

Challenges of Policy Implementation in Nigeria's Education System

UWAKWE, ELIZABETH

Department of Educational Management
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
Nigeria

keedzcare@gmail.com

ADIELE, E. EDWARD

Department of Educational Management
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
Nigeria

Abstract

Educational Planning is the foundation of education. The development of education depends on effective planning. Educational planning is a continuous process, and it covers all aspects of education. The current situation in Nigeria leaves higher education in a dire situation due to the myriad of challenges bedeviling the sector. This paper discusses some major challenges affecting effective educational planning as these challenges have stifled the smooth growth and progress of the educational system. Special focus is made on higher education in Nigeria. In this regard, this paper attempted a review of some of the implications for these challenges affecting educational planning in Nigeria's higher institutions. Some of these challenges include scarcity of realistic data for educational planning, poor funding of educational plans, poor implementation of plans, insecurity, and scarcity of skilled personnel. The paper also explored the end results of these challenges in the educational sector. They include inaccurate data, poor quality of education, disruption of academic calendar and high rate of school dropout, etc. The paper concluded by making practical suggestions that are expected to guide the formulation of implementable framework that will position Nigeria's educational policy on an enviable pedestal.

Keywords: Education, Challenges, Planning, Implications, Higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Education is very important to the development of any nation. This is because education is believed to have the power to transform the society. Through education, the economy of a nation can be improved upon. Education enhances the social well-being as well as the economic and

technological transformation of any nation, (Akpan:2015). Education therefore needs to be carefully planned in such a way that it can fulfill the functions it is meant to perform in the society.

However, in the past years, the Nigerian Educational system has had its fair share of challenges and obstacles. These challenges have continued to affect the quality of learning in our schools. The educational system of any nation cannot therefore be successful if it is not carefully planned. This planning involves forecasting the future and proactively making provisions for these future eventualities.

Planning is the intelligent preparation for action. It is in-deed a process, and involves deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it and who should do it. Planning fills the gap between what is available and what is anticipated. Looking at the future objectives, and inconsideration of the present situation, planning steps in to fill the void. Educational planning can therefore be said to be a process of forecasting educational needs, envisaging the future trends in educational development, setting goals and objectives and following through to achievement of the set goals. It is all the procedures, techniques and resources put together to achieve the aim of education to foster unity and national development. According to Akpan (2015) educational planning is the process of examining the future and drawing up appropriate actions for achieving specified goals and objectives. It involves the setting of goals and objectives, formulation of policies, coordination of educational programmes and activities that would lead to the accomplishment of the educational programmes. Olulobe (2013) sees Educational Planning as a concise and deliberate attempt through organized and continuous process to identify the different elements and aspects of educational industry. From the above definitions, it implies that effective educational planning ultimately leads to a predetermined educational goals and objectives, taking into consideration the financial and human resource requirements for the achievement of the set goals. Educational planning aims to making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and objectives of the society. In doing this, educational planning pays special attention to the learners needs and expectations particularly in the learning facilities and equipment, classroom space, qualified personnel, curriculum etc. Educational policy should also consider socio economic and political realities as well as the technological changes of the learning environment.

Effective educational planning, no doubt is essential in sustainable national development. According to Ibrahim (2017) sustainable national development is a process through which resources exploitation, investment duration, technological development and institutional changes are made consistent with future and present needs. UNESCO (2013) defines educational planning as the application to education itself of a rational and scientific approach to examine one's alternatives, choosing wisely among them, and then proceeding systematically to implement the choices thus made. Education therefore can be viewed, according to Carlson et al., (2011) as a 'leveler, reducing social inequalities and enabling larger number of the population to share in the growth process.

The role of higher education as essential to national growth cannot be over emphasized. This is due to contribution of higher education in producing high-level skills and competencies

as essential to national development. For these reasons, countries all over the world including Nigeria are giving higher education the needed policy attention. Meanwhile, in the Nigerian education system, higher education is the education given after secondary school education. It consists of Federal Universities, State Universities, Universities of technology, Universities of Agriculture, Polytechnics and colleges of education. They are often referred to as either post-secondary education, tertiary institutions, or institutions of higher learning. They are owned either by the Federal Government, State Government or private agencies and individuals as provided by the National Policy on Education. (NPE 2020)

According to Akinyemi (2012), the stock of highly-educated individuals produced by higher education institutions plays an important role in the innovation and sustainable development of any society.

