



Politics of Government Budgeting: The Nigerian Perspective

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Abstract: *Government budgeting is apportioning of the funds or financial resources to satisfy the numerous desires of the citizenry. This important government activity is often articulated annually in a document captioned 'the budget'. Although there are laid down frameworks of government budgeting, there are also crucial activities associated with government budgeting which though not manifest but to a great extent shape and influence the quality of budget outcomes. These human and behavioral aspects of the budget are termed politics of government budgeting. Proper understanding of the politics of government budget is crucial for appreciating the full import of the budget. This article examines the relationship between politics and budgeting. It highlights the features of the environment of government budgeting in Nigeria and how they affect the budgeting process. Finally, and most importantly, it examines the various political strategies adopted by key actors and how these influence government budgeting.*

Key Words: *Politics, Government Budgeting, Political Strategies, Nigerian Perspective, Ecology of Budgeting, Recurrent and Capital Expenditure and Budget Cycle*

INTRODUCTION

Budget imbroglio and impasse is one of the many challenges facing Nigeria democracy since her transition back to civil rule in May 29, 1999. Since 2000, the polity has witnessed conflicts between the Legislature and the executive over budget matters. While the Public choice thesis tends to portray the former greedy and selfish politicians who waste public resources on themselves and their constituencies and promote party interest and parochial interests and not national interests. On the other hand, the lawmakers posited latter, do not understand the needs of their constituents because they are appointees and not elected ones. This is predicated on the hunch that the National Assembly is largely made up of elected members chosen by their constituents. As a result of this assumption, they are logically and better placed closer to the people and understand the needs of the populace. Onah (1998:54) summarized the factors militating against effective budget preparation, implementation and evaluation to include changes in government policies during budget preparation, basing allocation on previous year's estimates and not on actual performances; insufficient involvement of heads of department in budget preparation, political influence and corruption among office holders.

In recognition of the prime place occupied by budgets in the management of national resources, many sections of the 1999 Constitution have elaborated proposal for estimating preparation, implementation and control. These provisions notwithstanding, large discrepancies between revenue estimates and actual receipts exist, exhibit inability to keep to the budget time-table. In view of this, the general objective of the study is to examine the linkage between government budgetary and its ecology, especially its political

environment. This is imperative because of the organic relationships among the budgetary process and its environment that shapes it.

Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs. Good governance which is now of global concern demands prudent management of scarce resources for the provision of goods and services for the citizenry. In Third World countries where financial resources are grossly insufficient, the need for careful and planned resource administration becomes imperative. This is the role which government budget plays. It is the apportioning of funds or financial resources to satisfy the numerous and sometimes conflicting desires of men/women in the polity, that is the pre-occupation of government budgeting.

Human desires and preferences are varied. In this regard, Wildavsky (1964:5) posits that "human nature is never more evident than when men are struggling to gain a larger share of funds or to apportion what they have among myriad claimants". A lot of processes are involved in apportioning the limited financial resources to cater for the numerous needs of individuals and groups in the polity. Oftentimes, the process requires adhering to the laid down framework of government budgeting. However, sometimes the processes transcend the known and documented to informal and even covert activities. At this juncture, politics takes the stage in the budgeting process.

The politics of government budgeting emphasizes the human and behavioral aspects of the budget. It is specifically concerned with answering the question, who gets what, how, when and why of government financial resources? It is through the budget mechanism that state actors decide on relevant ways to effectively extract and reallocate resources from the society. The capacity of the state to aggregate diverse preferences and address distributive conflicts among other activities determine the outcome of the budget.

Following the introductory remarks is the examination of the literature on the interrelationship between politics and budget. The next section addresses the objectives and scientific contributions of the study. The third part explores the ecology of government budgeting. The budgeting process and cycle and legal framework for the budgeting were examined following the section on the ecology of budgeting. The final section concludes the paper.

Goals and Scientific Contribution of the Study

Consequently, to fully understand the import of the budget, it is necessary to equally identify and analyze not only the variables related to the outcomes of the budget process but also the factors that shape and influence the quality of those outcomes. This is the politics of the budgetary process. Budget management is not just a technocratic process but also a political one. Against this backdrop, this article analyzes the effects of the environment and political actors on budget outcomes with a focus on Nigeria. Specifically, it:

- Examines the interrelationship between politics and budgeting;
- Highlights the features of the environment of government budgeting in Nigeria and their effects on budgeting;
- Explains the process of government budgeting in Nigeria; and
- Examines the various political strategies adopted by key actors in government budgeting.

In view of the above, the scientific contribution includes that the recommendations of this study will assist the National Assembly, the budget office and other stakeholders in the budgetary process. It will also contribute to existing body of literature in public finance and related disciplines.

