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## Participatory Policy Process as Road Map to Economic Development: A Study of Nigeria

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### Abstract

Participatory policy process in Nigeria is commonly known to be dominated by elites, and control all stages of policy process. With regards to this, citizens are denied the right to contribute in policy process, thereby taking by surprise at implementation stage. Given to the fact that policies produced from true sense of participatory process stand the chance of adoption and support, the gap this denial creates makes citizens to withhold compliance, or in some cases out rightly stand against such policies. This is because they perceive such policies as alien to them, even when the policies could make direct impact in their livelihood. As such, this scenario has negative impacts on economic development of the country. This paper argued that the Nigerian policy environment is not democratized for citizens' participation. Thus, policy making process has remained fundamentally elites dominated and its environment is largely repulsive to engaging citizens in the country's quest for economic development. Since modern economic development is citizen driven, and utilizing secondary source of data, the paper recommended a participatory policy process that will give the citizens sense of belonging, perceiving such policies as their initiatives, and reinvigorating their patriotic spirit towards realizing economic development. The paper adopted structural-functional approach for analysis.

**Keywords:** *Public policy, Participatory policy process, Economic development, Structural-functional approach*

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### **Background to the Study**

Over the years, the practice of public participation has gained serious attention from scholars and researchers alike. This is predicated on the important role it plays in the human society. The practice of citizen participation can be traced to ancient Athenian political society where every individual citizen is important in decision-making process. In the ever-growing trend toward domestic and global democracy, citizen participation has stood as a foundation of any society that wishes to attain maximum security, equity and economic development. There is rise in demand for participatory process in public policy and decision-making. This is evident when Menegat (2002, cited in Meno 2016, p.1) holds that over 1,500 cities around the world have adopted participatory budgeting process. It is in recognition of this trend that the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) list serving the public interest as planner's primary obligation within their code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, (American Institute of Certified Planners, 2009). As a matter of importance, the code specifically advocates for inclusivity stating that people should have the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programmes that may affect them. By this it means that participatory process should be broad enough to accommodate those who do not wield power or influence.

This idea should be central in policy-making process. This is owing to the fact that policy is a general plan of action adopted by government to solve societal problems. The Nigerian policy-making environment is characterized by various group and individual interests competing for relevance and supremacy. Thus, policy-making process becomes an affair of the ruling elites who wield power and influence against the general citizens. With this, policy environment in Nigeria suffers from policy imposition, hasty adoption, lack of public goal, elite dominance, lack of social acceptance, non-continuity, lack of clear definition and coordination, and compromise at implementation stage.

This scenario has generated lack of trust and confidence by citizens on the government and their policies, thereby creating a gap between the government and the citizens. The missing link in the support and compliance of citizens to government's economic policies, to a great extent retard progress in economic development of the country. Ihedinihu (2016, p.13) contends that irrespective of how good economic policy of Nigeria is, the citizens whom economic activities and development are largely dependent on are not willing to comply with the stipulation of the policy as the policy-making process is shut against them. Ihedinihu further argues that this reoccurring situation has led to many policy adjustments, and discontinuation or policy abortion. Waziri (2009, p.35) holds that, the selfish desires and protection of personal and selected interests form the basis for policy priority setting, as against the clearly articulated needs of the citizenry. This has over the years produced leaders that have plundered the common wealth of the people rather than apply same to their development.

This explains why there is no significant record of economic growth which is driven by the citizens. Economic growth leads to economic development, therefore to achieve economic development is largely dependent on inclusive policy process which is the thrust of this paper.

### **Statement of Problem**

Policy is seen as a tool government uses to respond to social demands, and administer the affairs of the people. This means that policy is meant for the betterment of the citizens. It is naturally expected that as such, the inputs of the citizens are needed, thereby carry them along in the policy process.

Nigeria as a nation has experienced policy and economic sabotage, where citizens and group of individuals work against economic policies and directives of the government. This has led to poor economic growth, and consequentially low level of economic development. This paper therefore investigates the impact of participatory policy process on economic development with focus on Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the paper are as follows:

- 1) To ascertain if there is participatory policy process in Nigeria.
- 2) To investigate the impacts of participatory policy process on economic development.
- 3) To identify means through which economic development can be realized.

### **Concept Clarification**

Concept clarification is important especially in social sciences which has often formed the fulcrum of academic research. This is because it sets the parameter within which concepts are used in a given context.

