

## Educational Policy Implementation in The 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Challenges and Prospect

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### Abstract

Educational policy implementation deals with the process of translating the general guidelines or directions of the educational policy into specific causes of actions. Policy implementation seems to be the most difficult aspect of policy making and no policy formulation is operational without implementation. Nigeria as a developing nation can only meet up with other developed and industrialized nations when her educational policies are fully implemented. Stakeholders in Nigeria educational sector have a clear understanding of what educational policy should be but without adequate implementation, policy is useless as it is not enough just to make policies. This paper discussed the challenges and prospects of educational policy implementation in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Inadequate resources, poor leadership, conflict of cultural values, corruption, and religious constraints were identified as some of the challenges hindering proper implementation of educational policy. Based on these, suggestions such as provision of adequate funds, appropriate monitoring, use of professionals on the execution of educational policies were made. The government at all levels should resist the temptation of politicizing educational sector by ensuring that only professionals are engaged in the planning and execution of educational policies to avoid wastages and achieve desired results.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Prospects, Policy, Educational Policy Implementation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is desirous of joining in the league of developed nations. This vision can be realized if the wells spelt out educational policies are adequately implemented to stabilize and solidify our educational system. Educational policy is the bedrock upon which the educational system of every nation is founded. This explains why some educational policies are made in Nigeria to guide how educational system should be operated. However, it has also become almost normal to articulate beautiful authoritative statements and practical administrative guides for the development of educational objectives in Nigeria with little or no effort to implement them. This is a gross educational fraud that requires investigative, diagnostic, and curative attention. Challenges and prospects of Educational Policy implementation therefore refers to the difficulties or problems associated with policy implementation as well as the possibility or likelihood of future positive developments in putting the decisions or plans of Policy implementation in Nigeria.

It is on record that Nigeria has had several educational policies since 1977 which have continued to be reviewed with the aim to serving the current need of the nation. Regrettably, all the policies have not been fully implemented effectively and efficiently to meet the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians. Hence, there is glaring educational policy implementation challenges in Nigeria. Thus, there is need to look into the challenges and prospects of educational policy in Nigeria in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

**Policy:** Policy is a general guideline that gives directives for specific courses of action. Jenkins in Adiele, Obasi, & Ohia (2021) described a policy as a set of inter-related decisions given by political actors in relation to the selection of goals and the means through which they would be achieved in specific situations. In the same vein, Wikipedia (2015) posit that a policy is a deliberate system of principles to guide decisions in order to achieve rational outcomes. It is a guide or plan of action. Policies are legal instruments that specify broad outlines and guidelines for decision making on specific issues. They provide the strategic roadmap that specifies the objectives to be pursued. "Policies are standing decisions intended to serve as overall guidelines to thinking and decision making" (Urieto, 199:10).

**Educational Policy:** Educational policies are therefore applied policies that specify broad educational goals to be attained, Educational policies spell out the different levels and types of education through which a nation deliberately and rationally addresses her educational needs and aspirations.

Adiele, et al (2021) posits that Educational policies are legal instrument that defines the goals and also provides guidelines for educational activities and practices vital to effective educational planning. It provides the educational roadmap for educational programmes and projects.

Educational policy therefore gives the technical planner the sense of direction and the scope of operation in the planning process. Hence, Haddad in Adiele, et al (2021) remarks that educational policy making is the first step in any planning circle, hence, planners must appreciate the dynamics of policy formulation before they design implementation and evaluation procedures effectively.

Educational policy is the practical and operational guide which provide the bases for carrying out the visions, actions, intentions, goals and objectives of an educational system. It is authoritative statement or practical guide for the administration of schools made by legitimate authorities. Educational policies are formulated to speed up the growth of every nation. This is why no policy is made without, first and foremost, identifying and capturing the overall philosophy and goals of the nation (National Policy on Education. 2013). Government or those entrusted with the responsibilities

of educational administration make educational policies. Ocho (2003) stated that educational policies are operational guidelines, which provide form bases that will enable management, staff and professionals to carry out government expectations of the school system. This shows that "policy has a duality of focus; first, it usually visualizes or stipulates what government intends to do (that is, plan, intention, goals and objectives), and how it intends to do those things it plans to do (that is, effectuation, execution or implementation)" (Oriaifo, 2006: 6) To this end, the primary role of any educational policy is to regulate and improve educational means, programmes, and outcomes.

### **Educational Policy Implementation in Nigeria**

Educational policy implementation deals with the process of translating educational policies into specific courses of action. It is the day to day carrying out of policy document. Educational policy formulation is not complete until such policies are implemented. Policy implementation seems to be the most difficult aspect of policymaking and no policy formulated is operational without policy implementation. Every policy on education is expected to achieve its aim and this is the ultimate work of policy implementation. Educational policy implementation should be evaluated accordingly, either on the process of implementation or at the end of it. This is to ensure that such a policy achieves what it sets out to achieve. In this way, areas of improvement can be strengthened for effectiveness and efficiency.

