

# Improving Educational Policy Implementation for High Students' Welfare in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

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## Abstract

Educational policies are very essential to the growth and development of any society. They exist in all countries of the world and deal with how the laws and principles guide the educational activities of any given nation. Educational policies dictate to nations how their educational processes can be carried out and also how to achieve their respective educational goals. In education as in other fields of human endeavour, every official action of an organization must have a backing or a basis. It is this purpose that a policy serves. A policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made, but it does not make the decision. It usually provides a general guide that facilitates decision-making. Educational policies provide the direction for educational activities. Every policy initiated and enacted can be improved in order to serve a purpose. In public schools in Rivers State, the welfare of students is very essential and paramount. The main goal of education is to mould a comprehensive man. Therefore, the educational policies in schools should be improved to sustain the welfare of students. Policies in education can be enhanced to improve the way students live and adapt while in schools. This article is aimed at improving educational policy implementation for students' welfare in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Secondary data was used in this article. The following variables are connected to students' welfare and they include; adequate security, availability of recreational centers, improved teacher-student relationship, conducive student hostel, conducive learning environment, qualified teachers. The study recommended that the policy makers improve educational policies by ensuring that they are implemented effectively regularly to fit into the current reality. Enact more policies and also to adjust existing policies that are irrelevant with the modern day reality.

**Keywords:** Education, Educational policies, Students' welfare, Public schools

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential part of the growth and development of any society. It is regarded as the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it. It is also seen as the life-wire of any nation; for the transformation of a total man. Education is administered by the federal, state and local governments. They all have the responsibility to cater for education at their various levels and localities. For any country to grow and develop meaningfully, it must have the tenacity to embrace education and ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are implemented effectively. Every nation has its own educational policies and these policies are enacted to guide the activities of those saddled with the responsibility of implementing them. At various levels of education; (primary,

secondary and tertiary level), educational policies help to direct the procedures and practices of education to ensure that its educational goals and objectives are attained. Their implementation can be improved to meet with the needs of the present society.

### **Secondary Education**

Education is the bedrock of growth and development in any given society or nation. It is seen to be the oil that drives the wheel of any country. Researchers have opined that education is very pertinent for the survival of any society and must be enshrined in order to meet the needs of the citizens of that given society. There is no nation that can thrive without education, hence the need to ensure its utmost inclusion in the day to day activities of man. According to Peters (1966), who is often regarded as one of the frontiers of education, education is the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it. Education is the transmission of values and culture from generations to generations (Wikipedia, 2010). Education here is seen as the transmission of cultures, information, values, ideas, knowledge, opinions etc from one generation to another.

Secondary education is the level of education that comes up after primary education. It is also seen as the level of education that exists before the education at the tertiary level. The education that is derived at the secondary level embodies the type that prepares students for higher education. Secondary education is a crucial tier in the hierarchy of education in Nigeria. It is the midway between primary and tertiary schools. It is the form of education that students receive after their primary education and or before their tertiary education. It is intended for pupils between the ages of 11-17. Secondary Education is the budding ground for future professionals as well as the foundation for the discovering and classification of the specific fields of professions. Achuonye (2007) defined secondary education as the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage.

The objective of secondary education amongst others is to prepare an individual for the future ahead. One of the goals of education is to develop physical, mental, emotional, social, moral and spiritual aspects of life. (Patra, 2021). Education is a life-long process. It commences right from the beginning to grave. According to early writers of education, education was seen to be the tool that develops the mind of any individual. Plato for example asserted that education develops in the body and soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of. It is the creation of sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty specially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty. It is also seen and regarded as the child's development from within. Education is the enfoldment of what is already enfolded in the individual. It is the process through which the child makes the internal-external. John Dewey in Patra (2021) opined that is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfil his possibilities.

Secondary education makes an individual complete and entails and involves all that he/she needs to be a total person who can become self-dependent and reliant upon himself. It is the complete development of the individuality of the child so that he can make an original contribution to human life according to the best of his capacity. In narrow sense, the education derived at the secondary level may be taken to mean any consciously directed effort to develop and cultivate our powers. It also embodies the process in which and by which knowledge, character and behaviour of the young are shaped and moulded. Secondary education, in the narrower sense, is regarded as equivalent to developmental instruction. It consists of the "specific influences" consciously designed in a school or in a college or in an institution to bring in the development and growth of the child.

Idris (2011) stated that education develops a country's economy and society; therefore, it is the milestone of a nation's development. Education provides knowledge and skills to the population, as well as shaping the personality of the youth of a nation. Education is very important for an

individual's success in life. It can give a big impact on human opportunity in continuing their life quality. Education is generally seen as the foundation of society which brings economic wealth, social prosperity and political stability (Hassan, 2011). Economic and social status depends on education obtained by individual since education contributes to individual capability in managing quality of life. It can help one's individual to avoid from poverty, build up harmony and democracy society.

