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PUBLIC POLICY **In** **NIGERIA**

Perspectives on Social Policy and Administration

OKECHUKWU M. IKEANYIBE (Ph.D)

Public Policy in Nigeria

PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

By

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Foreword

Public Policy in Nigeria: Perspectives on Social Policy and Administration could not have come at a more opportune moment than now that the country, in conjunction with national and international partners in development, is grappling with policy shift and policy re-focusing given the not-too-happy experience with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are due to terminate in 2015 willy-nilly. The national performances on many of these goals are nothing to write home about three years to the termination of the goals. Admittedly, some goals have fared better than others, but generally the country is lagging behind many other countries in the same mould in critical areas such as poverty reduction, gender issues, girl-child education; access to safe drinking water, and improved environmental sanitation.

With the benefit of hindsight, and especially drawing from the experiences of the on-going MDGS, it is clear that there is an urgent need for a shift in focus, a change in paradigm and a re-think of our policy direction. One thing that is conspicuously absent from the "lame duck" MDGs, is the crucial issue of social policy and social concerns as central or core issues in the MDGs and not just as incidentals as they appear to be presently.

Social policy is an area in public administration which has not received the attention it deserves from both scholars and planners. This neglect is perhaps understandable given the strangle-hold the bourgeoisie economists have on the jugular of national economies, where the mere mention of "social policy" evokes an opprobrium normally associated with humanitarian activities which are antithetical to the profit motive that drives the bourgeoisie economy. Is it any wonder then that social policy holds no appeal to national governments, except, of course, for those governments that want to play to the gallery of populism.

Public Policy in Nigeria: Perspectives on Social Policy and Administration is a welcome irritant in the placid and serene environment of intellectual docility. In twelve chapters of well articulated, and deftly woven ideas, Dr. Ikeanyibe, skillfully and intelligently manipulated ideas to ruffle academic feathers in the sub-field of development and policy studies, to thrust to the fore the hitherto neglected area of social policy. Before drawing attention to specific social policies that ought to occupy the skill of our development planners, in chapter 8(Education Policies) 9 (Health Policies) 10 (Housing Policies) and 11 (Personal Social Services and Social Security), Dr. Ikeanyibe has successfully and

beautifully watered the ground with his insightful expose in chapter 4: "Conceptual Issues in Social Policy and Administration", effectively buoyed up by chapter 5: "Some theoretical perspectives in social policy and administration."

Dr. Ikenayibe does not just raise theoretical issues and leave the reader in the middle of the road unaided, he proceeds in chapter 6: "Design, and Approaches to Social Policy and Administration" and chapter 12: "Epilogue: Intergovernmental Relations and Social Policy Administration"; to give practical, empirical guides to development planners on how to confront headlong, the challenges of social policies, especially in federations like Nigeria.

Without doubt, this is a path-breaking contribution to development and policy studies, not just because it ventures into muddy areas treaded with caution, but primarily because of its alluring and contagious simplicity, though powerful and convincing arguments. *Public Policy in Nigeria: Perspectives on Social Policy and Administration* is a powerful and incisive book, and a must read for both academics and practitioners. Dr. Okechukwu Marcellus Ikeanyibe should be congratulated for this impressive outing.

September, 2013

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Preface

Every government operates through the instrumentality of public policy. Indeed failure of governments is often evaluated in relation to the quality of policies enacted and the level of implementation of such policies. In Nigeria particularly, people are used to the parole that the country's problem is not policy formulation but rather its implementation. If such statements were true, the problem of the Nigerian state must have been pinned down to the bureaucracy and allied policy implementation agencies. The political officials must have shown themselves to be blameless in the vexing problems of Nigeria's underdevelopment status. But policy failures are not necessarily results of ineffective implementation. Public policies may appear sound as formulated but very unrealistic in the milieu of environmental factors surrounding its implementation.

Social policy as an aspect of public policy has not been spared of this general policy failure suffered by the country. Despite the motley of policies to address issues in education, housing, poverty, unemployment, social security and insurance, health, and other aspects of social policy, many people would tend to believe that Nigeria has had no social services (public assistance programmes) for her citizens. Two things are very crucial in this kind of view about social policy in Nigeria: (1) social policies in Nigeria has not actually taken care of the less advantaged people, that is, social policy has not gone beyond the universal approach of addressing the basic services expected of any modern government to address specific and residual cases that target the most deserving. (2) The universalistic approach to welfare has been most ineffective and thus has not pursued the objectives of social development. There are numerous policies in some of the key areas of social policy examined in this book viz, education, health, housing, and personal social services and social security. Some of these policies were couched in such attractive captions as 'health for all', 'housing for all by the year 2000', 'free, compulsory, basic education' and so on. The questions are: how have these policies fared in terms of providing welfare to the citizens? How appropriate have they been in achieving the set goals?

