

Impact of Challenges of Public Service Under Democratic Government in Yobe State from 1999-2019

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Abstract

Government the world over exists to provide essential services to the citizens. It is in order to ensure that services are well delivered to the citizens that government all over the world has been in constant search for efficient and effective ways of carrying out its functions. It is on this note that many reforms have been carried out in the public sector. The public sector has undergone series of reforms to make it more effective and efficient in the delivery of services to the people. This is because prior to the reforms, the public sector was entangled in a plethora of challenges that made it difficult for it to perform its functions creditably. This research aims to assess the challenges of public service under democratic government in Yobe State from 1999-2019, with a view of improving the lives of Yobe state citizen through recommendations from the study. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The population of the study comprised 60 participants selected using random sampling technique according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A validated questionnaire with a reliability score of 0.72 Cronbach alpha was used in data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviations to answer the set research questions. The research demonstrates insightful information that shall bring the attention of policy makers in the state by comparing the problems at hand and the challenges facing the development of the public service.

Keywords: Implementation, Effect, Public service, Economic, Development, Yobe and Nigeria.

DOI: 10.7176/PPAR/16-1-02

Publication date: January 30th 2026

Acknowledgement

This study was fully founded by a grant from tertiary Education Trust Fund (Tetfund) under the Institutional Base Research (IBR) Scheme. Authors therefore thank the fund for the support rendered.

1. Introduction

Nature has endowed Yobe State with diverse economic potentials. Potash, which is a basic raw material for soap production, is found in commercial quantities in the Northern part of the State. High Grade Gum Arabic is also available, especially in Bursari, Tarmuwa and Damaturu Local Government Areas of the State. Equally produced in commercial quantities are cotton, groundnuts, beans, and sesame, among others in almost all the three geopolitical zones of the State. In the chemical and mineral sector, gypsum is found in commercial quantities in Fika, Gujba, Gulani, and Fune Local Government Areas. Diatomite and Limestone also in Gujba Local Government Area, while the presence of substantial deposits of Kaolin, Quartz etc. have been confirmed in other parts of the State. The state is also the largest supplier of livestock in the country.

In the Agro-Allied sector, the following agricultural products are grown in large quantities, namely rice, wheat, maize, beans, corn, cotton, and groundnuts. The State therefore has great potentials for the establishment of adhesive and pharmaceutical, cement, glass, chalk, Plaster of Paris, soap, flour and feed, textiles, meat, and leather processing industries. This is the process of social and economic development in a society where Socio-economic development is measured with indicators such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment. Changes in less-tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm and the extent of participation in civil society. Causes of socio-economic development are basically changes in technology and in laws which is one of responsibilities of the state in the process of governance.

In any democratic dispensation, there is no government that would rise to power without party manifesto, and it is these manifestoes that are probably translated to an agenda or policy of that government in power. The interface between public policy and democratic governance is an organic one. Democracy reinforces public policy and vice-versa.

The way and manner through which public or citizens feel the existence of government is through the instrumentalities of public policies. They are working tools or instruments through which nation state realize her dreams. In fact, dividends of democracy are felt by people through the formulation and implementation of public policies by the government.

On this note however, any government that is operating without genuine public policy is like a death or non-existing government. Because it is believed that the intents or actions of that government are utopia.

People nowadays has come to see government as a failure due to colossal problems associated with the ways and manner in which policies are conceived, formulated and implemented because it has not brought desired change in the lives of the people.

Government policies are usually greeted with severe public cynicism and disrespect due to big gap between government and the governed. Government has often time left a sour taste in the mouths of Nigerians largely because of policies failure.

Conceptualizing Public Policy and Democracy

Concept of Public Policy Like any other concept in the field of social sciences, conceptualizing public policy is often problematic. The problem arises from the fact that while some would want to see it as action or inactions of government, others would want to see it as intentions or decisions of government. We would therefore look at some of the definitions of public policy in order to put the concept into proper perspective.

