

**HANDBOOK  
ON**

**PROMOTING CIVIL  
SOCIETY'S PARTICIPATION  
IN PUBLIC POLICY**

**PRODUCED BY  
ORGANIZATION FOR COMMUNITY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (OCCEN)**



**AGENTS FOR  
CITIZEN-DRIVEN  
TRANSFORMATION**



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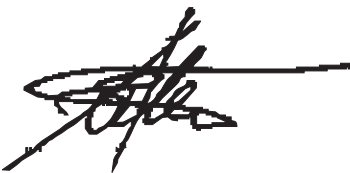
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## FORWARD

There is growing recognition that stable, transparent and accountable governance can only be achieved when public institutions are willingly accepting the participation of civil society and representative of citizens group in policy formulation and implementation. The OCCEN' project on strengthening civil society participation in public policy decisions in Kano state funded by EU-ACT plays a pivotal role in building CSOs capacity and creating an enabling environment through which citizens and government interact and engage each other on matters of public policy and good governance.

This handbook is intended to provide a quick reference guide to assist CSOs and citizens' understanding of public policy process, and enhance their capacity to demand and promote greater participation of citizens in public policies and government programs. The handbook found its inspiration in the issues identified by EU-ACT sector support on Democracy, Rule of Law, Civil Society Migration (this includes- Justice Sector Reforms, Good Governance, Democracy, Electoral Reforms, Anti-Corruption, Human rights, Women's rights, Child's rights, Response to Gender Based Violence, Disability and Inclusion, Mental Health, Response to Organised crime, Response to drug abuse and related crime, Trafficking in Persons).

In presenting this handbook, I wish to express my full appreciation for the unsparing support that EU-ACT extended to OCCEN during the process that led to its development and publication.



Abdulrazaq Alkali  
Executive Director

## ACRONYMS

ACT	-	Agents for Citizens-driven Transformation
ANOVA	-	Analysis of Variance
CSOS	-	Civil Society Organisations
EU	-	European Union
OCCEN	-	Organisation for Community Civic Engagement

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## INTRODUCTION

The Organization for Community Civic Engagement (OCCEN) organised a 3-Day Training on public policy participation for civil society organizations. Currently, OCCEN is working hard to strengthen civil society participation in public policy decisions in Kano state with funding support from Agents for Citizens-driven Transformation (ACT) project implemented by European Union through British Council. The project aims at creating an enabling environment in which civil society organizations and marginalized citizens (women, youth and people with disabilities) and power holders can interact and engage with each other on matters to promote good governance, participate in policy decisions, demand for political accountability, and inclusive governance in Kano state.

In view of this, OCCEN organized the training in order to build the capacity of ten (10) selected Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), on how to participate in policy making process in Kano state. As a result, twenty (20) participants (males and females) from different CSOs and People with Disability to ensure inclusiveness participated in the training out of which this handbook is developed to serve as a guide to CSOs.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

#### 1.0 Introduction

The term 'Public Policy' is derived from two common words, 'Public' (which means people, citizens) and 'Policy' (that means government statements, rules and regulations, what government intends to do or not to do). 'Public policy' (made by government and affects citizens) is different from 'private policy' (made by an individual and affects the person alone).

Policy-making presupposes the recognition of a policy problem. Problem recognition itself requires that a social problem has been defined as such and that the necessity of state intervention has been expressed. The second step would be that the recognized problem is actually put on the agenda for serious consideration of public action (agenda-setting). The agenda is nothing more than "the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside the government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time" (Kingdon 1995,3). The government's (or institutional) agenda has been distinguished from the wider media and the overall public (or systemic) agenda (Cobb and Elder 1972). While the government's (formal and informal) agenda presents the center of attention of studies on agenda-setting, the means and mechanisms of problem

recognition and issue selection are tightly connected with the way a social problem is recognized and perceived on the public/media agenda.

