
Managing Educational Policy Implementation Through Enhanced Human Resource Management Practices in Educational Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

This theoretical paper examined extant literature on the importance of Human Resource Management practices on educational policy implementation in Nigeria. The importance of an enhanced human resource management for policy implementation was underscored. Education policy was broadly defined as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems, which directs actions and provides guidelines for solving educational problems. The paper reiterated the fact that policy formulation is important to guide and direct organizational functions, but much more policy implementation brings to light the conceived policies. Since policy implementation cannot just happen without adequate and qualified personnel, the need to focus on the human resource responsible for implementing educational policies at all levels of education cannot be downplayed. Therefore, consciously positioning the workforce to give their best in implementing educational policies for achieving educational goals was underscored. The paper concluded that policy implementation depends largely on the human resources available for the specific purposes and that enhanced human resource management practices should be considered alongside policy formulation programmes, and suggested that educational stakeholders at all levels should be conscious of this all important contemporary societal need.

Keywords: Managing, Educational Policy implementation, Human Resources Management, Educational Institutions

INTRODUCTION

The world over, educational policies are made with the intention of influencing the field of education, with a collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of the education system. It consists of principles and policy decisions. Policy formulation is important to guide and direct organizational functions, but much more, policy implementation brings to light the formulated policies. Since policy implementation cannot just happen without adequate and qualified personnel, the need to focus on the human resource responsible for implementing educational policies at all levels of education cannot be downplayed. Therefore, the importance of an

enhanced human resource management practices for educational policy implementation in Nigeria is considered very important by educational stakeholders. To this end, consciously positioning the workforce to give their best in implementing educational policies for achieving educational goals is considered very pertinent as policy implementation depends largely on the human resources available for the specific purposes, and that an enhanced human resource management practices should be considered alongside policy formulation programmes.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Educational Policy and Implementation

Policies: are just sets of ideas or plans that a group of people have officially agreed to follow in a certain circumstance or situation. Education policy is broadly known to be the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of the education systems, which directs actions and provides guidelines for solving educational problems. Adiele (2020) defined educational policy as the various courses of action that guide present and future decisions of government towards accomplishing educational goals and objectives in a manner that maximizes the use of available resources. It includes any action that guide the specified educational goals and objectives to be pursued, programmes to be implemented, rules to be followed, projects to be executed or all of the above.

According to Vishwaroop (2022), Education policy is the term used to refer to the principles and policy decisions that influence education, including all the laws that govern the setting up and running of educational institutions, and has the aim to answer questions regarding the purpose of education, objectives to be achieved, methods to achieve them, and the various tools necessary for the measurement of success and more importantly, its failure. Similarly, Ibara (2021) defined educational policies as practical guides to ministries and school officials on school matters, with the policy statements designed to guide professionals with regard to how the educational system should operate, with bases for administrative actions and decision making for achieving educational purposes. He noted that these policies in the form of general statements guide decision making and performs two major functions of pointing to the direction of the future and helping to correct defects detected in the operation of the system. Every functional educational policy would have gone through the stages of Initiation, Definition, Deliberation, Enactment and Consequences. These stages can also be referred to as the policy making process identified by Howlett and Ramesh in Adiele (2020) to include: Agenda setting, Policy formulation, Adoption (decision making), Implementation and Evaluation.

Policies have some characteristics. They include, but not limited to the following:

- Policy reflects purpose/ goal oriented
- Policy is written and clearly defined
- Policy consist of courses of action and an effective instrument for plan execution
- Constant and flexible in nature
- Policy is not prescriptive
- Policy does not change easily, but periodic review (Ibara, 2021, Adiele, 2020).

