
The Challenges of Educational Planning and Implementation: Way Forward

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Abstract

This paper examined the challenges of educational planning and implementation: Way forward. Planning has been observed as a fundamental requirement for any successful endeavor whether in the political or socio-economic environment. For this fact, any individual, institution or country that fails to plan, has planned to fail. Educational planning was examined and it involved a systematic and scientific set of decisions for future actions with the aim of achieving set out educational goals and objectives. The Nigerian education sector is faced with many challenges; they have been reported complaints that the education sector has been poorly funded in quality performance of our educational products. The significant challenge for educational planners and management today is the ability to effectively apply strategic plans, best practices to the education sector for overall education provision and service delivery. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the concept of educational planning, the rationale for educational planning in Nigeria, educational implementation, the different strategic plans in Nigeria and challenges of educational planning in Nigeria which include: lack or inaccurate statistical data, lack of funds, shortage and unavailability of resources, corruption and changes in government. It was concluded that educational planners should begin to initiate educational plans, policies and programmes that will promote and sustain equity and development in the education sector. Among other things, it was concluded that there should be continuity in government policy even if there is change in government and availability of resources towards the school infrastructures and human resource development to the extent that the propagation of worthwhile knowledge can be guaranteed for effective and efficient planning and implementation of educational policy. Suggestions were also made which include: the government should increase budgetary allocation in the education industry.

Keywords: Planning, Educational Planning, Implementation and Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Planning is seen as fundamental prerequisite for any successful endeavour whether in the political or socio-economic environment. For this fact, any individual, institution or country that fails to plan, has planned to fail. In many nations of the world Nigeria inclusive, there has been a continuous effort for improved educational systems which resulted in some kind of shift in educational planning and specific efforts on the part of the governments to develop policies for transforming education (Chukwumah & Ezeugbor, 2015). Chukwumah and Ezeugbor (2015), asserted that over the past three to four decades, different Nigerian governments have shown interest in transforming the education sector and have come up with various educational policies and programmes to ensure that they achieve their goals. Such efforts generally led to the introduction of the universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and 6-3-3-4 system in 1985 (Six years in primary school, three years in Junior, three years in senior secondary school respectively and four years in the university), yet the desired educational goals have not been met as many policies and programmes were poorly implemented (Nwankwoala, 2019). The Federal ministry of education has laid emphasis on the need to promote the effective use of strategic planning and implementation to improve the quality of education provision and service delivery in the Nigeria educational system.

Education is widely accepted by many nations to be one of the most important needs for the well-being of any society. It is seen as a powerful instrument of social progress without which neither an individual nor a nation can attain professional growth, hence the need for meticulous in planning and implementation of education for quality service delivery cannot be over emphasized. Following this view, Kansanen (2004) posits that there is need for good schools, good teachers and administrators. Given its importance, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted education as an instrument par excellence for national development and therein places much emphasis on it, as a necessary condition for realizing the five national goals of education which include a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens. As such, the Federal Ministry of Nigeria stated that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument for change, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of a society has to be preceded by an educational revolution.

The ultimate goal of education is to develop the individual's mental capacity and character for useful living within the society. No doubt, despite the various planning and implementations of the educational system, the Nigerian education sector is still faced with many challenges. There have been repeated complaints that the education sector in Nigeria has been poorly funded resulting in poor quality performance of our educational products, grapple with large class size, inadequate number of qualified teachers (Agabi, 2019; Ololube, 2021). The state of many schools (especially primary and secondary) in the rural area in particular is a matter of concern for restructuring, has made manifest by dilapidated buildings, insufficient classroom accommodation, lack of essential teaching materials, inadequate staff welfare, shortage of school

furniture for students and teachers, lack of other essential facilities such as water, light, toilet facilities and low levels of teacher productivity.

Many schools in Nigeria have very little or no internally generated revenue to offset their financial problems, nonexistence of computer for ICT for students' practice, poor decision making, examination malpractice, improper planning, poor implementation, rising cases of students' indiscipline and poor academic performance. In the face of these problems, educational planners, and school managements are being encouraged to transform schools through proper implementation of strategic plans. The current education system of our nation needs an urgent successful and sustainable transformation and improvement, yet the desired educational goals of the National Policy on Education have not been met as many policies and programmes were poorly implemented. It is on this ground this paper builds on literatures to proffer clarity on the underpinning issues bedeviling educational planning and implementation through the strategic use of planning and implementation of educational policy to improve the quality of education provision and service delivery in the Nigeria educational system.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Education Planning

