

An Assessment of Strategic and Administrative Policies Towards Service Delivery in A Bureaucratic Environment: The Case of Nigeria

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/gjahss.2013/vol11n8111>

Published July 24 2023

Citation: Oaikhena I. M. (2023) An Assessment of Strategic and Administrative Policies Towards Service Delivery in A Bureaucratic Environment: The Case of Nigeria, *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.11, No.8, pp.1-11

ABSTRACT: *The need to demonstrate managerial excellence by public and private administrators in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Bureaucrats are saddled with the responsibilities of managing public funds, budget implementation/performance integration, amongst others; as such there is the need for strategic policies to regulate and enhance their activities for effective/efficient service delivery. These strategic and administrative policies are targeted towards pressing issues in the public domain. Previous policies have been overly ambitious with government employing substantive strategies, which have proven quite successful in some other climes, to achieve large scale industrialization, whilst much attention has not been given to providing the necessary framework conditions to support the growth of strategic and administrative policies. The study provides an insight to strategic and administrative policies. The study is thus expected to enlighten/sensitize administrators to adhere strictly to carefully laydown governmental policies that are geared towards improving efficient service delivery. The study took its research methods from the empirical perspectives, and its theoretical framework from administrative policy. The study recommended, that policy pronouncements by the government and its' agencies should conform with human and environmental devolvment in both public and private sectors in the country. Hence government is expected to deal more specifically with policies that are strategic in nature.*

KEY WORDS: Strategic policy, service delivery, administrative policy, bureaucracy

INTRODUCTION

Policies that are strategic are policies that are targeted towards addressing a particular problem that have been identified in a society. When a policy becomes strategic, it means that it has a clear-cut and unique purpose. Administrators need to have more understanding of what policies are all about and what it means to implement policies successfully. Literarily speaking, *we eat, breath and drink policies*, because it provides the guide and

regulate the working in government and the environment. Policy affects the people both pervasively and profoundly. As it influences virtually most aspects of human lives. Policies in these regard then becomes law. According to Adebayo (2008), he posits that, civil servants must therefore be constantly engage in gathering facts and preparing findings that may lead to care in policy or lead to policy decisions. In this way, civil servants/administrators help to measure policy before the legislative stage is reached as they assist in drafting the law which is designed to carry out the desired programme. The drafting of policy programme is a function of policy actors who in most cases target the programme towards a problem that has been strategically identified.

Accordingly, strategic policies, becomes written statement of an organization's choices in its operations, whether it is profit or nonprofit oriented agency, chosen to solve society's problems. Therefore, in small business, a policy might describe senior leadership's official positions of the establishment or employees' behavior, as most establishments rely on employees to follow-up policies, or official decisions, in order to accomplish strategic goals.

Towards this end, administrators (private or public) need to be vibrant towards adhering to policy formulations with a purposeful implementation and meaningful out-put. It was in agreement to this that, Torjman (2005), posit that, policy dialogue acts as a vehicle for encouraging government to engage with communities, participants in discussions of relevant policies, program and administrative issues. This paper thus discussed the strategic and administrative effect of policy towards the enhancement/transformation of public administrators for effective and efficient service delivery; it ascertained the level strategic and administrative policies play in the development of administrators in the country; and suggested ways for adequate strategy to be put in place for the development of workable policies.

Two main strategic policies were thus discussed in the study. These are the substantive and administrative policies. These different statistic polices provides a platform for organizations, establishment, the government and the governed to achieve desired goals that are considered to be in the best interest of all members of the society. Thus, the ideologies of an industrial-relations system must be distinguished from the ideology of the larger society; but they can be expected to be similar or at least compatible in a developed industrial society (Otobo, 2000).

Substantive Policy Towards Strategic Outlook

The substantive aspect of policy falls within the areas of legislature, program and practices. Substantive policy statement is therefore, a written expression which informs the public of an agency of government's current approach to, or opinion of, the requirements of the constitution, administrative rule or regulation, or final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction. According to Matthew and Law (2002), substantive policies contain well calculated policy actions that, affects political system in major ways. It should be noted that, substantive policy document, only plays an advisory role to the agency(ies). This aspect

includes for instance, income security, employment initiative, child/mother care services, including social exclusion services etc. The advisory role played by the substantive policy document, has helped in positioning agencies of government and non-governmental organizations.

