

AN EVALUATION OF THE CHALLENGES OF REPRESENTATION TO PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

Francis Okechukwu Chikeleze Ph. D

Associate Professor of Public Administration

Department of Public Administration

Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: *The study examined how the challenges faced by the democratic principle of representation affect public policy formulation and implementation. If it were possible for constituencies to directly deal with governments in making their inputs in public policy formulation and implementation, they would have been better disposed to pass on their felt needs for inclusion in the formulation and implementation of public policies. But since this is not possible for logistic reasons associated with the governmental processes, representation has thus become inevitable. However, much as representation is meant to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of governance, it faces challenges that limit its ability to wholly pass across the wishes and needs of the constituencies for inclusion in government policies and programmes. In examining these challenges, questionnaire were administered to 480 respondents who are politically conscious with a minimum of first degree graduate education. The location of the survey was Enugu state of Nigeria and respondents were free to respond to the questions as it applied to their various constituencies. The study found out, among other things, that there is hardly existing constituency benchmarks which guide representatives, against which their representative functions are evaluated. Secondly, there are no defined channels through which constituencies regularly communicate their needs and issue positions to be considered in policy formulation and programmes to their representatives. Thirdly, there are no functional machinery charged with regular assessment of legislators to ascertain their level of compliance or otherwise with the issue position of their constituencies. Fourthly, the level of confidence constituents have in their representatives to take the right decision/position on issues concerning their constituencies is significantly low. Fifthly, constituents do not know the voting pattern of their representatives in the various Legislatures to ascertain their level of responsiveness to constituency needs. Finally, the interest of political parties that produced candidates for election into the Legislature over the years do not reflected the interest of the constituencies. In view of the foregoing findings, the study recommended the need for constituency-articulated benchmark to guide representative activities. Secondly, the electoral process should allow independent candidacy to make it possible for constituencies to elect candidates with credible character that win the confidence of their constituents. Thirdly, there should be a regular channel of communication between representatives and their constituencies which should also serve the purpose of evaluating the performance of representatives. Fourthly, a voting method in the legislature that makes it possible for constituency members to access the voting records of their representatives need be introduced. Fifthly, the political system needs to evolve a system that allows a fuller public participation in the crafting, implementation and evaluation of public policies.*

KEYWORDS: Representation, Representatives, Democracy, Governance, Issue Position, Constituency, Public Policy, Public Programmes,

INTRODUCTION

Public policies refer to government courses of action in response to problems of public concern. It covers issues like health care, pollution, the economy, etc (Dryzek, 2009). Communities that make up a political entity face various collective challenges which the government is expected to address through the public policy instrument. However, the major difficulty faced by these fragmented communities is how to mobilize and pass across their demands to the government with a view to securing attention in addressing them. Since these constituencies cannot all congregate where public policies meant to address these challenges are discussed, they usually relate their needs through the medium of representation. This is the gap legislators fill in the governance process.

However, the transmission of these community yearnings through their representatives are often shortchanged giving rise to numerous unmet needs of the constituencies. Various factors are prominently responsible for the failure of these needs being fully transmitted to, and met by the government. Of particular interest in this paper is the nature, character and practice of political representation which affect the translation of these needs into public policies and programmes.

The main focus of Public Administration relates to the formulation and implementation of public policies that address challenging public problems. These needs, on which public policies are built, are generally articulated by the government using various levels of representation covering the local, state and federal levels. However, a number of public programmes initiated to address those challenges fail partly because public policies informing such programmes are formulated and implemented at levels where the final beneficiaries have no opportunity of making input in the crafting and implementation of policies that address such challenges.

Again, such programmes are also often evaluated at governmental levels above the beneficiaries without their input on how such policies impacted on their lives, and the extent to which the policy objectives were realized. This practice creates a gap between those who formulate and implement public policies and the beneficiaries of such policies. This gap is often a function of the wrong assumption that government always knows what the people needs most and how those things will best be provided. This in turn results in the total or partial exclusion of the beneficiaries of such programmes in the policy formulation and implementation process. The natural outcome is government spending on programmes without commensurate returns on investment.

On the other hand, where this vital link between the policy formulators and implementers on one hand and beneficiaries of such programme on the other hand are effectively harnessed, it enables the beneficiaries to contribute to responsive governance by making their input in policy formulation as well as help to mobilize their participation in programme implementation. It also provides a feedback channel to government on how various public policies impact on their wellbeing as well as provide the window for the assessment and necessary adjustment of such policies and programmes in future.

Therefore in order to enhance the realization of policy objectives and maximize the benefits of government programmes aimed at addressing public challenges, public policy formulation in a democratic setting requires effective participation and contribution of the beneficiaries of such programmes. This participation is often done through representation.

However, the extent to which the nature and character of representation in Nigeria fulfills this expectation is quite doubtful. Since legislators, apart from law-making, provide the channel for public participation as well as act as a watchdog on the activities of government, which holds political power on behalf of the sovereign people, their functional effectiveness is invariably determined mainly by the extent to which it is able to properly articulate the peoples' needs, effectively channel them into mainline government programmes, and provide sufficient feedback to the government on their impact. Consequently, legislators who stand in this gap between the executive and the public are critical to responsive public administration and good governance by fulfilling their representative roles creditably and effectively.

In drawing attention to the relationship between popular participation in public policy formulation and implementation on one hand and representation on the other, Luttbeg (1974:1, 3) adopted the principles of Political linkage. He described it as

Any means by which political leaders act in accordance with the wants, needs, and demands of the public in making government policy. Consequently, the policies passed by government must reflect both the preferences of the government and, most desirably, the public interest. Therefore the ideal of a representative democracy is the identity between the will of the people and government policy. Ideally, parliament should make the decisions that the people themselves would have made had they been able to decide themselves.