Politics – Budget Interrelation

A lucid discussion and proper understanding of the politics of government budgeting requires the explication of the concepts of 'politics' and 'budget'. The concept of politics has been so widely used and even jargonized that it is often associated with any behavior/statement that appears dubious and aimed at maneuvering a situation to gain advantage over another. However, from scholarly and narrow perspectives, some definitions deserve our attention. Wikipedia defines the concept as the study or practice of the distribution of power and resources within a given community. The Free Dictionary equally presents politics as "the art or science of government or governing, especially the governing of a political entity, such as a nation and the administration and control of its internal and external affairs. For the purpose of this paper, the classical definitions of politics as "who gets what, when and how" (Lasswell) and "authoritative allocation of values for the society" (Easton) appear most apt. In summary, politics refers to all the processes whereby a society and various groups within it use the government to attain certain goals and values for the society which often involves the allocation and distribution of resources.

The word budget denotes many kinds of statements of future plans and expectations, varying enormously in their form and content, the uses to which they are put and even in their names. The various terminologies associated with the budget include 'programme', 'forecasts' and 'estimate'. It has also been variously defined (Chikeleze, 2002; Edwards et al, 1959; Schick, 1966; Okogu, 2011) and can be viewed from different perspectives depending on the orientation or interest of the actor.

In this regard, Smith and Lynch (2004:37) describe public budgeting through four perspectives. For the politician, the budget process is "a political arena for political advantage". The authors then synthesize their analysis into what can be considered an operational definition (Wikipedia).

A budget is a plan for the accomplishment of programmes related to objectives and goals within a definite time period including an estimate of resources required together with an estimate of resources available, usually compared with one or more past periods and showing future requirements.

Halidu (1994) cited in Ocheni et al (2013) gives an encompassing definition of the budget as:

A conscious and systematic allocation of resources prepared in advance, relating to a future period and based on a forecast of key variables adopted to achieve certain policy objectives, which may or may not set explicit performance targets for the achievement of objectives, relates anticipated expenditure to anticipated revenue and forms the bases against which the actual expenditure and revenue can be measured and controlled.

Arising from these definitions of the budget is the fact that it is a plan to determine which resources will be allocated towards the attainment of a given objective (or value) articulated in financial terms. It is a critical mechanism by which state actors decide on relevant ways to effectively extract and re-allocate resources from society. Budget is the sum total of the aspirations, values, social and economic policies, and services of government.

The budget process comes to grips with the big question of politics; who gets how much, for what purpose and who pays? Budgets determine the proportion of national resources that go to the various sectors of the economy, public priorities, the goals and objectives of thousands of programmes and projects and the claims that various groups in the society make on the public purse. An analysis of the budget processes seeks to understand the capacity of the state to aggregate diverse preferences, address distributive conflicts, enforce contracts over time and remain accountable to the will of the people. Here lies the interrelation between politics and budget.

Budgeting therefore has become one of the chief decision-making systems. While many major policy decisions are made outside of the budget process, virtually every decision entails budgetary consideration. As a result of the dearth of resources which is often a major constraint on government, every policy making takes place under the umbrella of fiscal constraints. The key issues or questions that policy makers raise are, "what shall we do?" and "can we afford it?". The budget is a financial and political plan designed to provide answers to these questions. It is against this backdrop that Wildavsky noted in a seminal paper back in 1961 that "perhaps the study of budgeting is just another expression for the study of politics (Wildavsky, 1961:190).

In view of the above, it is necessary to understand the environmental dynamics that affect and influence the process, procedure, forms and output of budgets in Nigeria. That is, there are critical factors that are important determinants in budgeting. Therefore, the thrust and purpose of our discussion on environmental variables and budgetary process is to show the link or the relationships, which exist between budget initiation, formulation implementation and its environment. It means the symbiotic relationships between budgeting and its environment in terms of content, implementation, performance and service delivery. Supporting the above view, McCurdy (1977:298); adds that out of this realization comes a theory called ecology of public administration, which holds that any public organization must conform to social, economic and political environments, or suffer by extension. McCurdy (1977:298); means that budget formulation and implementation must tolerate, accommodate and take cognizance of its social, economic and political environments for it to succeed because the environment must have an impact on its effectiveness, efficiency and performance. No doubt, the impact may be positive or negative, depending on the administrative capability and ability to adjust to the environmental demands.

The Environments of Government Budgeting

The projection of the environment as a basis for examining and understanding of the operations of political and administrative systems has gained currency. Reasoning along this line, Khatz and Khan (1978) posit that in order to fully understand human organizations, they must be viewed as open systems in which

transactions occur between the organization and its environment. On a similar note, Heady (1979:64) argues that:

Bureaucracies as well as other political and administrative institutions can be better understood if the surrounding conditions, influences and forces that shape and modify them are identified and ranked by the extent possible in order of relative importance; and institutions in the environment are also explored.

It is therefore crucial to examine the environment of government budgeting with a view of determining its effect on the politics of government budgeting in Nigeria.

