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**PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
GOVERNMENT POLICY INITIATIVES ON EDUCATION FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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**Victor U. Agogbua (PhD), Ndidì Loretta Okeke (PhD)**  
Department of Educational Management and Policy, Faculty of Education  
NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka  
E-mail: [vu.agogbua@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:vu.agogbua@unizik.edu.ng); [on.loretta@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:on.loretta@unizik.edu.ng)

**Abstract**

The study examined principals' perception of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 263 principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The entire population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on the Implementation of Government Policy Initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development (QIGPIESD)". The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by three experts in education. Test on the data collected using Cronbach Alpha reliability method yielded coefficient values of 0.80, 0.85 and 0.75 for clusters B1, B2 and B3 respectively with the average reliability coefficient of 0.80. Mean and standard deviation was used in analyzing data collected for the study. The study revealed that principals perceive the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra to be moderate. The study concluded that the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State is ongoing but impeded by challenges emanating from the schools, stakeholders' resistance, poor funding and economic downturn. Based on the findings, the study recommended that government should prioritize education even during difficult times and explore innovative funding mechanisms.

**Keywords:** *Principals' Perception, Government Policy Initiatives, Sustainable Development Policy Implementation*

**Introduction**

Education is a powerful instrument for encouraging learning and the development of skills and information that lead to self-sufficiency and higher living standards. The importance of education, especially secondary education cannot be overemphasized as it plays a pivotal role in the supply of manpower needed for national development (Agogbua, 2021). The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) elucidated that the objectives of secondary education are to provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades and to provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development. In order to meet these laudable objectives, both at the federal and state secondary schools, principals as administrative heads are tasked with the responsibilities of ensuring that government policy initiatives on education are implemented to the latter.

Government policies on education are the various rules, regulations, and guidelines developed by the Nigerian government to guide the administration, management, and delivery of education in the country. These policies are aimed at promoting quality education, expanding access to education, and ensuring that education aligns with national development goals. Edet and Ugbe (2018) posited that educational policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of people. The objective of any policy is to satisfy individual needs, community pressures and the degree of complexity and sophistication to which socialized personnel must be educated and trained to meet these demands.

Currently the issue of sustainable development has made the government of Nigeria develop educational policies that will help in meeting the developmental needs of Nigerians without compromising the ability to meet their future needs (Brundtland Report, 1987).

Various educational policies have been developed by the Nigerian government on education, such as, Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, which is aimed at providing free and compulsory education for all children at the primary and junior secondary school levels. The UBE policy also aims to address issues such as gender inequality, regional disparities, and poor teacher quality in the Nigerian education system (World Bank, 2018). The government also developed policies aimed at promoting technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In 2013, National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), which is aimed at promoting skills development and standardizing qualifications in TVET was launched. Many other policies have overtime been initiated by the government for the sustainable development of education in Nigeria. Education for sustainable development is the incorporation of sustainability principles into the educational system, including teaching and learning processes, curricula development, and school management practices.

The agency in charge of monitoring the implementation of UBE projects is the Universal Basic Education Commission. This agency monitors the activities of the State Universal Basic Education Commission and the Local Government Educational Authorities (Yusha, 2014). According to the implementation guidelines for UBE programmes, due attention is to be given to public enlightenment and social mobilization of people. Teachers are to be an integral part of the process of conceptualization, planning and implementation; there should be provision funds, enriched curricula, provision of infrastructural facilities and more for the success of the scheme (FRN, 2014). As part of the implementation strategy, the UBE Act provides the States of the Federation with intervention funds, which can be accessed upon meeting certain stringent conditions.

Research has shown that many State governments abandoned the intervention funds as a result of their inability to meet the required conditions; thereby abandoning uncompleted projects and refusing to initiate new ones (Human Development Initiatives, 2018). Currently, Nigeria has twenty million out-of-school-children (Alabi, 2022). At the inception of UBE programme the literacy rate in Nigeria was 52%. However, in 2021, it was estimated to be 77.62% (Global Data, 2021). The worst hit is the Northern part of Nigeria with a school attendance rate of 53% (UNICEFF, 2022). How far would one say that UBE has gone in increasing access to education and improving literacy levels in Nigeria is the question this research is set to answer.