This book is an attempt to review basic issues about policy making in Nigeria and the role of various actors in the process. It makes a historical review of some of the key social welfare policies in the four areas of social policy: education, health, housing and personal social services and social security in

general and the extent these have served the objective of social welfare. The book is also revealing on the predicament of social policy in an era when Nigeria, as most countries of the world, imbibes the neoliberal tendencies in her developmental design. Neo-liberalism is the intensification of the influence and dominance of capital; it is the elevation of capitalism, as a mode of production, into an ethic. The implication of this is that governments everywhere including Nigeria, have tended to relieve their bureaucracies of the task of elaborate service provisioning responsibility, and are adopting market principles of deregulation, privatization, commercialisation and the likes in key sectors of the economy including vital social sectors. Questions then arise as to what becomes of the essential services which the citizens look up to the government for provisioning? How can the forces of marketization (deregulation, privatization and commercialisation) that inform major policy decisions in the country today be balanced with the interest of the less-privileged in the society? Has Nigeria significantly adopted the new processes of social administration and welfare delivery preached by the advanced capitalist countries and their international agents of financial institutions since the 1980s? If it has, how has this affected social welfare in the country? These questions cannot be more relevant at any time than now that the family which has been the major institution of social welfare in Nigeria because of the dominant cultural values of extended family links, kinship attachment and communalism becomes increasingly weakened under urbanization, modernization and excessive individualism that are fast eroding the traditional value system.

This book is only a beginning step in the attempt to provide answers to the above and related questions. The book is a basic text for students of public policy, social work practices and philanthropism. It is also written to provide information, and draw the attention of politicians and top executives of governments at all levels, leaders and promoters of not-for-profit organisations, including faith and community-based organisations to the enormous challenges of providing social welfare services in a country where over 60% of the population are regarded as poor. Above all, it is our hope that those interested in public affairs and helping the down-trodden through their personal or group efforts will also find the book interesting and inspiring.

The book is organized in twelve chapters. The first three chapters explain the basic concepts of public policy, underscoring the basic elements of public policy and policy making, and the role of administrators or bureaucrats in the entire process of policy-making. The next four chapters are on the field of social policy, introducing the reader to this field of study by discussing the basic concepts, theoretical perspectives and approaches to social policy and

administration. Chapter seven provides some historical insights into the origin and development of social policy as a concern of modern government. The British Poor Law necessarily becomes our starting point warranting the greater attention paid to the history of social policy in that country. This is essentially because of the primacy of the poor law as the first articulated legal efforts of modern government to address social problems as a collective State concern. This chapter also discusses the historical trend in the development of social policy and administration in Nigeria.

Chapters eight to eleven, each discusses a plank of the four areas of social policy in Nigeria reviewed in the book; chapter eight is on education policy, nine on health, ten on housing and eleven on personal social services and social security in general. The last chapter is an epilogue. It examines more critically the role of each level of government in the concurrent function of social welfare provisioning. The chapter reiterates that government and indeed at all its levels must be involved in providing welfare to the less privileged members of the society. The local government however, must be shouldered with the strategic responsibility of programme implementation especially for safety net programmes. The chapter therefore articulates what could be seen as the recommendations of the author on the challenges facing social policy and welfare provisioning in Nigeria. It projects a repositioning of the local government system and its greater use by other tiers of government to dispense basic services through grants, contracting and various decentralisation approaches. In this chapter also, the author underscores that neoliberalism does not translate to abandonment of welfare completely to market forces by government. Neoliberalism does not signify the end of the welfare state but a shift in the structure and approach. This observation is very critical for developing countries like ours where the welfare system is yet to fully develop before one can think of its moderation through neoliberal principles that encourage contracting the private and not for profit organisations.

September, 2013

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The Book

This book delivers a simple, readable, path-breaking and interesting contribution to development and policy studies, especially in the much neglected area of social policy in Nigeria. The book reviews basic issues about policy making processes and the role of various actors in the process. It makes a historical review of some of the key social policies in the four key areas of social policy: education, health, housing, and, personal social services, and the extent these policies have served the objective of social welfare and protection in Nigeria. The book is also revealing on the predicament of social policy and its most cherished beneficiaries in an era when most countries of the world have imbibed the neoliberal tendency in government business. Governments everywhere including Nigeria, have tended to relieve their bureaucracies of the task of elaborate service provisioning responsibility, and are adopting market principles of deregulation; privatization, commercialisation and the likes in key sectors of the economy, including the vital social sectors. Questions then arise as to what becomes of the essential services which the citizens look up to the government for provisioning? How can the forces of marketization (deregulation, privatization and commercialization) that inform major policy decisions in many countries today be balanced with the interest of the less-privileged in the society?

Public Policy in Nigeria: Perspectives on Social Policy and Administration is a topical and unique book that tries to provide answers to these and related questions. The book attempts a comprehensive coverage of theoretical issues on policymaking and actors. It then draws attention to the failure of public policies in the vital social sectors in Nigeria (education, health, housing and personal social services or social protection), and provides practical, empirical guides to development planners on how to confront headlong, the challenges of social policies, especially in the current spate of neo-liberalism. The book is highly recommended to both academic and practitioners in policy studies, social welfare and humanitarian services.



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