In the absence of effective political linkage, which results in an inevitable disconnect between policy makers and beneficiaries, policies are made and implemented without realizing their full objectives leading to loss of financial and material resources. On the other hand, public policy outcome will be enhanced if the beneficiaries are afforded sufficient opportunities to contribute to the policy formulation and implementation process either directly or through effective representation. Thus, since the public cannot always contribute directly to these policy debate and implementation, the existing governmental channels become handy in availing them the opportunity to participate in the process. This is part of the rationale for representation in governance through legislators.

Since representation is an intrinsic part of representative democracy, constituents must necessarily address their needs through one form of representation or the other. However, both the legislators and their constituencies face a number of challenges in trying to translate perceived public needs to main line government programmes through government policies in ways and manner desirable to constituents. The examination of some of these challenges faced in this process is the burden of this paper.

Statement of Problem

The world over, legislators are generally charged with the performance of a range of vital functions that include enacting laws for good governance; control over state funds through the budgetary process, oversight functions over the Executives, and contribution to public policy formulation. The performance of these functions provides the opportunity for them to participate in formulating public policies that guide the operations of government. There is therefore a vital link between the government, the legislators and the constituencies they

represent. Where this link is not properly managed, the opportunity for the people to participate in the determination of their own affairs is jeopardized.

Over the years however, the Nigerian experience has shown a worrisome gap between elected legislators and the electorate they presume to represent. This has given rise to serious social, economic and political disconnect that arise from the practice of “elected” representatives operating independent of, and sometimes contrary to the interest of the electorate in the performance of their representative functions. The matter is even made worse by the fact that the electorate have substantially lost the political will and power to recall them when they outrightly act in ways and manner that prejudices known public interest. John Locke argued that sovereignty resided in the people for whom governments were trustees and that such government could be legitimately overthrown if they failed to discharge their functions to the people. Locke’s position therefore forms the premise on which responsibility and accountability of elected political officers is hinged. Thus, sovereignty resides with the people, and those representing them necessarily need to act for, and on their behalf in the discharge of their representative functions.

The shortfall in the extent to which representatives generally acknowledge their *servanthood* has been further spotlighted by Thomassen (1991 :237) who argued that in the actual day to day performance of their representative functions, members of legislative bodies have been found to be more inclined to follow their own conscience than to follow the lead of their constituency. He further noted that the extent to which the electorate can coerce legislative bodies to act according to its will is very limited because most voters do not know the voting records of political parties and individual candidates, let alone whether they would vote according to their judgment. In other words, in many respects, the political attitudes and opinions of members of representative bodies hardly reflect the attitudes and opinions of the electorate. Schacter (2006) further observed that this nonalignment between representatives and their constituencies is compounded by the fact that congressional elections are rarely issue driven or based on specific measurable indices which those seeking elective positions aim at delivering to the electorate in the course of their representation, and on which basis the electorate can judge their performance.

However, since constituency members cannot directly access government policies and their implementation they must necessarily submit themselves to one form of representation or the other, and in this case to the legislators. These representatives entrusted with the responsibility of carrying through the desired needs of their constituencies, have their own limitations arising from the structure of the political system. Some of the fallouts from this political structure include the fact that legislators are accountable to both their constituencies and their political parties; secondly, it is difficult to hold individual legislators accountable for the collective decisions of the legislature; thirdly, legislative elections are hardly issue-driven and as such makes it difficult to set measurable benchmarks.

Consequently, the major challenge facing constituencies under this circumstance is how best to ensure that their elected representatives in the legislature actually carry their interest through into government policies and programmes. Otherwise public policies enunciated or overseen by such representatives will be saddled with inconsistencies that result in serious distortions in the social, economic and developmental policies of government. The measure of the amount of consideration given to the constituencies should not be the palliative doled out as “*dividends of democracy*” but in comparison with the allocation to competing socio-economic needs of the public in the annual budget. Until this problem is resolved, the Legislature will continue to

comprise of “representatives” who represent themselves or other interests other than the constituencies that elected them.

Thus the attempt to align the representative activities of legislators to the needs of their constituencies raises a number of questions that formed the basis of this study.

- [1] Are there specific benchmarks articulated by constituencies and known to their representatives which guide their representatives functions?
- [2] Are there defined channels through which constituencies regularly communicate their needs and issue positions to be considered in policy formulation and programmes to their representatives in the Legislature?
- [3] Are there functional machinery and structure charged with regular assessment of legislators to ascertain their level of compliance or otherwise with the benchmarks and issue position of their constituencies?
- [4] What level of confidence do constituents have in their representatives to take the right decision/position on issues concerning their constituencies?
- [5] How regularly do constituency members know the voting pattern of their representatives in the various Legislatures?
- [6] To what extent has the interest of political parties that produced candidates for election into the Legislature over the years truly reflected the interest of the constituencies.

This paper therefore focused on examining the above questions and how they translate into the ability or otherwise of legislators to articulate, manage, and transmit the needs and issue positions of their constituencies to the mainline government administration through their representative functions as the basis for government’s formulation and implementation of public policies and programmes. Answers to the above questions will assist in revealing whether there are real alignment between the representative activities of legislators and the felt needs of their constituencies. The findings will also enlighten the understanding of how far the policies of government has been informed, guided and supported by the felt-need of the people as articulated and integrated by their representatives in the various legislatures in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper examined the issue of how representation by legislators affects the translation of constituency needs into government policies and programmes in the light of two theories of representation. The first is the Responsible Party Governmental model which views representation from the perspective of political parties. The second theory is the Mandate-Independent Controversy of Representation that focuses on two views; the first looks at representation from the point of view of effectuating the predetermined mandate of those represented while the second view emphasizes the need for the independence of representatives to act in their best perceived way in their representative functions. These models are briefly examined below.

