

EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: A PANACEA FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION STANDARDS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper provides a review of effective policy implementation: a panacea for improving education standards in Nigeria. The paper takes a critical look at the concepts of educational policy and effective policy implementation. In the context of this work, effective policy implementation entails implementing educational policies in such a way as to realize the goals and objectives for which the policies were intended. The paper also looked at the factors militating against effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. The paper concluded that if educational policies are effectively implemented, there would be an improved standard of education. The paper recommends the following for effective policy implementation; adequate funding of education, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, fight institutional corruption, ensure adequate security in educational institutions, political officeholders should have positive political will towards implementation of educational policies, employment of more professional teachers, positive relationship between policy designers and policy implementers and political officeholders should have political will to continue with educational policies.

Keywords: Effective, Policy, Implementation, Panacea, Education Standards.

Introduction

Educational policy is directed towards improving the standard of education in Nigeria. Educational policy is important to help guide the process of education. Basey, Ekpo, and Edet as stated by Eru, Jemimah, and Jones (2019), 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 of excellence for affecting national development (FRN 2013). Because of this, the government has reviewed the national policy severally to make it more functional and to meet up with the changes in the world of technology. One of Nigeria's national goals 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 a need for proper planning, staffing, funding, and implementation of policies.

Efforts have been made to develop education in Nigeria. Various policies have been formulated but not well implemented and evaluation is not done on the implemented aspect of the policies. This is in line with Constance (2016) who states that; Educational policies are made but their implementations are often thwarted or sabotaged. This disheartening situation may be a result of distortions in the educational system or the ineffective implementation engendered primarily by a lack of political will, a lack of continuity of programs, and corruption. This has also hindered national growth and development and until urgent action is taken to review Nigeria's educational policy system, its national aspirations will continue to be compromised. Some of the problems encountered in the implementation of educational policies according to Raji (2020) include non-payment of teachers' salaries, unqualified teachers, under-funding, and shortage or unavailability of some needed resources.

Furthermore, the problems in educational policy implementation include frequent changes in government, constant strike actions, uninspiring political leadership, and poor funding of education to mention but a few. As a result, educational policies are made that usually provide a general guide that does not facilitate decision making. Thus, there is a general hue and cry that the standard of education in Nigeria is falling at all levels and calling for remedies.

The Concept of Educational Policy

The policy is a fundamental process through which an institution attains stability and undertakes other changes as part of its ultimate goal (Raji, 2020). The educational policy of Nigeria is a general statement containing principles, regulations, and rules that govern many of the decisions, on how to educate the citizens. It seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, the objectives that it is designed to attain, the methods for attaining them, and the tools for measuring their success or failure (Eru, Ogi, and Jones 2019). According to Babalola (2013), educational policies are the principles and government policies in the educational sphere, as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of the education system. Educational policies are also general statements containing principles, regulations, and rules which govern, influence, and determine the decisions on how to educate children, where to get them educated, when to get them employed, who to teach them and how to finance their education (Okoroma, 2010). Policy implementation is often understood as a specific part of the policy-making process, where political ideas are turned into concrete actions and where these actions contribute to create the intended effect behind a specific policy (Burns, Koster & Fuster, 2016).

Effective Policy Implementation

The word effective refers to producing the results that is wanted or intended or producing a successful result (Effiong, 2013). In the context of this work, effective policy implementation, entails implementing educational policy in such a way as to realize the goals and objectives for which the policy is intended. In this context, if educational policy is effectively implemented, it would achieve the designed goals and objectives. The implementation of educational policies is determine by the following factors: the capacity of the implementer, the numbers of teachers available, the numbers of infrastructural facilities available, the funds available, the political will and the level of monitoring and evaluation system available. Therefore, the basic focus of the government and its personnel especially those responsible for implementing educational policies should then be on how to effectively implement government educational policies.

In implementing educational plans, attention should be given to how the plans were made (plans should be executed step by step according to the plan), and financial and other resources should not be diverted to other means.

Factors Militating Against Effective Implementation of Educational Policies in Nigeria

There are several factors that has hindered the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Some of these factors include:

Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is one of the major problem facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for education is very poor that it cannot be used to implement the various educational policies in the educational sector. Inadequate funding is one of the greatest challenges facing the ministry of education in Nigeria. A breakdown of budgetary allocation for the ministry of education for one decade shows that the budgetary allocation for the entire ministry of education have been below the

recommended UNESCO 20% of the total annual budget for a year (Ogunode and Adah, 2020). A break-down of Nigerian education budget for decade revealed the following:

Year	Educational Budget	Percentage (%)	Naira
2011	N306.3billion	6.20	N4.972trillion
2012	N400.15billion	8.43	N4.749trillion
2013	N426.53billion	8.60	N4.987trillion
2014	N493billion	10.70	N4.69trillion
2015	N392.2billion	8.91	N4.4trillion
2016	N369.6billion	6.01	N6.1trillion
2017	N448.01billion	6.00	N7.3trillion
2018	N605.8billion	7.04	N4.69trillion
2019	N620.5bn	7.05	8.83 trillion
2020	N652.94bn	6.9	N10.50 trillion.