Public Policy is a way of dealing with public problems or a sort of concrete socio-economic action or response to weakness and inability of private sector to supply necessary goods and services or a response to a missing link within the norms of the society, (Larson, 1985, p.27). This definition sees public policy as a reaction by government to intervene against social anomaly within the society. Appleby (1984, p.66) defines public policy in a more concise way, for him it is a guide to the action or decision of the people. This view underscores its relevance in guiding or directing the conduct of individual and human organizations. Such action prevents the society from sliding into state of anarchy. Government in its wisdom knows when and where to intervene. This is captured in Dye's (2011, p.14) definition, that public policy is whatever government chooses to do or not to do. By this, it means that, silence of government is also a policy. Public policy therefore serves as a framework put forward to guide a person or group of persons in the conduct of a particular task. It is in this view that Anderson (2007, p.1) asserts that public policy is a goal directed or purpose course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in an attempt to deal with public problems. This definition emphasizes that public policy is target or goal oriented. In a similar vein, Robert and Clark (1982, p.61) considered public policy from goal attainment and power configuration point of view. For them, public policy making process refers to series of steps taken by a government to solve problems, make decisions, allocate resources or values, implement policies and in general to do the things expected of them by their

constituencies. This view underscores the indelible link between public policy and the people. Ikelegbe (1996, p.80) echoes this in his definition that public policy is the integrated courses and programmes of action that government has set and the framework or lead by planned to direct actions and practices in certain problem areas.

**Participatory Policy Process** - In an attempt to explain the concept of participatory policy process, it would be necessary to first define the concept of participation. Though Vroom and Jago (1988, p.18) contend that participation is subject to ambiguous and diverse interpretations. This is seen where participation is the term used to designate the involvement of citizens in contributing ideas toward the solution of problems affecting them and the entire human society. Bekker (2012, P.27) was precise to view this as an activity undertaken by one or more individuals who were previously the sole protagonists in the process. However, this definition is not all inclusive.

Specific interpretations can be made within the context of policy-making process. Participation in this regard is a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is an activity undertaken by policy actors involving the citizens for logical realization of goals. It is a deliberate and goal-oriented activity of government. This is because the process or activities in which the citizens participate with various institutions are goal-oriented. Therefore, citizen participation is viewed as citizens involvement in a wide range of activities that relate to the policy-making process establishing the legitimacy and acceptance of the policy with certainty of compliance and cooperation. Langton (1978, p.21) in a similar way view this as purposeful activities in which citizens take part in government related activities. This shows that policy makers should rely on citizens' inputs to stay informed about public concerns as well as to gain insight into citizens' preferences. This creates ground for variety of opinions and options, generation of a sense of project and programme ownership and feeling of civic pride. Furthermore, citizen participation ensures the principle of checks and balances, preventing abuse or misuse of administrative authority and political power. This notwithstanding, citizen participation has its shortcomings, it is bureaucratic and time consuming, costly and slow, and it can as well evoke a negative reaction if citizens' inputs are not taken, (Langton, 1978, p.25). be it as it may, citizen participation remains the way to go, as it is more protective and assuring, promoting good governance, effective policies and economic development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopted structural-functionalist approach which is relevant in this context and provides a more comprehensive theoretical framework for analysis of the participation and functional relation between the citizens, government and policy process within a system. The theory was first identified with Emile Durkheim in sociology discipline and later adopted in the field of political science. It aims at providing a consistent and integrated theory from which can be derived explanatory hypotheses relevant to all aspects of political system (Lane, 1994, p.68). The structural-functional model is most associated with Parsons (1951) in the field. However, Almond (1969) has restated the scheme so drastically that he has an influence independent of Parsons.

According to Almond's structural-functional analysis, all political system must perform certain requisite functions. He describes societal reality largely in terms of structures, processes, mechanisms and functions. In this model the parts and pieces of an organism contribute functioning of the organism as an entity. The functionalist tradition postulates that social systems meet certain needs and suggests that there are functional imperatives that must be met in order for a group to survive, (Eminue, 2005, p.13). As every part of the system or process plays its roles, they contribute to maintaining the social structure, and achieving the desired results. This alignment of social relations or participation is critical for survival of the society. Eminue (2005, p.15) identified certain characteristic features embodied in the structural-functionalism approach:

- a) An emphasis on the whole system as the unit of analysis
- b) The postulation of particular function as requisite to the maintenance of the whole system
- c) Functional interdependence of diverse structures within the whole system

### **Application of the Theory**

By this framework the state is conceived as a system while the government and the citizens are structures or units within the system. The government being part of the system has function or responsibility of championing policy making process, while the citizens have the civic role to play in the policy process. The citizens whose interest are directly or indirectly represented by institutions like - Civil Society groups, Organized Pressure Groups, Political Parties are viewed as parts of the system (the state) should be involved in the policy making process. Each of these structures performs explicitly specific requisite functions through their inputs which contribute to the stability, continuity and success of the policies. While the government provides the framework for policy making, the people as a unit of the system are expected to make their inputs.