Ayo (1985), defines public policy as any “action taken by the government in pursuit of certain aims.” From this definition public policy refers only to actions, and not the decisions or statements of intent. Friedrich (1975) sees public policy as “the proposed course of action of the government or one of its divisions.” It is further defined by Mlekwa

(1976) as “official statements determining the plan of action or what the government wants to do. Ikelegbe (1996) see it as “what government integrated courses and programmes of action that government has set and the framework or guide it has designed to direct actions and practices in certain problem areas.” Obikeze and Obi (2004) posits that “public policy is simply, government action and programmes of action toward solving societal problems.”

Furthermore, Dunn (1981) defined public policy as a long series of more or less related choices including decisions not to act, made by governmental bodies and officials. Also, public policy has been defined as the formal articulation, statement, or publication of a goal that the government intends to pursue in order to address a need or a problem (Waladt, 2001:93). While some scholars, such as Jones (1997) see public policy making as “a process of ongoing stages, such as policy formulation, policy adoption, budgeting, implementation and evaluation.” Lindblom (1968) sees it as a series of small step or increments, rather than a highly rational and structured process. Yet, Dahl (1970)) view public policy as a matter of competing publics, which represent the diversity and pluralism of society.

In the context of plural, democratic countries as Grindle and Thomas have articulated: “Public policy results from the conflict, bargaining and coalition formation among a potentially large number of societal groups, organized to protect or advance particular interests common to their members (2007).”

Challenges associated with policy implementation depend largely on the problems passed on to the implemented by policy formulators and those that are inherent within the implementation stage itself. In Nigeria, however, the most serious challenge is the ability of the government to eradicate corruption at all levels. Genuine commitment to the eradication of corruption involves not only the empowerment of the various agencies charged with responsibility of converting corruption with little interference by the government in their activities, but also the prosecution of the perpetrators no matter, their social, economic and political status in the society. Secondly, mere is also the issue of including implementation plan and analysis within the broader policy formulation framework, where the chains and multiples factors for successful policy implementation will be considered and appropriate measures taken, that will provide for clear definition of goals and coordination as well as defined programme for achievement of goals. More importantly, the ability of the politicians and bureaucrats to imbibe a culture of patriotism and the necessary political will and commitment, that will ensure continuity in policy direction and resistance to temptations and compromises that for long have been detrimental to the successful implementation of public policies. Lastly, the challenge is to the various civil society organizations, other

professional bodies and private individuals to pressurize the government for better public policy that will ensure the progress of the country, through the various constitutional means and other democratic norms and traditions. The implementation stage of the policy process is by definition an operational phase where policy is actually translated into action with the hope of solving some public problem.

Various governments in Nigeria have the obvious tendencies of pursuing multiple goals that in most cases are complicated. Policy goals often lack clarity and consistency with demands of the people. Policy makers in Nigeria assume that they know the needs of the target groups whose, social situation they are attempting to ameliorate and therefore see no need for clarity of goals. And it is obvious where policy goals are not clear, implementation tend to be more difficult.

Many policies pursued by government tends to be over ambitious which largely affect how programmes and policy goals are decided. According to Egomwan (2009) "the desire to establish the legitimacy of the political regime by providing tangible evidence of improving conditions, create a situation in which the political leaders are likely espouse policies that led to improvement of conditions of life, but maybe not realizable because of its overambitious nature", Therefore, the scope, comprehensiveness and operation ability of policies formulated gave rise to serious bottlenecks during implementation. Vision 2020, seven (7) point agenda and transformation agenda are some of such policies.

Implementing agencies in most cases suffered a setback due to lack of appropriate modern technology, managerial skill and administrative capacity that are prerequisite for effective policy implementation, the procedures adopted in policy implementation are such that, are not consistent with policy goals. And sometimes cultural consideration hampers adoption of modern technology in areas of programme implementation. Examples can be seen in the people's resistance of use of fertilizer because of traditional beliefs some decades ago; or the rejection of polio vaccines in some northern states.

The study assesses the challenges of public service under democratic government in Yobe State from 1999-2019, with a view of improving the lives of Yobe state citizen through recommendations from the study.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Research Design

A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. Kothari and Gary (2014). They also maintained that "it is a conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data." For this study, the researcher will adopt qualitative interview research design.

