An Analysis of the Research-Policy Nexus in Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the existence and activities of policy-oriented research organizations in Nigeria public policy decisions seem not to have benefited from relevant research input. This is generating considerable disenchantment among researchers. This paper employs a multiple case study approach to examine the linkage between research and public policy in the country with a view to providing measures for strengthening the influence of research on public policy decisions. We found major pitfalls in the research-policy nexus including gaps in policy initiation, poor culture of policy development, policy confusion and uncertainties and inadequate linkage mechanisms.

Résumé

Malgré la présence et les activités des organismes de recherche établis au Nigéria, il y a lieu de penser que les décisions en matière de politiques publiques n'ont pas bénéficié d'un apport notable de la recherche. Ceci entraîne un désenchantement des chercheurs. Ce papier adopte une approche s'appuyant sur de multiples études de cas pour examiner le lien entre la recherche et les politiques publiques, dans le souci de proposer des mesures visant à renforcer l'influence de la recherche sur les décisions publiques. Les auteurs ont constaté un important relâchement du lien entre la recherche et les politiques, y compris des lacunes sur le plan de la prise d'initiatives, une culture insuffisante au plan de la formulation des politiques, un certain degré de confusion et d'incertitude ainsi que des mécanismes de liaison inadéquats.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, research for use in the public policy arena is conducted largely within the social science and closely related disciplines and is targeted towards policy sectors such as macro-economic policy, social policy, technology policy, agricultural policy and so forth. Apart from studies conducted by academic researchers in social science faculties and research centres in several Nigerian universities, voluminous research information also abound in specialized research institutes established directly by the Federal government to conduct research into socio-economic problems in the country. Departments of planning research and statistics are also available at both Federal and State levels which are supposed to engage in policy research. The existence of such extensive research outfit does not however, imply that policy research needs by the government are being fully satisfied.

Despite the recognition of the role of research in policy decision making in Nigeria, research input into the policy process is rather limited. Thus, the research facilities and potentials are neither fully developed nor fully explored. Funding of policy-oriented research institutes like other research institutes has no place on the list of government priorities. Unfortunately, as funding deteriorates, research needs multiply and policy-related problems proliferate. The country therefore, has not been able to take full advantage of existing research infrastructure as far as policy matters are concerned.

The critical element in policy-research and evidence-based decision-making is effective linkage among researchers, policy-developers and decision makers. There is none of the three communities that has placed adequate emphasis on such linkage. Several decisions are still being taken without research input, and several research studies are being conducted without policy relevance. Yet there are other policy (relevant) studies with considerable public investment that are not even utilized. Several similar studies are being conducted in the country in different places at different times and even in the same place at close intervals. This syndrome of re-inventing the wheel is not only wasteful of resources but also symptomatic of the height of the dissemination problem in the research community itself.

Moreover, there is no commitment on the part of the government to continue to situate existing policy-oriented research institutes into the mainstream of policy decision making. The reliance on several parallel *ad hoc* channels has tended to create conflicts in the flow of ideas and has placed politics in the forefront of policy decisions. The situation is apt to lead to disenchantment on the part of policy researchers with adverse consequences on the supply of research output. Besides, research into the use of research information especially for policy purposes has been receiving attention in the developed world and to date research issues in this field are still being actively articulated and investigated. In Nigeria, however, little is known in this field of study. An understanding of the interactions between the research communities and policy makers is desirable not only to ensure that researchers are encouraged to deal with challenging development issues but also to derive maximum benefits.

This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the linkage between public policy and research in Nigeria. Specifically, we seek to (i) examine the existing policy research capacity and the relevance of research in public policy decisions in the country, (ii) determine the challenges and opportunities for research-policy linkages, and (iii) suggest ways of strengthening the influence of research in the policy process. A multiple case-study approach is adopted. This involves five policy-oriented research organizations. They are Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), Nigerian Institute for International Affairs (NIIA), National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) which are owned by the Federal Government. The others, which are NGOs, are Development Policy Centre (DPC) and Centre for Advanced Social Studies (CASS).

