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# POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: A MASTER KEY FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Policy implementation in any sector is a formidable driving force for the achievement of goals and objectives of such sector. In Nigeria, implementation of policies has been an issue to worry about, as there seems to be a big gap between policy formulation and implementation. On the aspect of education, beautiful and super policies formulated from inception by our indigenous educational managers since 1977 have not been properly implemented. This paper focused on the issue of policy implementation in the country's education system with the view to ascertaining its efficacy in building the quality of education. It further examined the definition of educational policy implementation, process, determinants, policy translation, support and application, needs for policy implementation, challenges, and prospects for the achievement of educational goals in Nigeria. The paper concluded that the Nigeria education system is suffering from corruption, misappropriation of funds, bad leadership and mismanagement, and can only be salvaged through the extermination of the hindering factors and implementation of proper policies.

**Keywords:** Education, Effectiveness, National Development, Policy Implementation, Quality.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As clamour for implementation on the quality of education persists on one hand, the falling standard of education is increasing on the other hand. The educational sector in Nigeria for over three decades has not been stable due to lack of proper attention from its managers in 1977, a beautiful policy on education merged after a lot of brain storming and considerations to guide the activities of education towards success. No doubts, the formulators of this policy had good intensions for our educational system, but until date this policy has been revised severally without the achievement of its objectives. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014), a nation's policy is government's way of realising that part of the national goals can be achieved using education as a tool and no policy on education can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation.

The question is, haven identified the philosophy of the nation, and education been the central point of every country's development, has the goal of education been realised? It is obvious that our dearly beloved country has good dreams and aspirations without implementation. The educational system has suffered a lot of setbacks due to lack of policy implementation. How do we tackle this menace? Owing to the fact that implementation of policy is the cardinal point of quality standard and effectiveness.

### **The Concept of Policy:**

A policy is an act of governance, a principle of behaviour, conduct expressed by a government, an authoritative body, an individual or organisation. Policy is a definite course of action recommended and adopted by the governing power as expedient to the issues and problems of a group or society (Okunamiri, 2010). It is a deliberate system of guidelines to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. In addition, it is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive or practice of governments and other institutions (<https://www.edc.gov>process>).

This is to say that policies are statements, laws, regulations, guidelines, rules and principles stipulated for purposes of coordinating groups or organisations. On this note, stipulation of policies in organisations, groups, associations is very important as it helps to guide programmes and activities towards the achievement of goals.

### **Concept of Educational Policy**

Educational policy is a general statement containing laws, principles, rules and regulations which guide the activities of education towards the achievement of its goals. In the words of Ibrahim (2018), cited in Ogunode and Adah (2020), educational policy is a document which explicitly lays down the guiding principles for effective implementation, management and administration of education policies from basic education up to tertiary education at the federal, state and local tiers of government.

From the foregoing, education policy seeks to answer for the needs, problems and solution of education. Accordingly, Okunamiri (2010) affirmed that educational policy contains principles and rules which govern many decisions on how to educate children, where to get them educated, where to get them employed, how to teach them, how to finance their education etc. Such policies may take the form of ordinance, code, act, law or edict/decreed. In Nigerian educational system, there are laid down policies without proper functionality.

## **Policy Implementation**

Implementation is the systematic ways of executing programmes, policies and projects (Ogunode & Adaotu, 2020). It is also a stage by stage of carrying out a defined and planned programme. This therefore, implies that implementation is an act of carrying out a planned action, programme or task. The above clearly explain the concept of policy implementation in education as putting into work every articulated plan concerning the achievement of the objectives of education. This is evident in Ogunode and Adah (2020), where they noted that the implementation of educational policies is determined by the following factors: the capacity of implementer, the numbers of teachers available, the numbers of infrastructural facilities available, the funds available, the political will, the level of monitoring and evaluation system available. Policy implementation in education entails identifying, incorporating, monitoring and continually refining professional learning that helps educators enhance their practice, encourage and inspire students' academic and non- academic growth, which are obviously lacking in the educational system.