In recent years, the Nigerian government has recognized the importance of education for sustainable development. However, despite the government's efforts to promote sustainable development in the country, the integration of ESD into the curriculum of public secondary schools has not been effectively carried out (Adedire et al., 2021). This has resulted in a lack of understanding of its importance among stakeholders, particularly principals who are responsible for implementing the policy initiatives. The lack of effective implementation of the initiatives in public secondary schools has significant implications for the sustainable development of Nigeria. The failure to implement these government policy initiatives on education in public secondary schools will hinder the development of sustainable communities in the country. This can lead to several negative consequences, including environmental degradation, social inequality, and economic instability. Therefore, it is imperative to examine principals' perception of the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State and to identify the factors that hinder their implementation so as to propose solutions to enhance the implementation in schools.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine principals' perceptions of the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the extent principals perceive the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. The factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do principals perceive the implementation of government policy on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

2. What are the factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
3. What are the perceived solutions to the problems militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

### Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 263 principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The entire population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on the Implementation of Government Policy Initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development (QIGPIESD)". The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section A contains demographic information of respondents while section B contains 24 items on the principals' perception, factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development and the perceived solutions to the problems. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by three experts in education. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a pilot test on 20 principals in Enugu State. Test on the data collected using Cronbach Alpha reliability method yielded coefficient values of 0.80, 0.85 and 0.75 for clusters B1, B2 and B3 respectively with the average reliability coefficient of 0.80. The researchers administered the instruments to the respondents in their offices. The instrument was administered and retrieved on the spot after completion. However, an appointment was booked in cases where the respondents were unable to fill out the questionnaire on the spot. Out of the 263 copies of the questionnaire administered, 242 were retrieved in good condition and used for the computation of data analysis. Mean and standard deviation was used in analyzing data collected for the study. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used to determine the relatedness of the respondent's mean ratings. In analyzing the research questions, any items with a mean rating of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreeing while a mean rating below 2.50 was regarded as disagree.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** To what extent do principals perceive the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 1: Mean Summary of Respondents on the Extent They Perceive the Implementation of Government Policy on Education for Sustainable Development in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State (N=242)**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Government initiatives on education ensure free education for all in public schools	2.36	0.43	Disagree
2.	The policy brings about useful living in the society	2.90	0.39	Agree
4	Every child is compulsorily prepared for higher education	2.40	0.41	Disagree
5	Every girl child is compulsorily sent to secondary school	2.06	0.44	Disagree
5	The government ensures that religion is not a barrier to education	3.29	0.96	Agree
6	Schools offer a diversified curriculum to cater for different talents	3.57	0.97	Agree
7	The government ensures that students are trained in both science and technology	3.18	0.83	Agree
8.	Vocational skills necessary for economic development are implemented in every school	3.26	0.79	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>2.87</b>		<b>Agree</b>

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents agree on the implementation of government policy initiatives on education sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State on

items 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 with mean ratings of 2.90, 3.29, 3.57, 3.18 and 3.26 and standard deviations of 0.39, 0.96, 0.97, 0.83 and 0.79 respectively. They also disagree on items 1, 3 and 4 with mean ratings of 0.43, 0.41 and 0.44 and standard deviations of 0.43, 0.41 and 0.44 respectively. The cluster mean of 2.87 indicates the principles perceive that government policy initiatives on education are implemented for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Research Question 2:** What are the factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 2: Mean Summary of Respondents on the Factors Militating Against the Implementation of Government Policy Initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State(N=242)**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remks
9.	Policymakers do not prioritize education leading to insufficient funding for education	3.28	0.85	Agree
10.	Lack of awareness that results in little support for policies aimed at promoting compulsory basic education	3.30	0.77	Agree
11.	Weak institutional capacity such as the Ministry of Education makes government policy initiates unsuccessful	3.35	0.82	Agree
12.	Stakeholders' resistance to change contributes bring delays in the execution of some policies	3.23	0.76	Agree
13.	Linguistic barriers impede communication flow that affects the implementation of policies	3.40	0.88	Agree
14.	Global challenges such as economic crises divert attention away from enforcing education for sustainable development	3.32	0.80	Agree
15.	The absence of feedback loops prevents necessary adjustments to improve policy implementations	3.18	0.74	Agree
16.	Political instability in most villages hinders the implementation process	3.26	0.85	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.29</b>		<b>Agree</b>

Data in Table 2 reveal that the respondents agree on the factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State on items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 with mean ratings of 3.28, 3.30, 3.35, 3.23, 3.40, 3.32, 3.18 and 3.26 and standard deviations of 0.85, 0.77, 0.82, 0.76, 0.88, 0.80, 0.74 and 0.85 respectively. The cluster mean of 3.29 indicate that the items are among the factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### Research Question 3

What are the perceived solutions to the problems militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 3: Mean Summary of Respondents on the Perceived Solutions to the Problems Militating Against the Implementation of Government Policy Initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State(N=242)**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	REMARKS
17.	Policymakers should prioritize education by providing sufficient funding for education	3.23	0.76	Agree
18.	Constant awareness that would result to improved support for policies aimed at promoting compulsory basic education	2.90	0.39	Agree
19.	Establishing partnership with local communities to foster collaborative approach to policy implementations	3.18	0.83	Agree
20.	Development of standardized guidelines to facilitate policy implementation across different schools	2.06	0.44	Disagree
21.	To update the curriculum to include topics related to sustainable development and social responsibility	3.29	0.96	Agree