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In examining the use of research and the linkage between research and policy it is important to stress that the relevant research is an embodiment of various types which have the potential of influencing public policy. Although the various types are interrelated, they are conventionally classified into four categories namely, policy research, policy relevant research, academic research and policy oriented research. These categories have been clearly defined in the literature.

According to Cross (1998), policy research refers to studies carried out as part of the policy process. The motivation is to illuminate on aspect of that process in the interest of effective policy development. It may include feasibility studies, background reports and evaluation research. The critical determining condition of policy research is that it is premised upon the definitions, perceptions and priorities of policy makers.

A significant proportion of this research is carried out in-house, that is, by research and development department, or statistical divisions of government agencies. By contrast, policy relevant research may be focused equally on policy issues but does not share the assumptions of the policy maker. It is thus more wide-ranging, perhaps more critical and often longer-term. It is driven by a combination of academic logic coupled with one which is essentially moral or ethical. Academic research differs from the above two not by the standards it seeks to attain but by the origins of the problem it explores. When this is derived exclusively from the scientific literature itself without any recourse to policy or political debate, then it may be said to fall into this category. Policy oriented research is defined as studies based on a shared perception of the issues, where relevance and topicality are critical, and where the object is to improve the quality and effectiveness of public policy. This differs from policy research in being more independent and thus potentially more critical; it differs from policy-relevant research in being constrained by policy priorities and perceptions (Cross et al, 2000).

The modeling of the linkage between research and policy is witnessing continuing transformation. Despite the different arrangements of the critical elements, however, the critical building blocks remain relevant till today. The Atwo worlds@ model propounded over two decades ago (Caplan *et al* 1975; Caplan 1979), viewed the linkage from two angles; that of the customer (the policy maker), and that of the supplier (the researcher). The questions of under- or non-utilization are explained in terms of the non-compatible characteristics of the worlds, communities, or systems of customer and supplier. The policy and research communities have different operational cultures and time frame, different approaches to problem definition and different constituencies in terms of roles and accountability. The motivation for forging appropriate linkages is to resolve these differences. Notwithstanding the simplistic nature of this model, it is still a reference point till today. It has generated further conceptualizations by various scholars over the years (Weiss, 1977; Weiss and Bucuvalas, 1980; Bulmer, 1986).

In her own conceptualization Weiss described the linkage model in terms of what influences the make-up of knowledge exchanged between the research and policy communities and thus placed emphasis on research, policy, their interaction and their context. This involves a description of the characteristics of the research, characteristics of the researchers, characteristics of potential user groups and characteristics of the modes of dissemination or linkage. In a recent work, Cross *et al* (2000) provided a modification of the Weiss framework. They argued for a different ordering of the constituting element of the basic two community template of the Weiss framework and provided additional characteristics to make the model a better analytical instrument. Essentially, the refinement shifts the perspective from utilization to that of relationship between research and policy. This framework provides additional characteristics for the actors in the research-policy interaction, the issue arena, the research parameter and dwells also on the transformation use of scientific knowledge with a view to articulating a functionalist perspective to the analysis of the relationship between research and policy.

In applying this framework to the case study analysis we focused attention on specific research studies carried out by the selected organizations with a view to influencing public policy. The key issues addressed include initiation, motivation and purpose of the research, the calibre of researchers, conduct of the research, linkage mechanisms, the role of policy makers, the findings, dissemination channels and use to which the research results are put. We also carried out in-depth interview of key officials of the research organizations.

3. ASSESSING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY IN RESPECT OF THE SELECTED ORGANIZATIONS

3.1 Nature and Impact of Research-Policy Linkages in NISER

The research conducted in NISER covers various aspects of the Nigerian economy and society. However, for the purpose of the assessment of research-policy linkage the NISER Review of Nigerian Development (NRND) seems to be one of the most appropriate projects which deserve great emphasis. The project commenced in 2000 with the following objectives: (i) regularly profile and review selected performance indicators in various sub-sectors, (ii) serve as a data base and reference point for key policy issues, (iii) identify areas of policy concern from time to time, and (iv) make strategic policy recommendations as input into the development programmes. It covers areas such as agriculture and rural development, science and

technology, economic development, education, physical development, social development and political development. Several indicators were developed to monitor performance in each area.

