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Critical Review of Policy Pillars of Development Agenda for Western Nigeria, (D.A.W.N.)

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ABSTRACT

The study reiterates the need to differentiate a policy document by verifying the issues it is concerned with. Specifically, it underscores the critical need to pay attention to the real issues of development in a development-centered policy document, and ascertaining if the policy document facilitates the planning and implementation of development programs that meet the needs of the people. To justify this assertion, the paper conducts a critical review of the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria, DAWN, with a view to knowing the substantive information and material in the policy in relation to the policy document in terms of the nine pillars of the document. Among other factors, It sought to know how the concept of Development is constructed in the document in terms of related theory as well as whether it was motivated by a traditional paradigm of technocratic, money driven, top-down approach to development, or by a commitment to the participatory approach. The study observes that the drafters of the document understand and place a high premium on the central role of policy content especially in the sustainable development document. However, it was observed that no visible attempt was made to enshrine clauses and other salient provisions to enforce continuity, accountability, transparency and probity in the document.

INTRODUCTION

The sustainable development policy document, unlike any other policy document, must be differentiated by its attention to verifying the real issues development is concerned with and ascertaining if it facilitates planning and implementation of development programs that will correspond to the needs of the population, (Hedebro, 1982).

Planning and implementation of the program therefore brings the issue of policy content to the front-burner. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Atlanta Georgia, USA.

Policy content evaluation examines the substantive information and material contained within a policy in relation to the policy's requirements, its similarity to other policies, the context in which it was developed, or some combination of these (CDC, n.d.).

Background of the Blueprint

The document was formulated in 2011 and was formally launched in 2013. It emerged from a desire to stimulate sustainable development through an integration of the economies of southwestern states of Nigeria. The States are Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Lagos, Ondo and Ekiti States. These States make up the Southwestern Region of Nigeria. The blueprint is therefore a product of a Regional Cooperation and Integration Agenda, with a coordinating agency called the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria, (DAWN) Commission, which was empowered by the Governments of the six States.

The guiding framework of the document is hinged on its vision, context, and policy imperative and underpinning

philosophy. Its vision is to make the region 'the preferred place to live, to work and to visit, while it recognizes the status of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is dedicated to harnessing the resources of the Yoruba people who constitute this region with a bid to promoting their wellbeing as well as improving their quality of lives. It set out to achieve this through what it termed 'competitive communalism' that is not only inclusive but recognizes all citizens of the Region as stakeholders and equal beneficiaries of opportunities.

Prior to the Agenda, the Region used to be a force to reckon with. In the 1960s, infrastructure sprang up in several parts of the region, built from the proceeds of cocoa, rubber and timber which were major export commodities from this region. However in subsequent years, and especially in recent times, economic development plans, hinged on proceeds of the Nigerian oil boom resulted in the neglect of agriculture and a gradual downward spiral of the strong economic, social and cultural values hitherto noted with the region and consequent social, economic and political challenges.

Going by figures from Nigeria's Human Development Summary Statistics by Zones, 2008 as compiled by the NBS and NHDR team, the South-West Zone of Nigeria ranked second, out of six, after the South-South Zone, by a value of 0.523 in Human Development Index (HDI) values. The Zone ranked sixth in terms of Human Poverty Index, (HPI) also in the same year while under the Gender Development measure (GDM), it ranked second with 0.507 after the South-South Zone. It also came second with an average of 0.285 in the area of Gender Empowerment measure and also made the second rank

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with 0.48, following North-Central Zone closely which had a value of 0.49 in the same year.

This critique will therefore take a look at the Agenda through the following lenses;

A. The substantive information and material in the policy in relation to the policy document.

B. How the concept of Development is constructed in the document in terms of related theory.

C. It will seek to know whether it was motivated by a traditional paradigm of technocratic, money driven, top

-down approach to development or by a commitment to the participatory approach.

D. Whether the Agenda set in the policy is truly transformative and practical.

E. Whether the evidence base supporting the policy's strategy aligns with current realities.

F. The visible management theories or strategic planning patterns observed in the document.

G. The key similarities and differences that can be identified in the policy in comparison with policies across communities.