Responsible Party Governmental model

Ware (1995: 5) postulated here that since political parties form the basis for the aggregation of preferences into alternative agenda to which legislators are signed up, and between which ordinary citizens can choose, it can therefore be argued that since the election of legislators are hardly issue driven, their accountability may be assessed on the basis of the extent to which

they pursued the preferences presented by their parties on which basis they were elected. In furthering this line of arguments, Peress (2012) recalled that in 1951, the Political Science profession officially endorsed a viewpoint that the existence of two competitive political parties with *distinct* policy positions was a necessary condition for effective representation. Furthermore, Thomassen (1991:242) held the opinion that if the purpose of representative democracy is to translate the policy views of the electorate into public policy, it is very dubious whether one should lay such an emphasis on the relationship between individual members of parliament and their constituencies. He therefore argued that the modern mechanism to express different views on matters of national policies are political parties, not individual representatives. Also, Cowen, Cowen, and Tabbarock (1992) argued that

in parliamentary systems where parties are strong, voters choose candidates on the basis of their party, and to a much lesser extent on those candidates' personal attributes. Consequently the accountability of such candidates is skewed more towards the party than the constituency. Again, such legislators tend to be more accountable, on the one hand, to party officials, lobbyists and other 'unpopular' interest groups. Provided they remain loyal to the party and its leadership, legislators are likely to retain their seats. This is especially so since they are hardly subject to any mechanisms that would make them directly accountable to the ordinary people. The Responsible Party theory argues that legislators are accountable through political parties, which commands the incentives and means to hold them accountable, including expulsion and the likelihood to suffer defeat if their party dumps them.

However laudable the Responsible Party Governmental model appears in modern democracy, it raises a number of questions in view of the obvious constraints and limitations on political parties to fully represent public interest in its entirety. The first question is whether the interests of political parties, around which aggregate political preferences are rallied, actually represent the interest of the various constituencies in the polity at all times. In other words, is it safe to assume that there is always a congruence between political party interest and public interest which legislators are elected by their constituencies to represent? Again, are there mechanisms of counterbalancing over-dominating party interest if it skews away from known public interest? For instance, in the course of a controversy concerning a position taken by the former Nigeria President, Ikhariale (2013) observed that

President Jonathan seems to want result irrespective of the constitutionality of the process while Tambuwal (Speaker of the House of Representatives then) on the other hand demands strict compliance with the constitution no matter whose horse is gored...the President was however pointing out that his first obligation is to his party, the PDP, suggesting that his party comes first before the constitution.

Ikhariale further argued that

There is no point repeating that in the event of a conflict between party interest and the national interest, the national interest which is conterminous with the constitution prevails. Parliamentarians are expected to think ahead and think more about the wellbeing of the polity as against that of the party.

Apart from the unlikelihood of consistent congruence between party interest and public interest, the Responsible Party Governmental model is premised on the assumption that political parties front clearly defined and distinct ideological alternatives in the pursuit of democratic governance which cover all the desires and aspirations of the public. But unfortunately, this is hardly so, especially in developing societies. Hence the ever present need for continuous input into the political system through enlarged public participation either directly or through people-oriented representation. Otherwise, the public are constrained to choose from whatever narrow alternatives offered by political parties, irrespective of how limited they may be.

Stop

In societies like Nigeria, there is hardly any meaningful congruence between political party agenda and known public interest, apart from mere campaign promises that are never intended to be fulfilled. Ideally, the gap between what political parties offer in terms of governmental options and what the society actually needs in real terms is supposed to be filled by the input of the public through their representatives in the Legislature. The filling of this gap through legislative representation helps to ensure that the public is heard at all tiers of government, from the local government council, through the state House of Assembly, the House of Representatives, to the Senate.

This paper is inclined to believe that the Responsible Party Government model does not take full cognizance of contingent issues affecting modern democracies, especially in developing nations like Nigeria. These issues include the known fact that political parties often lack substance in terms of real ideological leaning that present the electorate with real alternatives in the pursuit of government business. Easton (1965: 290) defined political ideologies as “consisting of articulated ethical interpretations and principles that set forth the purposes, organization and boundaries of political life.” Nwosu and Ofoegbu (1986: 225) also explained ideology as defining the parameters within which the actions of the leaders can be legitimated or condemned, approved or disapproved, and an embodiment of the principal goals and objectives to be accomplished in the future. According to Leeds (1981: 109) Ideologies “are ‘action-related’ sets of ideas, concerning the change or defense of existing political structure and relationships. An ideology provides moral justification for a specific form of government.”

A combination of the foregoing definitions imply that political ideologies helps to determine the pattern that guides the organization of social, economic and political life of the society; set the goals, priorities, methods and means of pursuing the common good of the society; present articulated programmes by governments towards the achievement of the common good; ensure the support of the public by rallying them round a focused path of governmental action and encourages support for government in the pursuit of their (public) good; help the government to build legitimacy by relating government to public goals and fulfilling their role expectation. These ideological components provide the platform on which the electorate chooses between alternative methods of governance and programmes presented by political parties during elections. Since the values and goals of political parties are defined by their ideological leanings, these must be clear enough to guide the electorate in choosing which party they cast their lot with. Where these indicators lack in real terms, political parties cannot effectively serve as model with which public interest can safely be substituted as implied by the Responsible Government model.