According to Almond (1969, cited in Eminue, 2005, p.17), the various structures or parts of a system are interdependent through their structural and functional relationship for realization of the goals. This brings to clarity the necessary mutually interdependent relationship that should exist between government and the people in the policy making process. Here, the people need the government to provide the framework for policy making, while the government needs the people for policy inputs, acceptance and compliance to realize the goals of the policy.

The government is empowered by law to spearhead policy making process and is therefore expected to necessarily collaborate for an inclusive policy process so as to achieve the intended objectives which in this context is economic development. The theory assumes that every structure within the system must perform its function for the survival of the system. This simply means that for economic policies to realize its targets of economic growth and development, the people as a structure must be part of the policy process for the ultimate survival of the state.

### **Participatory Policy Process in Nigeria**

The formulation of economic development policy and indeed other public policies have been the responsibility of actors in the public policy space. The actors, for Ujo (2011, p.11) can be classified into two groups, which are – Formal and Informal. Ujo holds that formal groups are those that operate within the institutional framework of government, while, the informal groups operate outside government. The formal group consists of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, and the informal group consists of the political parties, pressure groups and civil society groups and organization.

The above explanation indicate that the formal group is made up of political and bureaucratic elites, while the informal group consist of opposition political parties, pressure groups, and civil societies which protect and project the interest of the people in the policy-making process. In representative democracy, the political and bureaucratic elites are directly involved in the formulation of economic policies. The process becomes participatory when the informal groups are incorporated with the mindset of considering their inputs and interests. This is because the informal groups provide the necessary platform for the participation of the people in the policy-making process. Participation in this regard means the inclusion of the inputs or interests of the people by the formal group in the formulation of economic policy. The inputs or interest of the people in this context means the truly felt needs and yearnings of the people.

Through articulation and aggregation of interests, political parties ensure the interest of the people become inputs in the policy-making process. This is because the interests of the people are enshrined in their party manifestoes which they intend to implement should they win elections. Wonah (2017, p.2) holds that pressure groups influence government policies thereby making the interest of the members and indeed the entire Nigerian society to be considered in the formulation of policy. For Wonah, the civil society group serves as the intermediary between the government and the people. They project and protect the interests of the people in policy making process.

Osman (2002, cited in Wonah, 2017, p.2) argues that public policy making process is not merely a technical function of government, rather it is a complex interaction process influenced by the diverse nature of socio-political and other environmental forces. These environmental forces that form the policy context lead to the variation in policies and influence the output and impact. Osman further contends that public policy making not only involves the public bodies or public officials as policy actors, rather private or non-official group also play a very active role in policy making. In Nigeria, policy making process is guarded against the inputs or participation of the non-official group who ought to play a very active role in policy making.

In Nigeria, policy making process is guarded against the inputs or participation of non-official groups or informal group, like political parties (especially opposition parties), civil society groups and pressure groups that represents the interests and views of the

citizens. This has made government policies to remain suspicious and amounts to non-compliance, support and cooperation from the citizens. This has often led to constant change of policy when there is change in government. Offiong (2007, p.25) captures this as he contend that the policy direction of the government is not clear due to lack of inclusive policy process which has led to economic sabotage. Such scenario undermines every effort towards achieving economic growth and development.

### **Implementation of Participatory Policy Process in Nigeria**

The importance of citizen participation in public policy process cannot be overemphasized. Citizens' participation in public policy process is regarded as one of the milestones of democracy and good governance. Political parties, civil society groups, pressure groups, local government town hall meetings provide an ideal forum and platform for allowing participatory policy process as it is closest to every single individual citizen, for easy realization of inclusiveness for economic growth and development.