Challenges of Planning in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

Educational planning has been described as a blue print for future educational development which also prescribes the direction and course of actions for accomplishment of set educational goals and objectives (Akpan: 2015). Educational planning is therefore open to so many challenges that has continued to prevent education from being the key that opens the doors for development, modernization, civilization and industrialization of any nation. Higher Education planning has come to play a major role in the development of the nation.

Regardless of all these benefits and importance, higher education in Nigeria is faced with various challenges. The current state of affairs in Nigeria leaves higher education in a dire situation. This also makes educational planning in higher education a very difficult task. And with this difficulty, the quality of higher education is put on the spot. The quality of education in Nigerian higher institutions has deteriorated over time. This, according to Ezekiel-Hart and Adiele (2010) is responsible for the non-recognition of any Nigerian University on the list of top 500 Universities in the world into details in the following section:

1. Scarcity of Realistic Data for Educational Planning

Planning essentially relies on extensive research. This research is done to find out the present situation as well as the factors responsible for those realities. This research essentially relies on the availability of reliable data both qualitatively and quantitatively. If the data used to form these policies are reliable, the resultant document will be of very high standard. Unfortunately, for various reasons, this data for this critical research in formulating educational policies for higher education is usually very scarce and in most cases non available. According to Adiele et al, (2021), the reliability of educational data determines to a great extent, the success of any educational project. Hence, any educational programme planned with faulty data or statistics is bound to fail. This is responsible for the failure of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme of 1976. For instance, it was expected that 2.3 million children would be enrolled into primary 1 by 1975/1976 session. That projection was however found to have been based on wrong data/statistics. Instead of the projected number, Azubike (2013) reported that 3.1 million pupils turned out for enrolment. Needless to say that this made a total rubbish of the whole plans

and projections as the policy could not be implemented. In Nigeria's higher education system, one common feature is that the number of students that eventually enroll normally outweighs the expected/ planned number. In most of our Universities today, most facilities are over stretched. It is common to see classrooms that are meant for 30 students having a crowd of more than 100 students. The result is that teachers are usually overwhelmed, classes are overcrowded and facilities are overstretched. Nigerian education system has failed to effectively plan because of lack of accurate data, which is because of the use of mediocre to prepare data for use in the planning and forecasting process.

2. Poor Funding of Educational Plans

No meaningful feat can be achieved without finance. Every organization need funding to survive. No sector of the economy can make any meaningful progress if it is not adequately funded. Funds are needed for facilities and equipment purposes, for payment of salaries and emoluments, for grants, for capital projects and even for research. Poor funding is one of the key challenges of higher education in Nigeria. The education sector in Nigeria is known to be one of the few areas that have been neglected by government, in the sense that it does not get the right budget allocation year after year. That is to say that the government's disbursement to the educational sector falls short of the growing demands for higher education, the better the funding, the better the workability of plans (Onwuka, 2021). The Nigerian higher education plans are very believable. As lofty as these plans are, the actualization and implementation of these plans is usually challenged by poor funding. Each year as the country presents the annual budget, education is usually allocated very paltry sums. Azubuike (2013) presents a very disturbing reality of the low level that funding of education in Nigeria has reached over a 31-year period. The budgetary allocation to Education over these 31-year period has never been close to the 26% of the total budget as prescribed by UNESCO. With this poor funding of the education sector, it goes without saying that the funds usually allocated to educational planning is inadequate. And when the funding is low, the result will be poor. Not even Nigeria's status as the giant of Africa has been able to suppress the effects of this very poor funding of education and by extension, low allocation of funds to educational planning. Ololube, (2013) therefore advises that educational planning should be concerned with the problems of how to make the best use of limited resources allocated to education in view of the priorities given to the different stages of education or different sectors of education and the need of the economy.

3. Poor Implementation of Plans

One of the major challenges facing most projects in the world today is poor implementation of plans. No matter how beautiful the plans or projections are, they will remain mere dreams or better still paper works. So long as plans are not implemented, the objectives those plans are meant to meet will remain unmet. In Nigeria's educational sector, poor implementation of plans has been the nightmare militating against educational development. Nigeria has over the years come up with several educational policies and plans. Starting from Universal Primary Education (UPE), then came the National Policy on Education (NPE), The 6-3-3-4 system of education, and

the most recent 9-3-4 system, the Nigeria government has never been able to fully implement whole heartedly and comprehensively any of these policies. This situation is even worsened as each successive administration tries to jettison the policy that it meets and tries to introduce a new one. And each time this happens, the plan is left halfway and uncompleted. Adiele (2021) remarked that this poor plan implementation of educational plans by different administrations have led to the noticeable decline in the quality of education when compared to contemporary global practices. One of the educational plans that have always remained unimplementable over the years in the higher institutions is the admission policy which stipulates the percentage of students to be admitted in the different areas. Contrary to the plans, the reality has shown that more students are admitted to the social sciences and business oriented course than in sciences.