Therefore, if existing political parties have clear ideologies that will enable the public distinguish an approach to governance held by one political party from another approach held by another political party, it makes sense to assume that when representatives exercise their representative functions in line with the ideological leaning of their political parties, they are at the same time representing the interest of the electorate that voted for such parties bearing in mind their ideological leanings. But where such clearly defined ideologies do not exist, it is deceitful to assume that representatives that act in line with the dictates of their political parties are acting in the best interest of their constituencies and the public.

The down turn in strict party ideology is not limited to developing nations. It has also been observed even in western democracies. For instance, Baker (2009) observed that in the U.S. the platforms of the two major parties have shifted towards vague, moderate positions in order to appeal to the largest number of voters. As a result, the major parties may appear so similar that many voters lose interest. Again, Bibby (2003) observed that political parties also exhibit relatively low internal unity and lack strict adherence to an ideology or set of policy goals. Rather, they have traditionally been concerned first and foremost with winning elections and controlling government. Notwithstanding the foregoing argument in respect of the dearth of clear and distinct political ideologies, Egan (2008) argued that both the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States enjoy long term trust in their ability to handle specific issues that cannot be explained away by American's policy preferences. However he cautioned that representatives can exploit this trust to be less responsive over time to citizen's opinion on issues.

Unfortunately too, Nigeria's political culture has consistently experienced lack of adequate and measurable political ideology, leaving the electorate without real choice between political parties on grounds of alternative governance options, preferences and policy choices. Even where resemblances of political ideology are presented, they are at best vague and immeasurable. Toyo (2000: 10) noted this vagueness in his comment that "Nigeria is a society where traditional philosophies were broken down by colonialism and no modern philosophy, except 'progress', has taken root. Political party talk about progress, development, dividends of democracy, power to the people, change, but what it means in real terms and how it can be attained has eluded their definition.

This dearth of clear, distinct and workable party ideology that distinguishes one political party from another and affords the electorate informed choices of party options and representation makes it dicey to totally absorb the prescription that allegiance to political party by representatives can effectively substitute allegiance to constituencies and the electorate. Consequently, the political system and constituencies need to still intensify their search for ways and means of ensuring that their representatives in the legislature are accountable and responsive to both sides without cheating on any.

Mandate-Independent Controversy of Representation Model

Besides the Responsible Party Governmental model, Edmund Burke's (1774) Mandate-Independent Controversy of Representation presented by Thomassen (1991:238) raises the question as to whether representatives should act according to the will of their constituencies or according to their own mature judgment. In other words, should representatives act as agents who take instructions from their constituencies or act according to their own personal judgment on issues before them? Part of this controversy is examined below with their possible

implications for representation and constituency's issue position on matters relating to public policy.

In furthering his postulations, Burke made a distinction between Mandate Representation and Independent Representation. The mandate representation model refers to representatives who defend the interest of their constituencies without following instructions from them, while the independent representation refers to those who defend the general interest, but according to the views of their constituents (Thomassen, 1991: 239). The former invariably presupposes that representatives should act in a way that take the global perspective of the entire nation into consideration as they congregate as a body based on what they know as individuals without recourse to the advice and views of their constituencies. In other words, representatives are supposed to be trusted by their constituencies to act in their best interest without taking directive from them. This implies that representatives should bear their constituency's views in mind while at the same time considering the overall interest of the nation in the conduct of their representative functions. These two perspectives are briefly examined below.

Mandate Representation

Leaning more on the side of representatives who defend the general interest but according to the views of their constituencies, Birch (1972:39) shared the conviction that

Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of a whole – where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. The representative's role is no longer to defend the interest of their local district with central government, but to participate in national policy-making and legislative process. The task of members of parliament to defend local interest, acting as delegates or as trustees, has become marginal, compared to their role in general policy making, where specific local interests are hardly an issue.

Weissberg (1978: 537) also argued that electoral districts tend to be “so diverse in the kind of values and beliefs held and policy preferences tend to be related to interests and interest groups that must, of necessity, cut across a purely geographically defined division. Thus, the whole, not constituencies, should be the main concern of representatives.

The above arguments, laudable as they appear may be feasible only where the political system and terrain guarantees equity and fairness in the distribution of wealth among constituencies and citizens. Again, it can only be possible where the political system and process have done well enough to eliminate or minimize possible factors that encourage hostilities and conflict of interest between constituencies since these factors often give rise to representatives pursuing narrow constituency interests at the expense of the global national interest. Otherwise it may be difficult to understand how a global and non-constituency-based representation can function in a highly fragmented and conflict-ridden polity where representatives are influenced by the political environment to pursue sectional, tribal or constituency interests especially with a long standing feeling of marginalization and deprivation common to Nigeria and the developing nations of Africa.

If the political environment guarantees equity, justice and fairness among political blocks and collective good of all, there will be an assurance that representatives can come to the House, not intent on pursuing constituencies' narrow interests but the interest of the *whole* while still working within the mandate of their various constituencies. Otherwise each representative will come poised to "*fight*" for their sectional interest rather than the interest of the whole.

Independent Representation

On whether representatives should act according to the will of their constituencies or according to their own mature judgment Pitkin (1967:147) rejected a system "in which the determination precedes the discussion; in which one set of men deliberate, and another decides; and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the argument".