Agenda setting is the process by which problems and alternative solutions gain or lose public and elite attention. Group competition to set the agenda is fierce because no society or political institutions have the capacity to address all possible alternatives to all possible problems that arise at any one time (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). Groups must therefore fight to earn their issues' places among all the other issues sharing the limited space on the agenda or to prepare for the time when a crisis makes their issue more likely to occupy a more prominent space on the agenda. Even when an issue gains attention, groups must fight to ensure that their depiction of the issue remains in the forefront and that their preferred approaches to the problem are those that are most actively considered.

Agenda-setting results in a selection between diverse problems and issues. It is a process of structuring the policy issue regarding potential strategies and instruments that shape the development of a policy in the subsequent stages of a policy cycle. If the assumption is accepted that not all existing problem could receive the same level of attention (and some are not recognized at all).

#### 1.1 What is a Public Policy?

A public policy refers to a long series of actions carried out to solve societal



problems after it is been identified and defined by the relevant stakeholders. Public policy is the strategic use of resources to alleviate problems or concerns (Chandler and Plano, 1988). It was also described as any decision or measures taken to deal with a particular problem or innovation.

Public policies follow a particular purpose: they are designed to achieve defined goals and present solutions to societal problems. More precisely, policies are government statements of what it intends to do or not to do, including law, regulation, ruling, decision, or order (Birkland 2001: 132). Public policy, on the other hand, is a more specific term, which refers to a long series of actions carried out to solve societal problems (Newton and van Deth 2005: 263). Hence, (public) policies can be conceived of as the main output of political systems.

Public policies are the main output of political systems; and they come along in different forms, including laws, rules and regulations. It also has some key ingredients. The major ingredients of public policy are:

- Goals (the desired end to be achieved)
- Plan/proposal (specifications taken to set goals, develop plans, implement and evaluate programmes)
- Effects (measurable impacts of programmes)

## **1.2 Types of Public Policy**

Fundamentally, there are four (4) types of public policy. They are:

- Distributive policies – this is concern with the distribution of resources. For example, social issues, agriculture, etc.
- Redistributive policies – are measures that modify the distribution of existing resources. E.g. Land reform, welfare policy, etc.
- Regulatory policies – measures that specify conditions and constraints for individual or collective behaviour. E.g. Environmental protection, consumer protection, etc.
- Fundamental policies – are derived from the constitution, hence, they are based on constitutional provision or judicial interpretation of the constitution.

## **1.3 The Importance of Public Policy**

Public policy has the following significance, among others:

- It involves choices/alternatives within which selection is made
- Decisions are usually taken by citizens and/or organizations
- It address specific issue or problem
- It states what is going to be done and how

- It provides the direction, the guide and the way to the achievement of certain goals. It is a major guideline for action.
- Public policy is directed toward achieving provision of public services, e.g. education, health, housing, water resources, electricity, etc.
- It brings about regulation of personal or corporate activities, e.g. Maintenance of law and order, traffic control, etc.

In conclusion, each policy begins with the identification of a societal problem. Policy making is a strategy for solving societal problems through institutions. Public policy plays an important role in providing laws, direction and support for public services.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The relationship between public policy and institutions is a close one since policy does not become a public policy until it is adopted, implemented and enforced by government institutions. Institutions lend legitimacy, universality and coercion to policies. Institutions also shape the behaviour of actors and the use of policy instruments. Many institutions are involved in public policy as actors. These include the legislature, the executives,

the judiciary and bureaucracy, while the political parties, interest groups, citizens and media are also critical.

#### **2.1 The Executives**

The Executives involves the Federal and State Executive Councils. The federal executive council includes Mr. President, Vice President, Ministers and other key top government officials who meet at least once a month in Nigeria to consider submissions and memos from ministries, departments and agencies. Other matters of critical national importance (for example, new policies) are also discussed with decisions taken or resolutions made. At state levels, the council is made up of the State Governor as Chair, Deputy Governor, Commissioners and other top government functionaries. Also, submissions and memos from ministries, departments and agencies are considered. Cabinets in either federal or state councils are central organs in public policy formulation and implementation; although it (a policy) may be initiated by Heads of councils, MDAs, or even private individuals or group. The councils usually 'reach' decisions (not make) on various policy matters placed before them at cabinet meetings. That is, decisions are taken after extensive deliberations at the meeting under normal circumstances.