The importance of educational policies cannot be overemphasized. They are very important for achieving educational goals since they are the agreed ways and procedures the educational system should be operated. Vishwaroop (2022) reiterated that educational policies are required because any policy, be it any field, puts down guidelines for the operation of a particular system, especially one that has a hierarchical structure. The problem with having no policy with respect to education is that decision-making becomes unreliable and sporadic. Similarly, in the absence of a structure in the form of an educational policy, the entire system would be in a state of complete disarray. He therefore posited that education policies are necessary for the following reasons:

Optimization of Cost

There should be some kind of regulatory system in place for the influx and expenditure of money in an educational institution. This can be done by setting a budget for the same as part of an elaborate education policy. The policy should make the distinction between costs that are inevitable and those which are not so that a proper plan can be formulated. The formulation process should begin only after the budget is set, though, because otherwise, this whole process would have been a waste of time and effort.

Maintaining Compliance

Every educational institution is obligated to follow the law of the land, and they will follow the law strictly only if there is strict legal action against non-compliance. Educational policy is important because it keeps all institutions within the framework of the law and forces them to abide by it, failing to do so resulting in penalties prescribed in the policy.

Safety in the Learning Environment

Educational policies also influence how safe students feel in their learning environment. The policy can mandate that all schools shall have to adhere to a certain standard when it comes to both physical safety as well as mental well-being of the students and teachers alike. This will ensure a safe environment for all.

Promote an Active Learning Culture

Since a school or university primarily focuses on academics, it is absolutely imperative that it should promote a learning culture through the staff. The policy needs to enable teachers to promote and provide an active culture around sharing knowledge through formal and informal means so that the students can grow their intellect together.

Equality and Diversity Inclusion

All schools should be unbiased in their treatment of students. Some schools might be religiously inclined while some others might have political affiliations, but this should never be made apparent to the students. Educational policies make sure that the learning environment in a particular institution is not tainted by political and religious connotations. Similarly, Ulla (2018)

maintained that Policy is generally an intent, a set of rules and principles, adopted for ease of governance within an organization and is fundamentally important for organizations to have implementable policies, as it forms a linking pin between the school management, teachers, students, parents, and the rule of law. He maintained that without formal policies, then organization staff at any level would have no guidance on how to make right consistent decisions as absence of policy leads to inconsistency of decision making, provide useful and necessary assistance. The importance of educational policies which help a school establish model operating procedures and create standards of quality for learning and safety, as well as expectations and accountability. Some privileges provided by well written and kept up to date policies as identified by Ulla (2018) include:

Internal Controls

Organizational policies should serve as an important form of internal control. Policy form as a control mechanism that will effectively limit the behaviour of teaching and non-teaching staff. Instructions could be that two teachers must be involved in any assessment process, one to correct the answer script, and another to audit the sheet. Policy should always be enforced through some kind of scrutinizing mechanism, or it will be a weak internal control. School management can make life easier by creating proper internal controls that are enforceable.

Minimize Costs

Management always feel the need to minimize costs. This can take the form of examining the real amount of resources required for what the School actually needs, such as finding the cheapest suppliers without sacrificing quality. It can also be about limiting the financial losses that can cripple school operations, such as shortages, wastages, errors and other kinds of losses. When policies address potential sources of risk and require employees to know them, it creates awareness of the need for risk management. It is best to ensure that employees comply with company policies intended to minimize risk.

Maintain Compliance

School policies must enable the organization to maintain a degree of accountability in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders. School has an obligation towards the law of the land. Compliance is to follow these established defined statutory procedures and practices. Educational policies are rules that are intended to help schools teach students efficiently, fairly and safely as per the regulatory norms, and the Board to which the Institution is affiliated. These terms determine how students are taught, what they are taught, how schools manage students and its personnel.

Build a Learning Culture

Academics being the major service of a school, it is mandatory to create a learning culture by encouraging the staff to continuously add to their knowledge. This includes determining which capability each staff should acquire and creating a process for updating it throughout the year.

For example, a policy to have a staff competency matrix and training need analysis for all staff must be completed before becoming eligible for the appraisal. Initially each staff learning should include a checklist of tasks, such as required training and development, work samples and formal learning instructions.