The environment of government budgeting can be broadly grouped into political, economic and social. These if unfavorable, impose severe constraints on what the participants in the budgetary process can do. On the other hand, where these components of the environment are conducive, they become liberating factors and enhance effective budgeting.

McCurdy (1977:298), emphasizing the importance of environmental variables in the understanding of the operation and effectiveness of budgeting and environment, concludes, the discovery that local conditions have an enormous impact on opportunities for administrative (budget) reforms. It means that the budgetary process is not operating in a vacuum. It exists and operates in a system or environment, which determines the content, purpose and direction of government budgets. Simply put, environment and budgeting process have tremendous impact on each other, or there is interaction between the environment and budget formulation and implementation. As a result of this, subsequent sections will be devoted to selected linkages.

The Political Environment

It is necessary to mention some component parts of the political environment. The list includes the legislative arm of the government which charged with the responsibility of law making. The legislators are accredited representatives of different constituencies, with political promises. These promises act as pressures on the legislators to influence policy content, policy direction and policy output positively or negatively.

Next in the list of essential components of the political environment is the party system. This as to do with whether it is a one-party, two-party, and three-party or multi party system. The party system will present the issue of political manifestoes and ideological divides and leanings of the society and that of the major political actors. The critical issues of ideological divides and the party are primary and paramount in the policy determination of the government and capital.

The central thing in party influence in the budget is that of ensuring that budgetary financial polices accommodate their party manifestoes and electoral promises, especially those of economic policies. The result of power play by the political parties may induce public administrators to provide and allocate funds by fiat instead of by rational allocation of funds to achieve maximum benefit with minimum resources.

Next in the list of the political environment are the pressure and interest groups. These will include, among other groups, labour, industrial unions, student union governments, market unions and organizations and other trade unions. These pressure and interest groups may adopt the strategy of strikes, demonstrations, propaganda, protests, lobbying and political support to twist the hands and policies of the budget officers and formulators basically to ensure adequate provision, allocation and representation of their interests in the national budget. The effect of the influence of the pressure and interest groups in the budget formulation and implementation may be positive or negative, depending on the extent to which the budget formulators accommodated or/and departed from the merit principle and rationality in the allocation of funds.

Finally, in the list of the political environment, is the structure and form of government; for example, unitary, federal, confederal, forms of government, as well as presidential and parliamentary systems of government. All these forms and structures of government have different degrees of pressures and influences on statecraft and public administration because of conflicts and competitions, merits and demerits associated with these forms and structures of government.

- The nature of government in power is a factor that influences government budgeting. In a democratic system as in the present dispensation in Nigeria; public opinions that highlight the needs of the people are freely expressed and listened to. Pressure groups, communities and their representatives press their opinions on the budgetary process. This system demands public enlightenment on the budgeting process and therefore, generates high politics as a result of legislative debates, budget briefs and reactions from civil society organizations, among others. In military/autocratic regime, there may be no room for public opinion. The often combined legislative and executive bodies' (for

instance the Supreme Military Council in Nigeria) process and pass the budget. This generates minimal politics during budgeting.

- The nature of political power sharing in the polity also influences government budgeting. Party loyalty predominates in democratic systems of government. Consequently, if there is a single dominant party (as was the case in Nigeria before the emergence of All Progressive Congress [APC]), debates on appropriation bill are smooth and fast. But in a multi-party system with a number of parties with strong representation, debates are hot with each party trying to supersede in tilting the budget to its advantage. Under this circumstance, the politics of budgeting becomes intense.

Government business is carried out jointly by the three arms of government – Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. Consequently,

- The nature of the relationship between the arms of government becomes an important factor in government budgeting. If the relationship among these three arms is cordial, the budgetary process is smooth and hitch-free. But where there is conflict, especially between the Executive and Legislature, the budgetary process suffers delay as a result of fault finding, queries and other legislative actions that may frustrate the appropriation of fund by the executive. We can recall when in 2014 the APC advised its members in the National Assembly to bloc all executive bills.

Economic Environment:

The Budget and its economic system interact and influence each other in a positive or negative direction depending on situation, time and place, because economy is the Sub-structure upon which the budget is rested. It means that the economy is the pillar that carries the entire system, including budgeting. A favorable economic environment is characterized by a good tax system, rate system, short payback periods, stable economy, and low rate of unemployment, low poverty level, high savings and investment rates.

Therefore, a favorable economic condition will make government budget formulation and implementation easier, as well as have fertile ground or fewer difficulties in achieving such budget objectives. For example, at the recent public presentation of the 2014 proposal, the Finance Minister and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala reassured Nigerians of the proper implementation of the power sector reforms, Agriculture Transformation Agenda, job creation and improvement of dilapidated infrastructure across the nation. Through the minister of works, the federal government specifically promised that Ore-Benin, Abuja Lokoja roads would be completed before April and that work on the second Niger Bridge would commence during the year but expressed fears over the huge recurrent expenditure captured in this year's estimates.

