

EDUCATIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

A nation's policy on education is government's way of realizing national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool. Before policies are made there are expectation for positive changes in the system. This can only be achieved through adequate funding. This paper examined funding education policies and programmes in Nigeria. It identified some challenges in funding education policies and programmes which include educational funding problems associated with policy implementation inconsistency in educational policies and programmes. Since education policies are necessary it stressed the need to give sufficient time for the implementation. Some strategies that can help to correct the problems in the system were also suggested.

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Introduction

The Nigerian education system has experienced a lot of changes in her educational policy. Education policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of a people. Education is a potent tool for all round development of an individual or a nation. Bassey, Ekpo and Edet (2008) asserted that education is a great investment in an economy. It increases the quality of the individuals in a nation and this helps to speed up the race for economic development. For this reason, the federal government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument per excellence for affecting national development. In view of this, the government has reviewed the national policy severally in order to make it more functional and to meet up with the changes in the world technology. One of Nigeria's national goal is to build a great and dynamic economy. The federal government came up with these policies that aim at transforming the economic standing of citizens and would want to use education to actualize these objectives. For these goals to be actualized, there is need for proper planning, staffing, funding and management of policies. Management in this context is concerned with planning, funding, monitoring and Evaluation. According to Okoroma (2006) efforts have been made to develop education in Nigeria since 1960. Various policies have been formulated but not well implemented or given enough time to evaluate the result. Unfortunately not much has been achieved. Odukoya (2015) observed that between 1991-1999 the country had five different regimes, and ministers of Education. The states were not exonerated from these changes. Each of the presidents, ministers, Governors and commissioners had different conceptions and policies on education for implementation during their tenure.

With such instability in the system of governance most of the policies were abandoned half way probably because funds were not provided. The political and administrative inconsistencies were so much that they affected both policies and programmes in the educational sector. Odukoya (2015) noted the incessant changes and paucity of technocrats within the government. These resulted to lack of continuity of programmes, fallen standards, and inconsistency. Nigeria has not earned a pass mark in this regard. In the light of these objectives there is need to re-assess the steps taken by government to realize these noble objectives in education. For this reason, educational planners need to examine these fundamental problems in education.

Concept of Educational policy

Uchendu (2000) described policy as a fundamental process through which an institution attains stability and undertakes order changes as part of its ultimate goal. Policies are written or unwritten statement that guides the present and future thinking initiatives. It directs the decision of management (Babalola, 2003). They are written when there are documents for reference purposes and are unwritten when made in form of pronouncements, that is, policy statement by people in power and authority. In other words, policies are guides that usually provide latitude for operations. (Besong, Fan, Ada and Adalikwu, 2009). Educational policy of Nigeria is a general statement containing principles, regulations and rules that govern many of the decision, on how to educate the citizens. It seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, the objectives that it is designed of attain the methods for attaining them and the tools for measuring their success or failure.

There should be a check in frequent changes in the system because policy inconsistency affects standards. Policies that followed the due process of law and public

acceptability should not be thrown to the wind, by succeeding administration, instead areas of amendment could be identified and addressed for the purpose of continuity. Improvement policy implementation in education is a conspicuous national problem that has taken centre stage in Nigeria. Okoroma (2006) observed that there is a gap between educational policies and goal attainment due to inadequate implementation of policies. Formulation of policy sets the stage for implementation which according to Ukeje (2003) is the most important aspect of planning.

In Nigeria, policy making at times is a mere attempt to rationalize political decisions. Actions are hastily and expediently conceived. The consequence of this is that many of Nigeria's educational policies are not reduced to those goals and objectives which can easily be attained given the range of problems and feasibilities involved in the allocation and utilization of available human and material resources.

Challenges and Constraints to Educational Policies and implementation in Nigeria

In most developing countries of the world there are many challenges that hinder the realization of most educational policies. In Nigeria, these changes need to be addressed to actualize the aims and objectives of education. Among the challenges are:

Educational funding

Funding is a central factor in realizing educational goals. Inadequate funding in education has been a major challenge in the realization of most policies and programmes in education. Mohammed and Gbenu (2007) noted that there is a correlation between under funding and national development. Viavis policy implementation. This study note that Nigeria is doing little in the area of research and this has adversely affected policies and programmes in the education sector. In funding education, Akpan and Undie (2007) also observed decline in the budgetary allocation of the federal government of Nigeria (FGN) to education. In 1999, 11% of the annual budget was allocated to education but this reduced drastically to 5.9% in 2002 and 1.8 in 2003. From the figures just shown, it is clear that rather than progressive movement towards the minimum standard of 26% recommended by the United Nations scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) to education for developing countries. Nigeria has witnessed gradual and systematic reduction of allocation to education. Poor funding is a major factor that affects education generally. Because of this, new facilities cannot be provided and old ones cannot be rehabilitated causing retrogression for the education sector and making it impossible to realize national goals and aspirations in the sector. It is clear that under the prevailing circumstance, there is acute need for the transformation of the present funding policy if the goals will be met. According to Amadi (2007), inadequate financial resources in the higher institutions have the effect of limiting the educational development policy and programmes in Nigeria.