In other words, he argued that it is not right for constituencies to predetermine their issue positions and mandate their representatives to pursue and defend them in the Congress before the House have deliberated on them. Rather he advocates a situation where the determination of issues results from the outcome of discussions on the floor of the House. However, the recent event in the Nigerian Senate regarding the vote on constitutional amendment of the section dealing with girl child marriage raised a lot of doubt in the minds of some constituents in Ondo Central Senatorial District on the quality of representation of Senator Ayo Akinyelure. It was reported that the representative "wept profusely publicly for being the only senator from the South-West that supported the inclusion of underage girl marriage in the constitution" (Dayo, 2013). This was a case of a representative who ignored the values of his constituency and yielded to the trend of discussion on the floor of the House. The Senator came under serious fire from his constituency members who queried his sensibility as their representative and demanded justification for continuing in his representative functions in the Senate. This event contravened this model.

There are obvious fallouts from the liberty of representatives to act on the basis of their personal knowledge and understanding of issues in order to make reasonable contributions to legislative debates and public policy issues. These include the need for the constituencies to ensure that those that represent them are sufficiently functionally equipped in critical areas that include: good personal character and integrity; commitment to public interest and selfless service; not prone to illicit wealth acquisition/accumulation; good level of education and enlightenment about the nation's economy, politics and social issues that support informed contribution to discussion and subsequent decisions; good knowledge of his/her constituency needs and priorities; and be known to have good past performance records.

These necessary requirements for trusted representation lay enormous responsibilities on the representatives, their constituencies and the socio-political system. First, the electoral system must provide a valid and trusted electoral process that guarantees the election of representatives with the right personal qualities and character such as those mentioned above. Having such personal qualities help to ensure their likelihood to always acts in perceived public interest at large rather than in their own narrow personal interest, that of their political parties or financiers especially where it is at variance with known public interest. Secondly, the socio-political system should also be able to have a mechanism of ensuring that representatives conform to those desirable values. It should also be able to guarantee the election of independent candidates/representatives with good reputation who may not have access to political party sponsorship. The process should also empower the electorate to remove any representative

found wanting in these basic qualities or who acts consistently against perceived public interest. It is not sufficient to make the provision for recall in the law but still stop short of making it effective in real terms.

The main question arising from the above models of representation that demands attention is whether the Responsible Party model and the Mandate-Independent Representative models have been able to adequately accommodate constituency interests? Over the years, Nigeria has experienced bad governance with very few exceptions resulting in disaffection, poor service delivery and other vices which strongly suggest that political parties hardly represent the overriding public interest adequately. It also appears that representatives, elected under political party platforms, have also failed to pass across pressing public needs and interest into mainstream government programmes. Consequently, there is a need to seek for other ways of ensuring that public needs are heard by the government and built into government policies and programmes as the justification and proof of legitimacy for responsible governance.

A Marriage of Both Models

In the last count therefore, there is a need for a balanced mix between the Responsible Government model and the Mandate-Independent representation in such a way that they will act as checks and balances on each other. While relying on political parties to provide clear governance options, representatives should act in the overall best interest of the nation bearing in mind their constituency interest which they are elected to represent. The political system need to evolve ways through which the voices of constituencies are heard in all legislative houses. This calls for setting benchmarks for representative activities which will also serve as the basis for evaluating their performance. Even if representatives need to act in their best judgment, they need to bear in mind that they are only exercising representative mandate on behalf of their constituencies, and due regard should be given to a justifiable representation of their interest in the center.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In examining the questions raised in the statement of problems, a survey conducted in Enugu state of Nigeria in 2014 revealed various views on the issue of the Challenges of Representation in Public Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria. The sample constitute of 480 politically conscious university graduates. Data gathered from the survey is presented point by point below.

Evaluation Benchmark

- [1] Are there specific benchmarks articulated by constituencies and known to their representatives which guide their representatives functions?

Table 1		Always		Often		Hardly		Never		Don't know		Compare	
BENCHMARK		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Alignment with constituency's position on government policies and programmes	86	17.9	59	12.3	203	42.3	127	26.4	05	01.0	30.2	68.7
2	Improvement in the quality of life of constituencies through provision of infrastructural facilities	71	14.8	87	18.1	197	41.0	117	24.3	08	01.7	32.9	65.3
3	Effective feedback to constituency on the programmes and activities of government	48	10.0	78	16.2	165	34.4	177	36.9	12	02.5	26.2	71.3
4	Mobilization of constituency for participation in government policies programmes	68	14.2	52	10.8	180	37.5	147	30.7	33	06.9	25.0	68.2
5	Influencing integration of constituency needs in government programmes	92	19.2	72	15.0	161	33.5	129	26.9	26	05.4	34.2	60.4
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												29.7	66.8

On the issue of whether there are specific benchmarks articulated by constituencies and known to their representatives which guide the representatives and against which the quality of their representation is evaluated, table 1 above shows the various responses. Five variables were considered here and responses obtained for specific variables are shown in the table. In the final analysis 29.7% of respondents affirmed that specific benchmarks were articulated by constituencies and known to their representatives against which the quality of their representation is evaluated. However, 66.8% affirmed in the negative. It can therefore be deduced that such benchmarks hardly exist, at least to the majority of constituency members on which basis they may evaluate how well or otherwise they are represented. Consequently, the challenge still remains that constituency members have no real way of evaluating the quality of representation by elected representatives in terms of delivering on defined benchmark or expectations.

- [2] Are there defined channels through which constituencies regularly communicate their needs and issue positions to be considered in policy formulation and programmes to their representatives in the Legislature?