Educational policy implementation in Nigeria is assumed to be the responsibility of the civil servants. According to Ocho (2003), the bureaucrats, administrator, or civil servant normally use established guidelines in carrying out this duty of policy implementation. In Nigeria, policy implementation involves major interest groups and stakeholders in education such as the Federal and State Ministries of Education, the National Universities Commission, the National Board for Technical Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, the Post Primary School Management Board, the State Universal Educational Boards, the Local Government Education Authorities, the National Council for Nomadic Education and the National Business and Technical Education Board among others (Ogbonnaya. 2014). According to Oriaifo (2006), implementation of policies in Nigeria is the responsibility of all stakeholders, ranging from students, teachers, parents, administrative staff (academic and non-academic), all curriculum workers as well as the staff of the various Ministries to all parastatals of education. The different boards, organs, stakeholders, agencies, and ministries are vested with the power to implement educational policies made by the government. The importance of educational policy implementation cannot be over emphasized.

It is established that for every one naira spent on effective educational planning and implementation, the nation; (i) saves unquantifiable amounts in time and resources; (ii) enjoys overall improvement in productivity and job opportunities; (iii) experiences considerable decline in crime rate; and (iv) begins to relish the fruition of social, economic, cultural, political, scientific and technological advancement (Oriaifo, 2011:26)

Therefore, those involved in the implementation of educational policies should convert policies into workable blueprint. They should develop programmes for the implementation of policies. They should coordinate, monitor, assess, and appraise the implementation of educational policies in relationship with its main objectives. It is in implementing policy guideline that weaknesses or limitations of the current policy are discovered, suggestions made on how to improve the policy and adjustment effected. This is important because, as Oriaifo (2006) argued, it is not expected that there should be problems in the planning and implementation of educational policies. Sometimes such corrections, criticisms, and recommendations give birth to new policies.

### **Challenges of Educational Policy Implementation in Nigeria**

Policy implementation is an important aspect of policy making but it has suffered a lot of setbacks in Nigeria. Some of the setbacks which are constraints to educational policy implementation in Nigeria as identified by N.S. Okoroma (2006:244) include:

**Inadequate Consultation:** The challenge of educational policy implementation begins from the error in the policy making process. Educational policy implementation becomes a total failure when the bulk of those to implement educational policies are not properly consulted at the policy formulation stage, they sometimes struggle or find it difficult to understand such policies and its intention.

**Inadequate Resources:** Another challenge of educational policy implementation in Nigeria is inadequate human and material resources. Teachers are not adequate in some of our schools and where they are some of them are inexperienced and without sufficient training to carry out the reforms of new policies. There are also inadequate material resources in terms of structures, facilities and instructional material in our schools. This makes policy implementation impossible.

**Financial Barrier:** In Nigeria, education is grossly underfunded (Ezeugbor, 2011). The government does not provide sufficient fund for implementation educational policy. Sometimes, the fund provided for implementation of the policies are mismanaged and misappropriated. The difficulty encountered in the implementation of the policy of Universal Primary Education scheme was associated with inadequate funds (Ocho, 2003 & Ogbonnanya, 2014). Financial provisions are necessary for coordinating, monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of educational policies, Abidogun in Okoroafor (2016) has rightly observed that underfunding has greatly affected the dwindling quality of education as lack of adequate funds lead to insufficient supply of essential materials and human resources to facilitate achievement of the set educational goals.

**Conflicts of Cultural Values:** Inadequate cultural integration and harmony is one the complex issues bedeviling the implementation of education policies in Nigeria. Conflicts of cultural values affect educational policies in different ways in the country. Sometimes, communities and their cultural affiliations are not considered before enacting some educational policies. It becomes very difficult to implement such alien policies in the communities. Also, in a multi-tribalized society like Nigeria, it is usually difficult to get all tribes to agree in some core cultural values with regard to some educational policies and thereby causing impassable obstacles in the wheels of policy implementation. In a federal nation, the federating units in their diverse communities' values, and norms come together to design and operate community based policies unlike in a quazi-federal nation like Nigeria (Edokpolo, 2011). Here, educational policies do not sufficiently integrate various values, norms, beliefs, axioms, and interests of the people geographical bounded as Nigeria. The political landscape of Nigeria does not give room for the survival and success of educational policies.

**Corruption and lack of political will:** Okoroma (2006) and Ibe (2017) identified corruption and lack of political will as factors militating against educational policy implementation in Nigeria. It is obvious that corruption among public office holders in Nigeria hampers a successful implementation of educational policies in varied indiscreet ways. They could manipulate the process plan or misappropriate fund set aside for the implementation process. No policy succeeds when the process is mischievously tempered with, recklessly manipulated or consciously circumvented.