Safe Learning Environments

Students, teachers and staff members deserve to feel physically and psychologically secure in their environment. Policies influence how safe individuals are in school. In order to create this environment, guidelines need to be developed and reinstated that establish safety standards for the physical environment and mental state of students and staff. Disciplined rules have an effect on the safety of students and staff at school level, therefore, procedures should extend beyond the classroom, frequency of fire drills, anti-bullying, and how staff should respond during a medical emergency.

Setting Goals and Establishing Productivity

Students and teachers are the major customers of all the policies in a school. Management should establish standard rules to guide acceptable behaviour, and help to create a conducive learning environment. All of these are necessary to help the institution run smoothly to ensure that students receive a quality education. In order for an institution to encourage higher learning, plans must be in place that establish goals as set forth by the school management. This is important for relating education to the community and making it responsible to the larger world. Accountability through the use of goal-oriented policies ensures productivity – thus save time, prevent confusion and unify the school.

Suspension and Expulsion

Although the law strictly disapproves it, the school should be very careful in determining when a student should be suspended or expelled, because it can impact a child's future. Although it is common to expel students for excessive violations of school rules, this is not always a good option for dealing with behaviour problems. When a child is expelled, he may lose his desire to continue attending traditional institution and quit. Suspension policies can inadvertently discourage students from attending school, leading to a lifetime of low-paying jobs or dependency of others. For this reason, it is important to have policies that incorporate other solutions before resorting to suspension and expulsion.

Equality

Equality in the schools is again determined by its policies. School must have guidelines requiring acts of discrimination to be reported to their administrators and to be remedied promptly. There are also rules in place to make sure that children with disabilities, or slow-learners, receive the same access to an education as other students. This ensures that everyone gets the opportunity to contribute to society and thrive economically.

Teacher Engagement

Another important thing is that policies on teacher training and engagement should focus more on the professional continuum of teachers. Teacher engagement is the key element for teacher retention, including teacher interventions, and their continuous professional development all over their career – they are a whole and they are interconnected. A proper workplace policy also aims to guide teaching and non-teaching staff in how to perform in the school for various prohibited issues in – harassment, internet use, health and safety, and social media are just a few.

Stakeholder involvement

Last but not the least, collaboration between all the stakeholders should be much larger. It is extremely important that everyone is involved in the policy-making, that each stakeholder has his/her role, and should be able to take that role into the process. Schools should have well-documented and comprehensive policies and standard-operating-procedures for all the internal and external stake holders.

At the institutional level, having well-developed policies and rules can empower the School to:

- Help teachers and students know what is expected of them with respect to standards of behaviour and performance.
- Set guidelines for decision-making in routine situations so that teachers and managers do not need to continually ask senior management what to do.
- Help to adopt a consistent and clear response across the school to continually refer to situations involving any interactions between peers, students and parents.
- Allow to demonstrate good faith that employees will be treated fairly and equally.
- Allow to have an accepted method of dealing with complaints and misunderstandings in place to help avoid favouritism.
- Set a framework for delegation of decision-making.
- Give a means of communicating information to all stakeholders.
- Offer protection from breaches of legislations, compliances, etc.

As stipulated in the National policy on education (2014), education policy can directly affect the education of people at all ages because education takes place at all forms for many and different purposes from early childhood education, elementary through to junior and senior secondary, culminating in colleges or universities, graduate and professional education, adult education and job training.

Therefore, education policy decisions are made to include school size, class size, school choice, school privatization, tracking, teacher education and certification, teacher pay, teaching methods, curricular content, graduation requirements, school infrastructure investment, and the values that schools are expected to uphold and model. Subsequent to the policies being established, it is important to convey decisions that are made on a school level to the relevant stakeholders, students, teachers and other staff. Because it is necessary that they know which

decisions have been taken, why they have been taken and what the whole rationale behind this decision was.

Policies are what keep institutions in check and offer guidelines for their effective operation. This applies to the same extent across the board, encompassing all aspects of education. Educational policy is instrumental in the educational framework of the nation, and updating it on a regular basis is very vital.