Table 2		Always		Often		Hardly		Never		Don't know		Compare	
	CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Constituency offices of Representatives	66	13.8	87	18.1	176	36.7	135	28.2	16	3.3	31.9	64.9
2	Official visits to Constituencies by representatives	32	06.7	69	14.4	221	46.0	142	29.5	16	3.3	21.1	75.5
3	During public functions attended by representatives	76	15.8	70	14.6	198	41.2	119	24.8	17	3.5	30.4	66.0
4	Constituency and Ward meetings	74	15.4	78	16.2	195	40.6	109	22.7	24	5.0	31.6	63.3
5	Town union meetings	62	12.9	122	25.4	172	35.8	108	22.5	16	3.3	38.3	58.3
6	Multi-Party constituency meetings with representatives	53	11.0	118	24.6	162	33.8	119	24.8	28	5.8	35.6	58.6
7	Traditional Rulers meeting with representatives	73	15.2	97	20.2	202	42.1	83	17.3	25	5.2	35.4	59.4
8	Age grade associations meetings with representatives	68	14.2	56	11.7	187	39.0	150	31.3	18	4.0	25.9	70.3
9	Churches' & religious organizations' meetings with representatives	90	18.8	87	18.1	159	33.1	121	25.2	23	4.8	36.9	58.3
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												31.9	63.8

The survey sought to know whether there are defined channels and fora through which constituency needs are communicated to their representatives with a view to their taking those needs into main line government policy formulation and programmes. While 31.9% concede that such interactions exist in the indicated channels, 63.8% disagree with the existence of such channels. The overall response indicate that there are hardly any such channel that provide popular platform for interaction between representatives and their constituencies through which constituency needs are clearly communicated to their representatives for accommodation in government policies and programmes. In the substantial absence of such channels and interactions, representative merely promote what, in their considered opinion, should be given to the constituencies irrespective of whether or not it matched their prevailing needs for a defined period of time.

- [3] Are there functional machinery and structure charged with regular assessment of legislators to ascertain their level of compliance or otherwise with the benchmarks and issue position of their constituencies?

Table 3		Always		Often		Hardly		Never		Don't know		Compare	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Ward/ Constituency Reps	63	13.1	78	16.2	155	32.3	169	35.2	15	3.1	29.3	67.5
2	Town union	57	11.9	58	12.1	208	43.3	138	28.7	19	4.0	24.0	72.0
3	Traditional rulers	51	10.6	91	19.0	174	36.2	140	29.2	24	5.0	29.6	65.4
4	Age grade associations	52	10.8	82	17.1	149	31.0	176	36.3	23	4.8	27.9	67.3
5	Churches and religious organizations	75	15.6	63	13.1	165	34.4	158	32.9	19	4.0	28.7	67.3
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												27.9	67.9

Responses in table 4 above indicate that an overwhelming number of constituency members (67.9%) as against 27.9%, do not concede to the question of having functional machinery and structure charged with regular assessment of representatives and their level of compliance with known benchmark and issue position of their constituencies. This response substantially agrees with the response in table 2 above that denies the existence of well circulated and known benchmark that guides legislators representative activities.

- [4] What level of confidence do constituents have in their representatives to take the right decision/position on issues concerning their constituencies?

Table 4a		Very high		High		Low		Very low		Don't know		Compare	
	Senators	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Good personal character	100	20.8	145	30.2	111	23.1	111	23.1	13	2.7	51.0	46.2
2	Known commitment to public interest	73	15.2	147	30.6	114	23.8	130	27.1	16	3.3	45.8	50.9
3	Known commitment to selfless service	89	18.5	110	22.9	113	23.5	136	28.3	32	6.7	41.4	51.8
4	Not prone to illicit wealth acquisition	84	17.5	65	13.5	123	25.6	166	34.5	42	8.8	31.0	60.1
5	Good level of education & enlightenment	76	15.8	182	37.9	103	21.5	102	21.3	17	3.5	53.7	42.8
6	Good knowledge of constituency needs	81	16.9	149	31.0	96	20.0	119	24.8	35	7.3	47.9	44.8
7	Knowledge of his past performance record	66	13.8	109	22.7	128	26.7	142	29.6	35	7.3	36.5	56.3
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												43.9	50.4

Table 4b		Very high		High		Low		Very low		Don't know		Compare	
	Members of House of Reps	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Good personal character	88	18.3	127	26.5	154	32.1	103	21.4	8	1.7	44.8	53.5
2	Known commitment to public interest	78	16.2	86	17.9	190	39.6	118	24.6	8	1.7	34.1	64.2
3	Known commitment to selfless service	62	12.9	97	20.2	188	39.2	113	23.6	20	4.2	33.1	62.8
4	Not prone to illicit wealth acquisition	80	16.7	89	18.5	125	26.0	160	33.3	26	5.4	35.2	59.3
5	Good level of education and enlightenment	65	13.5	171	35.6	133	27.7	91	18.9	20	4.2	49.1	46.6
6	Good knowledge of constituency needs	78	16.2	143	29.8	100	20.8	127	26.4	32	6.7	46.0	47.2
7	Knowledge of past performance record	71	14.8	105	21.9	118	24.6	168	35.0	18	3.8	36.7	59.6
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												39.9	56.2