Participatory policy process gives credence to its implementation, (Wonah, 2017, p.13). Thus, a public policy proposal should in details explain the objectives, policy instruments and implementation stages and steps which at this stage receive inputs from the people. In realizing this, the citizens will know the policy direction and targets of the government. In the light of their inputs, the people, having given sense of belonging will willingly adopt, support and comply with the policy stipulations. For instance, in the case of economic policy, the people having been fully aware of the policy details through their participation will adjust to the tunes of the policy with sufficient support, cooperation and compliance.

When the people are carried along in policy making process, the realization of the policy goals becomes feasible. Most policies experience over 80% adjustment at the implementation stage, or being out-rightly aborted when the goals are not close to realization is due to no-inclusiveness of the policy process that characterizes Nigerian policy making process. It is a fact that policies are meant for the people directly or indirectly, and as such, can only succeed with their cooperation and compliance. That makes it logical therefore, that for economic policies to achieve its targets of economic growth and development, the policy process must be participatory in structure. This in line with Makinde's (2005, p.23) argument that policy implementation is the process of converting financial, material, technical and the people's inputs into outputs. Edward as stated in Makinde (2005, p.66) holds that policy implementation is a stage of policy making between the establishment of policy (such as the passage of a legislative or regulatory rule) and the consequences of the policy for the people whom it affects. This assertion reiterates the fact that policies have direct or indirect input on the people. The statement emphasizes on the need to carry along the people whom the policy affects.

Makinde (2005, p.67) further contend, that communication is an essential ingredient for effective implementation of public policy. This communication should begin with the people and the implementers from the stage of formulation to its implementation. On the

part of policy implementers, this will prevent inaccuracy and inconsistency in the implementation process. If this is not handled properly, it will result to usual vehement repulsion and revolt from the people. It is on this that Makinde quickly noted that stripped of all technicalities, implementation problem in most developing nations is the problem widening gap between intention and result, which leads to policy failures. The fundamental reason for the policy failures cannot be farfetched, the absence of participatory policy process. In most cases, policy emanates from government rather than the target groups. And by implication, the target beneficiaries are not allowed to contribute to the formulation of the policies that affect their lives, (Wonah, 2017, p.4).

### **Public Policies that Failed in Nigeria**

Hornby (2010, p.34) maintains that since 1976, many public policies enunciated by successive Nigerian governments have not lived up to their expectations. Some failed few months after their enunciation, while others failed due to multiplicity of reasons. For their failures, most of these policies would have helped in the galvanization of economic and social wellbeing of the citizens. Among the public policies which have failed in the country, Obamwonyi (2014, p.48) identifies and explains these as follows:

1. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN): this policy was formulated in 1976. Its functions amongst others were to provide sufficient food for all Nigerians; to facilitate agricultural credit from commercial banks to farmers. The policy was abandoned soon after the civilian administration of Shehu Shagari came on board in 1979.
2. Green Revolution: it was formulated in 1979 and used to replace the operation feed the nation. This policy did not achieve the desired results due mainly to structural defects occasioned by political parochialism. It ended up as mere slogan or symbiotic policy.
3. Nigerian Agricultural, Insurance Cooperation: it was formulated in 1987. Its functions include the provision of insurance cover for business engaged in agricultural production. The policy objectives were merged with NICON in 2000. This policy did not see the light of the day before and after it was merged with NICON. It was a policy designed to fail right from its formulation as it was never implemented.
4. National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA): formulated in 1989, with the functions of among others:
  - i. To provide strategic public support for land development.
  - ii. To promote and support optimum utilization of the nation's land resources for the accelerated production of food and fibre.
  - iii. To encourage the evolution of economic size villages
  - iv. To provide gainful income and employment opportunities for rural people.
  - v. To address the special problem of the nation's rural majority etc.

The policy was phased out and its functions performed by the Federal Ministry of agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD)



5. Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank: formulated in 2000, its functions include the provision of credit for the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products.
6. Forestry development Programme: formulated in the year 2000. The objectives include the provision of tree seedlings and other forestry development facilities to local community participants in the country's five ecological zones.
7. Roll Back Malaria: formulated in 2001, the poling was meant to eradicate harmful effect of malaria parasites.
8. National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS): this was enunciated in 2004. This policy evolved from the stand point of Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations to address human development problems. It was also on the basis of Nigeria's long-term goals of poverty reduction, wealth creation, employment generation, good governance and value orientation. All the efforts and purported machineries, put into his policy were wasted as was a mere symbolic policy. It never functioned at any of the three levels of government meant to implement it.
9. Directorate of food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure: This policy was enunciated in 1986 for the following purposes:
  - a) To coordinate and streamline all rural development activities in the country and to accelerate the pace of integrated rural development.
  - b) To promote a framework for grassroots social mobilization
  - c) To amount a virile programme of development, monitoring and performance evaluation
  - d) To provide rural areas with access roads and potable water.
  - e) To improve rural sanitization, literacy and technology.