Policy Implementation

Implementation has to do with putting the stated policies into action. It is the process of translating the goals and objectives of a policy into action because the success of any policy lies solely on its implementation. Adiele (2020) defined policy implementation as the act and process of converting a policy into reality and of enforcing it. He identified the implementation process to involve: the implementation organization, implementation environment, the policy target group, the policy objectives and method of implementation, the policy resources and policy evaluation. Okoroma (2016) reiterated that policy implementation is as important as its formulation because any policy without a corresponding action to realize its objectives will come to naught, and eventually be a big disservice to education in particular, and the nation in general. The creation and implementation of policy to a great extent is critical to advancing and managing change in education. This is because following the planning of educational programmes, implementation is next before further analysis can be made.

Human Resource Management (HRM)

Peretomode and Peretomode (2001) recognized that formal organizations are made up of people, the human resource. The human resource is the most valuable asset in work organizations, and the educational sector is no exception. Human resource management which can also be referred to as Personnel management is primarily concerned with the workforce in an organization. Cole (2002) simply describes it as the management of people in work organizations. It is an administrative function of an organization which exist to provide the personnel needed for organizational activities, and to manage the employee – employer relationship. The management study guide states that Personnel management can be defined as obtaining, using and maintaining a satisfied workforce and it is a significant part of management concerned with employees at work and with their relationship within the organization. Basically, Personnel Management is that part which is primarily concerned with the human resource of an organization, which is indeed the most important asset in every work organization.

Flippo (1976) defined personnel management as the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of the procurement, development, compensation, integration, and maintenance of people for the purpose of contributing to organizational, individual and societal goals. Personnel management is an extension to general management and is concerned with promoting and stimulating competent work force to make their fullest contribution to the business endeavour. It includes the functions of employment, development and compensation, which are performed primarily by the personnel management in consultation with other departments.

An enhanced human resource management practices buttresses the idea that Personnel management is obtaining, using and maintaining a satisfied workforce within the organization to achieve set goals.

Castellar (1984) observed that a major premise of personnel administration is that the end result of education process can be determined to a large extent by the effectiveness of the school personnel. Human resources management in education does not only involve effective utilization of people at work, but also the harnessing of the totality of people's skills, energies, talents, latent capacities, social characteristics needed to achieve educational objectives.

Enhanced Human Resource Management Practices for Educational Policy Implementation

In every organization, both formal and informal, human resources have a significant role in every activity, the educational institutions are no exception, especially as it concerns implementing educational decisions through policy formulation and implementation. Policies are formulated with the intention for proper implementation. Adiele (2020) noted that though some policies are self-executing, others require actions and enforceable activities to put them into effect. These actions and activities which is implementation proper are done by the human resource. No matter how well articulated educational policies are, whether at the macro, micro or institutional levels, it requires the human resource to ensure its implementation. Scholars over time in both theoretical and empirical literature have reiterated the fact that adequate mobilization and utilization of manpower is key for policy implementation. Since policies are made for all levels and types of education in Nigeria, it is important to take into consideration the different roles to be played by those directly involved in its implementation at both national, state and institutional level. This is echoed by Nwankwoala and Lawson (2021) that teachers will implement the National Policy of Education in the classroom. Furthermore, in identifying the process involved in policy implementation, Adiele (2020) listed policy resources to include staff (human resource), funds and other material resources as vital for success to be recorded in the implementation process, and political, socio-cultural, economic disposition and demographic factors as determinants of educational policy.

The problems of policy implementation in Nigeria has always been identified by scholars to include among others: planning without accurate data, inadequate consultation, inadequate monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation, unsteady political environment, inadequate financial resources, inadequate involvement of the policy implementers at the planning stage, dictation of policies to implementers, constant change in policies, corruption, implementation in dispersed governance, inadequate collaborative policymaking, vagaries of the political cycle, politicization of knowledge, over-estimation of available resources, under-estimation of the cost of implementing the plans, over-reliance upon, and too much optimism about external assistance, dependence on hopelessly inaccurate statistics for projecting enrolments and cost, etc. (Ibara 2021, Adesina in Okoroma, 2016). These problems all bother around personnel, either as a result of lack of requisite knowledge, training and development, or lack of motivation which leaves the personnel dissatisfied. Gupta, Gharuam & Gharuam (2016) recognized that every organization has three major resources to be managed if the organization wants to achieve its objectives and