Table 4c		Very high		High		Low		Very low		Don't know		Compare	
	Members of House of Assembly	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Good personal character	92	19.2	117	24.4	167	34.8	94	19.6	10	2.1	43.6	54.4
2	Known commitment to public interest	56	11.7	107	22.3	192	40	116	24.2	9	1.9	34.0	64.2
3	Known commitment to selfless service	68	14.2	112	23.3	140	29.2	142	29.6	18	3.8	37.5	58.8
4	Not prone to illicit wealth acquisition	34	07.1	101	21.0	161	33.5	143	29.8	41	8.5	28.1	63.3
5	Good level of education & enlightenment	45	9.4	124	25.8	150	31.2	130	27.1	31	6.5	35.2	58.3
6	Good knowledge of constituency needs	63	13.1	120	25.0	144	30.0	130	27.0	23	4.8	38.1	57.0
7	Knowledge of past performance record	49	10.2	102	21.2	134	27.9	176	36.7	19	4.0	31.4	64.6
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												35.4	60.1

Table 4d		Very high		High		Low		Very low		Don't know		Compare	
	Local Government Councilors	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Good personal character	79	16.5	167	34.8	99	20.6	116	23.2	19	4.0	51.3	43.8
2	Known commitment to public interest	61	12.7	178	37.1	122	25.4	99	20.6	20	4.2	49.8	46.0
3	Known commitment to selfless service	34	07.1	146	30.4	136	28.3	143	29.8	21	4.4	37.5	58.1
4	Not prone to illicit wealth acquisition	58	12.1	137	28.5	125	26.0	130	27.1	30	6.2	40.6	53.1
5	Good level of education & enlightenment	40	08.3	165	34.4	141	29.4	105	21.9	29	6.0	42.7	51.3
6	Good knowledge of constituency needs	35	07.3	210	43.8	93	19.4	106	22.1	36	7.5	51.1	41.5
7	Knowledge of past performance record	33	06.9	158	32.9	117	24.4	145	30.2	27	5.6	39.8	54.6
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												44.7	49.8

On the question of the level of confidence (tables 4a-d) constituency members have on their representatives, overall average response indicate that 41.0% have confidence in their representatives while 54.1% do not have confidence. On all levels of representation, responses indicate that constituencies do not have good level of confidence on their representatives. All the scores weigh less in favor confidence for their representatives: 43.9% Vs 50.4%; 39.9% Vs 56.2%; 35.4% Vs 60.1%; 44.7% Vs 49.8%. Much as the overall average margin is not very significant (13.1%), it is noted that the individual negative margins differ in varying ranges. The margins for Senators (6.5%) and Local Government Councilors (5.1%) indicate that these two levels of representation suffer the least level of lack of confidence from their constituents, while Members of the House of Representatives (16.3%) and House of Assembly (24.7%) suffer the highest level of confidence from their representatives.

In other words, the proposition by the Independent Representation School of thought that representatives should act on the basis of their personal judgment is unlikely to satisfy constituencies that lack significant confidence in their representatives based on the tested variables. The study revealed a substantial shortfall on the part of members of the House of Representatives and House of Assembly.

- [5] How regularly do constituency members know the voting pattern of their representatives in the various Legislatures?

Table 5		Always		Often		Hardly		Never		Don't know		Compare	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1	Senate	84	17.5	75	15.6	99	20.6	202	42.0	20.0	4.2	33.1	62.6
2	House of Representatives	79	16.5	54	11.2	103	21.5	225	46.9	19	4.0	27.7	68.4
3	State House of Assembly	91	19.0	56	11.7	88	18.3	221	46.1	24	5.0	30.7	64.4
4	Local Government Council	93	19.4	48	10.0	129	26.9	190	39.6	20	4.2	29.4	66.5
Overall average of positive [P] and negative [N] scores												30.2	65.5

Constituents (65.5%) hardly/never know the voting pattern of their representatives essentially because of the “yeh” and “nay” style of reaching decision in the Nigerian legislature that does not allow anybody to actually know the side of the divide a legislator stands at any point in time. It is thus impracticable for constituency members to follow the voting pattern of legislators with a view to ascertaining their congruence with constituency interest and positions on issues on the floor of the House. Furthermore, this makes it extremely difficult to hold legislators accountable by their constituencies since they can hardly be pinned down to specific legislative decisions.

- [6] To what extent has the interest of political parties that produced candidates for election into the Legislature over the years truly reflected the interest of the constituencies.

Table 7		Always		Often		Hardly		Never		Don't know		Compare	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	% P	% N
1		31	06.5	95	19.8	92	19.2	234	48.8	28	05.8	26.3	68.0

The overwhelming opinion of respondents (68.0% as against 26.3%) is that there is hardly/never a positive relationship between the interest of political parties and the constituency represented by legislators. In other words, while legislators purport to represent such constituencies the interest they pursue is substantially that of their political parties on whose platform they won elections not the declared interest of their constituencies.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to examine the issue of political representation with particular focus on the extent to which legislators are able to convert their constituency needs into government policies and programmes. It is common knowledge that one of the pillars of representative democracy is the assurance that the interests of those being represented are paramount in the minds and activities of their representatives. But where there are strong reasons to doubt the credibility of the process in achieving this important objective, questions are raised with a view to restoring confidence in the system.

Some of the issues raised in this paper relate to the establishment of benchmark against which the activities of representatives need be judged. Secondly, in the absence of statutory and

functional channels of communication between representatives and their constituencies to provide needed platform for interaction, there is not likely to be any congruence between the activities of representatives and their constituencies. Thirdly, the need for evaluation of the representative function with a view to improving the process and sanctioning representatives who do not live up to their responsibilities is paramount. This can be addressed through establishing a functional machinery and structure charged with regular assessment of legislators to ascertain their level of compliance or otherwise with the benchmarks and issue position of their constituencies.

