be affected by the political support it has. To put it differently, politics affect how an

agency exercises its discretion and carries out its program. The environment in which an agency exist may contain many forces that, at times exert influence on its actions (see also Anderson, 1997:229).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, uncovering the potency of these concepts is an essential tool in the policy administrator's tool box for effective program administration. However, as straightforward as these concepts may present themselves to improving policy and program implementation administration intended to impact positively on the lives of the people, they are a complex category in practice, particularly where there is inadequate data flow to the street level bureaucrat. Hence, there is the need to adopt effective management technique that allows for constant information flow, plan re-negotiation and consensus-building along program line with all stakeholders implementation process. This will enable both program managers and beneficiaries alike contribute to improving program success which will contribute to social progress of society.

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