She told the audience that the 2014 budget envisaged net collectible revenue of N7.50 trillion; stressing that N3.73 trillion of the expected collectively revenue would be used to fund the 2014 budget, which focuses on boosting job creation and inductive growth. According to her, "The budget has been underpinned by the parameter of oil benchmark of 2.39 million barrels per day compared to 2.53 million barrels per day in 2013" (Eme and Onyishi, 2013:6).

The minister stated that the budget was anchored on a benchmark oil price of \$77.5 per barrel. The exchange rate is expected to remain stable at N160 per dollar while the economy is expected to grow at 6.75 percent within the budget period against the 6.50 percent of 2013. She announced that gross oil revenue for the period would be N6.814 trillion against the N7.734 trillion of 2013 while projected gross non-oil revenue would be N3.288 trillion much less than the N3.307 trillion of the previous year. Based on the above, the minister stated that out of the revenue profile, the sum of N3.288 trillion has been set aside to fund the 2014 budget for the year. She said the figure represented a 9 percent reduction from the N4.1 trillion in 2013 and reflected a total of expenditure of N4.64 trillion, representing about 7 percent reduction from the N4.99 trillion budgeted in 2013. A breakdown of the budget indicate that N399 billion has been set aside for statutory transfer, N712 billion for debt servicing, N2.41 trillion recurrent non-debt expenditure and N1.25 trillion for capital expenditure (Eme, et al., 2014:173).

The platform on which the budget rests which is the government fiscal policy envisages oil production capacity of 2.388 million barrels per day which unfortunately is less than the 2.53 million barrels proposed in the 2013 fiscal year. Projected gross oil revenue of N6.814 trillion is also less than the provision of N7.734 trillion of the 2013 fiscal year. The implication is a decline in oil revenue accruable to the Federation Account this fiscal year. This leaves us with nothing but an aggregated spending of N4.643 trillion in the proposed budget. The N4.643 trillion represents 6.9 percent decline from the provisions in the appropriation act of

2013 as amended. It is also less than the 2012 act by 4.4 percent hence the lowest in the last three years (Eme, et al, 2014:174).

Analysts believe that government position on this is understandable considering the production losses due to high rate of vandalism and theft at the creeks of the Niger Delta. In 2013, government expressed serious concern over pipeline vandalism and theft of crude at the creeks and its inability to stem the tide. Again its position may not be conservative enough as global dynamics of oil and gas market seems to favour new discoveries of shale oil and other alternatives.

Generally speaking, the budget objectives of Nigeria will include, among other things:

- a. To stimulate agricultural development, diversification of the productive base of the economy through enhanced capacity utilization in industry, and increased agricultural productivity.
- b. Promotion of sustainable economic growth through the achievement of macro-economic exchange rates and fiscal stability as well as prudent monetary policies.
- c. Raising income levels and unemployment through enhanced economic growth and vigorous implementation of poverty alleviation programmes.
- d. Facilitate private sector led growth through the creation of appropriate enabling environment, institutions, and policies as well as legal and regulatory frameworks (Eme, et.al, 2014:176).

Writing on the impact of economic condition on the nature of policy output (Dye, 1966:33), provides substantial evidence that the level of economic development within a jurisdiction affects the nature of policy output from its administrative system. A close study (Dye, 1996), reveals that high level of performance by the budgetary process is generally associated with good economic condition of the place, whereas in an austere or depressed economy or when the economic environment is favorable, there is little doubt that budget formation and implementation will fail to achieve its objectives. Hence, the impact of a depressed budget attainment of its objectives will be negative or low.

Sharkansky (1968:9) maintains that the administration in poor states may tax their citizens with unusual severity to provide the demanded level of services.

The state of the economy also influences the budgetary process a great deal. If the economy is in a state of depression, there is always stringent resources allocation to ministries, and extra ministerial agencies. This stringent allocation leaves them with less than adequate resources for the execution of their proposed projects.

On the other hand, if the economy is in a boom, budgets are buoyant and departments and agencies have greater chances of having a good portion of their demands met. In summary, the overall resources available to government for distribution through the budget strongly influence the attitude and disposition of the players and of course the intensity or otherwise of the politics of government budgeting.

The general level of poverty in the country is another economic environmental factor that affects the budgetary process. In Third World countries like Nigeria where there is prevalence of poverty, the pressure on the governments through the agencies to provide services is high. The private sector which would ordinarily complement government efforts in services delivery is equally weak. Consequently, there is competition and lobbying by operating agencies for higher allocations to enable them service their clients adequately. One may therefore conclude that the economy offers a set of material resources that either provides the wherewithal or imposes limits for administrators or budget actors to operate.