The project was designed to have a regular component which focuses on the analysis of development in various sectors of the economy using appropriate performance indicators, and a thematic part which deals with a salient issue of general concern in the country. Since its inception, the project has addressed three themes namely; 'The State in Nigerian Development', 'Understanding Poverty in Nigeria' and 'Public Private Partnership in Nigerian Development'. The assessment of the linkage mechanisms is based on the variables presented in Table 1.

A key feature of the NRND project is the high degree of participation by relevant interest groups and agencies. To enrich the knowledge base for the project and thus create a conducive atmosphere for the fulfillment of its aspirations, a participatory approach has been adopted. This is with a view to having extensive cross-fertilization of ideas, evolving genuine ownership, creating awareness among potential beneficiaries, mobilising resources for effective implementation and making the project truly result-oriented. The main elements of this approach include involvement of key institutions at the beginning and subsequent stages of the project and designing a review process that draws input from a broad spectrum of professionals and interest groups.

With regard to the impact of the project, it is important to stress that policy decisions and results of research findings may be difficult to map on a one-to-one basis. For a particular policy decision, it is possible to have inputs from multiplicity of sources and variety of interest groups. No particular individual or group can determine with certainty the weight placed by policy makers on his or her own

Table 1: Assessment of Research-Policy Linkages in NISER

	Linkage Variables	Details in Respect of the NRND Project
1	Source of Initiatives for the Study	Within the organization based on experiences in developed and developing nations and Nigeria's peculiarities.
2	Source(s) of Funding	Internal funds mainly. Dissemination is enhanced with support of collaborators
3	Diversity of Research Personnel and Conduct of Research	Researchers are always drawn from Universities across the country to join their counterparts in NISER. Such resource persons serve as researchers, reviewers and discussants at various stages of the project. Data for the research are obtained from secondary sources and surveys.
4	Mechanisms for interacting with policy makers and users	Some policy advisers and other users are involved as reviewers of research reports and participants in methodology and dissemination workshops.
5	Role of Policy Makers and Users in research initiation, implementation, monitoring and dissemination	The various government agencies and ministries where data are collected for the studies are invited to send representatives to the methodology and dissemination workshops and to provide inputs into further research directions. They are to suggest issues and indicators to be included or excluded from future studies and share their views with researchers about the current findings.

input. In assessing the impact of the NRND, we undertake a content analysis of the responses of the key organizations who are recipients of the NRND publications. The relevant responses are summarized in Table 2. By and large key government agencies and other users found the publications very valuable and promised to make appropriate use of the contents. This is an indication that the research has a positive impact on the users.

Table 2: Perception of the Impact of NRND Research Output

ORGANIZATION	REMARKS	
	2000	2001/2002
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	"You may be glad to know that we found the publication very useful indeed."	"I have taken time to read.... the opening chapter ....together with the chapter on conclusions and policy perspectives. This provides useful prescription which cannot be ignored." I am confident that your exertions would enhance the Ministry's role in the implementation of the nation's development agenda....."
Federal Ministry of Environment		"I feel highly honoured and am grateful for the copy of the NISER Review of Nigerian Development. This publication will certainly be useful as a reference book to me."
World Bank Office, Abuja		"The findings and recommendations in this publication will be very valuable for the planning and implementation of our poverty reduction interventions in Nigeria."
Office of the AGF, Federal Ministry of Finance	"The publication will assist a great deal in policy deliberations."	"There is no doubt your publications over the years have been of immense benefit to policy formulators and this one will surely not be an exception. I assure you that this office will optimize the use of it."
UNICEF		"It will certainly be a good reference material for our programming."