There is no doubt that, the success of any educational system depends on effective planning and implementation. Planning is a term that is applicable in all spheres of life. Planning is the process of examining the future and drawing up appropriate actions for achieving specified goals and objectives (Ajani, 2021). It means working out in broad outline the things to be done and the procedures for doing them to accomplish set purpose. According to Ajani (2021), educational planning is the application of rational systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the process of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of the students and the society. Ajani (2021) was of the opinion that, educational planning should take into account any future changes that may want to affect existing plans hence the need for flexibility. Nwankwo (2007) explained that educational planning is a process of preparing a set of decisions about educational enterprise in such a way that the goals and purposes of education will be sufficiently realized in future with the available resources. According to Ololube (2013) educational planning is a concise and deliberate attempt, through organized and continuous processes to identify the different elements and aspects of the educational industry. It helps us in determining the present state and interaction, hence projecting them throughout a given period of time. This is done by analyzing, formulating, implementing and controlling the actions that have evolved to attain the desired aims and objectives of education.

A plan is described as efficient if the resources put into it are sufficient in meeting the stated objectives. Ololube (2021) opined that it is important for educational production to be both effective and efficient so as to properly guide the internal and external changes in the school as it utilizes the educational resources available. Unfortunately, resources are scarce in a developing country like Nigeria where education has to compete with other sectors for the allocation of funds within limited resources and this makes it imperative for educational planners not to be

wasteful hence plan effectively for even unforeseen circumstances that may affect education for all (Nwagwu, 2007). They further observed that the effectiveness of education depends on Strategic planning which deals with macro issues emphasizing what the organization should do.

Education Implementation

Education policy implementation is a complex, evolving process that involves many stakeholders and can result in failure if not well targeted. It is therefore crucial to understand it, clarify its determinants and explore ways in which it can be more transparent and effective. The pressures on education implementation systems grow to deliver high-quality education and the number of reforms increase, but policy makers do not necessarily grant much attention to their implementation. Considering the fast-paced economic, social and demographic environments that surround education, efforts for education systems to adjust, improve and drive the future appear necessary for socio economic growth (Gallup, 2017). There is little evidence of whether education reforms have an effect, however, because educational impacts are challenging to assess and seldom evaluated. Even when reforms do have an impact, stakeholders are easily dissatisfied with the outcomes and they tend to hold policy makers accountable for them (Corbier, 2017).

Similarly, there is little knowledge about the actual processes that produce, or are supposed to produce the desired outcomes of educational implementation in Nigeria schools. These processes “between the establishment of a policy and its effects in the world of action are commonly referred to as policy implementation, even if there is no consensus on the planning process (O'Toole, 2000). Having entrenched within the concept of implementation that the idea implemented brings about an effective change to the education sector. For example, implementing a new curriculum at the school level mostly implies changing schools and teachers’ practices, their beliefs, and the materials used (OECD, 2017). On the other hand, a planned policy introducing new formulas requires district leaders to change the way individual schools and local education systems are managed to withstand the academic change or reform.

Rationale for Educational Planning and Implementation in Nigeria

Like any human endeavour, education in Nigeria must be efficiently planned, and effectively implemented to achieve the goals, objectives and national aspirations of Nigeria. This is because education is one of the avenues through which national development could be achieved. Taiwo (2004) agrees with this assertion and is shared by many authors in Education. The National policy on education [NPE] (2014) rates education as ‘the most important instrument of change’. Most world countries use education as an instrument to plan national development. The potency of education as a change agent is manifested in its effect on socialization, the transmission of culture, acquisition of skills, knowledge and societal norms as well as inculcating moral values and attitudes (Taiwo 2004).

This explains why education should be properly planned and effectively implemented. The contemporary countries including Nigeria have confidence in the rewarding benefits of education. This is why educational planning has been seen by Taiwo (2004) as the process of

determining in advance what you want to do in the field of education, and how you are going to do it to achieve productive gains such as socialization, the transmission of culture, acquisition of skills, knowledge and societal norms as well as inculcating moral values and attitudes

Educational Planning and Implementation in Nigeria

The educational planning in Nigeria can be seen in the five main national objectives as stated in the FRN (2014) which was endorsed by the government as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education. These objectives include the building of:

- i. A free and democratic society;
- ii. A just and egalitarian society;
- iii. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- iv. A great and dynamic economy;
- v. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

If these stated national objectives are strictly pursued, then the quality of instruction at all levels will be oriented towards inculcating values such as freedom for the individuals to make national educational decisions, equal educational opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, respect for the worth and dignity of individual citizens, respect for the dignity of labour, a healthy moral and spiritual development of individuals and a sense of responsibility to work together for the common good of the society. Since Educational planning in Nigeria covers all levels of education primary, secondary and tertiary therefore each level requires different modalities of planning for skillful execution (Edame, 2004).

