



## **Educational Policy Implementation in Nigeria: Challenges and the Way Forward**

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### **Abstract**

Educational policy implementation in Nigeria has been facing a lot of challenges right from the time of independence. Hence, this paper examined educational policies implementation in Nigeria: challenges and ways out. It explained education as the act of transmitting knowledge, values, and skills required for an individual to personally develop and able to effectively contribute to the development of the society which he or she belongs. Policy was discussed as a plan or programme systemically designed to achieve a specific goal. It elucidated educational policy as a systematically designed programme or plan put in place to achieve a particular purpose in education. Educational policy implementation was defined as the act of operating an educational policy in order to achieve the goal for which it is established. The paper discussed political instability, corruption, inadequate fund, inaccurate data and insufficiency of personnel as the challenges facing educational policy implementation in Nigeria. It was suggested among other things, that forthcoming administrations in Nigeria should cultivate the habit of sustaining the inherited educational policy or policies from their antecedents, instead of abandoning it and come with another one which might not be significantly different from it, to ensure that the inherited policy or policies see the light of the day.

**Keywords:** Education, Policy, Educational Policy, Educational Policy Implementation



## **Introduction**

Education is very important in human life. It the act of transmitting knowledge, values, and skills required for an individual to personally develop and able to effectively contribute to the development of the society which he or she belongs. Mba and Ugwulashi (2020) defined education as the process of teaching an individual to acquire desirable skills, knowledge, values and attitude, and understanding which will enable him or her to critically think about the various issues in life. Omolewa (2006) stated that the most valuable investment a nation can make on the development of its country is the dedication to the provision of quality education for its citizens. This means that education is the foundation upon which of any country's growth and development must stand for her to achieve desired economic prosperity. Bassey, Ekpo and Edet (2008) maintained that education is a crucial investment in an economy. It improves the quality of the people in a country and this assists to expedite its economic growth and development. Imam (2012) opined that education is the basis for national and human development. It is a tool for getting relevant knowledge, habits, skills, and inculcating cultural values for sustenance. The nexus between education and development has been globally recognized, to the extent that education has been universally regarded as a veritable key for the development of any nation

However, policy is very important to the success of educational system. It is through policies that educational system in any country can achieve the goals for which it is established. Without policies, each aspect of education would not have a clear direction and its purpose might not be well actualized. Nevertheless, it is one thing to formulate policies for education, but it is another thing entirely to ensure that the policies are well implemented. No matter how well a policy is formulated, it becomes meaningless if the implementation is not well carried out. Since the time of independence, Nigerian government has been formulating different educational policies such as Universal Primary Education (1976), Universal Basic Education Programme (2004), National Policy on HIV and AIDS for the Education Sector in Nigeria (2005), National Gender Policy (2006), National School Health Policy (2006) and The Safe School Initiative (2014), National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (2016) and National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria (2016). Hence, the fact remains that these policies have been facing various challenges which are hindering their effective implementation. It is against this background that this paper examines educational policy implementation in Nigeria: challenges and ways out.

## **Concept of Policy**

Policy refers to a plan or programme systemically designed to achieve a specific goal. Every organization needs to formulate policies. The policies formulated would serve as a guide to its operation. An organization without well formulated policies guiding its operation might continually operate haphazardly. This is because there would be no clear direction of operation which the workers have to subscribe to, for the stated objectives to be realized. According to Okoroma (2006), policy serves the purpose of ensuring that every official action of an enterprise must have a basis or a backing. Miskel (2005) opined that policies should not only be formulated, rather, it should also be based on effective programming, communication, monitoring and evaluation. This is necessary to ensure that policies achieve the purpose for which they are established. Sadiku (2020) defined policy as a plan by some agents to do something in particular, for some purposes whenever a particular condition transpires or is actualized. Uchendu (2000)



elucidated that policy is a central procedure through which an organization achieves stability and realizes order changes as part of its decisive objective. Joel, Ogi and Ikpe (2019) opined that policies are written or unwritten statement that regulates the present and future thinking creativities in an organization. According to Koontz et al (1980), policies are regarded as plans, this is general statements or understandings which direct or channel thinking and action in decision making.

### **Concept of Educational Policy**

Educational policy refers to a systematically designed programme or plan put in place to achieve a particular purpose in education. An educational policy serves as a blueprint which provides a guideline for the operation of a particular aspect of education. This could be based on the students' entry requirement, curriculum implementation, years of study, students' Industrial Working Experience Scheme, teachers' qualifications and instructional resources to be used to support teaching and learning process. Educational policies are very essential because it provides a direction for each aspect of educational system. It is divided into two (internal and external). Internal policies are those policies made within educational institutions by the managers such as principals, provosts, rectors, vice-chancellors or people at the middle or low-level management. External policies are those policies formulated by government agencies saddled with the responsibility of regulation educational system in the country. These include Federal or State Ministries of Education, Joint Admissions Matriculation Board, National Board for Technical Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education, State Universal Basic Education Board, Teaching Service Commission, National Examinations Council, West African Examinations Council, National Business and Technical Examinations Board.