Secondary education is the key to move in the world, seek better jobs and ultimately succeed in life. It is the best investment for the people because well educated people have more opportunities to get a job which gives them satisfaction. Educated individuals enjoy respect among their colleagues and they can effectively contribute to the development of their country and society by inventing new devices and discoveries (Azizah, 2011). Main purpose of secondary education is to educate individuals within society, to prepare and qualify them for work in economy as well as to integrate people into society and teach them values and morals of society. It refers to the means of socializing individuals and to keep society smoothing and remain stable. This type of education in societies prepare youngsters for adulthood so that they may form the next generation of leaders. One of the education essential tasks is to enable people to understand themselves. Students must be equipped with knowledge and skills which are needed to participate effectively as member of society and contribute towards the development of shared values and common identity.

Education means a change in man's conduct of life. It means the upgrading of a man's ability to choose the best alternative available in any circumstance he faces. It means the development of the person to prepare him to adopt the best approach to a problem at any given time. Education defined as 'adjustment ability to a changing situation and environment' (Hassan, 2011). Education is way greater than an economic investment: it is an important and pertinent factor upon which life, development and the survival of man depend. We all know that it is the responsibility of everyone in a country to educate; whether we are parents, adults, children, or teachers, in the public or private sector, education is the responsibility of everyone. But however we see the needs and problems, most of us would agree that the role of education is to help provide the opportunity for all people to develop as fully as possible. According to Azizah (2011), education should be a means to empower children and adults alike to become active participants in the transformation of their societies. Learning should also focus on the values, attitudes and behaviours which enable individuals to learn to live together in a world characterized by diversity and pluralism. Education therefore has a crucial long-term role in developing a knowledge and understanding of human rights, the values base they represent and the skills required to strengthen a democratic culture.

### **Functions of Secondary Education**

The function of secondary education is very essential and paramount in producing new generations that will help in solving the real problems in our society. Today's ever growing numbers of people mostly are not satisfied with their basic education and try to get secondary or tertiary education in order to meet the demands of contemporary society. They sacrifice their time and money and sometimes even their health to raise educational level because they realize that education is their passport to the future and for tomorrow. The functions of secondary education according to Nanbak (2018) include:

1. The provision of smooth opportunities for primary school leavers to further acquire higher quality education irrespective of their sex, religion, social and ethnic backgrounds.
2. To diversify its curriculum to cater for the variety of talents that are latent in the students to come to light in a productive way.
3. To equip the students with the relevant scientific and technical knowledge to effectively survive in the modern age.

4. To foster national unity with emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
5. To inspire students with a high desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and in later life.
6. To raise a generation of people who should be self-reliant and can think for themselves as well as respect the worldviews of others.
7. To inspire a deep sense of appreciation of the dignity of labour among citizens as well as create a great sense of national consciousness

### **Educational Policies**

Educational policies are very essential for the successful integration of educational activities in societies. They are defined as the laws and principles that guide the activities of educational processes in nations. There is no country that carries out its educational activities without certain laws guiding them. Policies are laws that guide the activities of any organization; hence, educational policies are laws that direct educational bodies and stakeholders on what to do at every point in time. It stipulates and directs their actions in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. A policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made, but it does not make the decision. It usually provides a general guide that facilitates decision-making.

Educational policies provide the direction for educational activities. The formulation of an educational policy sets the stage for implementation which is perhaps the most important aspect of planning. Planning is usually an action which succeeds policy formulation but precedes implementation. A policy serves the purpose of ensuring that every official action of an organization must have a basis or a backing. Terry (1977) in Okoroma (2006) considers that “a policy is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative action will take place”. According to him, “a policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made but it does not give the decision”.

A policy brings about a meaningful relationship between business objectives and organizational functions as it discourages deviations from planned courses of action. It ensures consistency of action because an organization is governed by approved principles. A policy does not have to be rigid, as there should be room for adjustment if necessary after its formulation. Educational policies are initiatives mostly by governments that determine the direction of an educational system (Okoroma, 2006). According to Osokoya (1987) in Okoroma (2006), education is a distinctive way in which the society inducts its young ones into full membership. So every modern society needs some educational policies to guide it in the process of such initiation. Educational policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of a people. It is believed that the objective of any policy is to satisfy individual needs, community pressures and the degree of complexity and sophistication to which socialized personnel must be educated and trained to meet these demands.

Kerr (1976) in Okoroma (2006) believes that, for a policy to qualify as an educational policy, it must be distinct from other policies. In his view, educational policies are distinguishable from other policies by the fact that policies on education are part and parcel of educational institutions. However, it is important to note that not all policies formulated in educational institutions can qualify as educational policies. Generally, policies must be rational and purposeful to enable them to stand the test of time.

### **Student Welfare**

Attainment of peace, progress and high academic outcome in schools is largely dependent on provision of welfare services and service delivery in the institutions. Students’ welfare services are

significant in institutional day-to-day operations, failure of which may lead to protests, programme disruptions or violence, apart from academic dysfunction. Academic and non-academic operations can only be carried out successfully if auxiliary supports are provided in sufficient quantity and quality in schools, especially in the secondary school system, where high level manpower is produced. Surt Foundations (2010) describes welfare services as actions or procedures that cover the basic well-being of the individuals and the society. These services may be provided as a citizenship right, or negotiated in the market, and managed by governments and institutions or private actors.