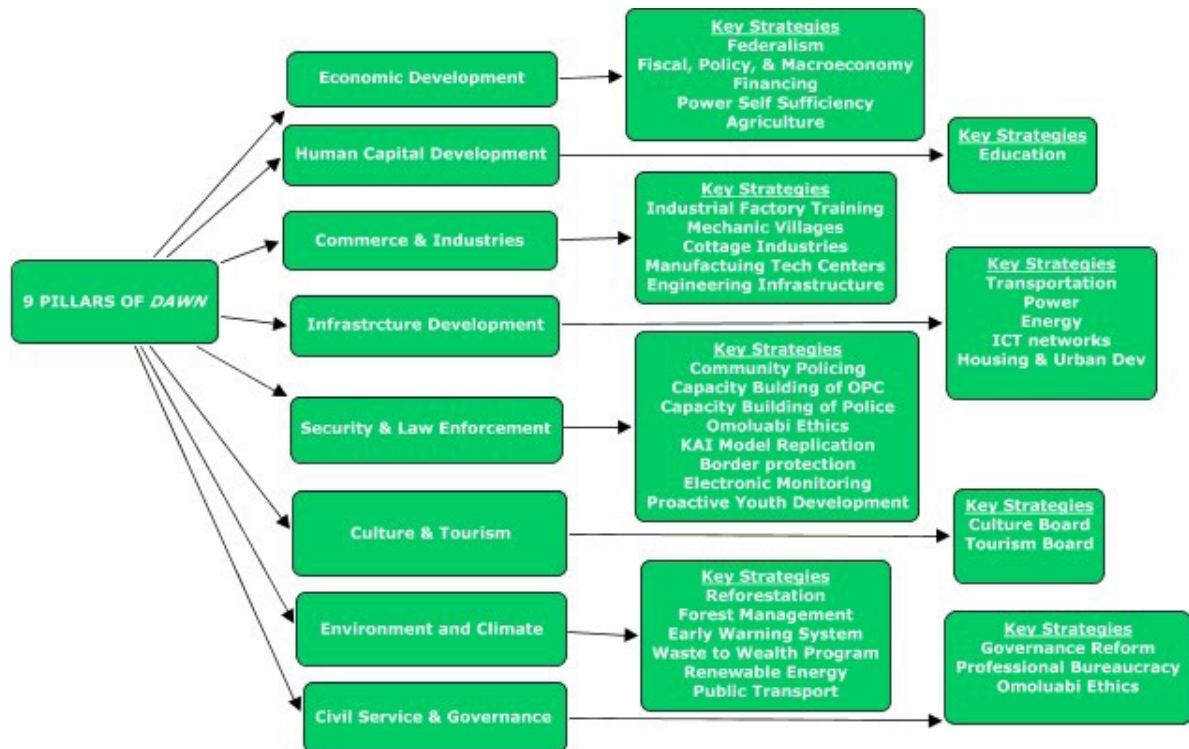


Figure 1: Temie Giwa: Analysing the Development Agenda For Western Nigeria (YNaija Frontpage)

Source: <https://ynaija.com/temie-giwa-analysing-the-development-agenda-for-western-nigeria-dawn-ynaija-frontpage/>

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopts the critical review approach of Policy analysis, to evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of the DAWN blueprint, in a way that analyses, describes and interprets the chosen content areas of the policy.

Substantive Information and Material in the Policy

The blueprint's nine- point pillars appears to provide distinct guidepost to observers as well as lay a foundation for easy ticking, monitoring and evaluation of progress for success or otherwise in the implementation of the Agenda laid in the document. Not only was the plan formulated on the following pillars of development, namely;

- Economic Development,
- Commerce and Industries (with a focus on Manufacturing and Small/Medium Enterprises),
- Human Capital Development (Education and Health),
- Infrastructure Development (ICT, road, rail, Air and Water Transportation, Power and Housing)
- Agriculture and Agri-Business,

- Security, Law and Enforcement,
- Culture, Tourism Arts and Heritage, Environment,
- Climate Change and Habitat,

Civil Service, Governance and Institutions, each pillar is underscored by a corresponding vision and mission statements as well as strategies through which each pillar performance or outcome can be pursued, scanned, and/or measured. It is perhaps strategic that Economic Development is the first pillar with an all-embracing, vision that highlights infrastructure, human capital, living standards and good governance and a seemingly complementary mission of ensuring that Southwest Nigeria records the highest annual rate of growth in GDP and HDI in sub-Saharan Africa between 2012 and 2020. It is therefore little wonder then that for a more explicit insight into the implementation strategies of this pillar, the terms 'true federalism', 'fiscal, macroeconomic and policy environment', 'financing, power -self-sufficiency and Agriculture support key action steps and heighten the substantive information in this section of the document. Dividing goals under this section into three segments

of short term, medium term and long term, enriches the depth and perspective of analysis especially with their assigned span of years to determine the maximum number of years under term. It is believed that this will serve to put a time frame of analysis for each sector, as well as put the analysis in perspective.

It is observed that the policy drafters demonstrated an appreciable dexterity and possible precision in the formulations under Culture and Tourism in pillar six. There is a noticeable disregard for the earlier systematic approaches in highlighting the vision and mission pertaining to each pillar. The comprehensive technical report format adopted to buttress the strategies of this pillar gives observers a hint of vast knowledge of approaches to planning that the drafters of the policy are believed to possess.