22.	Giving Ministry of Education autonomy could enhance the success of government policy initiatives	3.57	0.97	Agree
23.	Providing specialized capacity building for teachers to effectively integrate sustainability principles into their teaching methods	2.40	0.41	Disagree
24.	To set up a robust system to evaluate the progress of sustainable education initiatives regularly, making data-driven decisions for improvement	3.26	0.79	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>2.98</b>		<b>Agree</b>

Data in Table 3 reveal that the respondents agree on the perceived solutions to the problems militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State on items 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, and 24 with mean ratings of 3.23, 2.90, 3.18, 3.29, 3.57 and 3.26 and standard deviations of 0.76, 0.39, 0.83, 0.96, 0.97 and 79 respectively. They also disagree on items 20 and 23 with mean ratings of 2.06 and 2.40 and standard deviations of 0.44 and 0.41. The cluster mean of 2.98 indicate that the items are among the perceived solutions to the problems militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings on the extent principals perceive the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that principals perceive the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra to a moderate extent. The findings are a result of respondents agreeing to the fact that the policy brings about useful living in the society, the government ensures that religion is not a barrier for education, schools offer diversified curriculum to cater for different talents, government ensures that students are trained in both science and technology and vocational skills necessary for economic development are implemented in every school. The findings are in consonance with the findings of Ayesha et al. (2019) who stated that the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development is crucial for the long-term development and prosperity of a nation. He argues that such policies provide a framework for integrating sustainable practices and values into the education system, ensuring that students are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for sustainable living. Adedire et al. (2021) revealed that the government's effort to promote sustainable development through the integration of education policy initiatives into the curriculum of public secondary schools has not been effectively carried out.

Findings on the factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that factors such as lack of awareness, weak institutional capacity, and stakeholders' resistance to change among others are contributing factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The finding is a result of respondents agreeing to the fact that policymakers do not prioritize education leading to insufficient funding in education, lack of awareness that results in little support for policies aimed at promoting compulsory basic education, weak institutional capacity such as the Ministry of Education makes government policy initiatives unsuccessful, stakeholder resistance to change contributes to delay in execution of some policies, linguistic barriers impede communication flow that affect implementation of policies, global challenges such as economic crises divert attention away from enforcing education for sustainable development, absence of feedback loops prevent necessary adjustments to improve policy implementations and political instability in most villages hinder the implementation process. Agreeing with the findings, Ajulor (2018) stated that the government needs to devote more money to the education sector, curb corruption, ensure transparency and accountability in the sector and increase politicization of education ministry roles and level of involvement in the education delivery system. Mathana and Sang (2023) also revealed that finance and funding are influential factors in driving education policy towards achieving its objectives. However, though there may be funding, there is also financial corruption that setbacks the implementation of the policy initiatives.

Findings on the perceived solutions to the factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State revealed that principals perceived solutions to the factors militating against the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State to a moderate extent. The findings are a result of respondents

agreeing to the fact that policymakers should prioritize education by providing sufficient funding for education; constant awareness that would result to improved support for policies aimed at promoting compulsory basic education; establishing partnership with local communities to foster collaborative approach to policy implementations; giving Ministry of Education autonomy could enhance the success of government policy initiatives; and setting up a robust system to evaluate the progress of sustainable education initiatives regularly, making data-driven decisions for improvement. The finding agrees with Ajulor (2018) that the government should allocate adequate funds and resources for the development and implementation of sustainable education programmes in schools. Mathana and Sang (2023) also revealed that finance and funding are influential factors in driving education policy towards achieving its objectives. Governments should demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development by allocating sufficient resources and support for the implementation of education policies.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study presented, analyzed and discussed, the study concluded that the implementation of government policy initiatives on education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Anambra State is ongoing but impeded by challenges emanating from the schools, stakeholders' resistance, poor funding and economic downturn. Addressing these challenges will be crucial to ensuring the successful implementation of education policies aimed at sustainable development in the public secondary schools.

### **Recommendation**

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. To improve access to free education, it is crucial for the government to take proactive measures to remove barriers that hinder access to education. This can include addressing issues such as school fees, textbooks and other essential educational resources.
2. Government should prioritize education even during difficult times and explore innovative funding mechanisms. Governments should also collaborate with international organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders to mobilize resources and implement strategies that mitigate the impact of global challenges on education.
3. Government through the Ministry of Education should always collect feedback and monitor outcomes to continuously improve policy design and implementation.

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