Social Environment

Government budgeting takes place within a social system made up of groups which are engaged in continuous competition, with government institutions presiding over as umpires (e.g. interest groups, religious groups, community based organizations, etc.). Government decisions (including budgets) can therefore be seen as resulting from the interplay of demands and objections of interest groups on government institutions for the satisfaction of their various needs through services. The nature of interrelationship among groups affects the budgetary process.

The nature of group dynamics becomes all the more important in multiethnic and multi-religious society as epitomized by Nigeria, where national issues are often perceived and analyzed from sectional/group perspective rather than from objective point of view. In this type of environment, various political strategies are brought to bear by the different groups to promote their interests and secure their needs through the budget.

Legal Environment:

The Nigerian administration and budgeting process is not operating or existing in a vacuum. It exists and operates according to rules, regulations, laws, bye-laws, the constitution and a judicial system of the place, by which it is formulated and implemented. For example, budget estimates transform from budgets estimates to budget when they fulfill all the legal requirements. It means that the budget officers are guided and influenced by the legal environment. In this list of legal requirements, we have the following; the constitution is the supreme and the fundamental law of the land. For example, according to the 1999 Constitution, under sections 119, the President/Governor shall cause to be prepared and laid before the House of Assembly, not later than 60 days before the expiration of each financial year, estimates of the revenue and expenditure of the state for the following year.

Finance Control and Management Act 1954 posits that the minister has cause to be prepared in each financial year, estimates of the receipts and expenditures in respect of the development fund for the next following financial year, which shall be laid before the House of Representatives. Financial Instructions and Financial Memoranda offers the budget officers as a matter of necessity to observe all the Rules and Regulations stipulated in the Constitution, Financial (Control and Management) Act to ensure that the budget meets all the necessary conditions of a budget. For example, according to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the economic objectives of Nigeria shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives from which provisions.

1. are made in the constitution:
 - a. Harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy.
 - b. Manage and control the national economy in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice, equality of status and opportunity.
2. The state shall direct its policy towards ensuring
 - a. The promotion of a planned and balanced economic development including the diversification of industries and the dispersal of industrial projects and infrastructural facilities throughout the federation.
 - b. That the material resources of the community are harnessed and distributed equitably and judiciously, to serve the common good of all the people.
 - c. That the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange, in the hands individuals or groups.
 - d. That suitable and adequate shelter, food, water supply, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care, pensions, unemployment and sick benefits and the welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizen.

There is no doubt that if any part of the economic objectives of the federation is violated in the manner the budget is formulated and provided for, the whole content of the budget may be declared null and void and of no effect. Therefore, budget initiators, formulators and executors must not overlook this aspect of the law, to avoid disappointing the nation. Thus, the budget affects the legal environment, just as the legal environment affects the budget.

Section 81 (1) of the 1999 constitution stipulates that:

The president shall cause to be prepared and laid before each House of the National Assembly at any time in each financial year estimates of the revenues and expenditure of the federation for the next following financial year (The Constitution, 1999).

Section 81 (2) requires the president to indicate the heads of expenditure contained in the above estimates (other than expenditure charged upon the consolidated fund for the payment of salaries and allowances of stipulated public officials) in a bill to be called Appropriation Bill providing for the issue from the consolidated revenue fund of the sums required to meet the expenditure and appropriation of those sums for the purpose specified in the bill. 81 (3) empower the president to present the Net Oral Assemble a supplementary appropriation bill showing the sums required when

- a) the amount approved in the appropriation act for any purpose is insufficient or
- b) a need has answer for expenditure for a purpose which no amount has been approved in the appropriation act (Onuoha, 2004:38).

The 1999 constitution did not give any time frame or limit as to where the National Assembly should finish its work in the presenter's budget which in turn can be presented "at any time". Section 81(l) of the 1999 Constitution allows the president to present his budget "at any time" before the National Assembly before the beginning of the financial year differ from what operates in the united state of America. The United States of America president is required to present his budget (for the fiscal year that commences 1st October) to the congress. According to the united state constitution the president is expected to present his budget "on or after the first Monday in January but not later than the first Monday in February of each year" (McCormick, 1998: 456).

This means that the United States Congress has about eight months to deliberate and conclude discussion on their president's budget proposals before the commencement of the financial year. Section 80 (4) of the 1999 Constitution states categorical that; no monies shall be withdrawn from the consolidated revenue fund or any other public fund of the federation except in the manner prescribed by the National Assembly.

One significant matter arising from the above provision is what happens to funding if government activities of the National Assembly deliberately delay the passage of the bill especially when there is no legal time limit for the National Assemble to act on the appropriation bill.

Such a question has become necessary in the light of the delays in passing the 2008 Appropriation Bill due to the celebrated disagreement between the president and the National Assembly over what he called "who has the power to do it" budgetary matter.