The Environment, Climate Change and Habitat pillar touches on key points as well as issues and concerns of waste management, flooding, coastal erosion, pollution, deforestation and urbanization. It however conspicuously leaves out more contemporary issues of mitigation and adaptation as well as biodiversity conservation, while acknowledging the need for awareness among farmers and fishermen, with no mention of the necessity for same need for ordinary citizens who constitute the vast majority of the population and their need for knowledge on reducing the risk of Climate Change. There is also the noticeable absence of Maternal Health especially as a key factor in the improvement of Human Capital Development. The two lines of recognition given to this issue may indicate the drafters' little or no consideration for this vital issue and appears to be a great omission for a purported Sustainable Development blueprint, especially when Maternal Health could stand as a strategy to complement human capital development in the Southwest.

Conception of Development in the Document

The substantive information contained in the document points more in the direction of Development as seen through the Modernization theory. Economic development takes pre-eminence and aligns with the mission of GDP growth pursued by the policy. There is an audible call for a shift to generation, growth and development. This is coupled with an emphasis on regional comparative advantage in the area of agriculture, industry, infrastructure, mining, minerals development and the ensuring of the adopting of global best practices. Economic development is tied to Science and Technology as well as ICT, and housing and urban development. The policy focuses on internal factors of the regions constituting Southwest Nigeria. It also looks into social and cultural structures and the adaptation of new technologies. It strongly expresses the belief that traditional societies will develop as they adopt more modern practices. There is an overarching advocacy for industrialization, urbanization, bureaucracy and the adoption of democracy to align the policy vision with Modernization.

Predominant Motivation in Terms of Top- Down or Participatory Approach

There are no indications of involvement of Civil Society in the drafting of the document, just as there is no claim of sufficient certainty to rely on, to classify the policy as motivated by the participatory approach. There are no strong indications of agreed goals and commitments in the strategies set as well as in the pillars making up the document. By its content, focus, and strategic leanings, there is more than enough evidence of a top-down style approach. It also does not seem to owe an apology for its technocratic approach as each pillar and strategic focus acknowledges the need for expert contribution in the implementation stages of the policy as well as in rallying support for its sustainability.

There is also a hint from substantive information that links the drafting of the policy as a possible product of an "expert" perhaps in conjunction with other like minds. This may have been responsible for the dearth of pointers to Civil Society and the role it can play in fostering development, in the stating of the nine pillars. It may therefore be correct to admit that the guiding philosophy/philosophies of the agenda is not strongly in favor of the 'poor' at the expense of the 'rich' The weight of significance attached to cultural integrity, self-governance and social justice in the document in relation to the people, as imperatives for driving the sustainable development agenda of the plan is watered down by its strong leaning to technocracy. Even though there are pointers or indicators in the policy on the need for social change, participation, as well as strengthening of local and regional institutions, an attempt to locate its consistency in the document is largely wasted.

How Transformative and Practical are the Agenda Set in the Policy?

The mission to ensure highest annual average growth rate in GDP and HDI in sub-Saharan Africa between 2012 and 2020 seems more ambitious than practicable. This is so because the document did not indicate or impress on the level of aggressiveness in strategizing for this mission to be feasible. A transformation agenda works hand in hand, and succeeds best with the active involvement and participation of the citizenry. Going by the little or no indication or acknowledgement of the central role of the people in strategizing to ensure the vision of the pillars come to fruition, it may be out of place to situate a strong transformative agenda in the policy thrust of the document. Farmers are the only target for awareness on Climate Change and habitat issues and concerns. While the issue of nature conservation takes the back burner in a region of states noted for its abundance of its fauna and flora. This appears to be an unpardonable omission since there are no indications of attempts to get the general populace educated on the crucial issues of mitigation, adaptation as well as with the concerns of conservation of the biodiversity.

Evidence Base Supporting the Policy's Strategy and How it Aligns with Realities

To support the policy strategies of achieving True Federalism, Agriculture, Education and Power Infrastructure, the recommended steps included advocacy for the enthronement of true federalism. While to achieve the set goals for Agriculture, Education and Power Infrastructure, a Master plan was expected to emerge with a comprehensive blueprint for social transformation, with emphasis on reduction of poverty, as well as on employment generation. There is a true reflection of the realities of Nigerian leadership under the current system of Federalism in Nigeria. There are records of failures to operate institutions that will reflect the country's diversity and foster national unity. There have been records of bad governance, unequal political arrangements, less than transparent administrative practices and power sharing between the Federal/Central government and the 36 states that make up the Federation, with a consequent feeling of marginalization by communities. For instance under the present Federal structure in Nigeria, states are not allowed maximum utilization of the resources within them for the betterment of the lot of the people. States are made to depend on allocation from the Federal Government which are not enough to make appreciable changes in the state, while some states are given preferential treatment and accorded privileges. This is also reflected in regional inequality in education, power infrastructure and as well as poverty and unemployment.