This type of interventions is necessary because of the vindictiveness of some employers who would do everything possible to take their 'pond of flesh' from the employee for daring to make them lose production hours not minding the right of the worker. This could be the reason why Imhabekhai (2004) pointed out that the task management must satisfactorily handle according to Fayol, is to come out with a good centralization – decentralization mix to meet the needs of individual organizations to achieve optimum results. Centralization is not a good or bad system of management according to Onansoya (1999), it can be adopted or discarded at will, infact centralization is one in which decision-making authority is vested in the top-level of the organization to which all matters pertaining to a particular problem have to be referred. The decision taken at this level becomes strategic for the advancement of the establishments, agencies or institutions, as major decision reached form the base for strategic policy pronouncement.

Strategic policy demonstrates government's continued commitment to manage public funds responsibly, in order to ensure that compliance with financial management is maintained as required by law. This approach to public finances is not just the right thing to do for four-year term Government in Nigeria, it is the key to a nation's future. This could be the reason why Leon (1979), posit that, people have applauded acts committed in the name of country that they would have condemned if they had been committed for any other reason. Conscious efforts should be made to ensure that labour policy covers every aspect of personnel management and industrial relations. It should provide for job security, growth of the employee and a means of encouraging the employee to produce at his best under suitable working conditions (Onasanya, 1999).

It is therefore apt to say that, good employee relations policies should be maintained in other to sustain a better working environment. Otabo (2000), stated that, it was easy and tempting for many people to view society as an organism, a living biological entity made up of different cells with each group of cells specializing in carrying out certain functions.

Strategic Management Outlook on Employee Relations

Strategy is not necessarily an exclusive attribute of the human condition. It is attributable to the characteristics of individuals and populations to deal with the primordial objective of surviving. Strategic management is thus seen as managing specific kind of work which could be analyzed, studied and approved systematically. It is therefore, the task of the manager, among others to attempt to harmonize every decision and action, the requirements of immediate and long term objectives of government. To this end, McLaughlin (2017) opined that, sound public finances and strong and stable government gives businesses the confidence they need to invest in a country, invariably creating future wealth and jobs for the teaming

populace, at the same time, accumulated surpluses and reducing debt, as it further provides medium term economic and financial forecasts for the government's next financial years along with the government's broad strategic outcomes which will guide the development and implementation of government policy during the period.

Therefore, the objectives of employee relations policies according to this study may include maintaining good industrial relations with staff and their unions; developing a cooperative and constructive employee relations climate; effective management of the work process; control of labour costs; and the development of an engaged and committed workforce. When these are articulated, policies should provide guidelines for action on employee relations issues in order to ensure that these issues are dealt with consistently, as they provide the basis for defining management's intentions on key matters such as, union recognition and collective bargaining.

Nonetheless, substantive policy had indeed claimed that there should be clear-cut objectives for the development of administrators for better service delivery. This could be the reason why Ikelegbe (2006) argued that realities of such objectives towards target groups should be emphasized, in terms of time, effort, and resources and which procedures, standards and activities are emphasized might alter significant policy expectations and intentions. As a result staff of various establishments needs a good policy management project. The activities and focus of workers have to be relevant to society. While the democratization project remains important, as there is need to direct attention, energies resources to policy management.

Achieving Policy Goals

The redirection of efforts and the conception of a policy management may have to be orchestrated by popular active civil society groups. It is clear that a range of actions can be taken by government and its agencies, alone or in conjunction with partners, to reduce poverty, unemployment, insecurity, etc, in order to enhance service delivery, alongside the stated objectives.

According to Dye (1992), the goal of eliminating discrimination in private life creates a positive obligation for government to act forcefully in public accommodations, employment, housing, and many other sectors of societies. The prerogative of every government is to ensure the compliance of persons, regardless of the type of business they do or work for, wants their policies to be read and understood by their employees, customers and suppliers.