Policy making in education

After several revisions of National policy on Education, none of the editions of the National policies on educations has adequately addressed the issue of adequate implementation in education. Ironically, some of the policies such as universal basic education formulated during the year of prosperity as noted by Amadi (2007) saw their implementation during the period of economics recession, hence there was difficulty operating such policies. In any policy programmes there are basic requirements stated for each level of education. These requirements include infrastructures, equipment and instructional/teaching material resources for learning, personnel to implement education programmes, teachers support staff. Amadi (2007)

Infrastructure refers to building, housing, classroom, lecture rooms/halls/theatres, laboratories, workshops, administrative block with furniture and workbenches. Equipment includes science laboratories/workshops equipped for various forms of practical, consumable and non consumable materials for work/skills development, computers, photocopiers and communication equipment./ Learning resources include libraries internet facilities, and playground with standard pitches for games and sports.

To meet up with provisions of all these facilities there is need for adequate funds. Financing Nigeria's education system has reached a crises point. A very disastrous consequence of these financial crises is the great loss of a good and valuable manpower to overseas countries.

Problems Associated with policy implementation.

For more than thirty years the nation has not been able to successfully implement National policy on Education. The problem of policy implementation is traceable to the planning stage which according to Okeke in Okoroma (2006) comes immediately after policy formulation. For policies and programmes to achieve desired result there should be proper planning. Most policies in education require long term planning and monitoring. For policies and programmes to succeed, there should be stable government, funds should be available, all the structures and facilities that will facilitate its implementation should be readily available. Adesina (2012) noted that planned implementation is constrained by the following factors.

- **Over estimation of available resources:**
This is a situation where estimated resources are greater than the actual available resources to implement programme.
- **Under estimation of cost implementing a plan:** this happens when cost estimated does not make adequate provisions for inflation and actual implementation costs becomes unmanageable.
- **Over reliance upon external assistance:** plans that substantially rely upon assistance from foreign sources for their implementation run into hitches when such aid fails to come, and
- **Inaccurate statistical data:** planning education requires accurate and up-to-date data plan that do not adequately provide for this usually have implementation problems

Ability to implement policies and programmes can be hindered by these factors also, they include:

- Incompetent staff
- Insufficient information
- Distortions in the communication process
- Inconsistencies in the channel of communication
- Lack of political support
- Insubordination and
- Conflict

Frequent Changes in Educational policies and programmes

Nigeria has experienced several reviews, reforms, innovations educational policies and programmes. Also a lot of inconsistencies exist which has resulted to poor standard in the educational system. Frequent changes in policies and government tend to have negative impact on the policies and programmes of education. Giving credence to the above, Obukoya (2015) observed that between 2000-2016, the nation passed through five different regimes. Notably from Babangida to Shonckan four in 1993 to Abacha 1993-1998, Abubakar 1998-1999 Obasanjo 1999-2007.

Within this period Nigeria had litany of ministers, Governors, commissioner with different views on how to administer the affairs of the education sector. This gave rise to inconsistencies even till date Nigeria is moving forward as regards to educational policy and programmes. There is lack of continuity, this has hindered national development. There are also several modifications. For instance, the UPE. UBE, 6-5-4 system, 6-3-3-4 system 9-3-4system. No one can predict what policy or change that will come up next. All these policies are accompanied by framework, new proposals and pronouncements.

Prospects of funding Education in Nigeria

The prospects of funding education properly in Nigeria are economics. According to Ariguzo, Chukwudebelu and Asamaonye (2012), the Nigerian policy/ curriculum has been reviewed, repackaged and redesigned severally. If it is made functional it will help the nation to achieve most aims and objectives as noted in the national policy on education. If the policies programmes are well funded, implemented and monitored, it will yield desired result. The knowledge and skills gained in schools will lead to growth and sustainable development. In the area of technical and vocational education, emphasis on the practical aspect is very important, because it will enable recipients to be self-reliant and also employers of labour. Government should play its vital role by policies implemented and monitored to achieve desired objectives in education.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the Nigerian government has tried by, it policies and programmes to improve the educational attainment of its citizens. Unfortunately the political and economic instability, coupled with misplaced priority has robbed the nation of the beautiful policies. When policies that guide a nation are not implemented the nation will not develop and move forward and most of its dream towards transformation will remain a mirage for this reason, stakeholders in education and government should reassess their input in education in order to move this nation to the next level of development.

Strategies for improvement

- The government should provide funds for policies and programmes in education
- There should be specified time to work on every policy that is formulated
- There should be private sector participation in education.
- The government should endeavour to have stable policies even when the political arena is stable.
- There should be reliable data for the system to plan effectively.
- Competent administrators and curriculum planners should to part of policy formulation and implementation in education
- Nigeria governments and leaders should develop the necessary policies will for education to grow.

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