However, in Nigeria educational planning dated back to the missionary and colonial period of Lord Lugard in the early 1950. The first educational policy in Nigeria was during the former Western Region 1952. The regional government proposed the introduction of free education to come into effect in January, 1955. To make this proposal succeed, the government proposed a large scale training of teachers, expanded the existing teacher training Colleges and purchased adequate equipment for the proposed schemes. Several planning committees were set-up to work out details for effective implementation of the plan. The scheme was implemented as scheduled. The scheme however, ran into unforeseen difficulties. One of these was the inadequacy of teachers which led to poor quality of teaching and falling standards of education. There was an upsurge in the number of pupils since education was free and compulsory. Equipment was inadequate; Schools were not properly monitored because the number of supervisors was few compared to available pupils. After six years of operation, the plan was reviewed with a view to detecting errors in planning and making necessary corrections. It was indeed clear that the planning was faulty.

The second policy was introduced in the former Eastern Region which has been described by Odukoya (2011) as “hastily prepared”. The poor planning at the initial stage led to shortage of teachers, equipment, buildings and other essentials. Like the government of Western Region, the government of Eastern Region set up the Dike committee, which later found out that the government was spending over 30% of its national resources on education, and that most of

the budget on education was exhausted on primary education alone. The committees therefore recommended qualitative education rather than quantitative education. A compromise was then reached whereby a three years' non-fee paying system and a three years' fee paying system based on the estimated local distributions was adopted by the government.

The third educational policy was that of Northern Nigeria where educational planning between 1962 and 1968 was guided by Ashby commission's Report which recommended that:

1. 10% of all children completing primary education should proceed to secondary education.
2. 30% of those completing WASC (West African School Certificate) should be admitted into Institutions of higher learning including university.
3. 25% of all children should complete primary education. (Odukuya, 2011).

The recommendations preceded the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE). Again, planning was not effective and this adversely affected the scheme, so by 1967, 11% overall enrolment was attained. The demand for enrolment into secondary school however, exceeded Ashby Commission's estimate by 1967 when 11.4% was recorded instead of the 10% estimated by the commission. From this time to 1976, the six universities then in existence (Ibadan, Lagos, Ife, Benin, Ahmadu Bello and Nsukka) could not even cope with the number of candidates aspiring to gain admission into the university. (Nwankwoala, 2019).

The fourth phase of educational planning was the Universal Primary Education (UPE) schemes launched in September 1976 by the Federal Government. According to the announcement by the Federal Government, the UPE became compulsory in 1979. Barely one year after the scheme had become operative, it became clear that the planning was faulty. Some of the major difficulties included the shortage of teachers, classroom space, equipment, funds to purchase the essential materials. While some of the schools were over-enrolled, others were under-enrolled. The whole nation was dotted with primary schools that were poorly maintained, some abandoned. The Federal Government started shifting some of the financial burden onto the state and local governments, and even to the communities in which these schools were situated. It was again clear that the planning was faulty and short-sighted. It was not based on adequate statistics and demographic data, and was not backed up with enough teachers, enough teaching materials, buildings and funds to pay staff salaries.

The fifth educational planning and policy in Nigeria was the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in 1982. This coded numeric observation means that children will spend six years at the primary education level. Six years at the secondary, but the secondary years will be divided into three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary. The last four years are expected to be spent in the university (a tertiary level of education). The 6-3-3-4 system of education in theory, places a central emphasis on pre-vocational education and academic in order to provide the needed technical manpower. It also aims at providing avenue for those not academically inclined to branch off into a vocational school where they are more likely to implement their talent (NPE, 2014). Little preparation was made regarding the provision of the 6-3-3-4 system into the most appropriate educational programmes and consequently the most

appropriate occupations ultimately. How teachers for the primary schools will be trained was not specified in the 6-3-3-4 system, if the teacher grade two institutions would be phased out or not. It is likely that the drop-out rate will exceed the educational provision made to cater for them (Edame, 2004).

i. The 1999 Education Plan: The Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was launched on the 30th September, 1999 in Sokoto, Sokoto state by President Olusegun Obasanjo. The UBE Act, 2004 made provision for basic education in Nigeria to include Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE), primary and junior secondary. The responsibility of financing the basic education rests on the Federal, state and local governments.

The specific objectives of UBE scheme are to:

1. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. Provide free, compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
3. Reduce drastically drop-out rate from the formal school system through improved relevant and efficiency.
4. Cater for drop-out and out-of-school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
5. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying the foundation for life -long learning.