Centre for Management Development (CMD)		"The donated material is of inestimable value to our organization. It would be much appreciated if four additional copies could be sent to us to enrich our Library collection......."
Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation		"The various chapters of the book will certainly be most helpful in policy decisions and other deliberations."
ILO		"In view of the importance and relevance of the issues treated in the book we wish to request for four additional copies of the publication........."
CBN	"The book appears very rich with information. Please oblige me with an additional copy."	"It is very thoughtful of you to send the publication to me and I quite appreciate the kind gesture. The book will no doubt make interesting reading and will be of immense benefit to us in the Bank."
UNDP	"We congratulate you for this outstanding output and would like you to please send additional copies for the UNDP."	
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (SENATE)	"I have gone through the areas of focus and I am highly impressed by the scope and exhaustive nature of the discussion......... No doubt our country and indeed all policy makers will find this latest effort by NISER indispensable...Your publication is important in our quest for a proper understanding of our situation....."	
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES)	"We are delighted to note the issues raised in the publication and sincerely hope to make use of the contents at all times and appropriately."	
Federal Ministry of Finance	"The publication is not only invaluable to us but is of	

	immense research value. We are therefore, requesting for two (2) additional copies for use in the Ministry's Library..."	
Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation (Office of the Permanent Secretary)	"I am also to convey her sincere and deep appreciation for your kind gesture and assure you that the publication will certainly be put to good use."	

3. 2 Nature of Research-Policy Linkages in NIPSS

As noted earlier, NIPSS records show that the Research Department had not carried out a departmental research activity for up to 10 years. In 2003 the Institute secured the support of the office of the Vice President to conduct a study on Foreign Direct Investment in Nigeria. The project was to be finalized at the end of the year. The objective of the project was to establish and document the exact nature, trend and country of origin of FDI in Nigeria since May 1999. The fieldwork had been completed and a mid-term report submitted. Table 3 presents a summary of the assessment of the linkage mechanisms in NIPSS in respect of this study.

Table 3: Assessment of Research-Policy Linkages in NIPSS

	Linkage Variables	Details in Respect of the Study on Foreign Direct Investment
1	Source of Initiatives for the Study	NIPSS Research Department
2	Source(s) of Funding	Funds secured from the Office of the Vice President
3	Diversity of Research Personnel and Conduct of Research	Survey, Library research and Workshops involving NIPSS Researchers, Office of the Vice President and other relevant Ministries.
4	Mechanisms for interacting with policy makers and users	Workshop for stakeholders
5	Role of Policy Makers and Users in research initiation, implementation, monitoring and dissemination	Personnel from the Office of the Vice Presidents joined the research team.
6	Impact (Use of Results)	The study has not been finalized (as at the first quarter of 2004) due to non-release of funds.

3.3 Nature of Research-Policy Linkages in CASS

To examine the nature of research-policy linkages in CASS we considered three recently concluded research projects. The attempt was to unravel the linkage mechanisms associated with the motivation, execution, dissemination and utilization of the research. They are (i) Democracy and Development in the Niger Delta (Pilot Survey), (ii) Oil and Gas Exploitation, Agriculture and Environment in the Niger Delta Region, and (iii) Women and Development in the Niger Delta. The studies were conducted between 2003 and 2004. They were initiated by CASS with the aim of generating scientifically determined factors necessary and sufficient for aiding public policy formulation and management particularly in respect of the Niger Delta where appreciable

development has not been realized over the years. In examining the linkage of these studies with policy, we employed four variables namely, (i) the source of the initiatives for the study, (ii) source of funding, (iii) research personnel, (iv) linkage mechanisms with policy makers and users, (v) role of policy makers in research initiation, implementation, monitoring and dissemination and (vi) impact on policy articulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Assessment of Research-Policy Linkages in CASS

	Linkage Variables	Details in Respect of the Studies Considered
1	Source of Initiatives for the Study	Only within the organization
2	Source(s) of Funding	Funds mobilized by the organization
3	Diversity of Research Personnel and Conduct of Research	Researchers were assembled by the organization. No representatives from the side of users
4	Mechanisms for interacting with policy makers and users	Not explicit
5	Role of Policy Makers and Users in research initiation, implementation, monitoring and dissemination	Not explicit
6	Impact (Use of Results)	Not explicit