2.2 Research Focus and Approach

The study aims to give a fresh explanation for the failure of Yobe State's development strategy from 1999 to 2019, during the periods when democratic governance returned and the Fourth Republics of Nigeria picked up. The research employed both primary and secondary data collection and analysis.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

The study collected of data and information on planning, policy development and implementation, government processes and the perceived reasons for the poor performance of Yobe State's social and economic policies between 1999 and 2010 as well as recommendations for strategy on economic growth and the planning process. The interviews granted focuses on issues related to the impacts of the challenges of social and economic development of Yobe State from 1999 to 2010.

2.4 Primary Sources

Primary data were generated through in-depth interviews with selected participants using question guide based on the research problem. Open-ended and semi-structured questions were utilized to elicit responses from the participants.

2.5 Secondary Sources

Secondary data collection and analysis on the growth patterns and performance of the social and economic development of Yobe State from 1999 to 2010. Some of the materials that reviewed are books, academic research journals, academic theses/dissertations/projects, government reports, NGO reports, and newspapers/magazines. Other sources of data include National and Regional Development Plans, Sectoral policies and plans, Macroeconomic and fiscal performance reports, political party policies, Annual Plans and Economic Reports, research materials and books on the development of Nigeria and Nigerian states, Policy Framework Papers, Public Investment Programmes, Economic Reports, Budgets, and Budget Speeches.

2.6 Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

Sample selection of in-depth interview research is one of the areas that no universal or statistical technique has been postulated, widely accepted and adopted by scholars. It has therefore continued to generate debates over the years in many academic conferences and academic journals, which have produced written reports and myriad publications (Baker & Edwards, 2012). However, scholars have generally agreed that sample size in an in-depth interview research is often smaller than what is obtainable in quantitative research methods (Dworkin, 2012; Lewis, & Elam, 2003). This is because in-depth interviews are often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, thereby focusing on meaning (and heterogeneities in meaning) (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Dworkin, 2012), which is often centred on the how and why of a particular phenomenon, issue, process, situation, subculture, scene or set of social interactions (Dworkin, 2012).

The nature of the problem being studied, the social setting, the size of population, the research timeframe and available resources are considerable factors in sample selection in an in-depth interview research (Morse, 2000; Ritchie et al., 2003). A number of articles, book chapters, and books recommend guidance and suggest between five and 50 interviewees as adequate sample (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994, 2000). Morse (1994) has suggested that five to 25 interviewees are adequate as sample size in an in-depth interview method. Other studies suggest at least six to 15 interviewees should be the smallest acceptable sample size (Bertaux, 1981; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Therefore, this study employs a purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select sixty (60) Yobe State government officials, who will grant interview sessions for this study. A purposive sampling technique is a form of non-probability sampling frequently used in social science research, where the decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are made by the researcher based on a number of criteria. These criteria may include specialist knowledge of the research issue and the nature of the study (Oliver, 2006).

Five (5) relevant government officials from each of the MDAs for the interviews as well as five (5) participants from members of Yobe State House of Assembly. Thus, a total of 60 participants were utilized for the interview.

2.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is one of the most crucial steps in a research process as it helps depicts clear understanding of the research findings and makes it easy to evaluate the attainment of research objectives. Data obtained will be qualitatively analysed.

2.8 Study Area

The study area was Yobe State government of Nigeria. The research was restricted to the staff of Yobe State Government and some key members of Yobe State House of Assembly, in Damaturu, the state capital.

3. Results and Discussions

The following areas are identified as the bedrock to the successful implementation of public and private policy by the above research.

3.1 Continuing and Commitment to Policy

Change in government more often is accompanied by change in priorities. The situation tends to make implementation more difficult in terms of switch over to entirely different priorities and objectives which requires new organizations, personnel, resources and technology which are not always easy to provide especially under democratic government when transition from one party to another after election victory, this led to abandonment of many policies and project completed and the new government that come onboard is hardly to complete the project whatever how good to the citizen because of political/ideology differences.