However, it is observed that policy making at times in Nigeria is a mere attempt to rationalise political decisions. Noting Joel et al. (2019) point of view, actions are hastily and expediently conceived. The resultant effect is that many policies are not reduced to those goals and objectives which can easily be attained, given the range of problems and feasibilities involved in the allocation of available human and material resources (Joel et al., 2019). One thing is to make policies, and another is to execute. This serves as a wake-up call to those who are in-charge of education, if the development and sustainability of the nation must be achieved through the educational system.

Following the goals of education as derived from the nation's philosophy. Education is meant to:

- Inculcate national consciousness and national unity in to the citizenry;
- Inculcate the type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society;
- Train the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- Enhance acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2014).

On the basis of the above, all policies meant for education must be implemented to the later for attainment of objectives. This assertion is based on the fact that educational policies are without value if it cannot be implemented (Ololube, 2018).

## **Educational Quality and Effectiveness**

The place of education in the growth, development and sustainability of any nation cannot be overemphasised. Sreenivasula (2013) in Nnokam et al. (2019) affirmed that the economic growth and development of a country depend on the educational system of that particular country. In the same vein, Turkkahranan (2012) in Nnokam et al. (2019) concurred that the principal aim of education is the sustenance of individual and societal improvement. It is on this ground that governments and practitioners across the globe are saddled with the enormous responsibility of

ensuring that educational institutions are efficiently and effectively managed in pursuance of the millennium development goal and now sustainable development goal of education.

In striving to realise the goals of education, two major factors are deeply involved: quality and effectiveness. Quality is the degree to which an object or entity satisfies a specified set of attributes or requirements, while effectiveness is the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result (Oxford Learners Dictionary). Ololube (2017) succinctly expressed that quality education is one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. Educational effectiveness on the other hand is the degree in which an educational system and its components and stakeholders achieve specific, desired goals and effects. Basically, an ideal educational system is one that can achieve the following:

- Provide equal opportunities for all educable children up to secondary school level, to prepare them for the labour market;
- Develop children's innate abilities .g intellect, character, moral judgement, cultural awareness;
- Relate the content of education with the needs of the child and labour market, which will help to develop human capital through the process of education;
- Address the issue of inequality by creating a balance between quantity in male and female education, levels of education, ethnic groups, types of education and religious groups (Okunamiri, 2010).

At present, Nigerian educational system cannot be acclaimed qualitative and effective due to myriad of factors militating against its success. A review of the antecedences of education from basic to tertiary levels reveals the ineffectiveness of education due to inadequate policy implementation. From Nwosu et al. (2014) perspectives, it is obvious that the educational system is struggling with the problem of population explosion, curriculum and course system, planning, autonomy and external control, cultism, examination malpractice, students activism, access, equality, quality, poor leadership, improper recruitment of staff, mediocre, graduate unemployment and brain drain to mention but a few.

Similarly, Obih et al. (2014) supported that education is faced with the problems of the teacher, the learner, physical structure, poor funding and poor school management. It is worthy of note that quality is the maintenance and improvement of standards with the assumption that standards are objectives and quality is a continuous change. Quality in the educational system consists of the application of the principles of effectiveness, empowerment, equity, sustainability, appropriateness, wellbeing and safety (Nwosu, 2017). It is also the standard and degree of excellence of something measured against other things of similar kinds (Nwosu, 2019). She went further to buttress that quality education is one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. In line with the above, UNICEF (2015) asserted that quality education includes learners who are healthy, well- nourished and ready to participate, learn and support in learning by their families and communities and also outcomes that encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes are linked to national goals for education and positive participation society.