Succinctly, each of these potential solutions to addressing problems would become formalized as a policy response through new legislative amendments, to existing legislation and program directives or the creation of a special initiatives or funds, if the legislative base is already in place. Zimako (2009) argue that "...each state policy is guided by the dictates of prevailing political consequences of the policy".

Therefore citizens as well as political leaders, constitute subordinate constitutional questions to immediate policy concerns. History is replete with examples of the same political leaders arguing one notion of federalism at one point in time to achieve their immediate policy goals, and the turning around and supporting a contradictory notion of federalism at a later time when it fits a new policy goal. Ikelegbe (2006) opined that, certain demerits exist in the implantation of new policy goals. First, it entails more time and energy which could slow down the formulation and implementation of plans and programs. Second, public involvement may create stalemate on public policy issues because of probable disagreements between segments of the population. Third, it is quite difficult to generate and sustain public involvements because the generality of the citizens are often timid, unconcerned and insensitive even to issues that affect them. Every administration has its own policy goals. Achieving set out goals means positioning objectives in a strategic pattern. Pattern according to Jofre (2011) is an unintended guide to our actions that emerges from repeated behavior overtime. A change in strategy, such as pattern and vision, might not be effective if strategic positions, programmes, products, and attitude do not change accordingly. Succinctly, a radical change in a bureaucratic environment involves all concerned actors within its strategy and structure.

Administrative Policies Targeted Towards Employees

Administrative policies involves, the collection of statistical information on the people working/living within an environment and the evaluation of complex programs in an environment. Administrative policies for employees, enables them to understand basic rules of the office and environment. They are typically presented during an employee's orientation period, as the company's human resources department usually enforces the policies and provides employees with an employee handbook explaining the rules and regulation of the establishment. This could be the reason why Stuart (1999) said that pollution prevention, product stewardship, and clean technology all move a company towards sustainability. This indirectly implies/suggests that in an organization, formulation and implementation of strategies are not isolated events. People do think and act simultaneously, sometimes against management plans, imposing their own strategy to “do what they know or do best”. According to Jofre (2011), he opined that such autonomy of choice can have unforeseen consequences to the strategy formulation (and implementation) process. In such establishment, efficiency is also possible but it depends on mutual adjustment and interaction.

The human environment possesses values, attitudes, perceptions and preferences which in interaction with human conditions and the physical environment generate demands and interest which are transmitted into the political and conversation processes (Ikelegbe, 2006). Thus the policy process consists of interactions between the environment, the conversion process and the policy. Therefore, these policies encompasses the provision of a broad range of state and local government services, which include education, health, welfare, garbage disposal etc., as a result, a skilled, educated, creative workforce can neither be recruited to a state nor retained there if the quality of life is considered unattractive.

Dye (1992) argued that, policies are directed towards economic growth; they include industry, building transportation facilities, providing utilities, renewing urban areas, training the labor force for work, and so on. The training and development of employees is an issue that has to be faced by every organization. The amount and quality, of training carried out, varies enormously from one organization to another. Oaikhena, Agara, and Idehen (2013) described training, as a panacea for most organizational problems.

Organizations are basically concerned with the structure of administration, i.e. the structure through which the activities are operationalized to achieve set objectives.

Challenges Associated with Implementing Strategic Policies

Some challenges were identified to have created a lacuna to effective implementation of public policy and service delivery. One of such challenges is bureaucracy, others highlighted by this study are: non-adherence to budgetary processes; and lack of industrial relations.

- **Bureaucracy**

Bureaucracy is also a system of control. Max Weber argued that, in any large scale task, some people must coordinate and control the activities of others. According to Ikelegbe (2006) he described bureaucracy as a major organizational structure, within which policy making, implementation and evaluation takes place, as a result the bureaucratic input in the policy process that, the concepts of administrative policy making and bureaucratic policy system, have become commonplace in policy studies. Therefore, in a bureaucratic environment, an incompetent worker can find sanctuary, and a good worker can meet challenges that demand all his strength. According to Jomoh (2004), he argued that bureaucracy has its own dark side, as he said that it may lead to the destruction of an organization it is supposed to take to new height, if proper care is not taken. The paper suggest that strict adherence to procedures, rules and regulations obviously leave no room for flexibility, and in the face of new and dynamic situations, may lead to disastrous consequences.