The executive role in policy making depends on the type of government or constitution a country adopts. In Nigeria, where presidential system of government is in practice, the federal executive councils and state executive

councils cabinets are the central organs of public policy formulation and implementation.

## 2.2 The legislature

The legislature comprises of the National Assembly, State Assembly and local government council that play a notable role in policy-making. In democracy, implementation of most policies can only commence when appropriate legislations are made and appropriation made. The Legislature, however, plays the following roles in public policy:

- Hearing and investigation into issues that constitute public problem.
- Carrying out oversight function
- Contact with various administrative officials and interest groups
- Debating and adopting bills or proposals of law
- Determining major policy issues such as revenue allocation formula, state creation, etc.

## 2.3 The Judiciary

The judiciary is the third arm of government in democratic governance that deals with law. It is the custodian of laws and ensures any action taken by either the executives and legislature is tandem with the provision of the law. The judicial role in public policy process include:

- Judicial review, i.e. determination of the constitutionality of legislative and executive actions.

- The judiciary serves as an interpreter of the constitution, as such, wields much influence in policy formulation. Statutory interpretation of cases brought before the Judges.

Note that the judiciary does not initiate or propose policies, does not formulate policy, neither does it implement policies. It only reacts to policy proposals, enactment and implementation.

## 2.4 Experts/Technocrats in Administration

These are the bureaucrats that guide policy initiative, formulation and implementation. They are mainly those in position of authority that directs government actions and execute programmes and projects. Technocrats are administrators that play some roles as follows:

- Policy formulation and implementation
- Provide information that will guide policy direction
- Assist with the scientific management of the policy process through policy formulation and analysis.

Thus, experts and technocrats in administrative agencies play roles in policy formation process. They supply information and help to articulate the broad objectives that guide policy directions. The advice of experts can also lead to the initiation of policies by decision-makers or politicians, apart

from the vision of the government itself. In addition, experts assist with the scientific management of the policy process through policy formulation and analysis.

### **2.5 Political Parties**

Political parties are platforms upon which candidates are sponsored to vie for any elective position. In democratic governance, political parties are formed as structures that provide a system of leadership from grassroots. To ensure democratic consolidation, there is need for intra and inter-party democracy in order to promote free, fair, credible and popularly acceptable elections. Political parties formulate policy issues to which candidates of the party are to some degree tied. These are often reflected in their manifestoes. Parties do give relevant information to their candidates on major policy issues. A ruling party can influence the process of making public policy by ensuring that actions of government are in line with the party manifestoes. Parties lobby policy makers to make favourable policies. In modern societies, political parties perform the function of 'interest aggregation', that is, seek to convert a particular demand of interest groups into policy alternatives.

### **2.6 Interest Groups**

Interest groups are generally regarded as pressure groups and are formed to purposely to pursue certain goals. They usually adopt different methods to influence public policy making process, for example, lobby, persuasion, provision of vital information to policy makers, etc.

Interest groups influence the policy process by sponsoring and supporting candidates for elective positions and also use both covert and overt pressures to influence policies of government. Involve in public debate and discussions to influence policy, for example, deregulation or subsidy removal. They sometimes use civil disorder, for example, strike, demonstration, etc.

### **2.7 Individual Citizens**

Democracy is a game of numbers, as such, citizens are supposed to elect their leaders across levels and promote transparency and accountability. To protect democratic tenets, individual citizens should participate actively in democratic processes, policy initiative, formulation and implementation. In democracy, citizens are supposed to be represented in policy making. But in many democracies, like Nigeria, very little citizens' participation in policy making is recorded due to citizens' neglect, unfavourable conditions, corruption, bad governance, apparent abuses of democratic culture, and so on. In other forms of governance, like Aristocracy, Oligarchy, Authoritarianism, military dictatorship, etc, not much opportunity is provided to the citizens. Some citizens, if not many, do not exercise their franchise or engage in party politics. Many voters are not influenced by policy considerations.