This education plan for Nigeria is aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulating and accelerating national development, political consciousness and national integration. This plan can rightly be described as the Nigeria's strategy for the achievement of Education for All (EFA) and the education related millennium development goals (Adeshina, 2005). The objectives of the basic education indicate that the programme is a nine-year basic education programme that covers 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary education. Despite the expectations from the Universal Basic Education, the implementation of the programme has faced serious setbacks such as inadequate qualified teachers especially in junior secondary levels, inadequate classrooms for teaching and learning, insufficient funds to run the programme.

ii. Strategic Plans for the Development of the Education Sector

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) launched the 4- year strategic plan for the development of education sector. This education plan focused on tackling the challenges hampering the Nigerian

education system from playing its role in national development. This transformation agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan addresses six focal areas

- i. Strengthening the institutional management of education.
- ii. Access and equity
- iii. Standard and quality assurance.
- iv. Teacher education and development
- v. Technical and vocational education and training
- vi. Funding, partnership and resource mobilization

The 4-year strategic education plan was an attempt to implement strategies that would make education more functional and beyond schooling where emphasis is on certification. The emphasis on technical and vocational education and training was necessary in order to provide pupils/students with the type of education that can make them self-reliant and to eradicate poverty. In order to achieve the goals of the 4-year plan, the curriculum of the 9-year basic education, the National Policy on education and the curriculum of teachers' training were reviewed. The Early Child Care Development Education was institutionalized. There was also the distribution of instructional materials to schools, phased rehabilitation of Federal Unity Colleges, Need Assessment of Public Tertiary institutions and promotion of technical and vocational education and training.

iii. The Strategic Plans for Education (2016-2019)

According to Abdulsalam (2016), the 2016-2019 educational plans were aimed at repositioning the Nigeria's education system to play a central role in the Federal Government's philosophy of change. The plan tagged "Education for Change" is focused on strengthening institutional structures and creating innovative strategies aimed at revamping the education sector. The aims of this education plan as highlighted by Abdulsalam (2016) included the following:

- a) To provide the needed direction to chart a course towards ensuring the provision of inclusive and equitable education.
- b) To provide life-long learning opportunities for all.
- c) To promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- d) To promote accountability and transparency in government.
- e) To promote public-private partnership and collaboration with donors to fill funding gaps.
- f) To provide the type of education Nigeria needs to meet the target of the sustainable development goals.
- g) To provide functional education as a leeway out of youth unemployment.

However, this strategic education plan recognizes paucity of funds as a major challenge for the development of the education sector. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons the plan is aimed at

promoting public-private partnership and collaboration with donor agencies to fill the funding gaps.

The purpose of educational planning is effective implementation. Nwakwoala (2019) observed that there are two types of education planning in vogue in many parts of the world, namely: strategic and operational planning. Operational planning focuses on the present resources and operational problems to ensure that the goals are attained. It is any planning carried out at the local or the institutional level. It is concerned with measurable and verifiable objectives. Strategic and operational plans are complementary; for instance, while strategic planning ensures that the right thing is done, operational planning is to ensure that the system is doing things right.

Challenges of Educational Planning and Implementation in Nigeria

The numerous issues that confront the educational sector in Nigeria are either left unattended or neglected and most often transferred to another administration compound inadvertently the whole system of education in Nigeria (Agabi, 2019). Citing some of the issues, they noted that indiscipline seemingly is one of the challenges militating against implementation of educational plans/policies in the education sector. Crisis in Nigeria education sector has led to 'brain-drain' syndrome which resulted to academic drift of scholars and elites from Nigeria to other parts of the world or other sectors of the economy in search of greener pastures. Below are some of the challenges confronting educational planning and implementation in Nigeria.

1. **Lack or inaccurate Statistical Data:** Prominent among the issues bedeviling planning and implementation of educational policy in Nigeria is the problem statistical data availability (Nwankwoala, 2019). Investigation, analysis, and achievements are assessed based on statistics and the data sets available. Research, analysis, forecast, and economic predictions are impossible without available and accurate statistical data over a specific area of interest. Nigeria since independence has had challenges in the areas of data availability. When they are available, they are mostly inaccurate (Agi & Adiele, 2015). Planning and especially implementing educational policies requires up to date data, school plans which do not provide adequately provide necessary data needed in the planning and implementation process usually encounter challenges at long-run.
2. **Lack of Funds:** Under-funding raises a lot of other implications on the part of educational planning. Nigeria's education system is bedeviled with the challenges of underfunding and thus poor infrastructure, inadequate classrooms and teaching aids (projectors, computers, libraries, laboratories etc.); paucity of quality teachers/poor or polluted learning environment (Nwiyi, et al., 2019). Therefore, in such learning environment, educational plans and policies cannot be implemented rather the school system is further plagued with numerous social vices like examination malpractices, cultism, students' unrest, strike actions to mention but a few.