3.4 Nature of Research-Policy Linkages in DPC

The consideration of the research-policy linkages in DPC is based on the "Ijebu-Ode Research on City Consultations on Poverty Reduction". The project was implemented between 1999 and 2003 but follow up activities are still on-going. The success of traditional institutions in various communities in providing community services such as construction of palaces, schools and maternity centres whereas the various tiers of government have failed to provide basic amenities for the masses of the people served as the main motivation for the project. The DPC worked with the Urban Management Programme (UMP) which had already developed the city consultation tool for mobilizing all stakeholders in a city to identify problems and together find appropriate solutions through consensus. The DPC approached the UMP who was favourably disposed to committing funds to the project. The objectives of the project include the following. (i) conduct a city profile to establish the incidence of poverty in the city, identify the power groups and existing opportunities, (ii) mobilize the people through mini-city consultations, (iii) conduct a city consultation for people to reason and reach a consensus on the problem of poverty and the appropriate solutions, (iv) draw an action plan to combat poverty and (v) disseminate the findings. Applying the 6 variables for the assessment of the linkages between the research and policy as well as interactions with users we found that this study exhibits interesting characteristics which indeed commend it for consideration as "best practice" especially on the basis of the inherent innovations and utilization of the outcomes. The details are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Assessment of Research-Policy Linkages in DPC

	Linkage Variables	Details in Respect of the Study Considered
1	Source of Initiatives for the Study	The initiation started within DPC but the support of Ijebu-Ode city authorities, National Planning Commission, Gun State government, Urban Management Programme Regional Office for Africa (UMP-ROAD) and UN-Habitat were sought.
2	Source(s) of Funding	From inception to the inauguration of the implementation committee, the UMP-ROAD provided funding to the tune of $35,000. The implementation of the Action Plan has been financed by donations (_15 million) from indigenes and a _15 million loan from NAPE.
3	Diversity of Research Personnel and Conduct of Research	In conducting the research, all the critical stakeholders - the traditional authorities and local government were intimated with the process. Local consultants were commissioned to carry out the research and prepare city profile. DPC mobilized all groups through mini-consultations in situ (i.e. at meetings of societies, trade groups, artisans etc.). A three day city consultation was held where local experts presented papers on the Ijebu-Ode poverty situation as well as the local resources available. Thereafter, an Action Plan was fashioned out and adopted. A committee made up of representatives of all stakeholders was put up to implement the plan. The committee then mobilized funds from indigenes and commenced the implementation of the plan.
4	Linkage Mechanisms (and mode of interaction with policy makers and users)	The project initially started with UMP-ROAD, DPC and the community. The state government, National Planning Commission and several development partners including UNDP, ILO and embassies became part of the process before and after the implementation committee was inaugurated.
5	Role of Policy Makers and Users in research initiation, implementation, monitoring and dissemination	Policy makers were involved in the initiation of the research. But they provided funds for the implementation of the research. The local government, state government and NAPE provided funds for the implementation of the Action Plan. They were not involved in monitoring except that NAPE came to inspect what was on the ground before advancing the loan it gave. They were not also involved in the dissemination.
6	Impact (Use of Results)	The outcome of the research was the Action Plan whose implementation is still on-going. Other cities in Gun state and Acad. state have gone to Ijebu-Ode to learn from their experiences. Over 3,000 people have been trained in various small-scale enterprises and book keeping and they have been granted loans to establish. Experiences gained in the project are being tested in similar projects in Manna in Nigeria as well as Tema and Tamale cities in Ghana.

Indeed, the project has been put up for best practice competition. In the UMP-ROAD, it was adjudged a "best practice" in 2002. At a global competition in Dubai in the same year, it came 11th. The main constraint is that funds have not come from donors to implement the Action Plan.

4. TOWARDS EFFECTIVE LINKAGES BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY IN NIGERIA

For effective linkage between research and public policy in the country the weak links in the system have to be identified and remedial measures prescribed. This is the challenge of this section. First, we present the pitfalls in the research policy nexus and thereafter we proffer some suggestions.