### **2.8 The Media**

Media communication is a prerequisite in democracy and democratic governance. Media communicate information to the

citizens about decisions of government. It also serves as an important source of information for the government on public's reactions on issues. As such, the media must be reliable and not bias. The media can influence public opinion in determining policy or policy change.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS (PPA)

#### 3.0 Introduction

Policy analysis is defined as a set of techniques that seeks to provide explanation on probable effect of a policy. Policy analysis involves the application of systematic research techniques. It is an attempt to measure organizational effectiveness through an examination and evaluation of organizational programmes. Policy analysis is used for problems assessment and monitoring, as a 'before the fact' decision tool, and for evaluation. PPA is important to all public and private citizens for better understanding of government decision and programmes.

Policy analysis is defined as a set of techniques that seeks to answer the question of what the probable effect of a policy will be before they actually occur' (Shafritz 1986:409). This refers to a "before the fact" analysis of Public Policies. However, the term is also used by many to refer to both before and after the fact analyses of Public Policies. Policy analysis involves the application of systematic research techniques most of which are borrowed in other disciplines.

#### 3.1 Approaches to Public Policy Analysis

Several approaches are used in public policy analysis. These include:

- The prescriptive approach
- The descriptive
- The micro
- The macro

The above approaches adopt either qualitative or quantitative methodology to analyze public policy. Relevant data are collected through different methods around a specific policy to aid analysis. These methods could be questionnaire, interview, observation, focus group discussion, and so on. The qualitative approach to policy analysis relies on narrations and descriptions, while the quantitative approach relies on quantitative data and adopts the use of statistical techniques that helps in establishing relationship between variables and policy related phenomena.

##### 3.1.1 The Qualitative Approach

Different methods are used to collect qualitative data. Among them are:

- Interviews
- Observations
- Focus group discussions
- Observation

Various methods are also used to analyze qualitative data. Among them are:

- Narrations/descriptions/quotations
- Atlas ti
- Nvivo, etc.

### 3.1.2 The Quantitative Approach

Different methods are used to collect quantitative data. Among them are:

- Questionnaire
- Interview

There are different methods used to analyze quantitative data.

- Frequency and percentages
- Chi-square
- Correlation and coefficient
- Regression analysis
- Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Public policy analysis is the detailed examination of a particular policy or policy making system and all the stages involved in the process. It focuses on public policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, the values of policy makers, the environment of the policy, the course of policy alternatives, e.g. by the use of techniques such as planning, performing, budgeting, etc.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION

#### 4.0 Introduction

Under normal circumstances, policies are formulated to serve the interest of the citizens. Policies are implemented by institutions of government. Successful implementation of any policy is only possible with sufficient resources to translate the policy objectives into an operational framework. After a period of

implementation, a policy is evaluated. Policies are evaluated to understand its effectiveness and efficiency toward the achievement of the intended goals. Policy evaluation is normally done using reports and information from stakeholders.

Evaluations can lead to diverse patterns of policy-learning, with different implications in terms of feed-back mechanisms and a potential restart of the policy process. One pattern would be that successful policies will be reinforced; a pattern that forms the core idea of so-called pilot projects (or model experiment), in which a particular measure is first introduced within a (territorial, substantive, or temporal) limited context and only extended if the evaluation is supporting. Prominent examples range from school reforms, the introduction of speed limits (and related measures in the field of transport policy), to the whole field of genetic engineering. However, instead of enhancing evidence-based policy-making, pilot projects may represent tools that are utilized for purposes of conflict avoidance; contested measures are not finally adopted but taken up as a pilot projects and thereby postponed until the political mood is ripe for a more enduring course of action.

Evaluations could also lead to the termination of a policy. Reform concepts and management instruments like Sunset Legislation and Zero-Based-Budgeting (ZBB) have been suggested as key tools that encourage terminating

prior policies in order to allow for new political priorities to materialize. ZBB is supposed to replace traditional incremental budgeting (the annual continuation of budget items with minor cuts and increases reflecting political moods and distribution of power).

#### **4.1 What is Public Policy Evaluation?**

Policy evaluation is the process of determining the consequences of public policy and what has and has not been achieved. It is a systematic collection and analysis of information to make judgments about contexts, activities, characteristics, or outcomes of any policy. Policy evaluation is a range of practices geared toward ensuring government's effectiveness and efficiency.