Whereby other developing country like Ghana; in the last 10 years, they have never budgeted less than 20 per cent for education. There is South Africa, Egypt, among others. The implication of this is that majorities of agencies and commissions that depends on the ministry of education are also underfunded. The poor funding of education in Nigeria is responsible for poor implementation of educational policies.

Inadequate Professional Teachers

Teachers are very important in the implementation of educational policies. No meaningful educational policies can be effectively implemented without the availability of adequate professional teachers. At the basic and junior secondary school independent Newspapers (2019) reports that there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficits in primary schools and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary Schools across the nation. Manafa, (2011) reported the dearth of trained teachers affects the implementation of language programmes in school, federal government colleges inclusive. The small developing languages have no trained teachers. In the major languages, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, English and French, the practicing teachers are poorly motivated, ill-trained, overworked, unevenly distributed, and abysmally insufficient in numbers. The shortage of professional teachers is among the key challenge facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Infrastructural facilities are required for the implementation of educational policies, to implement teaching, learning and research programmes. Infrastructural facilities include classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff offices and libraries. Others include hostels (in residential institutions), staff quarters, students and staff recreational facilities, sports and games facilities. They also include roads, electricity and water supplies. Infrastructural facilities is one major problem preventing effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria because no meaningful teaching and learning can take place without adequate infrastructural facilities available. It has been observed by Manafa, (2011) that inadequate infrastructural facilities is a common problem affecting the entire educational system in Nigeria.

Institutional Corruption

Institutional corruption is another problem preventing the full implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Funds allocated for the implementation of educational policies and programmes are being diverted by some of officials in the ministries of education into private pocket. According to Ogbonnaya (2010), some heads of educational institutions receive 10% gratification for the execution of any project in their institution.

Some parents even give bribes to secondary school principal to have their children admitted in the school. Teachers also give bribes to officials in the school board, so that they will not be transferred. School proprietors give bribes also to officials of education board for them to approve their private schools. There is even sexual harassment among students and teachers in schools. With this, the implementation of educational policies is jeopardized. Ogbondah (2010) submitted that in spite of the inadequacy of allocations to the public university system, any fund made available often go down the drain through the corrupt practices of those entrusted with the implementation of university programmes due to inadequate monitoring of university income and expenditure, such is the grim state of affairs, thus the future will need a paradigm shift.

Nigeria has been experiencing underwhelming development amidst overwhelming corruption (Osunyanmi, 2018). Education is not insulated from this malaise. Corruption allows a high percentage of the funds allocated to the sector to get diverted into the private accounts of public officials. Hence, the amount being spent on education is much lower than the figure in the budget. The Corruption Perception Index 2016 revealed that Nigeria had a score of 28. The score ranges from 0 for the highly corrupt to 100 for the least corrupt. The country occupied the 136th position among the 176 countries ranked. Concerted efforts are required to tackle corruption so that development will not elude Nigeria (Ololube, 2016). The educational funds diverted is among the problem facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

Lack of Political Will

Lack of political will to implement the educational policies in Nigeria is another problem facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. The Child act right bill signed and passed into the law by the federal government of Nigeria have not been signed by many states government because they don't have to sign the bill into law for implementation in their various states. Independent (2019) revealed that twelve states in the northern part of Nigeria are yet to pass the Child Rights Law despite its obvious benefits for children. UNICEF Child Protection Specialist, stated this during a two-day media dialogue on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). She identified the states as Bauchi, Yobe, Kano, Sokoto, Adamawa, Borno, Zamfara, Gombe, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa and Kaduna. The Child act right bill covers every aspect of the lives of children and adolescents. They are broken down into the following: survival rights, development rights, participation rights, and protection rights. The lack of political will to implement or sign the bills into law is affecting the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria

Insecurity

Insecurity is another major challenge facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Many educational policies designed and formulated to improve the access to education and improve the quality of education have been frustrated due to the insecurity problem in the country. Many educational programme like safe school initiative, girl child education, women education and universal basic programme have been slowed down by the various forms of insecurity problem facing the country. According to thisday (2018) the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) says Boko Haram has killed 2,300 teachers in Nigeria's northeast since the start of the insurgency in 2009. In the 2018 UNESCO global education monitoring report (GEM), the UN agency said 19,000 teachers have been displaced in the region, affecting access to education. "In north-eastern Nigeria, as of late 2017, there were 1.6 million IDPs, including an estimated 700,000 school-age children, as a result of violent attacks on civilians by Boko Haram, which began in 2009 (UNOCHA, 2017b)," the report read in part. "Boko Haram has destroyed nearly 1,000 schools and displaced 19,000 teachers (HRW, 2016). Reports indicated it had killed almost 2,300 teachers by 2017 (UNOCHA, 2017a).