However, policies made within the educational institutions must fall within the purview of the government policies, so as not to operate in contrary to the government's policies which could lead to contradiction. Without sound policies, it might difficult for education to achieve the goals for which it is established. Educational policies which had been made in Nigeria include Universal Primary Education, The Child Rights Act Policy, Universal Basic Education Programme (2004), National Policy on HIV and AIDS for the Education Sector in Nigeria (2005), National Gender Policy (2006), National School Health Policy (2006) and The Safe School Initiative (2014), National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (2016), National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria (2016). Joel, et al. (2019) posited that educational policy of Nigeria is a general statement which contains the rules and regulations that control the plans, on how to educate the citizens. It is designed to provide answer to questions about the purpose of education; its objectives, that it aims at achieving and the strategies for realizing them; and the yardsticks for determining their strengths and weaknesses.

Romane and Beatriz (2017) explained educational policy as the actions embarked upon by governments in connection to educational practices, and how governments carry out the production and delivery of education in a particular system. OCED (2015) stated that policies in education cove a lot of factors such as equity of learning, learning environments quality, learning outcomes quality or the ability of the system to prepare students for future living which embraces good governance and responsible followership. Ojulari (2020) saw educational policy as the thinking at a high level of perception which shows educational goals and the methods of realizing them. It is the foundation upon which daily administration of education is built and serves as a guide to school



managers when determining the lines along which the educational system should be operated. According to educational Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2003), for educational policy to be effectively made, stakeholders such consumers of education (students who enjoy the educational services provided in schools and parents who may desire a particular type of education for their children); employers of labour (those who make use of the products of educational system); host community (representatives of the community in which the school is cited); government and participants in education (the teaching and non-teaching staff ). Owolabi (2005) believed that the operation of education becomes mainly disorderly when it is not directed by any policy. Ojulari (2020) maintained that educational policies are policies designed within or outside educational institution for managing the operation of educational activities. These policies may be on pedagogical policies, curricular activities, distributional policies or resource policies. Edobor (2010) maintained that educational policies are designed and executed by government to combat education problems or to meet the educational needs of a country. In reality, educational policies are either the product of democratic deliberations through consultations or they are imposed on the people.

### **Concept of Educational Policy Implementation**

Implementation simply means the process of translating a plan or some plans into actions. That is, the act of transforming an already designed programme into what can be physically seen. Educational policy implementation refers to the act of operating an educational policy in order to achieve the goal for which it is established. In another word, it is situation whereby a formulated policy is put into practice for the purpose of realizing a particular or some goals. Policy implementation is very important. It is one thing to formulate a policy, but it is a different thing entirely to ensure that the policy is well implemented. No matter how a policy is well formulated, without effective implementation, it might not be able to actualize the stated goals. Ogunode and Ahaotu (2020) defined implementation as the logical way of executing a project, policy or programme. Mkpa and Izuagba (2012) explained implementation as the process of putting a plan or decision into action. It also captures the execution of a policy that has been designed. Mkpa and Izuagba (2012) defined implementation as the act or process of putting a decision or plan into action. It also involves the execution of a policy that has been formulated. Okoroma (2006) posited that there is a wide difference between policies of education and goal achievement of education in Nigeria, due to inadequate policies implementation. Manafa (2011) explained educational policy implementation as the process of carrying out of the formulated policies in concrete terms. Educational policy implementation is likely to achieve the stated goals, when the required resources are dedicated to it. It is the stage at which the preparations made earlier in terms of proposed designs or plans are tested to see how they are able to achieve the targeted goals. Amadi (2007) posited that implementation of educational policies cover different areas such funding, equipment and instructional material resources for learning, teachers' support staff, infrastructures, personnel to implement education programmes.

Nwadiani (1997) posited that educational policy implementation is the transformation of education policy into action involving all activities that are carried out after the formulation, acceptance and release of policy. It is the most difficult stage in planning the education system in Nigeria. At the implementation stage, administrative efficiency and managerial skills are subjected to great task. Implementation links policy plans with actual performance through the activities of implementation agencies.