Succinctly Jike (2005) posits that bureaucracy is sometimes attacked not because of the quality of the administration but by reason of the policy, being administered. For instance, tax officers may be attacked when the real object of criticism is the particular tax being collected or a regulatory administration may be attacked when the real object of attack is the policy itself. Quite often, civil society organizations as criticized the inefficiency of bureaucrats and their inability to adapt to a changing environment, most especially in the area o reforms.

- **Non-Adherence to Budgetary Processes**

This is one area of major challenge as government sometimes does not make adequate preparations, in terms of proper consultations, before embarking on major policy implementation/execution. Ikelegbe (2006) did not miss words when he described the budget as a forecast of a plan of actions for a specific period expressed in monetary

terms. While Onasanya, described it as an estimate of income and expenditure, a standard against which performance can be measured (1999). From Ikelegbe's view point, it could be deduced that planning refers to the rational and systematic means of arriving at optional means or strategies and the instruments and resources to attain prior set objectives. These policies and programme structures have to be designed within resources level to achieve goals.

Therefore, it is imperative to have a budgetary process in place to achieve set out aims and objectives. Describing the budget once small because of its importance and for better understanding, Ikelegbe (2006), argued that budget is a statement of purposes, anticipated revenues, work proposed to be performed and funds allocated to achieve the work proposed to be performed. In view therefore the budget is a financial policy and programme plan of action by government by bureaucrats, political executives, professionals, interest groups, communities and individuals. Thus the non-adherence to budgetary programmes, would often times lead to government non-performance, inefficiency, poor budgetary implementation by relevant managers.

Every manager has the authority to operate within the limit of the approved budget and the setting of standards against which performance can be measured. Many programme managers are selfish, incompetent and corrupt, thus resulting to poor budget implementations and poor management of problems in developing counties (including Nigeria) where the executive capacity to manage programmes are usually poor. The study noted that the pervasiveness of poor project supervision, poor compliance to programme directives, the poor determination and slow response to implementation problems and poor staff utilization arising from inappropriate positions and poor allocation of responsibility, and also reflections of poor programme leadership, budget adherence have become management ineffectiveness to proper budget management. This could be the reason why Omorogbe (2008) argued that a decision of conscience is always binding even when it is objectively and inculpably wrong, that is, even when it makes an error in good faith. While Cole (2002) advised that, all positive actions programmes need to be carefully thought out if they are not to be counter-productive.

- **Lack of Industrial Harmony**

Industrial harmony paved way for industrial and economic growth. According to Goold and Campbell (1999) they asserted that when synergy is well managed, it can be a boom, creating additional value with existing resources. Thus industrial relation is concerned with the relationship between trade unions and the employees in the industry, including the intervention of government in that relationship.

In a complex and interconnected world, the nature of job is rapidly changing, and so are the regulation, reward and negotiation of employment. Industries and employees, consultants, managers and policymakers, need a better understanding of the forces

shaping workplaces and of relationships among employees and external stakeholders. These challenges are the result of the divide that exists at our establishment between those who make decisions and those who must implement these decisions.

This could be the reason why Onasanya (1999) posits that, industrial relations is practiced by human beings, poor human relations can adversely affect otherwise good industrial relations. As a result understanding the common problems faced by employees in organization or establishment is the key to maintaining a harmonious relationship between management and staff. This was further buttressed when Onasanya (1999), stated that good harmonious relationship contributes to economic growth and development as good industrial relations lead to increased efficiency and hence higher productivity and income.

Some Perceived Strategic Policies in Nigeria

Nigeria has a long history of economic development planning; this includes the various national development and rolling plans, as well as programmes such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Transformation Agenda, Vision 20:2020, and of late, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017-2020.