4. Insecurity

The high level of insecurity in different parts of the country especially the Northern parts of Nigeria has affected higher education as many higher institutions have suffered disruptions in their academic programmes. Insecurity has contributed to the poor deployment of facilities and personnel to various institutions in the North. Abubakar (2016) observed that many facilities were either destroyed or burnt down by militants during crisis due to poor security. The Cable (2019) cited the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) who reported that boko haram has killed 2,300 teachers in Nigeria's North East since the start of the insurgencies in 2009. In 2018, UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM), the UN agency said that 19,000 teachers have been displaced in the Northern region. The latest educational NEEDS Assessment found that out of 260 school sites, 28% had been damaged by bullet shells or sharpnels, 20% had been deliberately set on fire, 32% had been looted and 29% had armed groups in close proximity. Obi (2015), stressed that insecurity and terrorism has been a major challenge to the Nigerian government in recent times. The activities of the Islamic sect has led to loss of lives and properties in the (northern part) of the country. This situation therefore calls for a deliberate modification of the educational policy, to pay more attention to virtual and on-line learning methods that will see both teachers and students teaching and learning from the comfort and safety of their homes. Abubakar (2016) however observed that school administrators have condemned in strong terms the low level of implementation of the National Educational Policy on ICT and execution of interventional projects. This should be of concern for educational policy formulators for improvement.

5. Scarcity of Skilled Personnel

Educational planning is a specialized area in education studies. It is one that requires the best brains and high flyers. This is because planning requires conceptualizing skills. Qualified planners are therefore the most important resources that can lead to greater effective and most relevant plans. The expectation from planners should meet some basic threshold in terms of capacity. Unfortunately, most education planners in Nigeria do not have complete competence in planning. This is a major challenge because the plans that these planners birth turn out to be half baked and unimplementable. There seems to be no evidence that some plans are thoroughly

thought through. The resultant effect therefor is that these plans succeed only as much as they can. In most cases, the educational plans fail to anticipate the changes that may occur over the years, and that have the capacity to make these policies obsolete.

6. Incessant Strike Actions

One of the greatest challenges of higher education system is the incessant strike actions by the various pressure groups in the educational system. Some of the groups include Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (SSANU), etc. The demands of these unions ranges from demand for improved remuneration, upgrade of dilapidated infrastructure and learning aids, demand for research opportunities, etc. In this year (2022) alone, the various pressure groups mentioned above have been on strike for about six months due to government's inability to fulfill the agreements it reached with the various unions. It becomes more difficult to manage as each of the unions has a different set of demands from government to the extent that even if the government meets the demands of one, the other unions' demands may not be met. The implication is that the strike action continues. These incessant strike actions have become the bane of smooth running of academic calendars in the higher institutions.

7. Brain Drain

In the education sector, brain drain could be defined as the uncontrolled and wide spread migration of academic staff from an environment perceived disadvantage to a more advantaged one. According to Robert-Oka, (2016), the major factor that triggers brain drain includes institutional deterioration, low level of attractive remuneration of academic staff, salary erosion and general decline in financial attraction of the university employment. Akasike (2022) states that while a professor in Nigeria earn an equivalent of USD700 per month, his counterparts in Ghana earns an equivalent of USD2,000, where as in United Kingdom, a professor goes home with between USD8,000 and USD10,000 per month. One would not be surprised when we have more Nigerian academic staff migrating to other countries for greener pastures than their contemporaries outside the country to take up employment in higher institutions. Robert-Okah and Wali, (2013) noted that;

A gale of brain drain is now blowing away whatever remains of scientists and researchers in the nation's research institutes and this ill-wind portends danger for National development because research institutes are the pivots upon which any meaningful growth can be achieved in any nation (p. 4)

Implications for Nigeria's Education System

Education plays a major role in National development. Education helps to mould behaviour and focus people to become better than they have ever been. There is definitely a difference between an educated person and an illiterate. The challenges of Educational planning in Nigeria's higher education is real and has the potential of causing great dangers to the education sector. This underscores the need for much care to be taken in planning and executing educational policies.