4.1 Pitfalls in the Research Policy Nexus

(a) Unhealthy Competition Between In-house Research Outfits and Statutory Research Organizations

The existence of in-house policy research framework should not be confused with the essence of autonomous policy-oriented research outfit whose services should feed back into the policy process. The reasons for their distinct existence and activities are not far fetched. They include the following.

- Limited skills of civil servants who operate under the 'in-house' research framework
- Undesirable distractions from service mandates
- The coverage that time will allow is very narrow
- The bureaucratic principles and actions underlying in-house research by civil servants are apt to jeopardize the thoroughness and timeliness required of research output delivery.
- At best, civil service and research service should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Any attempt to merge responsibilities will lead to the destruction of the coin. In other words, the attempt will diminish from the quality of research input into policy making.
- In-house motivated and conducted research works may be afflicted with political discolouration and thus be seen by citizens as working to the answer.
- Results of such studies that are totally of in-house design and execution may not be presented in a critical and useful manner to warrant meaningful application
- With excessive dogmatism, the research framework will lose credibility leading to unpopularity of government and its policies.
- Total reliance on in-house research capacity will spell doom for engagement between government and international development partners. Without inputs from think tanks within the country, the engagement process will be thoroughly weakened thus exacerbating the vulnerability of the economy to external economic evasion and suppression. In the circumstance, the economy will be operating in the interest of external agents rather than that of the citizens. Clearly, the consequences on political stability will be adverse.
- The supplier of research information may be more receptive while dealing with research experts than civil servants. This is due in part to unsavoury political actions and performance of the government which is likely to be considered unsatisfactory by them.
- Relying on think tanks will reduce the dependence on foreign experts which is not only expensive but may lead to the infusion of subversive interests.
- Experiences all the world over acknowledge the need, relevance and strategic roles of policy-oriented research institutions. What is being increasingly canvassed in recent times is fostering and strengthening of linkages between such institutions and policy makers.

In Nigeria, however, the problem is that there is an unhealthy competition between the two research communities. They compete for research funds, policy ideas and recognition at the corridor of power.

In the absence of proper coordination, it has been difficult to ensure that the research findings form the basis of key policy decisions.

(b) Policy Initiation Gap

At the end of research projects policy recommendations are made. But what we find is that there is no one to take the initiative to take appropriate actions to articulate policies along the line of the suggestions made by the researchers. This gap exists even when the research findings and policy recommendations are conveyed directly to policy makers and advisers. There is no one charged with the responsibility of taking the initiative to embark on implementation of research recommendations. One of the respondents has this to say about the matter:

> "I'll give you an example. Last year I sought audience with the Presidency to present the findings of some research on all aspects relating to water utilization in the country - such as water for drinking, irrigation, transportation, industrial use, use in the health sector and so forth. At the middle of the presentation we were asked to stop and to repeat the presentation the following week when the relevant Ministers and policy advisers would be invited to be in attendance. This was done. But up till now, none of the policy recommendations has been addressed despite the relevance and potential utility. This is because no one is ready to take responsibility to initiate necessary actions to implement the suggestions. This is frustrating."

The lack of follow up is probably due to the misperception by the authorities concerned that such a step is diversionary and is not likely to yield immediate benefits to policy actors.

(c) Policy Confusion And Uncertainties

The delay in the non-release of budgeted funds and lack of commitment to proper funding of research funds cannot be totally due to lack of funds as it is often claimed. Sometimes it is due mainly to what can be regarded as confusion in the policy arena. One of the respondents querried: "How can we agree on the implementation of a project with well thought-out procedures for funding and suddenly funds are withheld even when the project is about 75% completed simply on account of an observation raised by an individual?" Usually the individual does not fully understand the considerations guiding the approval and implementation of the project. Invariably, funding of projects can be stalled on the basis of the flimsiest of excuses by egocentric commentators.