## **Challenges Facing Educational Policy implementation in Nigeria**

The challenges facing effective implementation of policies in Nigeria include:

### **1. Political Instability**

Since the period of independence, Nigeria has been witnessing different regimes ranging from that of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, Gen. J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi, Gen. Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed, Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, Alhaji Sheu Shagari, Gen. Muhammed Buhari, Gen. Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida, Chief Ernest Shonekan, Gen. Sanni Abacha, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, Olusegun Obasanjo, Umar Musa Yar'adua, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to Muhammed Buhari. Each of these administrations initiated an educational policy or more. What has been common in Nigeria is that the moment a regime winded up, its successor could abandon the inherited policy or policies, instead of looking for a way of sustaining it. Frequent transitions in government had ushered in different ministers of education. In an attempt to bring out a new educational policy or policies which would be ascribed to their tenure, they abandoned the existing policy or policies and came up with different one(s) which might not have significant difference with the former one(s). According to Odukoya (2011) politics and constant changes in government is a factor which affects educational policy implementation in Nigeria. Instability in government, coupled with frequent changes in ministers and commissioners had resulted in different crises in the educational policy implementation which Nigerian educational system had witnessed over the years.

### **2. Corruption**

Another factor hindering effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria is corruption. This menace has been contagious to the extent that, since the independence in 1960, no educational policy in the country had been free from corruption, as one the challenges facing its implementation. Political leaders and high-ranked government officials had been fingered in the embezzlement of the funds earmarked for the implementation of some educational policies while some negotiated with the contractors to get return, the scenarios which had led to the construction of substandard or less buildings than the specified numbers, and provision of poor quality or inadequate facilities or personnel, thereby hindering the actualization of the goals for which the policies were formulated. The corruption which is affecting the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria is not limited to the political leaders and high-ranked government officials alone; rather it contains the school staff. Some teachers give bribe to their principals to allow them absent in school, in order to face their personal businesses. For those days they were absent in schools, students miss what they were supposed to be taught. It had also been confirmed that some principals sold some of the computers or other learning facilities provided for their schools by the government or non-governmental bodies or converted them to their personal gains. All these are also challenges to successful policy implementation.

### **3. Inadequate Funds**

Shortage of funds is a cog in the wheel of successful implementation of the educational policies in Nigeria. Education is a great investment which requires huge amount of money; but the percentages which it has been getting from the Nigerian annual budgets since years back, has not been able to meet up with the United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization's recommendation of 20% of the total annual budget to education. To support this, in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, education got N426.53billion (8.6%) out the total budget of N4.987trillion,





N493billion (10.7%) out of the total budget of N4.69trillion, N392.2billion (8.91%) out of the total budget of N4.4trillion, N369.6billion (6.01%) out of the total budget of N6.1trillion and N448.01billion (6%) out of the total budget of N7.3trillion respectively. Also 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, it received N605.8billion (7.04%) out of the total budget of N8.3trillion, N620.5bn (7.05) out of the total budget of 8.83 trillion, N652.94bn (6.9%) out of the total budget of N10.50 trillion, N742.5bn (5.6%) out of the total budget of N13.08 trillion and N923.79bn (5.4%) out of the total budget of N17.13 trillion respectively.

#### **4. Inadequate infrastructural facilities**

The facilities needed for effective implementation of educational policies include classrooms, halls, laboratories, workshops, libraries, staff offices and quarters, hostels, school vans, sports and recreational equipment, computers, textbooks, toilets, sick bays, electricity, water supply and the likes. Unfortunately, the problem of inadequacy of funds has no doubt been leading to the shortage of facilities needed to successfully implement the educational policies in Nigeria. According to Jacob and Samuel (2020), shortage of infrastructural facilities is one of the major problems preventing effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria, because no meaningful teaching and learning can take place without adequate infrastructural facilities available. For example, the Universal Primary Education, Universal Basic Education, Girl Child Education, Early Childhood Care and Development Education and other educational policies had been seriously challenged with insufficiency of the required infrastructural facilities.

#### **5. Customs and Traditions**

Nigeria is characterized as a multi-ethnic country and each of the ethnic groups has its own customs and traditions. These customs and traditions have been the guide to their ways of life, education in no exemption. For instance, Girl Child Education is a policy which goes a long way in preparing Nigerian female children for their future roles in contributing to the development of their country in particular and the universe in entirety. Despite the significance of this policy, some people in the Northern part of the country do not see the essence of sending female children to school, rather they prefer to keep them at home and prepare them for marriage at very tender ages. This is a challenge to the effective implementation of Girl Child Education in Nigeria. In addition, across the six geo-political zones of the country, some people, especially those at the rural areas, have not deemed it fit to send their children to school, rather they prefer to engage them in their traditional occupations such as fishing, farming, crafting, weaving and the likes. This is a challenge to the successful implementation of Universal Basic Education in the country.