The Federal Government on Sunday (April 6, 2008) explained why late President Umar Musa Yar'adua has refused to sign the 2008 harmonized budget passed by the National Assembly in the month of March. Government sources said that the president was insisting on the removal of some clauses which the law makers "unilaterally injected" into the budget as they do not fall in line with the government's overall national plan, macroeconomic stability and sector strategies.

Specifically, the late President accused the lawmakers of the under listed;

1. The National Assembly unilaterally provided money for new projects, thereby infringing on the functions of the executive.
2. It raised the revenues bench mark, thereby heading to an increase in deficit from N468 billion under the executive budget proposed to N554 billion.
3. Increase in capital allocations running into billions of naira to ministers for new projects which would amount to waste as the priorities of the executive are different.
4. New vote headstotallingN2.1billion. This is in addition to the allocation of votes to several professional bodies that were never used as previous budgets.
5. Unilateral increase in present costs to some ministers and agencies. Cost jacked up without provision for social cost.
6. Unsolicited overhead costs running into billions of naira to key government ministers.
7. The Presidency considers it undue interference with the executive functions for the law makers to inject a clause that request the Accountant General of the Federation and Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria to furnish the National Assembly with monthly report on performance (as retained in clause 7(2) and.
8. The presidency considers it undue interferences with the executive function for the law makers to inject a clause that request the Accountant General of the Federation to disclose details of funds released to the National Assembly (as retained in clause 7(3).
9. The president considers it undue interference with the executive functions for the law makers to inject a clause that request the accounting officers in the ministries to present quarterly reports on budget performance to the National Assembly (as retained in clause 7(2) and
10. The National Assembly, in initiating and allocating funds for new projects that are not sponsored by the executive, fail to align the budget with the president's overall national plan, macroeconomic stability and sector strategies (Odunuga, 2008: 1 and 4)

The answer to the above question is to be formed in what the constitution calls "authorization of expenditure in default of appropriations.

According to section 82 of the 1999 Constitution:

if Appropriation Bill in respect of any financial year has not been passed into law by the beginning of the financial year; the president may authorize the withdrawal of monies from the consolidated Revenue Fund of

the Federation for the purpose of meeting expenditure necessary to carry on the services of the Government of the Federation for a period not exceeding six months, or until the coming into operation of the Appropriation Act whichever is the earlier, provided that the withdrawal in respect of any such period shall not exceed the amount authorized to be withdrawn from the consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation under the provision of the Appropriation Act passed by the National Assembly for the corresponding period in the immediately preceding financial year; being an amount proportionate to the total amount so authorized for the immediately preceding financial year.

Akinjide, (2000:66) has indicated that the above provision which was lifted word for word from section 76 of the 1979 constitution is to prevent a constitutional crisis similar to the one in Australia in the 1970s “deliberately manufactured by the opposition with the sole objective of bringing down the elected government. The crisis hinges on the inability of the premier to secure approval for his Appropriation Bill as stipulated by law.

Nwabueze (2000:10) has argued that although the constitution did not specifically state so, the National Assembly cannot initiate financial legislation or increase the total amount of the budget beyond what is proposed in the President's appropriation Bill but can only reduce it.

Nwabueze (2000) is of the view that only those who have responsibility of raising money to finance government expenditure should propose such expenditure. If the legislators were forced to propose expenditure they would be competing among themselves to secure as much of public funds as possible for their constituencies and other interests, they represent at the National Assembly. According to him, the members of the national Assembly cannot increase the total amount requested by the presidency in his appropriation Bill because: increase in the total amount partakes of the nature of initiation. The excess amount over and above the total figure in the Appropriation bill must be regarded as having been initiated by the Assembly not the president and is therefore unconstitutional... it is undesirable that such an increase should be permitted when the Assembly is not in a position to source the money to cover it. (Nwabueze, 2000:10).

The position of Nwabueze is supported, for example, by the practice in Great Britain where parliament can refuse or reduce the expenditure proposed by the government but cannot increase it. Haruna (2008:48) adds: ...The explanation for this paradox is that the two arms differ fundamentally over what they consider the proper bill. Whereas the National Assembly considers the aggregate figures it has returned to the presidency as good enough, the presidency disagrees. Between the two, it seems to me that the presidency has propriety and morality on its side. Section 81 of the constitution is unambiguous about how public revenue should be spent. It says, the purpose of each expenditure must be specified. The earlier section, that is section 80, does give the National Assembly the power to prescribe how monies can be withdrawn from public treasury, but the powers are not, and cannot be, absolute. Instead, they are contingent on specifying the terms of expenditure.