The foregoing implies that quality revolves around effectiveness. When there is no effectiveness, there is no quality. Educational effectiveness is the extent to which set goals are accomplished in relation to quality, quantity, equity and access to instructions (Nwosu, 2019). Therefore, effectiveness in education could be actualised when it is capable of achieving the specific goals as enshrined in the National Policy of Education. Quoting Okoroma (2000) in Nwosu (2019), effectiveness and quality can only be facilitated the following ways:

- Policy making and programme planning;
- Procurement and development of personnel;
- Curriculum development and programme instruction;
- Students' personnel or public administration;
- Maintenance of effective interrelationship with community and external agencies; and
- Provision and maintenance of funds and facilities.

However, the determinants and parameters of educational effectiveness are manifold and complex. They require efficiency, improvement, quality, development, appropriateness, performance among others. This is why the implementation of the national policy on education becomes the appropriate tool to solve this puzzle of effectiveness and quality, because every activity of education is embedded in it. The government, educational authorities and all stakeholders of education should be concerned with the conditions of education for the interest of national development. It is also important to point out that educational sector has been in dilemma for decades. The most disturbing aspect is the current strike by ASUU due to lack of policy implementation by the Federal Government. How then can education be effective and qualitative without the necessary facilities required to drive its goals? How can the nation develop without quality leaders who are fortified with knowledge? These obviously emphasize the need for synergy and application of the right principles to get good results, because the quality of determines the quality of manpower and their products; It will further reduce unemployment, since graduates and technicians can become self-employed after graduation; and impact on the moral attitude of the society and quality of lives (Thom-Otuya & Inko-Tariah, 2016). Consequently, it is disheartening that Nigerian society places high premium on paper qualification, which explains the crazy desire to have good result without working for it (Uzorka et al., 2011). To them, Nigeria has lost direction as far as education is concerned.

As rightly expressed by Pigozzi (2008) in Uzorka et al. (2011), a quality and effective education strive to ensure that all learners regardless of sex, age, language, religion and ethnicity should have the possibility of participating in learning from organised learning activities. Furthermore, he noted the following factors as indices for quality and effective education: Proper funding, effective quality control, conducive and appropriate teaching and learning environment, sufficient staff quarters and classrooms, adequate and proper equipment and staffing, good quality and well-motivated staff.

Corroborating Pigozzi's opinion, Obasi (2010) affirmed the indicators of quality and effective education as:

- Effective and efficient performance of graduates in society, industries and other work places;
- Employability;
- National and international mobility of generated manpower;

- Market value or demand level of research products and other services provided by the institutions;
- International transferability/ admissibility of graduates/ students for higher studies without remedial conditions;
- Level of discipline and patriotism of graduates;
- High rating of an institution and its products nationally and internationally; and
- High absorptive capacity at all levels.

In the same vein, UNICEF (2000) in Thom-Otuya and Inko-Tariah (2016) stressed that quality education is characterised by the following: healthy learners, healthy environment, content reflected in the relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills. Processes through which trained teachers use child centred teaching approach in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning, and reduce disparities.

The above exposes the shallow preparedness of the nation in the actualisation of effective and quality education, even when she is expecting huge success. This highlights the suit by the Federal Government against ASUU, requesting their return to the classroom. To whom much is given, much is expected. According to a popular maxim which states that one cannot reap where he did not sow. Government has so much relegated the educational sector to the background and has totally lost interest in education, otherwise, why should every focus be on politics when the educational system is heavily cracked? This is to say, that education can only be qualitative, effective and contribute to national development when the educational policies are implemented, evaluated, revised, supervised and monitored.

### **Educational Policy Making and Analysis**

Policy making in education is a process involving some individuals in propounding and stipulating rules that will guide the actions of managers and administrators in the education system. Accordingly, Thompson (2014) opined that education policy- making is the collective contraction of past events into a live present that is future oriented. Emphasising the words of Thompson, education policy is quite complex in nature, and requires a proper approach for good results. Being an instrument for socio-cultural change, the need for adoption of the system approach becomes imperative, as it identifies the needs, problems of the educational system, solutions for the identified problems, alternative actions, evaluation and revision of actions.