Alignment of Policy with Management/ Strategic Planning Principles

It must be noted that there is a predominance of Management by Objectives principles in the document. There is a visible aim to improve the performance of the Southwest states in Nigeria. There is also a clear definition of objectives especially seen through the lenses of the nine pillars and the strategies to accomplish them. However, it is not certain that stakeholders were a part of the input to the document which is a usual strength of Management by Objectives principles. There is more emphasis on setting goals to attain objectives, but there does not seem to be a strong management information system to measure actual performance and achievement against defined objectives in the document, neither is there any allowance for changes, contingencies/ unforeseen circumstances. There are more rules and objectives than actual picture of end goals to reach. One sees more structure in the document and major causes of action or steps to be taken. Perhaps this is the reason why the document advocated for a MASTERPLAN as a follow up.

Key Similarities and Differences between the Policies in Comparison with Like Policies

Just like the Southwest Nigeria Agenda as contained in the reviewed document, The ASEAN community goal comes with a blueprint on politics, economic and socio-

cultural imperatives. Also in line with Development Agenda FOR Western Nigeria, the political security blueprint of ASEAN was designed to engender a rules-based society with shared norms and values, as well as cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient union with shared responsibilities. Other similarities include highlights a bias for a single market and production bases, a competitive economic region with equitable economic development that is integrated into the global economy, while the socio-cultural blueprint focuses on Human Development, social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, as well as environmental sustainability.

Both Agenda among other things reflect a zeal to find an oasis of common ground, respect and friendship, and a community conceived in constructed commonness and dedicated to the proposition that enduring friendship can be cultivated

Like all regional bodies in search of commonness, the long standing template to drive the vision of community remains the same, and has always been anchored on the policy imperatives of;

- Harnessing the resources of member states and showcasing their collective wealth with the aim of promoting their well-being,
 - Forging inclusiveness and nurturing everyone in the region as an indispensable contributor to its socio-economic advancement and making them equal beneficiaries of available opportunities,
 - Ensuring a regional approach to infrastructure and industrialization and commerce in line with globalization and shifts in the international political economy,
 - Forging a model of governance that is enduring and capable of providing a basis for effective administration of the people, and
 - Enabling each member state to develop at their own pace and in accordance with their potentials in line with their peculiar history and cultural inclinations. (DAWN document)
- However, that is where the similarities seem to end. The Southwest of Nigeria is making a case for unity because they share a homogeneity that ASEAN does because their regionalization case is founded on a coalition of coalition of diversity of cultures, religion, language, social structure and institutions.

Observations on Development Agenda for Western Nigeria Blueprint

It is clear that the drafters of the document understand and place a high premium on the central role of policy content especially in the sustainable development document. Effort was also made to enhance the credibility of the policy document especially as seen from its substantive information. From the document, the significant role of sustainable development policy makers as agenda setters and major influence in promoting consistency in the development of strategy and policy documents is underscored to a reasonable extent. But it was observed that there is no attempt by the policy makers to delineate the point where policy implementation begins from where

improvement is judged, or comparison is made. There is also no big enough room made available for enforcement, compliance, and the checkmating of the challenges of corruption, possible policy reversal and somersault. No serious attempt was made to enshrine clauses and other salient provisions to enforce continuity, accountability, transparency, probity and fiscal discipline in the document. All of these have been the bane of policy making and implementation especially in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

To justify the assertion that there is the need to differentiate especially a development- oriented policy document by verifying the issues it is concerned with especially in paying attention to the real issues of development in the document, and ascertaining if the policy document facilitates the planning and implementation of development programs that meet the needs of the people, this paper conducted a critical review of the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria, DAWN, with a view to knowing the substantive information and material in the policy vis a vis the policy document in terms of the nine pillars of the document. Among other factors, it sought to know how the concept of Development was constructed in the document in terms of related theory as well as whether it was motivated by a traditional paradigm of technocratic, money driven, top-down approach to development, or by a commitment to the participatory approach. Among major findings of the study is the observation that the drafters of the document understand and place a high premium on the central role of policy content especially in the sustainable development document. However, it was observed that no visible attempt was made to enshrine clauses and other salient provisions to enforce continuity, accountability,

transparency and probity in the document. The paper concludes that since these lapses have continued to be the bane of policy documents and policy administration in Nigeria, there is the need to ensure that deliberate steps are taken to correct the anomalies for effective policy making and implementation Nigeria.

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