goals. These resources are humans, materials and financial. And out of these three, human resource is the most important and difficult to manage. Also, human beings control and coordinate the other resources which are also vital for the formulation and implementation of workable policies in educational institutions. Hall and Goodale in Peretomode and Peretomode (2001) considered HRM as the process of bringing people and organization together so that the goals of each are met. Since for almost all formal organizations, these goals are put down in the form of policies, it is therefore important to have an effective workforce that is motivated and abreast with current issues and trends. The human resources must be managed properly in accordance with their functions so that they can play their roles in accordance with their duties and functions in the institution they are in. Conscious and enhanced human resource management is a very important aspect in the education process in general, and policy implementation in particular. Storey (1989) identified and classified the major focus of HRM as; (i) it seeks to bring together and develop into an effective organization of men and women who make up the enterprise, enabling each of them to contribute their quota to the success of the system both as individuals or work groups;(ii) it seeks to provide fair terms and conditions of employment and satisfy work conditions for employees; (iii) it is concerned with creating, maintaining, stimulating and unifying energies of workers towards effective realization of their pre-determined goals/objectives; (iv) HRM has the capacity to provide adequate remuneration and rewards that will motivate staff to stay and work productively in organizations. From the discussion so far, HRM can conveniently be summarized as part of management that deals with people at work with regards to: (a) Utilization: recruitment, selection and training; (b) Motivation: job design, fringe benefits, remuneration, consultation, participation, negotiation and justice; (c) Protection: work conditions, job-security, welfare services. Health and safety at work and implementation of appropriate organizational policies and programmes. The fourth focus clearly shows that policy implementation within organizations are tasks which organizational members are a part of. It is in line with this assertion that Schermerhorn in Peretomode and Peretomode (2001) stated that even the best designed organizations that is well guided by well-made plans (policies) and necessary equipment cannot achieve its performance potentials without effectively managed human resources.

An enhanced human resource management can be described to be what Pratibha, Gupta & Gupta (2021) referred to as Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM). They advocated that SHRM practices is key to implementing national education policies, and that educational administrators should ensure these practices include:

- Selection process for heads of institutions
- Orientation and induction of manpower
- Training and development
- Development and redeployment of human resources
- Succession planning
- Career progressing
- Performance appraisal and development system

- Mentoring, guidance, coaching and counselling
- Retention of faculty members and leaders
- Conducive culture and innovation
- Grievance management

The summary of these practices can be said to be “putting square pegs in square holes” with the consciousness of achieving set goals and objectives. Therefore, functions in the management of human resources in educational institutions must be carried out optimally so that the organizational needs can be achieved through the implementation of outlined programmes and plans.

CONCLUSION

The importance of enhanced human resource management practices on educational policy implementation in Nigeria was the focus of this discourse, and its place was underscored. Education policy was broadly defined as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems, which directs actions and provides guidelines for solving educational problems. The paper reiterated the fact that policy formulation is important to guide and direct organizational functions, but much more policy implementation brings to light the formulated policies. Since policy implementation cannot just happen without adequate and qualified personnel, the need to focus on the human resource responsible for implementing educational policies at all levels of education was buttressed. Therefore, consciously positioning the workforce to give their best in implementing educational policies for achieving educational goals was underscored because policy implementation depends largely on the human resources available for the specific purposes, and that enhanced human resource management practices should be considered alongside policy formulation programmes.

SUGGESTIONS

From the foregoing, the following suggestions are made to ensure that the place of the personnel responsible for implementing educational policies is strategic:

1. There should be a conscious positioning of the workforce to give their best in implementing educational policies for achieving educational goals
2. An enhanced human resource management practices should be considered alongside policy formulation programmes.
3. Educational stakeholders at all levels should be conscious of this all important contemporary societal need.

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