Educational policy analysis on the other hand, is the study of educational policy that seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, objectives of education, method of attaining them and the tools for measuring their success or failure. Okunamiri (2010) stressed that educational policy analysis is a frame work for continuous study of the process and the actors involved in educational policy making over a period of time. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) in Walker (2009) supported that policy analysis is generally thought of as examining one or more steps of the policy cycle, which are considered to be: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation or policy evaluation.

These explain the fact that policy analysis in every sector is concerned with breaking down assembled ideas into units for purposes of achieving goals. In policy analysis, critical examination of existing situations in and outside the context of the sector is required for proper guidance. This is also important in the educational analysis. It cannot be denied that education has beautiful policies, but the process of formulation is the crux of the matter. It is assumed that

when someone is involved in decision making, he/she ensures that such decision is implemented. Who are the educational policy makers and analysts? Are the governments not involved in educational policy making? It is disappointing that those who make laws flout them. Even a lay man in Nigeria is aware that governments are major stakeholders in education. If they participate in the policy making bearing in mind the aspects of the societal focus, basic things that will enhance quality and effectiveness of education, and most of all the national development will be ensured.

### **Theoretical Framework on Policy Implementation**

Several theories have been propounded by different scholars on policy implementation in the quest for organisational productivity. Top-down theories by Van Meter and Van Horn are concerned with passing policy decisions from the national to the lower levels. According to Birkland (2015), the Top-down approach is based on the following assumptions:

- Policies contain clearly defined goals against which can measure performance;
- Policies contain clearly defined policy tools for the accomplishment of goals;
- The policy is an ‘‘implementation chain’’ that starts with a policy message at the top and sees implementation as occurring in a chain;
- Designers have good knowledge of the commitment and capacity of the implementer;
- The implementer assumes that these features are present or overcome any problem suggested by these assumptions;
- The focus then is on creating the proper structures and controls to encourage or compel compliance with the top’s goals.

While the Bottom-up theory by Lipsky stipulates the involvement of the local level in policy-making, and subsequent impact on higher levels. It is also called action-centred or backward mapping. In the words of Birkland (2015), it is a system of studying policy design and policy implementation that looks at the abilities and motivations of the lowest-level implementer and ways policy from that level to the highest level of government. Randall Ripley’s Hybrid theories of policy implementation try to overcome the division between the Top-bottom and Bottom-Top models. They understand the importance of top-down aspects, such as centrally defined policy decision, but also appreciate and value the need to involve low-level actors. In addition, they also create room for interaction between factor models, model of decentralisation program implementation process, rational model, management model, organisation development model, policy implementation process, interrogative model and inter-organisation interaction model.

A review of policy making and implementation in education highlights the need for adoption of Hybrid theories of policy implementation due to its synthetic nature. Integration of all the policy implementation theories will yield greater results. Concurring to the above assertion, Diori (2021) stated that integration of policy theories will enhance effective leadership, right organisational structure, clarity of goals and objectives, clear and detailed task assignments, adequate and effective use of resources and commitment of front-line implementer. This is to say that the effectiveness and quality of education towards the achievement of national development will be attained, if policies are diagnosed and applied one at a time, as against lumping all together without implementation. Secondly, involving all stakeholders of education in policy making and implementation is also important. Succinctly, educational goals can only be achieved

through proper review, identification of educational needs and problems, and immediate implementation of the policies required to resolve them.

### **Needs and Importance of Policy Making-Implementation in Education:**

Policy establishment in the educational organisation is necessary if the objectives of education must be achieved. When policies are clearly and well written, they promote effectiveness and efficiency. Policies help schools keep students safe, enforce rules consistently, and provide the best possible education. It is a point to note that schools are complex organisations that have many moving parts, where the hope for education lies. Parents trust schools to keep their children safe, provide a good education, and the stakeholders of education on the other hand, have certain expectations about how the affairs of a school run. This basically marks the reason and need for clearly set policies and procedures that guide day to day process of a school. The following needs/importance of policy-making and implementation in education:

- Setting proper expectations which include attendance policy, dressing code and cell phones and electronic devices;
- Creating a safe learning environment: bullying and sexual harassment, student code of conduct, fighting/weapons, alcohol, drugs and tobacco;
- Establishing procedures before there's an issue: dismissal procedure, academic dishonesty, students clubs and athletics, student search and seizure, disciplinary guidelines (<https://www.powerdms.com>).