(d) Poor Culture of Policy Development

The perception of policy development by leaders is often disjointed and nebulous leading to dysfunctional policy actions and lack of progress. There is no systematic follow up of policy actions and reactions. Typically policy changes are based on after thoughts, uncoordinated inferences from developments in the policy arena and individual preferences. Policy initiators, monitors and evaluators work at cross purposes. The knowledge base for meaningful policy articulation is being discountenanced and continually destroyed. Many leaders prefer to keep genuine policy recommendations at the background while actively investing huge resources in search of myriads of policy ideas that will enable them maximize personal gains in the course of implementing public programmes. In the process, existing institutional arrangements are sidelined while individuals who are likely to be easily manipulated are engaged as consultants. Invariably, the output is usually more of a reflection of individual idiosyncracies rather than genuine concern for the welfare of the people. This practice often leads to unending conflict between personal and public interests and it is therefore, a major source of policy instability in the country.

(e) Inadequate Linkage Mechanisms

The only aspect of the linkage between research and policy which research organizations sometimes address is dissemination of findings. Nonetheless, it is not possible at all times to involve the policy makers in dissemination seminars and workshops due to resource limitations. Thus, dissemination workshops seems not to have achieved the desired objectives in terms of sensitizing policy makers and inducing them to take appropriate actions. Usually, the priority placed on the attendance of such workshops by policy makers is always very low. This therefore, affects the frequency of attendance and the calibre of representatives at such

workshops. Invariably, the information obtained is often treated with levity or ignored totally. A more serious problem is that there is no rallying point for the crystallization of the research ideas before the commencement of the research. This is a major gap. In general, the researchers behave as if they have a monopoly of problem identification while policy makers appear to claim monopoly of solutions. At the end, both parties lose and the people are unable to derive the benefits of research and policy actions.

4.2 Suggestions for Improved Linkage Between Research and Policy

(a)   **Give priority to research funding**. The Federal Government should increase its financial provision for research funding through the annual budgetary allocations. On the part of the Think Tanks, it should be possible for some of them to establish a Research Trust Fund which they can invest in a very reliable manner. The proceeds of such investment can be used as the need arises to supplement annual budgetary releases from the government.

(2)   **Establish a network of public policy research organizations**. There should be a network of Think Tanks that will operate jointly to influence policy decision making by making useful contributions at the appropriate time. By pooling resources (human, financial and others) it should be possible for them to expand the coverage of their studies, operate rapidly as the situation may warrant and provide formidable and dispassionate policy options that will be respected by policy makers.

(c)   **Ensure that research is demand driven**. The National Planning Commission should collate research studies annually from different ministries, identify suitable research institutions and together with the relevant ministries design mechanisms for joint implementation. Besides, the government should demand for a minimum contribution from each of the Think Tanks on an annual basis. This will ensure that each of them has something to show for the funds allocated to them. Rather than creating parallel research groups, the Think Tanks should be challenged from time to time and be required to make necessary inputs to vital policy questions which the government wants to resolve. Of course, their views which should be a product of in-depth research may pass through a caustic review process until the most appropriate option is found.

(d)   **Establish feed back mechanisms between research institutions and policy makers.** Abrupt and frequent reversal of policies can be avoided if the government provides a framework for involving the Think Tanks in the review and evaluation of policies. The results of such monitoring and evaluation should be a pointer to the appropriate direction if a change in policy is contemplated by the government.

(e)   **Provide adequate research infrastructure**. The research organizations should operate in an environment that is conducive for meaningful intellectual engagement. They should have modern computer networks and full internet connectivity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In Nigeria the tendency for the research and policy communities to be working at cross purposes is growing. There is need to strengthen the linkage between research and public policy in order to minimize policy inconsistencies, confusion and instability which are the bane of development in the country.

A proper linkage will (i) minimize the resources currently being incurred in seeking out policy ideas from numerous sources, (ii) streamline and re-direct the focus of public policies from serving the whims and caprices of individuals and interest groups to satisfying the needs and welfare of the populace in general and (iii) encourage the research institutes to fulfill their mandates and enhance their performance. To enhance the policy relevance and utilization of research findings, interactions between policy makers and researchers should begin right from the initiation of the research through the review stage to finalization and dissemination.

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