It is the process by which general judgments about quality, goal attainment, programme, effectiveness, impact and costs are assessed.

#### **4.2 Types of Policy Evaluation**

There are four types of policy evaluation which can either be done internally (in-house by the operating agency itself) or externally (by outsider). Namely:

- Process evaluation
- Outcome evaluation
- Impact evaluation
- Cost-benefit evaluation

Policy evaluation can be carried out in different ways:

- Formal/official evaluation (through monitoring)
- Client satisfaction evaluation

- Outcome evaluation (satisfaction of client of measurable intended outcomes)
- Comparison of costs and impacts of a policy
- Evaluation of long term consequences (impact on the core societal problem)

#### **4.2.1 Advantages of Policy Evaluation**

There are many advantages of policy evaluation. These include, but not limited to:

- Help government improve the design and implementation of a policy
- Contribute to promoting public accountability, learning and increased public sector effectiveness through improved decision-making
- Determine value for money
- Promote good governance by informing and improving policy development, adoption and implementation
- Produce or build 'evidence' for further policy intervention

Policy evaluation is used to examine content implementation or impact of the policy which helps to understand merit, worth and utility of the policy. Policy evaluation provides a feedback loop which enables decision makers to draw lessons. The feedback loop identifies new problems and sets in motion the policy making process once again, creating an endless policy cycle.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PUBLIC POLICY COMMUNICATION

#### 5.0 Introduction

Communication is an important aspect of public policy. Through it citizens are informed and educated about issues and problems in society. The goal of policy communication is to inform citizens of the existence of a policy and persuade them to participate in and/or comply with the policy requirements. Policy communication provides the citizens with information on priorities, programmes and activities of government. That prompted the need for the use of proper channels to communicate policy to citizens.

#### 5.1 Ways and Skills of Communication

Different ways are used to communicate to others in the world. The commonest ways of communication include:

- Verbal
- Nonverbal
- Visual

Skills of communication are very essential as it facilitate understanding and easy comprehension of any message. Writing and speaking (transmission skills), reading and listening (reception skills) are of critical importance to communication, and in particular, public policy communication. The message (effective or ineffective) and language of communication are key to effective communication. In addition, always consider the target audience. Effective message should be:

- Simple
- Concise
- Appropriate
- Tone
- Credible

While ineffective message is usually:

- Complicated
- Too long
- Inappropriate
- Uninteresting
- Not relevant to audience

#### 5.2 Model of Communication

The mode of communication presents communication cycle beginning from the sender, the message, transmission, the receiver and feedback. In every communication there should be those characters and the message transmitted using a particular channel while feedback is expected in return.

#### 5.3 Effective Communication

Effective communication is the one that relay information to the understanding of receivers and call for feedback. Communication experts say that consumers normally process any verbal communication as seen below:

- What you say 7%
- How you say it 38%
- Body language 55%

For any communication to be effective consider the following:

- Get the right message and information
- To the right people
- At the right time
- Using the right media/medium



## 5.4 Policy Communication

Policy communication can adopt the following channels, among others:

- Stakeholder involvement/ engagement/meeting
- Use of media (electronic, print and social)
- Policy distribution and dissemination
- Consultation  
Persuasion and advocacy
- On-on-one or in group

Effective communication of policy enhance acceptance and promote compliance. Use of proper channels to communicate policy is essential in addition to acquiring communication skills.

## CHAPTER SIX

### EXPLORING THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESSES

#### 6.0 Introduction

All policies are made to address a particular need or needs. Policy formulations always begin with the identification of a problem or issue. As soon as an issue is identified as worth policing, public policy process begin.

#### 6.1 Public Policy Process

Policy process refers to the methods, conditions, procedures, activities, interactions, and stages by which the policies are made. It refers to how

policies come about or are made from problems identification to the policy outcome. The policy making process is often called 'policy cycle'. The policy cycle is based on an implicit top-down perspective, and as such, policy-making will be framed as a hierarchical steering by superior institutions. And the focus will always be on single programs and decisions and on the formal adoption and implementation of these programs. The interaction between diverse programs, laws, and norms and their parallel implementation and evaluation does not gain the primary attention of policy analysis.