**Inadequate Monitoring and Supervision:** There is poor monitoring and supervision of educational policy implementation and this adds to the problems militating against educational policy implementation in Nigeria. Monitoring and supervisory team are not usually constituted to carry out the duty of monitoring of educational policy implementation and where they are available, they are not properly trained for the job.

**Religious Constraints:** Different religious sentiments in Nigeria play constant roles in the implementation of educational policies. This is a major obstacle to policy implementation especially when it is not well considered before policy formulation. For instance, an attempt by some agnostic humanists in the southern universities to replace Islamic and Christian Religious Knowledge with a syllabus called "Moral Education" was fought by the affected religious leaders who felt that it was a call for moral anarchism since it raises the question of who would determine what was "moral" or "immoral" (Lemu, 2002). Again and recently too, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), an arm of the Federal Ministry of Education in an attempt to reduce the workload of primary and junior secondary pupils from 20 to a maximum of 10 subjects decided to merge Christian Religious Knowledge, Islamic Religious Studies, and some other subjects under a compulsory subject known as Religion and National Values (RNV) (Vanguard, 2016, April 19). The religious leaders vehemently and publicly resisted the policy as it will mandate pupils of one faith to memorize and study the spiritual values beliefs of another faith. The fear was that if such policy is implemented in the school curriculum, then Nigeria will be plunged into moral relativism and nihilism. It is therefore imperative that policy makers should incorporate the views of divergent religious affinities in the Nigeria while designing educational policies.

**Indiscipline:** This is another dead end to educational policy implementation. Indiscipline means lack of self-control, self-integrity, self-discipline, and self-evaluation. An undisciplined person possesses untamed personality and positive attitude deficiency. Lack of principle and order among those whose responsibility is to implement educational policies endanger the successful implementation of policies. Examples of indiscipline from supposed agents of policy implementation may be viewed, in the opinion of Oriairo (2006). to include absenteeism and truancy among teachers and their students, denying female children formal education by parents and guardians, insensitivity of the various tiers of government to important educational policies e.g. early childhood education, compromising integrity by parents, teachers and relevant educators on matters that extrapolate to hindering policy planning and implementation e.g. examination malpractice and so on.

**Lack of Knowledge:** It is pitiable to discover that Nigeria lacks experts who are competent and specialist in policy matrixes and so educational policy implementation suffers a general set part. Oriairo (2006) argued that Nigeria does not have the quality nor the quantity of policy professionals required in the various disciplines including education. This argument is sustainable since participatory implementation of educational policies requires a deeper understanding of policy framework and implementation modalities that ill-equipped and ill-informed policy personnel cannot supply.

**Self-Aggrandizement:** This is the mother of so many unjust practices that adversely affect implementation of educational policies. This disgruntled and over ambitious individuals, usually politicians are ground preventers of public policy for selfish objectives. Ocheoha (2011) noted that these selfish politicians, for selfish reasons, refuse to heed to the advice and recommendations of

bureaucrats, policy analysts and professional experts and as a result of such biases, more costs are recklessly incurred in implementation of policies which ultimately do not turn out to be beneficial to those it was designed for. For instance, some politicians truncate laudable policies and fecundated projects merely to frustrate their political or geographical enemies.

### **Prospects of Educational Policy Implementation in Nigeria**

Implementation of educational policy in Nigeria will go a long way to benefit the nation and all the stakeholders in the educational system. Some of these prospects as elucidated by Igbokwe (2016) include:

**Quality Decision:** It is obvious that educational policy implementation helps to fecundate well researched, tested, reliable and constructively criticized decision. It makes decisions easier as well since the day to day decisions can be extracted from the impressions in the policy blueprint.

**Educational Stability:** Consistency of decisions stabilizes educational system and this is only possible with the implementation of educational policies. In this case, the operational guidelines of schools or educational system do not depend on the administrative officials and so a change in administration does not destabilize the educational system.

**Sense of Direction:** Educational policy gives a sense of direction when its implementation is in progress. Everyone in the school system knows what is expected in particular situations. Results of actions are predetermined because practical guidelines are available. All stake holders become aware of the principles at play in every decisions in the school system.

**Orderliness of Action:** Policy implementation ensures orderliness in the educational system. No one does what he or she likes. People know what they are expected to do and how to do it. In this case, there is uniformity of action and similar processes. This ensures orderliness and eschews confusion and anarchy.