The policy was targeted at the rural areas. It was to make rural areas more attractive to live in so as to stem migration to urban areas. It was also to change for better, the rural ways of life and modes of production in order to meet the challenges of increased agriculture and rural development.

10. Nation Directorate of Employment: this policy was enunciated in 1986 for the following purposes:
  - a) To provide vocational skills development programme to secondary school leavers and graduates from tertiary institutions.
  - b) Special public works programme
  - c) Small-scale enterprises programme
  - d) Agricultural empowerment programme

The policy was targeted at the youths in particular so as to provide skill for the unskilled, that to enable the youths acquire vocation. The policy, though still ongoing, is almost in comatose as it is not addressing youth employment and vocational skills. It is not doing enough to stem unemployment and enhance skill acquisition among youths. Many youths are not aware of the policy so as to key into it.

11. Better Life for Rural Women: it was later replaced with the family support programme which became comatose and failed woefully after the regime that enunciated it.
12. National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE): it was enunciated in 1989 to provide basic education for nomadic herdsman and fishermen, train nomadic teachers, provide infrastructure for the nomadic schools. Additional programmes were targeted towards girls' education, women and children in exceptionally difficult circumstances, and adult literacy. The policy was targeted at the nomadic people, particularly those whose occupations are nomadic in nature. The programme was absorbed by the Universal Basic Education policy. But there are no signs that the policy is functioning as planned. This is because the herdsman who are the real target of the policy are not getting the education they ought to have.
13. Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP): enunciated in 1992, it was formulated to provide access to credit for micro entrepreneurs at the grassroots levels; encouragement of job creation, local raw materials utilization, and development of indigenous technology. It was targeted at cooperative societies and informal associations to enable Nigerians have access to credit. The policy has been phased out while the functions were absorbed by the National Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB).
14. Family Support Programme (FSP): it was meant to promote the welfare of women and children. It was mainly focused on the health needs of women and children. Like the FEAP, the policy has been phased out while the functions were absorbed by the National Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB). It is also a failed policy.
15. National Commission for Mass Literacy: it was meant to promote adult literacy in the country, especially adults who are illiterate. The policy ought to be absorbed by the UBE, but the policy has gone into oblivion as it has also failed.

### **Participatory Policy Process and Economic Development in Nigeria**

The concept of development can be said to be relative, since there cannot be one precise definition. As a result, it has been defined by various scholars in different ways. In most cases, development has been couched in terms of material things rather than people, in terms of creation rather than revolution, however, true development must mean development of man, (Osita-Njoku, 2016, p.2). This assertion means that every development must translate into the development of man within the society. In other words, man is the beneficiary of development efforts.

Some scholars also argue that development is not merely the construction of bridges and sky-scrapers in the cities by the application of foreign technologies, but the development of indigenous skills to exploit local resources for a sustained development process. Okoye (1985, p.35) contends that development should imply not simply an increase in the productive capacity or income which may mean just growth without development, but major transformations in the socio-economic structures whose inequalities and rigidities

resulting from outmoded systems, have tended to inhibit all-sided and even development of many third world societies. Okoye went further to hold that development is complex like life itself. This can be seen in the view that development is expressed in terms of output. This view has supported the emerging awareness that the availability of work, the distribution of income and the quality of life are equally important measures of development.

Okediji (1973, cited in Ibe 1989, p.20) summarized his definition of development as a process of initiating societal change so as to improve the capabilities of the institution and values of communities to meet the increasing and various social cultural, political, economic, and technological demands of its people. In the same vein, (Almaric 2007, p.137) maintains that development is a path of societal evolution that combines structural changes with improvement in people's welfare. Following these conceptualizations, one can deduce that development is for people, and not people for development.

Having seen what development is, economic development can simply be defined as the substantial improvement in the economic well-being, and quality of life of a nation, region or local community. This cannot be achieved without economic growth. The positive change or shift in a nation's total output provides the foundation to launch into economic development programmes and policies.