#### 6.2 Stages of Policy Making

The first stage in policy making is the identification of public problems, which require the state to intervene. However, only few will be given official attention by legislators and executives, and they constitute policy agenda. Policy formulation involves the definition, discussion, acceptance or rejection of action for coping with policy problems. Policy adoption refers to the formal adoption to take on a policy. Implementation represents the conversion of new laws into programmes, projects and practices. After a policy is passed by the legislature and implemented by the bureaucracy, it becomes a subject of evaluation to establish whether the output of the policy has attained the intended goals. See the designed policy cycle below:



The first stage in policy making refers to the identification of a public problem, which requires the state to intervene. In fact, there are many problems, but only a small number will be given official attention by legislators and executives. Those public problems that are chosen by the decision makers constitute the policy agenda. In this context, Cobb and Elder (1972) distinguish between the systemic agenda and the institutional agenda. The systemic agenda refers to all societal problems that demand public attention, hence forming the 'discussion agenda'. The institutional agenda, by contrast, contains a set of problems that are up for the serious consideration of decision makers. Thus, the institutional agenda is the 'action agenda', which is more specific and concrete than the systemic agenda. Setting the agenda is an important source of power as is it is policy consequential, i.e. legislative institutions grant an advantage to the first movers as compared to the second movers (Shepsle and Weingast 1987). The factors determining whether an issue reaches the agenda may be cultural, political, social, economic or ideological.

According to Kingdon (1995: 19), agenda setting can be regarded as '[...] three process streams flowing through the system – streams of problems, policies,

and politics. They are largely independent of one another, and each develops according to its own dynamics and rules. But at some critical junctures the three streams are joined, and the greatest policy changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policies, and solutions'.

The second stage in the policy cycle – policy formulation – involves the definition, discussion, acceptation or rejection of feasible courses of action for coping with policy problems. Generally, policy formulation is strongly related to policy adoption – the subsequent stage here – and in fact a clear-cut distinction between them is often impossible. However, we decided to present them separately since they still refer to different stages. Policy formulation deals with the elaboration of alternatives of action, whereas policy adoption refers to the formal adoption to take on a policy. Hence, policy formulation implies the definition of policy objectives and the selection of the most appropriate policy instruments as well as their settings (Hall 1993). It takes place within the broader context of technical and political constraints of state action. The political constraints can be either substantive or procedural.

Substantive constraints refer to the nature of the problem, while procedural constraints are about procedures involved in adopting a policy adoption. These procedural constraints are related to both institutional and tactical constraints (Howlett and Ramesh 2003).

The adoption of a policy option is determined by a number of factors. Of these, two sets of factors are of major relevance. First of all, the set of feasible policies can be reduced by the necessity to build majorities for the approval of a policy option, which implies considerations about values, party affiliation, constituency interests, public opinion, deference, and decision rules (Anderson 2003).

Implementation represents the conversion of new laws and programs into practice. Without proper implementation, policy has neither substance nor significance. Thus, policy success depends on how well bureaucratic structures implement government decisions. At the first glance, implementation appears as an automatic continuation of the policy-making process. Nevertheless, there often exists a substantial gap between the passage of new legislation and their application. For successful implementation, there must be an entity with sufficient resources, which is able to translate the policy objectives into an operational framework and that is accountable for its actions (Gerston). Often bureaucracies emerge as principal actors during implementation.

After a policy is passed by the legislature and implemented by the bureaucracy, it becomes a subject of evaluation. The main question at this stage is whether the output of the decision making process – a given public policy – has attained the 19 intended goals. Evaluation is often a

formal component of policy making and is generally carried out by experts who have some knowledge about the processes and objectives pertaining to the issue undergoing review (Gerston 2004: 124). Evaluation can be carried out in different ways. In this context, Munger (2000) differentiates between (1) purely formal evaluations (monitoring routine tasks), (2) client satisfaction evaluation (performance of primary functions), (3) outcome evaluation (satisfaction of a list of measurable intended outcomes), (4) cost-benefit evaluation (comparison of costs and impacts of a policy), and (5) evaluation of long term consequences (impact on the core societal problem, rather than symptoms alone). In more general terms, policies should be evaluated for their efficiency (using the least resources to the maximum effect) and effectiveness (achievement of the intended goals). Policy evaluation provides a feedback loop, which enables decision makers to draw lessons from each particular policy in operation. This feedback loop identifies new problems and sets in motion the policy making process once again, creating an endless policy cycle.