The insecurity challenges is preventing effective monitoring and evaluation of educational institutions across the country. Osunyikanmi (2018), posits that the insurgency masterminded by Boko Haram has persistently taken peace away from north-eastern Nigeria. The problem singly accounts for over 60 percent of 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria. Majority of the affected children live in the hotbed of the crisis.

Lack of Continuity in Commitment to Policy Implementation

Lack of continuity in the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria is another factor preventing effective implementation of educational policies. Many sound educational policies have been suspended because of changes in government. According to Manafa, (2011) the constraint to the implementation of educational policy in Nigeria is lack of Continuity in Commitment to Policy. This affects the smooth implementation of policy. Nigeria's educational system has witnessed a series of changes in policies and programmes. Some of the changes seem to be desirable while some will make one to wonder why some the other changes were ever initiated.

Political Instability

Political instability is another major problem preventing effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Political instability is one of the features of third world countries like Nigeria. Many educational policies have been put to hold due to changes in government or administration from one political party to another political party. Manafa, (2011) submits that it is the constant change in power or system of government in the past that has contributed to the problem of ineffective implementation of the policy statement of Education For All (EFA). Variation in non-uniformity in the system of primary education, instability which characterized the Nigerian Political Scene has always led to changes in educational policies, most especially the primary school level. Each government rationalized the policy on education on its own accord. Politics and frequent changes in government tend to negatively affect the implementation of the National Policy on Education (Odukoya, 2011). He opined that the instability in the system of governance, coupled with constant changes in ministers and commissioners led to the level of the crises the national education system has witnessed over the years and the inconsistency and often contradictory nature of the educational policies and practices.

Poor Policy Formulation

Poor policy articulation or formulation is another problem responsible for the poor implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Due to poor capacity of educational policy designers and lack of exposure to new approaches and methods of formulating policies. Ogunode (2020) observed that Federal Government is poor in articulating its educational policies. If the educational policies is not properly formulated or articulated, it will be difficult to implement the policies.

Poor Relationship between Policy Designers and Policy Implementers

The poor relationship between the educational policy designers and policy implementers is another factors responsible for poor implementation of education policies in the Nigerian educational sector. Educational policy designer formulated the education policies without the involvement of the implementers. The implementers lacks the technicality and methodologies and approaches adopted in developing the educational policies. So, the implementation of such educational policies will be very difficult since they are out of the plan actions.

Conclusion

The paper examined effective policy implementation: a panacea for improving education standards in Nigeria. The paper concluded that if educational policies are effectively implemented, education standards in Nigeria would improve.

Recommendations

The following measures were recommended by the researchers for effective implementation of educational policies to ensure improvement in the education standards in Nigeria, and they include:

1. Adequate funding of education. The government should increase the funding of education. Ibrahim (2018) submits that government should as well ensure adequate funding being critical to education policy implementation. Going by the indices of education funding in Nigeria, a lot need to be done. The amount allocated to the education sector should at least conform with the recommendation of UNESCO of allocating at least 26% of a country's budget to education.
2. Provision of Adequate Infrastructural Facilities. The government should provide more infrastructural facilities in all the educational institutions in the country.
3. Fight Institutional Corruption. There should be an effective monitoring of the management of funds being allocated to the education sector. Reliable accounting systems should be established in each Nigerian university to guarantee accountability, honest, and transparency.
4. Ensure Adequate Security in Educational Institutions. The government should provide adequate security to all the educational institutions in the country to enable a peaceful teaching and learning environment.
5. Political Will towards Implementation of Educational Policies. The political officeholders in the country should develop the attitudes of implementing the various educational policies in the country.
6. Employment of Professional teachers. For effective management of education in Nigeria, the government should employ more professional teachers and post them to all educational institutions where there is shortage of teachers. Manafa, (2011) posits that the Federal government should address the problem of inadequate teaching staff for an effective implementation of the educational policies. She should employ well qualified staff in all subject areas.
7. Positive Relationship between Policy designers and Policy Implementers. The government should ensure that educational policy designers and policy implementers are brought together with the purpose of working together in designing plan action document. This will lead to a smooth implementation of educational policy by the implementers.
8. Political will to continue with Educational policies. The government and especially the political officeholders should develop positive attitudes towards policies continuity and implementation in the country. Ibrahim (2018) recommends that government should ensure that the issue of politicizing education as well as un-ethical behaviors among personnel are minimized as much as possible or even completely eradicated. Frequent revision of education policies manifesting from political instability brings about a gap between formulation and implementation of the education policies. This is because every government that comes into power will want to make some amendments or even change the education policies to suit its own purpose. This adversely affects education policy development. The scenario should therefore be stopped and the policies should be left to be fully implemented. In addition to this, the personnel's charged with education policy implementation that violates the ethics of their profession through corrupt practice should be brought to book.

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