And since the higher education is the stage where professionals are produced, any obstacle to effective educational planning has huge implications. Some of these implications are discussed hereunder.

a. Poor Standard of Higher Education

Lack of good educational plans puts a big question mark on the educational framework. What this means is that if the plan is faulty, then the product will most likely be faulty. A teacher can only impart as much knowledge as he has. If the training process is not backed by very strong policies and plans, the teachers will suffer some deficiencies in terms of what is imparted in them. This of course rubs off on the students. On the other hand, if the policy does not make adequate provisions for proper equipment of the facilities, then the end product (the students) will not be exposed to international best practices. According to Ojo (1997), the quality of lecturers is a major determinant of the quality of education since no education system can rise above the quality of its teaching staff. This implies that a bad lecturer cannot produce a good student. The quality of learning in any higher institution is as good as the lecturers. Ezewu (1998) in support of this elaborates that;

An important sign of long-range health of a nation is the spirit and quality of its teachers. There is no substitute for teachers who are dedicated to their nation...The future of the nation rests in the hands of the teachers for the qualities they possess today will inevitably be reflected in the citizens of tomorrow (p. 32)

Unfortunately, the quality of teaching and learning in Nigerian higher institutions have declined in recent times due to poor teaching aids, low quality textbooks, paucity of well-equipped laboratories etc. Nigerian certificates are therefore hardly recognized or reckoned with outside the shores of the country. Our graduates are downgraded and made to undergo further studies to fit into their own system.

b. Dearth of Facilities and Poor Infrastructure

Famurewa (2014) opined that the underfunding of Nigerian Universities, especially the state owned ones has had multiple negative effects on the educational sector. Some of the implications include inaccessibility to research grants, inadequate internet and ICT facilities, ill-equipped libraries and poor manpower training and development on the lecturers' productivity vis-à-vis academic research. Halidu (2015) observed that for Nigerian Universities to effectively carry out the primary mandates of a university system, they must be adequately funded to suit the modern contemporary times. Halidu however laments that funding of federal universities in Nigeria is grossly inadequate and the ills of underfunding the Nigerian federal universities have had adverse effects on academic performance

c. Unstable Academic Calendar

Nigeria today is seriously challenged by severe insecurity as experienced especially in the North. As a major part of the society, the education sector is not spared in this high level of insecurity.

According to Omeje (2021), from December 2020 to date, over 700 students have been abducted from schools in North West Nigeria and this highlights a worrying development in the country's kidnap -for -ransom crisis. No doubt, this has severely affected the pace of learning in the Northern part of Nigeria. While the insecurity in the North is largely blamed on the Boko Haram insurgency, there is also another wave of security threat in the South, championed by the IPOB ideologists. For more than one year now, schools and other businesses in the South East of Nigeria has been shut down every Monday as a result of the sit at home order instituted by IPOB. This sit at home order is largely successful because people have had to comply due to fear. These sit at home orders of course have grave implications for education, especially in the higher education level. Schools in the South East have been forced to exclude Mondays in their academic calendars, while some others have been directed by government to extend academic activities to weekends. Educational Planning, especially in the higher institution must take cognizance of these challenges in order to reduce the effects to the barest minimum.

CONCLUSION

Effective planning in any venture is very central to its success. This is because failure to plan is planning to fail. Educational Planning is very essential to the success of the educational system. Adequate planning can only be made when one has a proper knowledge of the needs, goals, aspirations and expectations of the concerned individual or organization Educational planning is the bedrock on which the educational system operates. However, educational plan is bedeviled by so many challenges and these challenges have continued to stifle educational progress in Nigeria. The Nigerian higher education sector, as important and critical as it is, is not immune to these challenges. The challenges of educational plan implementation manifests in so many forms and have continued to present dire consequences. Today most of the graduates from our higher institutions are looked at as inferior when compared with similar graduates from other climes. This is not good for our educational system. The dearth of quality statistics for proper research and planning in education has also affected the quality of educational plans we have in Nigeria.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to have a virile higher education sector, there is a special need to delve into the challenges militating against higher education planning as enumerated. There should also be special interest in improving research opportunities, especially in the tertiary education level. There should also be opportunities for alternative modes of quality education, so that when physical (classroom) learning is not possible as observed during the Covid-19 pandemic or in the cases of incessant closure of schools occasioned by insecurity, classes can be going on virtually. In this regard also, the use of radio, Television and other Mass media to teach as many people as possible can be considered in the policy formulation.