Each policy must follow the recognized designed process before coming to life line. The processes are influenced by official and non-official factors such as priorities, interests, and political will. Each of the stages in the public policy processes has requirements.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## CITIZENS REPRESENTATIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC POLICY

**7.0 Introduction**

Globally, any policy that has the blessings of the citizens enjoy high level acceptance. A policy agenda crafted with or by the public, dialogue organized and facilitated with the citizens, and policy formulation with public representation, that produce people-oriented policy. Citizens' involvement through representation in the public policy process enhances public participation and paves way for accountability.

**7.1 Citizens Representation**

Citizens' representation simply means public involvement in the policy production process, and also serve (the citizens) as monitors of the implementation. It is only ideal for any policy process to recognize the importance of having the citizens represented across levels. The representation could be through involvement of the CSOs or any other interest groups and individual experts within the society. At every stage of policy formulation and implementation, citizens can be involved to promote transparency and accountability. Political representation is the act of making citizens 'present' in public policy making process. In democracy, elected officials stand as citizens' representatives in policy process especially when the political actors act in the best interest of

citizens. For the citizens' representation to happen, they (the public) must be organized, active but peaceful.

**7.2: Accountability**

Accountability is the ability or duty to report or give account of an event, tasks and experiences. It is an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions. Accountability is the act or condition of being accountable and takes responsibility for actions. Stakeholder involvement in policy formulation and implementation extend the horizon within the public space and charge all involved to be accountable. That is, with citizens' representation in the policy process, both the citizens and the policy implementing agencies must be accountable for their actions.

**7.3 The Importance of Citizens Representation and Accountability**

Provide opportunity for the citizens to participate in the public policy process. The citizens have their voices heard, opinion mined and views aired in policy making. When policy is formed, it remains a true reflection of hard work from all stakeholders. Other importance of citizens' representation includes:

- It will facilitate implementation.
- It is expected that there will be little or no pressure from the citizens group.
- Promote accountability, responsibility and transparency.
- It promote policy acceptance.

- Provide easy avenues for feedback to ensure successful policy implementation and even evaluation.

With citizens' participation in public policy process, all involved would be held accountable. That is, stakeholders involved will take ownership of the results produced. It is of critical importance to ensure citizens participation in public policy because that promotes accountability, responsibility (task specific) and transparency.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CHALLENGES FOR PUBLIC POLICY

#### 8.0 Introduction

From the foregoing, it is apparent that public policy participation, especially in developing nations, may be challenging. The process of public policy making looks cumbersome and demanding in terms of resources. Public policy process requires expertise, experience doggedness, commitment and perseverance. As such, not all citizens may fit into the process. In addition, public policy participation may sound like the citizens are encroaching or interfering with official work. In view of the above, some challenges are simply there to prevent the public from participating in public policy process.

#### 8.1 Challenges for Public Policy

There are many challenges to public policy, some of which are:

- Inadequate information with the public as per any policy
- Policy inconsistency and discontinuity
- Executive incapacity and lack of Interest from the legislators
- Corruption
- Lack of political will for effective implementation
- Resource constraints (both human and material)
- Conflict of interests among government institutions
- Lack of inclusiveness in the public policy process
- Inadequate infrastructure

#### ***Other challenges include:***

- Ethnicity
- Lack of needs assessment and 'evidence'
- Cross-cutting policies
- Lack of proper coordination and synergy among the implementing MDAs
- Partial, if not relegated public participation in public policy process
- Unequal treatment in policy provision between regions, states, MDAs, classes, and so on.

In conclusion, there will never be a problem-free system, but challenges are meant to be surmised and addressed appropriately. That requires commitment, the desired political will, resources (both human and material), and the expertise from both the citizens and the implementing MDAs.

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# *Note*

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