

## **Nature of Policy Process Encourages Economic Underdevelopment in Africa**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper discussed the concept of policy from different dispositions. It examined the attitude of African leaders within the context of policy formulation and how it affects the economic development in the continent. Some of such policies from selected countries were discussed. It was concluded that not until such approach is kept aside, economic development in Africa will be a mirage.

**Keywords:** Policy, Attitude, Economic Development.

Students of Political Science and Public Administration have been engaged in the study of products of government called Public Policy. From the political science perspective, policy is preoccupied with the activities of the various political institutions and groups in relation to their success in the pursuit of political power. Hence, policy is an important element of the political process. The concern of the political scientist therefore is about the processes by which public policy is determined.

On the other hand, Public Administration tends to concentrate on the machinery for the implementation of given policies such as organization of authorities, behaviour of public servants and increasingly, the method of resource allocation, administration and review.

From whatever perspective the concept of policy is viewed, attitudes of key actors and stakeholders are determining factors that shape the quality of a policy and its impact on the targeted audience. This paper therefore, is an attempt to examine the process of policy formulation in some selected African countries with a view to ascertaining their effects or otherwise in the economic development derive of the continent.

### **DEFINITION OF POLICY**

The term policy refers to as guidance for action. According to Sapru (2004:4) policy can take the form of:

- Declaration of goals.
- Declaration of course of action.
- Declaration of general purpose.
- An authoritative decision.

All the above dispositions have been interpreted by scholars in the following ways:

- Dor (1968) defines policy as “general directive on the mainlines of action to be followed”.
- Peter (1972) sees policy as “changing directives as to how tasks should be interpreted and performed”.
- Geoffrey (1965) defines policy as “decisions giving direction coherence and continuity to the courses of action for which the decision making is responsible”.
- Carl (1963) sees policy as “... a proposed course of action of a person, group or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realize an objective or a purpose”.
- Sapru (2004) sees policy as a “purposive course of action taken or adopted by those in power in pursuit of certain goals or objectives”.
- Lineberry (1977) sees policy as “what governments do and fail to do-to and for their citizens”.

From the dispositions above, the stand of Lineberry captures the prevailing conditions in most African states. We are at this juncture, focusing this discourse on public policy which may be general or specific, broad or narrow, simple or complex, qualitative or quantitative. It should be noted that, public policies in modern political systems are purposive, that is, either positive or negative forms.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this paper, Vickers and policy making approach is adopted to guide the discourse. Geoffrey Vickers (1965) wrote the Art of Judgement. His model addresses policy-making as a complex activity because values and reality judgements should be modified and adjusted. This is because, problems are never solved in the way goal setting conceptualizations suggest. This model emphasizes the importance of analyzing the interaction of two important variables of value judgements and reality judgements if societal problems are to be solved. Therefore, since policies are meant to solve societal problems, this model becomes relevant in this discourse.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

For the purpose of this discourse, the following assumption is been made:

The way policies are made is responsible for persistent low level of economic development in Africa.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this discourse, a random sampling technique was used in selecting some countries that have exhibited certain defects in some of their policies. Similarly, secondary data was used which was obtained from text books, contributions of scholars in journals, reports among others. Qualitative analysis approach was used to analyze the data obtained.

## **DATA ANALYSIS/DISCUSSIONS**

Within the selected countries, Guinea and South Africa came out with policies which were mainly meant for institutional development. For instance, around 1984, Guinea came out with a policy otherwise called Protection of property rights and development of commercial law such as enforcement of contracts. Multilateral and bilateral donors gave priority to this institutional issue if they were to promote the development of the economy.

In South Africa, at their transition to democratic government in 1994, it had a strong legal order which was to protect the apartheid, even though it had changed later.

In Nigeria, the persistent development crisis and the phenomenon of failing states are due to largely poor leadership. According to Chinua Achebe (1983) “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership”. It must be noted that, this leadership problem cut across most African countries. Here, most leaders are not committed to the development of their societies. They also lack honesty and commitment to democracy.

In fact most African countries depended heavily on the western management concepts. These ideas are introduced mainly through multinational corporations, donor investment projects, technical assistance, fellowship and training programmes. Such bodies use periodic commissions’ reports which tend to introduce public sector reforms such as in Kenya (1971), Ghana (1972), Nigeria (1974), Swaziland (1975) etc. As for Nigeria, since the introduction of the special Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the late 1980s which was teleguided and dictated by a multinational organization, the economy of Nigeria is far from recovery.

Indeed, the post 1990 political leaders in Africa have been restrained than their predecessors in pushing their personal agenda or their collaborators to the

detriment of their citizenry. In his contribution, Ladipo (2011) maintains that, most African countries have large external debts and the situation is compounded by armed conflicts such as what is obtained in Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia (at one time) the Congos, Egypt, Libya, Uganda, Nigeria, Central African Republic etc. When and how would these countries be free from that cogmire and begin to think of developing their economies coupled with high level of corruption characterizing the public sectors of most countries in Africa.

Some observers believe that, the problem of persistent underdevelopment in Africa is to a large extent, poor governance environment. For instance, countervailing power is lacking. State officials in many countries have served their own interest without being called to account for their deeds. Politics has become personalized and patronage becomes essentially to maintain power. The leadership assumes broad discretionary authority and loses its legitimacy. Information is controlled and voluntary associations are co-opted or disbanded. It is this type of environment that, according to the World Bank (1989) cannot readily support a dynamic economy. The consequent outcome of this is lost of value judgements and reality judgements as Vickers postulated in his model that has been adopted in this study and hence, societal problems are not solved which makes it nonsensical of such policies made there from, so persistent low level of economic development characterizes most countries in Africa.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the above discussions, most African countries suffer similar problems such as leadership problem, most institutional policies do not favour most Africans, rather create room and protect multinational organization to achieve their goals. The end result is, African countries have become dependents or neo-colonialists and their economies are from developing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If the economies of African countries are to be developed, the following suggestions are been made:

Africans must shun armed conflict and embrace the real African tradition, i.e. keep aside individualism and embrace collectivism.

Multinational organizations also contribute to economic underdevelopment of African countries through imposition of what they think is good for Africa and allow Africans to decide for themselves.

African leaders should have a re-think and place the interest of their people over and above their personal interests.

Corruption must be fought by both Africans and the multinational organizations and their home countries by rejecting any wealth acquired through illegal means either for investment or savings.

Africans must admonish their own tradition over and above any other life style.

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