3.2 Consistent and Relevant Definition of Responsibility and Coordination

Many policies in Nigeria require the involvement of many agencies at different levels of government. Example includes the policy on poverty reduction that was designed in phases and requires the involvement of so many agencies across the three level of government. And there is absence of coordination and clear definition of responsibility among the various agencies involved this factor led to the failure of the poverty alleviation policy.

3.3 Comparison During Implementation

Compromises are made that usually undermines the basic policy goals are detrimental to successful execution of programmes. For example, the successive Housing policies in Kano failed because it turnout to be the means of rewarding party loyalist and other economic and royal elites, thereby negating the basic goals of the policies of providing housing to the general public.

3.4 Corruption-Free Policy Should be a Priority.

The corrupt tendencies of public officials and politicians in connivance with private organizations and individuals have no doubt have a far-reaching consequence on effective implementation of policies in the country. Corruption has pervaded every aspect of our societal life. It can be seen not only in inflation of contract figures or percentage negotiations, but outright diversion of billions of naira meant for one programme or another. Agencies like EFCC and ICPC created to control and convert corruption have turnout to be toothless bulldogs with nothing to show compared to the high-level corruption in the country. These corrupt practices can easily be seen in the diversion of billions of US dollars aimed at providing enough power supply that will boost the national economy, a case which is yet to be investigated. Challenges associated with policy implementation depend largely on the problems passed on to the implemented.

3.5 Emphasis on the Effect of the Challenges to Policy Implementation

The Effects of These Problems and Challenges on National Development Given the ample problems and challenges elaborated earlier, the question of national development looks quite not obvious. National development been multifaceted phenomena that is concerned with total transformation of the political economic, social and cultural aspects of the society, requires, commitment and structures conducive to implementation of development programmes. The impact of implementation of policies on any economy is of vital importance. "The greatest problem hindering development of less developed countries like Nigeria is a lack of implementation and or improper implementation of plans, programmes and projects". (Bernard, 1995) In recent times, there has been increasing pressures on the Nigerian government to provide basic essential services such as education, health infrastructures, etc which was resulted from growing number of populations, coupled with high level of insecurity that engulfed most parts of the country. This is attributed to the high level of poverty and unemployment. And it is evident, that where policy goals are over ambitious, not well articulated and made explicit, implementation because more difficult and complicated, and it amounts to overstretching the available resources for maximum impact and at the end nothing concrete is achieved. Secondly, in the absence of Modern technology, managerial skills and administrative capacity in our public agencies responsible for implementing projects and programmes, the resultant effects will be inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the utilization of resources which lead to serious misappropriations and mismanagement. Thirdly, constant change in policies or shifts in priorities that led to abandonment of many projects across the country, largely due to change in government has the potential of making our national developments more difficult and led to compromises in our development plans. At the end, government may likely lose focus and direction, which will invariably affect our national development. Lastly, national development will never be possible in the face of high-level corruption that pervaded all nooks and crannies of the country. The situation was so bad to the extent that it caught the attention of International organizations such as the World Bank and Transparency International, and Nigeria was ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world. It can be seen in the way billions of US dollars were squandered in NEPA (Now Power Holding Company of Nigeria) and NNPC in recent years, at some point, the transparency international is showing accusing finger at Presidential Villa has been the most corrupt place in the country. And Nigerians are yet to recover from the recent oil subsidy saga that amount to trillions of naira and still nothing has been done to perpetrators. The effects of these corrupt practices will no doubt lead to lack of essentials like education, health, food and shelter, and poverty, unemployment, arm robbery, kidnapping, militancy and terrorism will be on the increase and the question of National development will be pipe dream.

5. Conclusion

Conclusively, there should be Continuing and commitment to policy implementation in all agencies of government, government must have a Consistent and relevant definition of responsibility and coordination among its workers, there should be Comparison during implementation, corruption must be tackled to minimal

level and effect of policy implementation must be periodically evaluated to determine the extent of how government functions effectively.

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