3. **Shortage and Unavailability of Resources:** one of the impediments to educational planning implementation is lack of high-quality learning resources to support classroom instruction and lack of time to study the guides. Therefore, effective implementation of educational plan is dependent on the presence of adequate resources and supports. In Nigeria, teaching-learning resources-textbooks, students guide, libraries, equipment and other facilities are either lacking in our schools, are in very short-supply or inadequate (Ololube, 2013). The drastic rise in school enrolment compounds the problem, as many school children struggle for the scarce resources.
4. **Change in Government:** This leads to change in its operators as the new person in office may not have interest in education and this poses a problem in the implementation of educational policies. Also, depending on who is in power, a well-articulated and financial curriculum could be marred at the implementation stage due to financial constraints. The quality, quantity and adequacy of this have great impact on implementation of educational policies (Harbison, 2016). Therefore, in a situation whereby the old government has interest in education and releases enough fund for its effective running, the new government may end up not continuing from where the previous stopped due to lack of interest. Furthermore, poor government policy may trigger incessant strike action, student unrest and/or civil revolt which disrupt continuity and balance in implementation of educational plan/policies.
5. **Corruption:** This practice pervades all segments of government in Nigeria as the perpetrators wallow in enormous financial and material wealth. This has greatly affected education system in Nigeria. The objectives of most policies in Nigeria are often derailed at the implementation stage due to a number of reasons: The budgets for the implementation of the policies are often passed by lawmakers with strings attached to them, even when the budgets are passed; the executive arm of government is often reluctant to release funds to facilitate implementation (Okeke, 2009). The inadequate funds often released to the operators of the education system (primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions) are not honestly and fully utilized to promote the cause of education.
6. **Inadequate Personnel as Head of Ministry:** In a situation whereby Personnel who lack the knowledge and is unqualified/ incompetent in the field of education is appointed as Head of Ministry of Education, he or she would be incapable of ensuring a successful implementation of educational policies.
7. **Employment of Incompetent Teachers:** The government tends to employ any how teachers which they can afford to pay regardless of their qualifications having used the money allocated to education for their own personal needs. Much as adequate number

and wide varieties of teachers are needed for effective educational plan/policy implementation, the quality of the teachers must not be sacrificed on the altar of quantity (Abdulsalam, 2016).

8. **Ethnicity:** This issue tends to affect the implementation of educational plan/policy as a result of the government considering those in their own geographical areas by allocating money resources to them neglecting other areas (Mishra, 2008).

Way Forward of Planning and Implementation of Nigeria Education

There is need for a good understanding of the process of policy planning and implementation in Nigeria educational system. This understanding is pertinent to positively influence our reviewed literatures and reporting system in preferring possible way forward on the challenges bedeviling Nigeria educational system.

1. Launch a standard for conducting research [research method] and for reporting – from problem identification, title formulation, proposal writing, sampling, instrument development and validation, fieldwork, data analysis, result presentation, abstract writing and referencing.
2. Institute an annual specialized workshop, seminar, conferences and training session for educational planners and administrators on the significance and process of policy formulation and implementation for researchers and for key government functionaries.
3. Institute workable policies that will bring about frequent changes in government policies which negatively affect the planning and implementation continuity from incumbent government offices and avoid policy attrition of favourable implemented policies.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, after a critical exploration of the Nigerian educational planning and implementation challenges; this study is of the opinion that it is essential that educational planners in Nigeria should begin to initiate educational plans/policies that will promote and sustain unity, equity and development of educational sector in Nigeria. Since education brings a positive change in the life of the students and the society at large. It should not be taken for granted. Its policies and programmes should be strictly adhered to and all efforts should be made by the teachers, administrators, students, government and the society at large to ensure the goal of educational planning are achieved. Also, based on the challenges encountered in implementing these educational plans/policies/programs that can salvage our collective dilemma should be deliberated on instead of the fruitless disposition of lamentation. This way we can redeem and salvage what is left from our endangered education system.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the literatures reviewed in this paper, the followings suggestions were made that:

1. The government should increase her budgetary allocation to the education sector to aid effective and efficient planning and implementing of educational policies.
2. The government at all levels should commit vast resources towards the school infrastructures and human resource development to the extent that the propagation of worthwhile knowledge can be guaranteed for effective and efficient planning and implementation of educational policy.
3. There should be continuity in government policy even if there is change in government.
4. Effort should be made by the government and stakeholder in the education sector to eradicate corruption from the sector so that available resources can be utilized for public interest.

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