Welfare problems which are caused by lack, or shortage of basic amenities are major significant factor currently producing student unrest in Nigerian schools. The inadequate hostel accommodation; unsatisfactory supply of food and catering services; overcrowded classrooms, and hostels; lack of financial aid and poor sanitary conditions tend to make students' academic life and experience a very traumatic one. Students studying under these dehumanizing conditions tend to lose sleep, lose concentration and as a result, may behave in manners not generally approved by the authorities of their institutions (Aluede, 2005). Life in the secondary school is expected to be relatively comfortable and satisfactory for students to develop their potentials psychologically, socially, politically, mentally and professionally. One of the key features students and their parents are concerned about when enrolling in schools is the availability of student welfare services. The significance of basic amenities as a major determinant of man's welfare, life sustenance and survival cannot be over emphasized.

Ajayi, Akuankawa, and Yusuf (2015) opined that welfare services have and will always be a prime concern to individual, family, community and the nation at large. According to Nabil and Hussein (2014), one would want to know about the quality of education being provided to students, their level of satisfaction, achievement and absorption capacity, as these people represent the nation's future. It is therefore imperative for schools to give students welfare a top priority while building the reputation of the school among other contemporaries with the ultimate aim of enhancing students' satisfaction. Students' welfare services can be referred to as all the services provided by the school to cater for the well-being of the students in order to bring about satisfaction and motivation to learn. These include Medical services, Hostel Accommodation, Security Services, Power supply, amongst others. The importance of these services cannot be over emphasized. This is because when the students are satisfied with the provision of these services, they cooperate with the management team for the smooth running of the institution. On the other hand, when they are dissatisfied and ignored, they express their grief through unionism.

These welfare services are important for the actualization of goals in schools, especially in government owned schools. A public school is a school that derives its support, in whole or in part, from moneys raised by a general state, county, or district tax. Public schools are the elementary and high schools supported by public taxation. It refers simply to a school that is funded by tax money, overseen by elected officials, operating with open admissions within its district, and so on (Abowitz, 2011)

Educational policies can always be amended to suit the present reality that schools face. They have to come with the terms that times are changing and the current educational policies and laws that they have may not suit the current trends and happenings. Enhancing educational policies for the improvement of students is very important and pertinent. Students' welfare which plays a huge role and determinant in their academic performance must be sustained and improved. The welfare of students in schools is very delicate to the actualization of educational goals at all levels of education. Studies have shown overtime that policies and rules enable organizations or countries to arrange their activities and access them often. Likewise, educational policies and rules enable educational

practitioners carry out educational activities in order to achieve educational objectives. The welfare of students is very paramount and hence, the policies that guide their education in schools should be enhanced to suit their needs in schools.

In public secondary schools in Rivers State, the welfare of students is not adequately taken care of. They are not given the full attention that they so require and desire. There are cases where students' opinion are not sought, respected, valued nor needed. Also, students learn in harsh conditions; Many classes do not have enough desks and chairs and so lots of students sit and learn on the floor. Sanitary hygiene is not accorded. Toilets are bad, there are no windows in classes amongst others. Students have to go through tough conditions just to gain and acquire knowledge. There is hardly any viable policy in many public secondary schools in Rivers State that caters for the needs of students. In most of them the students' union do not have a say in the day to day activities of the schools. The principals have to a large extent, clipped their wings and have refused to listen to their quest for a better life in schools. The implementation of educational policies in public secondary schools within the state is much needed. Improving them will go a long way in reducing the menace that students have to deal with, and also sustain their welfare.

## **CONCLUSION**

Educational policies help guide the procedural operations of education in schools at all levels. Its primary objective is to ensure that an individual becomes useful to his society, as well as ensuring he becomes an independent personality. The welfare of students is very essential to their well-being and educational development in schools and it is of utmost importance that the policies that guide their educational curriculum be enhanced in order to improve the welfare of students. These will help them become more comfortable and will ultimately lead to enhanced performance in their academics.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Students' welfare in public schools cannot be over-emphasized because it is the tune that dictates how well they will behave in schools and perform in their academics. The issue of improving educational policies that are present in educational institutions has become very delicate and there is urgent need to implement it so as to suit the needs of students in schools. Public secondary schools in Rivers State need to improve the policies it has enacted in its curriculum to complement the welfare and needs of its students. The following are therefore, recommended:

1. Educational practitioners such as ministry of education, states schools board and educational planners should look into the existing policies and improve them accordingly to meet with the current trends in the society. This can be done by allocating more funds to education and also ensuring that anything pertaining to students should be prioritized.
2. Government of Rivers State should improve the educational policies in the state by engaging the services of educational planners who will plan education according to the present realities of life in schools, so as to improve the welfare of students in public schools.
3. Future or subsequent policies that will be enacted should be students' friendly. By this, they should include all the practices that will ensure that students are comfortable and well taken care of in schools.
4. Student unions in schools in the state should rise up and speak for what they want as it relates to their welfare through proper advocacy.
5. Principals of various public schools in Rivers State should reach out to the ministry of education whenever they feel the welfare of students are being threatened by existing policies.

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