Nigeria has formulated and implemented several development plans among which are – first, National Development Plan 1962-1968, second, National Development Plan 1970-1974, third, National Development plan 1975-1980, and fourth, National development Plan 1981-1985, and these are apart from other national rolling plans of the Babangida military regime, coupled with the unimplemented late Gen. Sani Abacha's vision 2020 within which sustainable rural economic development programmes were encapsulated and constructed as specific projects, (Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2008, cited in Oghenekohwo & Berezi, 2017). Oyebamiji and Adekola further conclude that even in the light of all these development plans and programmes carried in them, they failed grossly; rather than Nigeria achieve economic development she is pushed back into struggling to attain economic growth. The failure is a demonstration of lack of participatory policy process, creating a gap between the policies and the people, whom the policies are made. Oghenekohwo and Berezi (2017, p.8) quickly argues that unfortunately since 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil governance, there seems to be no direct and sustained public policy instruments focusing on economic development.

Before the return of democracy in 1999, various governments in Nigeria since independence have embarked on several economic policies which have been geared towards democratization and development. From indigenization and the era where most of the economic decisions were made by the state, to the era of structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986, to privatization, public-private partnership (PPP) to the more emphasized current macroeconomic policies (fiscal and monetary policies) as a mechanism for achieving economic growth and development in Nigeria. These litanies of

economic plans, policies and programmes for economic development are characterized by huge gap between these policies and the citizens. This is because of non-participatory nature of the policy process, where the people are disconnected, and do not know the policy direction of the government. The attempted participatory policy process of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) experienced abuse and negligence, where the inputs of the people were jettisoned by the then government which is generally attested to have failed woefully, still leaving economic development unattained.

The recent interest in macroeconomic policies as mechanism for realizing economic growth and development in Nigeria is fueled by the recent fall in the government revenue which is a result of a fall in the international price of oil. Elakhe (2016, p.23) holds that since the sale of oil is the major source of revenue to the government, government expenditure and aggregate demand is drastically affected leading to a very slow growth rate; the exchange rate which was initially stabilized between 155 naira – 160 naira/ dollar is steadily increasing. Elakhe further argues that the annual growth rate is as low as the rate of 2.35%, with a volatile external reserve, unstable exchange rate and very slow growth rate due to policy inconsistency and non-inclusive process. This assertion simply explains the disconnection between the people and the policy-making process, which has resulted in poor economic growth, hence non-attainment of economic development.

### **Research Findings**

The paper identified the following:

- 1) Policy process in Nigeria is not democratized, but rather it is elite centered. The policy environment is dominated by the ruling class who influence all the stages of policy cycle.
- 2) Non-participatory policy process has resulted to poor economic growth which has led to low economic development, this is predicated on the fact that people protect policies, programmes and projects they are part of, and sabotage the ones they are not carried along.
- 3) Economic development can be realized through participatory policy process.

### **Conclusion**

Scholars have argued that over years, most policies of the Nigerian society have mostly hinged on self-interest of political leaders. This is the manifestation of the fact that policy process has been under the overwhelming dominance of the political elites, thereby denying the people their civic responsibilities of participating in the policy process. This study identified poor public participation in policy process as a major drawback to achieving policy goals. The target beneficiaries are not involved at the formulation and implementation stages and to this end, do not support, cooperate and comply but rather sabotage the policies. And this is responsible for most policy failures recorded. Unless citizens are carried along in the policy process to reflect the modern trend in contemporary globalized era, achieving policy goals will remain elusive. Waziri (2009, p.38) holds that, the citizenry must be carried along in the various stages of policy planning, decision-making and implementation process, simply because a people

oriented project is more likely to succeed as against an imposed project; people especially, the downtrodden of society (the poor and the youth) will always identify with what they are part of, than what they have no hand in or are not a part of conception. This is why after 50 years of independence and 20 years of democracy, and with the amount of human and material resources in her disposal, Nigeria still struggle to record significant economic growth, rather than economic development.

### **Recommendations**

For Nigeria to attain economic development, the paper recommends in the light of its findings that government at all levels should adopt participatory policy process, from the stage of formulation to the stage of implementation. This should be achieved through:

- 1) Restructuring of policy process against unnecessary rigidity and bureaucratic bottle-necks for easy participation, policy making, and implementation
- 2) Citizens and most especially the direct beneficiaries of any public policy should be encouraged and enlightened on the importance of the policy and the need to participate
- 3) Involving Civil Society Groups, Organized Pressure Groups, Traditional Rulers and political parties for open deliberations, opinions and suggestions for alternative and people oriented policies, and for concerted efforts.

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