Care should also be taken to ensure that reliable statistics should be available and within reach for educational planning as any faulty data used will definitely result to faulty and dysfunctional outcomes. Finally, educational plans for higher institutions must be designed to be

unambiguous and implementable and a feedback mechanism must be put in place for constant reviews and possible upgrades or amendments. Educational Policy and plans for the higher institution must be forward-focused so as to be in tune with global best practices and to be relevant in the ever changing world.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, M. A. (2016). An assessment of the use of ICT in teaching and learning in public schools in North Eastern Nigeria. Eastern Mediterranean University Press
- Adeniyi, E. O. (2001). *The situation in Nigeria, the problem of Nigeria educational system*. In Pilai, R. (Ed), Strategies for introducing new curricular in West Africa. Workshop.
- Adiele, E. E., Obasi, K. K., & Ohia, A. N. (2021). *Educational planning challenges in Nigeria*. Harey Publications Coy.
- Akasike, C. (2022). *ASUU knock FG, blames poor pay for worsening university brain drain*. Sunday Punch.
- Akinyemi, S. (2012). *Planning and funding of higher education in Nigeria: The challenges*. International Education Studies.
- Akpan, C. (2015). *Educational planning in Nigeria: A historical perspective fundamentals of educational management*. University of Calabar Press.
- Alabi, A. O., & Okemakinde, T. (2010). Effective planning as a factor of educational reform and innovation in Nigeria. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(6), 316-321.
- Azubiike, K. A. (2013). *Challenges of financial education in Nigeria*. In Mbajorgu, N. M., Dawha. E. M & Efanga, S. I. (Eds), Financing education in Nigeria. Pearl Publishers, 23-24
- Carlson, W., Desir, A., Goetz, S., Hong, S., Jones, S., & White, J. (2011). *The Haitian diaspora and education reform in Haiti: Challenges and recommendations*. Columbia University Schools of International and Public Affairs.
- Ezekiel-Hart, J., & Adiele, E. E. (2010). *Basic concepts in education and society*. Harey Publications Coy.
- Ezewu, E. E. (1998). *The need for intellectual independence for Nigeria: The role of tertiary institutions*. In E. Dienye (Ed), Education and national development in Nigeria. Eddy-Joe Publishers.
- Famurewa, I. O. (2014) Inadequate funding as the bane of tertiary education in Nigeria. *Greener Journal of Economics and Accountancy*, 3(2), 20-25
- Halidu, S. G. (2015). Assessment of funding of federal universities in Nigeria: Evidence from Ahmadu Bello university. *Yobe Journal of Economics*, 2(1), 10-11.
- Ibrahim, A. (2017). Validity of standard-setting methods: Public examination for sustainable national development. *African Journal of Education Assessors*, 2(1), 181-193.
- NPE (2020). *National policy on education*. <https://www.education.gov.ng>
- Obi, C. (2015). Challenges of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria: Implications for national development. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 8(2), 11-18.
- Offem, O. T., Udida, U. J. (2021). Educational planning as requisite for peace process and peace building: An imperative for national building. *Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 7(1), 21-29.
- Ojo, F. (1997). *Human resources management: Theory and practice*. Panaf Publishers
- Olulobe, N. P. (2013). *Educational management, planning and supervision models for effective implementation*. Springfield Publishers.
- Olulobe, N. P. (2013). The problems and approaches to educational planning in Nigeria: A theoretical observation. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(12), 21-30.

- Omeje, C. (2021). *Insecurity in Nigeria and its impact on education: Shutting down schools is a lazy idea*. <https://newscentral.africa/2021/03/17>.
- Onwuka, E. (2021). *The challenges of higher education in Nigeria*. www.educeleb.com
- Robert-Okah, I. (2016). Impact of brain drain on universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: The pains and gains. *African Journal of Higher Educational Studies and Development*, 2(1), 101-115.
- Robert-Okah, I., & Wali, W. (2013). *Deregulation of university education in Nigeria: Assessment of challenges and the way forward*. In E. Kpanagban, P. E. Eya and P. C. Igbojinwaekwu (Eds), *Reforms and innovation in Nigeria education*. West and Solomon Publishers, 637-672.
- UNESCO (2013). *Educational planning: A survey of problems and prospects*. UNESCO
- UNESCO (2022). *Education policies, planning and financing*. www.en.unesco.org/t_hemes/education-policy-planning.