From the above the major findings of budget making, implementation and evaluation in Nigeria have the following characteristics:

1. The proposed budgets represent increases or reductions of billions of naira from the budgeted proposals and approved budgets since 1999.
2. Capital expenditure is always projected at figures representing below 27.29 percent of the total budget; and 72 percent represents the balance for recurrent expenditure.
3. The budgets are mainly financed from budgeted revenues and the balance from debt.
4. The budgets that are proposed to focus on Job Creation and growth failed to allocate more resources on the necessary and key sectors as driven tools. However, security sectors, Ministry of Education and agriculture got huge allocations. These priorities have no sign of jobs opportunities.
5. Agricultural Sector which employs high percent of labour force got minor percent of the annual budget and informed Nigerians advocate for 15% of annual budget to Health. Nigeria Government is yet to implement all the Memorandum of Understanding signed with other countries like Maputo declaration, Abuja Declarations on Health, Education and Agricultural.
6. Due to the late presentation of the draft budgets to National Assembly, it is an indication if care is not taken that National Assembly may not have enough time to scrutinize the budget as expected and other issues around chamber (Eme, et al, 2014:179).

The Budgeting Process

The government budget is a law in itself. In a democratic system, its approval process entails its enactment into law by the legislature. It is thus a legal instrument that empowers governments to collect revenue and incur expenditure. Consequently, the legal framework for budgeting both at the federal and state levels is the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999, as amended.

The Finance (Control and Management) Act 1958 and the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2007 provide the guidelines and spell out the roles of the Federal Ministry of Finance (FMF) and the Budget Office (BOF) among other key actors, in the budgeting process. There are also the Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Frameworks (MTRF and MTEF) which provide procedural as well as technical details for effective budgeting (Okogu, 2011). We shall however dwell more on the budgeting process which is of greater relevance to our research topic.

The Budget Cycle

The budget process is carried out within the budget cycle which is a complete set of events occurring in the same sequence every year and culminating in the approved budget.

- There are five discernible phases of the budget cycle namely, review of previous budget, executive preparation and submission, legislative consideration and authorization, execution and budget audit/monitoring. The budget cycle begins with the review of the macro economic performance of the previous year's budget by the Budget Office.

Budget preparation: - This commences with press briefing to highlight the proposed policy direction. This is followed by budget workshop/summit to discuss tentative revenue sources for the coming year. The call circular is then issued by the Ministry of Finance inviting ministries, departments and their agencies to submit proposals. The call circular contains guidelines for the preparation of these proposals. These proposals are then exhaustively discussed at a series of Budget Committee meetings. The committees consist of Deputy Director of Budget Division and one Deputy Director from each Department. These are administrative hearings which are held in order to reconcile each agency's request and any adjustments that may have been made by the ministry of finance (or budget) or budget office (Oshisami, 1983).

Budget Authorization: - At this third stage of the budget cycle, the draft budget is presented to the National Assembly as an Appropriation Bill. Copies of the Bill are immediately distributed to members of the legislature. The Bill goes through the first and second Readings. The Bill is then referred to the Appropriation Committee of each House. There are various sub-committees which consider estimates for the relevant ministries, departments and parastatals which come under their charge (eg sub-committee on works, Housing etc). The Appropriation Committee of each House then collates the sub-committees' recommendations and drafts a budget paper which becomes the subject of discussion at the third reading (Akiyode-Afolabi and Ubani; 2005). During the third reading, debates are opened and amendments made. The Appropriation Bill is then sent to the President for assent after which it becomes an Appropriation Act.

Budget Implementation

At this stage, funds are transferred to ministries, departments and agencies who have direct responsibility to execute budgets. The aim at this stage is to have the end result as close as possible to what is intended or planned for. Execution entails four related steps which are: (Akiyode-Afolabi and Ubani, 2005: 41):

- i) An allocation system under which expenditure can be controlled by release of funds.
- ii) Supervision of the acquisition of goods and services to ensure value for money.
- iii) Accounting system.
- iv) Due process certification

Budget Audit/Monitoring

This stage of the budget cycle is the one that ensures that funds are used in accordance to the projection in the Appropriation Act. Budget auditing and monitoring focus on financial control by ensuring strict compliance in the disbursement of public expenditures. The duty of auditing is carried out by the Auditor-General with internal auditing mechanisms in the ministries. The Auditor – General is expected to submit reports to the legislature.

Key Actors and Political Strategies

The interrelation between budget and politics has already been established in this article. The budgetary process equally reveals that there are numerous players in government budgeting. The changing demands on government and its programmes, the shifting interests that are brought to bear in policy decisions and the many different actors that are part of the budget process mean that budget decisions will always occur in a

highly charged political environment. Our analysis of the political environment of government budgeting lends credence to this assumption. The focus of the analysis of political strategies is directed towards maximizing opportunities and minimizing constraints on the key actors.

The account of the budget cycle as contained in this work indicates clearly that the key actors in government budgeting are the operating agencies, the Executive and the legislature. Each actor has specific roles in the process with corresponding set objectives, and would apply all available political strategy to ensure its roles are performed effectively. These form the bases for our discussion on political strategies.

Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)

The MDAs are the units which spend money for the delivery of government services and are thus referred to as operating agencies. The preoccupation of the operating agencies is usually to ensure that their programmes receive a fair share of the overall budget. They also desire to increase their allocations or at least avoid cuts. In order to achieve these objectives, MDAs must take some crucial steps which include:

- The Minister, head of department or director of an agency must seek support from the Chief Executive (President or Governor). The pursuit of this goal might require visits, good will messages (media publications), among others.
- The agency must equally seek the support of the legislature. Agency personnel must work throughout the year to maintain contact with key legislative leaders and build the kind of alliances that will be helpful in supporting programmes of mutual interest. The relevant key legislative officers are leaders of both chambers of the National Assembly (and the Houses of Assembly for states) and their deputies; majority leader, chief whip, chairmen of the Appropriation Committee and other committees.

In his landmark study of the politics of the budgetary process,

- Aaron Wildavsky (1961) also suggests clientele support as a strategic element that helps to build political support for agency request. This implies that MDAs must build or elicit the support of client groups and associations interested in their programmes. For instance, the ministry of health could mobilize the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA), Association of Health Workers and Nurses Guild to either join the advocacy of campaign against the spread of Ebola, or testify the effectiveness of the ministry in this regard. The ministry of education can equally build the support of teachers for its programme.
- It is also advocated that eliciting the confidence of higher executive and legislative officials (eg president, secretary to the government, leadership of the legislature) would normally get their support for an agency. This is because these officials cannot have all the details for making a purely rational analysis. They must simply trust the head of the agency. This explains why MDAs whose heads enjoy good reputation are typically more successful especially in dealing with the legislature. Agencies can gain this confidence through transparency and accountability and by telling the truth or playing it straight.
- Budget padding is also another strategy applied by MDAs to secure a higher allocation or guard against budget cut. Padding means proposing a higher budget than is actually needed. Though apparently unethical, it is meant to ensure that after the Budget Office and legislative cuts, the agency will still have what it needs to carry out its programmes.
- Sometimes, agencies can decide to ask for a small amount to begin a programme, and later it presents the programme as so crucial that not finishing it would be detrimental and a loss of the already invested fund. Through this strategy, the agency can secure adequate programme funding.

The Chief Executive/Budget Office

Until the budgets are submitted to the Budget Office, they are fragmented. The first time the budget is considered as a whole is when the budget office has analyzed it and made tentative recommendations to the Chief Executive. During the briefings, the Budget Office gives the chief executive an overview of how agency requests in general, compare to the executive's priorities, how the requested expenditures compare to the revenue estimates, how much needs to be cut and what the Budget Office plans to do to make the policy and funds fit into the executive's stated objectives. Once this exercise is completed, the chief executive adopts the proposed integrated budget and takes centre stage in 'selling' it. The chief executive tries to project the budget proposal through the press and various citizen groups. He/she creates awareness on the successes/achievements of the previous year's budget and how the current budget will build further on those achievements, hence, such expression as "budget of consolidation". Executives are elected to be re-elected. Therefore, the chief executive uses the budget to score political points. He targets mobile constituents, who need to be kept happy to ensure their continued support (e.g. interest groups, civil society organizations and

even the business captains). He/she also uses the budget to gain new constituents who were marginally in other group's camp.

The Legislature

This is the seat of politics. The appropriation bill comes into the legislature for authorization. We have earlier on discussed the various stages the bill has to pass through before it is enacted. As the bill is being considered in the legislature, interested groups and citizens have the opportunity to discuss their positive and negative perceptions of the budget. Lobby, is very much in action. Heads of agencies consult with and attempt to influence different subcommittee chairmen and members as well as House officers to support their proposal. Unethical practices – like bribing key actors are witnessed at this stage, a case in point being that of a former minister of education. Agencies may also promise legislators award of contract. There is also the issue of “log rolling” or “you scratch my back and I scratch your back”. In this case, legislators agree among themselves to support items of interest to them on the basis of reciprocity.

Conclusion

Government budgets transcend the mere statistical figures presented but are also embodiment of the main desires, hopes and aspirations of the citizens. The central thesis of this article is that under the Nigerian problematic, effective linkage between politics and budgeting is closely tied to the environment where it operates. The paper identified the poor budgetary implementation to these environmental factors. To improve matters, suggestions have been made regarding accountability and effective monitoring. The article concludes by positing that it is through the budget that scarce resources are distributed or allocated to various sectors of the economy for service provision in line with beneficiary needs. The limited resources vis-à-vis the competing needs of individuals and groups make government budget to take place on a highly charged political atmosphere. Every MDA is preoccupied with adopting strategies to give it at least a fair share or at best a lion shares of the overall budget. The chief executive ensures that agency requests must key into his/her policy objectives while legislators have their constituents as their primary concerns. In the process both ethical and unethical strategies are brought to bear on the budgetary process. These are common features of government budgeting in Nigeria and very much account for the delays in both the submission and passage of the annual budget.

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