In addressing some of these issues in this paper, two major models were examined: the Responsible Party Governmental model and the Mandate-Independent Controversy of Representation model. The former laid emphasis on the capacity of political parties as a sufficient basis for representation. However, findings in this study reveal a yearning gap in the ability of political parties to play such roles effectively in Nigeria. Respondents didn't express any reasonable level of confidence on the parties to cover the interests of constituencies. The consensus is that parties and their candidates in the legislature are more interested in their interests than that of their constituencies. On the other hand, the mandate-independent model put the burden of representation on the discretion of the representative. Once again, this depends substantially on the personal qualities and character of representatives which in turn depend on a very credible electoral process. Such credibility of the electoral process and its ability to generate candidates with the desirable character traits has remained a very far cry in the Nigerian political system, especially with the exclusion of independent candidacy from the process.

This paper therefore concludes that the way forward must be sought between the two schools of thought since neither satisfies the basis for a reasonable level of representation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of the obvious challenges with defining representation in the context of constituency issue position, there is still a need to identify and determine some sort of specific benchmark that will be used to judge the quality of representation. Otherwise it becomes elusive to evaluate whether or not representatives represent the interest of their constituencies either in a narrow constituency sense, or in a wider national dimension. Without known and agreed benchmarks this will be virtually impossible. It is however important here to highlight the difficulty observed by Weissberg (1979) in defining what constitutes the aggregate constituency opinions which representatives are supposed to pursue. According to him, the question has been whether or not legislators actually follow the policy preferences of their constituents by acting in delegate capacity which in turn requires the establishment of some sort of correspondence between legislative voting and constituency preferences; how to aggregate individual preferences of constituency members into a "constituency preference"; and how to evaluate the closeness of legislators to their constituents on particular policies. This emphasizes the need for setting a benchmark that will also serve as the evaluation index, opening up regular communication channels, and improving the electoral process. The above argument, founded on the findings of the study, provides the guide for these recommendations.

1. There is a need to always generate a benchmark which representatives need to bear in mind in pursuing their functions. In defining the benchmark, this paper suggest items

such as their voting pattern on issues that has positive implications for their immediate constituencies and the nation generally; contribution to legislations and public policies that can influence the improvement of the quality of life of the people including, but not limited to, the provision of social amenities, infrastructure, employment creation, etc; effective feedback to their constituencies on the activities of government; mobilization of their constituencies' support for government programmes that impact positively on the lives of the people; making reasonable efforts to integrate the needs of their constituency into the main line government programmes; etc.

2. Since representatives cannot entirely avoid the Independent Representation approach in the course of their political activities, the political process need to evolve options that encourage the fielding and election of candidates on the basis of their personal characters and not exclusively on party affiliation as in Nigeria where independent candidacy is not allowed. This will provide ample opportunities and encourage the election of candidates that command the confidence of their constituency and lessen the burden of imposing candidates that do not have the trust and confidence of their constituency by political parties.
3. The adoption of an evaluation index makes it necessary for constituencies to articulate their issue positions which representatives are expected to pursue through constant dialogue, feedback and discussions with their constituencies on current issues of governance and politics. Such regular communication and discussions, using mediums such as Ward, Town unions and Multi-party constituency meetings, Traditional rulers, Age grade associations, Faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc, create opportunities for representatives to remain abreast with the needs and issue position of their constituencies. These machineries and structures will also be charged with the responsibility of regular assessment of representative activities of legislators to ascertain their level of compliance or otherwise with the issue position of their constituencies.
4. The outcomes of such interactions provide the benchmark against which the quality of their representation is evaluated. This in turn requires that constituency members have to be abreast with current national issues and the voting pattern of their representatives to be able to ascertain the level of alliance of representatives to the benchmarks. Even if such votes do not conform totally and always to the constituency issue position, regular monitoring will reveal the extent to which the representatives conform or deviate from the expected index and their level of responsibility to those they represent.
5. The voting pattern of "yeh" and "ney" in Nigeria has the obvious implication of hiding the positions of representatives as it is most times impossible to know who *shouted* which. This practice shields and frees representatives from any form of monitoring by their constituencies. Modern electronic device that is capable of capturing the voting records of representatives should be introduced to make monitoring possible and easy. In this way, representatives will be aware that they will be held accountable for their representative activities and the outcome of their decisions.
6. It is pertinent to mention here that representatives that are expected to be responsible and responsive to constituencies' needs and issue position must necessarily stem from a wholesome electoral process that guarantees the election of representatives that have sufficient information about the constituencies they represent; a representative that

constituency members also have sufficient information on his/her background and past activities/performances that qualifies him/her above other contestants; a representative that is sufficiently equipped in capacity and will to regularly consult with his/her constituency on issues, galvanize their opinion and represent them effectively. This calls for urgent and far reaching reforms in the electoral process and a re-inventing of social value systems that supports good governance.

7. In order to enhance the achievement of policy intentions, there is a need to encourage more effective public participation in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation both directly and through responsive and responsible representatives.
8. Finally, there is a need to institute a feedback mechanism from the prime beneficiaries of government policies with a view to ascertaining how the programmes have impacted on their lives and the necessary adjustments that may be needed in future. Periodic evaluations of policies necessarily require the participation of the beneficiaries who are in a position to advice government on the performance of such programmes. This will help the government assess the extent to which the program attained the intended objectives, level of deviation if any, and the necessary adjustment needed to return the programme on course.

In the final analysis, representation is not just about somebody occupying a seat in the Legislature on behalf of a constituency, but that such a person need be seen in real terms as actually representing the views and interests of their constituencies in the context of the common good of the whole country.

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