Nevertheless, poor policy implementation and policy failures remain the bane of the nation's economy. According to Ipinaiye (2018) said that corruption, one of the bane to economic growth, leads to inefficient use of resources as policy decisions are largely influenced by the private gains to the decision-makers and their cronies, rather than the economic and social benefits of such decisions.

Meanwhile, between (2016– 2017), strategy towards the continued fight against corruption in the country, lead to measures that were put in place by the President Muhammadu Buhari led administration, to further curb the menace corruption and abuse of office. These measures were the policy on Treasury Singly Account (TSA) and the Whistle Blower Policy.

The Treasury Single Account (TSA) is a financial policy. It was introduced by the government of Nigeria in 2012 to consolidate all inflows from all ministries, department and agencies (MDA) of government into a single account at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). This policy has been defined as a process and tool that unifies all government accounts into a single unit, for the effective management of its finances.

While the whistle-blower policy came on board in 2017. The policy's goal was to support the fight against crimes and corruption, by increasingly exposing financial crimes and rewarding whistle-blowers. In order to promote such exposure, whistle-blowers are encouraged and offered protection from harassment or intimidation by the accused. The target is that looted funds would be recovered through the encouragement of voluntary information by individuals about corrupt practices. Information is key to effective policy

implementation by administrators if the third world countries must develop. Thus Adebayo (2008) posits that the predominant influence of administrator over policy will remain for as long as the basis and structure of politics in developing countries retain the culture of poverty.

Summary/Conclusion

There is no gainsaying the fact that strategic administrative policies helped to address salient issues in a society. Notwithstanding, strategies in natural systems seem to emerge spontaneously from the interaction between the environment and organizations over time. The study revealed that bureaucrats typically intermediate between management and the citizens by diagnosing benefits for the citizens. Whether an individual or a population will be more or less successful to cope with environmental challenges is determined by their capability to respond to strategic policy changes, by their capability of adaptation. The objectives of employee relations policies may include maintaining good relations with staff and their unions, developing a cooperative and constructive employee relations climate, the effective management of the work process, the control of labour costs, and the development of an engaged and committed workforce.

In furtherance, the study pointed out that when there are articulated policies providing guidelines for actions on administrative relations issues, this can help to ensure that issues are dealt with consistently, as it provide the basis for defining management's intentions on key matters such as union recognition and collective bargaining. Collective bargaining involves employers and unions reaching agreement on terms and conditions of employment and the ways in which employment issues such as disputes, grievances and disciplinary matters should be resolved. Bargaining arrangements result in collective agreements, which are formal agreements between management and trade unions dealing with terms and conditions of employment or other aspects of the relationships between the two parties. It therefore becomes a strategic task for managers, among others, to attempt to harmonize every decision and action, the requirements of immediate and long range objectives of the establishment. None of these can work without people or human resources. Hence, it is imperative to coordinate and control human resources to align with the system in which people perform administrative functions. When strategies are focused on the establishment itself, the internal environment, acquire strategic relevance.

This strategic administrative perspective according to the study, gains its weight not only through the persuasiveness of its own arguments, but also through its relative consensus among the works of numerous strategic thinkers.

Recommendations

- ✓ Administrative officials should endeavor to make decisions in the process of implementing strategic and administrative policies, so as to be able to interpret the policy and apply it to specific cases and situations.

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- ✓ Bureaucrats should be able to determine which policy can be well implemented. Where abilities exist strategic and administrative policies could be confidently enacted for implementation.
- ✓ Government should continue to seek expert and professional advice on important roles in governance, by consulting and seeking policy advice and related input from expert and professional. As the problems confronting society become more complex and the search for optimal policies to resolve them become more acute.
- ✓ Managers should ensure that objectives, plans, policies, rules, regulations and procedures are effectively communicated to administrators (public or private) whose performance is needed to attain the set strategic objectives.
- ✓ It is essential for the citizen's participation approach, as it helps in educating the public on government plans, programmes and activities. It also provides information on the preferences, perceptions and needs of the public, particularly those most affected by government programmes. It furthermore enables the determination of public perceptions of the effectiveness of public services, their opinion and attitudes to government programmes.

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