**Cost Reduction:** Administrative expense that goes along with regular decision-making is reduced considerably when educational policy is operational and fully implemented. The administrative officials do not have to congregate always, in all cases, to waste time and money in order to take administrative decisions since some of these decisions are already contained in policy document. What is just needed is for the administrator to look at the policy document and give their verdict in the line of particular situation covered in the blueprint.

**Assurance of Justice:** Implementation of educational policies gives workers confidence that they will not be maltreated at their places of work. Policies are there to ensure that everybody is 'measured' or appraised based on the policy guideline. It does not matter whether the administrative officials like a particular teacher or not. What matters is what is contained in the policy statement. Every worker is judged by the policy statement. There is no preferential treatment.

**Responsibility and Control:** The knowledge of one's responsibility and sense of control is one of the assurances of educational policy implementation in Nigeria. It has been pointed out that one of the obstacles to educational development in Nigeria is the issue of responsibility and control that leads to conflicts between the Federal, State and Local Government in the management and control

of various of levels of education (Adeyinka. n.d). This idea of responsibility and control is bound to be permanently solved if educational policies are well implemented as defined. Each tier of government will know its level of responsibility and control at each levels of education in the country.

## **CONCLUSION**

No doubt. Nigeria is reputable for having richly worded, impeccably expressed, academically researched, and futuristically captured educational policies. The implementation of these policies is constantly plagued by endemically incurable implementation hangovers. As such, failed policy implementation has been fingered invariably to be the readymade incubator for the large number and manifestations of ills in education in Nigeria (Oriaifo, 2006). Policies are of no use to education unless implemented. Meanwhile, educational policy implementation is an important concept that cannot be glossed over. Its benefits in any developing nation are very imperative. In all despite the fact that implementation of educational policies in Nigeria has been besieged by lot of challenges which adversely inhibit the success of such policies, this paper has outlined a number of measures to make educational policy implementation effective and successful.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Regardless of numerous constraints to educational policy implementation, there are several ways policy implementation can become successful in Nigeria and they include:

1. The federal, state and local government should ensure that all stakeholders of educational system are well represented in the process of policy planning, formulation and implementation. If adequate consultation and dialogue with those to implement the policies are done properly, policy implementation will become a lot easier and more effective.
2. The government should ensure that trained and experienced personnel are available for educational policy implementation. For instance, some Nigerian Universities used computers for their Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (Post-UTME) but had insufficient trained computer personnel to conduct the examination. That was disastrous in some schools as candidates waited for hours, leading to fainting of some candidates and shortening of the timing of the examination.
3. The government should ensure that adequate fund is provided for the implementation of educational policies. To implement policies requires a lot of fund. Fund is needed to ensure that the implementers meet regularly and set up various programmes for policy implementation.
4. The government should ensure auditors are invited from time to time to review the use of fund provided for educational policy implementation since this fund is usually embezzled as soon as it is disbursed. This will ensure accountability and transparency. It will eliminate or reduce misappropriation of the fund.
5. The government should provide infrastructural facilities and other necessities needed for the implementation of educational policies. For instance, if the policy is on the development of science and technology, the government should build laboratories and provide required equipment for such laboratories.
6. The government should make provision for trained monitoring teams whose work is to ensure that educational policies are implemented as required. This team should be consulted

during policy formulation stage so that they should be aware of the objective of such policy. The monitoring team should help the government in continuous review of the policy and in providing facilities needed for implementation of policies. The government should empower administrators of schools to supervise and monitor the implementation of policies within their jurisdiction and give reports to appropriate authorities regularly.

7. The government should enact policies that will help private and mission schools to thrive so that value and character formation will once more become an integral part of our educational system. In this way, future generations will be more disciplined, selfless and accommodating as this will help in enforcement of rational policies towards development in future.
8. Policy makers should encourage active participation of different federating units in Nigeria in the formulation of educational policies. This will ensure that communities' values and reasonable interests are represented properly for easy implementation of policies.
9. The anti-corruption agencies should be given legislative authority and mandated to check the operational arbitrariness and deficiencies of policy makers and policy implementers for efficiency and effectiveness of educational policy implementation. For instance, the recent violation of the proscription of Post-UTME examination by some universities (Akinboade, 2016, June 28; Eze & Dike. 2016. June 28). An anti-corruption agency other than National Universities Commission (NUC) should be empowered to ensure total compliance of such educational policy.
10. Government at all levels and other policy makers should encourage the participation of religious, union, and opinion leaders in the formulation and implementation of educational policies as this will be very helpful for effective and efficient implementation of educational policies.
11. Educationists should selflessly come together through their numerous associations to find out creative, innovative, functional, realistic, and productive ways of getting the fruitfulness of educational policies towards solving the relevant challenges they were meant to solve.
12. Policies should be community-based and people-oriented in order to be tailored to the ever changing needs of the people who faithfully expedite its smooth and honest implementation.

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