#### **6. Inaccurate Data**

For an educational policy to achieve the goal for which it was designed, its formulation has to be based on accurate and reliable data, among other factors. It is pitiful that no census conducted in Nigeria since the independence was free from inaccuracy due manipulation of figures by the politicians, for personal benefits. Not only that, there has not been an effective data management system in Nigeria. These scenarios had made some policies to be formulated based on the inaccurate data thereby leading to haphazard implementation. Ojulari (2020) affirmed that lack of accurate statistical data and unreliable national census have been one of the factors hindering effective implementation of educational policies. Success of the various forms of educational policy implementation rests on reliable data.



## **7. Insufficiency of personnel**

Another challenge to the successful implementation of educational policies in Nigeria is inadequacy of personnel such as teachers and other professionals. For instance, up till this present time, many public primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria do not have the required number of teachers to facilitate effective implementation of Universal Basic Education. Not only that, many schools are also faced with the problem of insufficient health, security, and counselling personnel needed for successful implementation of policies like National Policy on HIV and AIDS for the Education Sector in Nigeria, National School Health Policy and The Safe School Initiative.

## **8. Poverty**

The level of poverty has been very alarming in Nigeria. According to Vanguard (2022), about 91 million Nigerians lived in poverty in 2021. Also, Premium Times (2022) reported that World Bank stated that number of poor people in Nigeria is projected to hit 95.1 million in 2022. The fact is that the parents who are poverty-stricken are not likely to play their roles expected to facilitate successful implementation of educational policies. For instance, Universal Basic Education is the foundation of education in Nigeria. This policy aims at enriching the Nigerian children with adequate foundation of knowledge and skills required to be functional human beings, capable of contributing their quota to the national and global development. However, many parents had been prevented from keying into the success of this policy because of poverty.

## **9. Insecurity**

Adequate security of lives and properties is very essential to the success of any educational policy. In an environment where protection of lives and properties are not guaranteed, implementation of educational policies suffers. During the civil war in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970, implementation of educational policies was put on hold in the Eastern part of the country. In addition, the operations of Boko Haram in the country had led to the death, kidnapping or displacement of thousands of teachers, students/pupils, non-teaching staff and parents; destruction of school buildings and facilities; and disruption of academic calendar. Furthermore, the sinister activities of the bandits, some herdsmen and the militants cannot be underrated. All these have been in no small measure hindering smooth implementation of many educational policies in Nigeria.

## **10. Lack of Political Will**

The problem of lack of political will cannot among many Nigerian political leaders be ruled out of the challenges facing effective implementation of educational policies in the country. For instance, the Federal Government would sign a bill and the state governments would refuse to implement. According Samuel and Jacob (2020), The Child Act Right bill signed and passed into the law by the federal government of Nigeria have not been signed by many state governments because they don't want to sign the bill into law for implementation in their various states.

## **Conclusion**

Based on what has been discussed above, it is evident that educational policies in Nigeria have been facing series of challenges which are hindering their effective implementation. Hence, if these problems are not solved, it would be difficult to actualize the goals for which these policies are formulated.



## Recommendations

As the challenges have been identified, it is also necessary to bring out the suggestions which would enhance stoppage of these problems, in order to facilitate effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

1. Forthcoming administrations in Nigeria should cultivate the habit sustaining the inherited educational policy or policies from their antecedents, instead of abandoning it and come with another one which might not be significantly different from it, to ensure that the inherited policy or policies see the light of the day.
2. Serious punishment should be meted out to any political leader, government official, teacher, and principal who involves in any corrupt practice capable of hindering effective implementation of educational policies, so as to serve a deterrent to others.
3. Government should ensure that allocation to education in the subsequent annual budgets is increased to meet up with the 20% recommendation of UNESCO and judicious utilization should be ensured, in order to facilitate successful implementation of educational policies.
4. Adequate provision of infrastructural facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, staff quarters and other facilities necessary for smooth implementation of educational policies should be given improved priority.
5. Government should intensify effort on sensitization of the people on the importance of education, especially those in the rural areas, in order to make them play their roles towards successful implementation of educational policies.
6. Government should ensure that comprehensive and universal data management system is built for Nigerians and census should be well conducted to ensure that all Nigerians are counted, to serve as a basis for the implementation of educational policies.
7. Adequate teachers and other personnel should be adequately recruited by the government, to make sure that policies are provided with the capable hands which would facilitate their successful implementation
8. Nigerian economy should be revamped by the government to facilitate drastic reduction in the poverty level among the citizens in the country.
9. Government should persistently give the Nigerian military personnel the needed support to fortify them more in combating the problem of insecurity, so as to maintain peaceful atmosphere necessary for successful implementation of educational policies.
10. Nigerian politicians should improve the level of their sincerity and always take implementation of educational policies as high responsibility, to make them achieve the purposes for which they are established.

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