As a matter of fact, educational organisation must have policies which must be implemented to be able to realise its vision and mission. They are policies that will:

- Enable the organisation to maintain a degree of accountability;
- Establish operating procedures and create standards of quality for teaching and learning;
- Ensure that values are applied consistently;
- Define clear expectation;
- Help to provide a framework for employees and students; and
- Create procedures that must follow the school management goals to encourage higher learning among learners.

### **Educational Policy Implementation for National Development**

National development is a positive growth of people's livelihood, economically, politically, culturally, technologically, educationally, socially interwoven and intermingled to form a whole (Ngene, 2010). To Emediongokon, Basse and Akpan (2015), it is a progressive growth in all aspects of a nation building. To this end Nwosu (2019), elaborated that national development is a continuous improvement, change and advancement of a country, which embraces industrialism, modernism, material acquisition, opportunities, and good quality life for the citizenry. She further stated that the ability of a nation to provide and improve on the social welfare of the citizenry, ranging from infrastructure, portable water, quality of education and other social amenities mark her development.



The foregoing implies that national development stems from a particular source, which is the all-powerful education. Education encompasses all dimensions to national development as it plays a crucial a crucial role in shaping personal and collective identities, promoting critical, social, capital cohesiveness, equipping and developing individuals' potentials and producing responsible citizenship based on principles of respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity. No wonder why Ololube (2017), described education as that which helps one to maximise his physical, mental and emotional capabilities which are useful to one and society.

Judging from the philosophy of the nation, education can be adjudged as an enabling factor for multiple dimensions of societal development and sustainability, as well as a transformational instrument, a formidable force and change agent in actualising the desired results of a nation (Nwosu, 2019). In addition, she listed the following functions of education in the achievement of national development as:

- It acts as an instrument of social control;
- It transmits knowledge and information that embraces diversity;
- It creates a large middle class which is prerequisite for national development;
- It creates an enlightened society which is crucial for integration;
- It develops an individual; and
- It preserves and transform cultural heritage.

The aforementioned exposes the capacity and position of education in the development of a nation. It is only a functional educational system which executes policies that can achieve this. Obviously, our educational system is wallowing in lack, and needs quick intervention if our society must develop. A situation where the educational organisation lacks the facilities to transmit knowledge and develop minds that will transform the society in turn is a total failure. Therefore, the educational policy makers should as much as possible, imbibe the culture of implementing thought out ideas for effectiveness. To whom much is given, much is expected. Educational system as the generator of the society requires huge attention in terms of providing its requirements for functionality. With this, the nation will develop in full capacity.

### **Challenges of Educational Policy Implementation**

The challenges of educational policy implementation in Nigeria are quite enormous. It is clear that the management of the system is based on traditional method which is characterised by population explosion, problem of funding, inadequate infrastructure, curriculum and course system, planning, autonomy, external control, examination malpractice , access, quality, mediocre, to mention a few (Nwosu, 2020). The system is inadequately funded, and has been faced with numerous challenges over the last three decades, which has led to the continuous decline in the quality of education. A study conducted by Odia and Omofonwan (2007) in Nwosu (2020), revealed that UNESCO recommended the allocation of 26% of the total annual budget of the nation to education. The issues of non-payment of teachers' salaries, unqualified personnel, shortage /unavailability of some needed resources cannot be overemphasised. Aside mismanagement of funds, nepotism, tribalism and favouritism, corruption is the most teething problem I educational policy implementation. Nigeria is given to formulation of policies and plans as regards to education. Unfortunately, these policies are never put in to action. To plan is a step, another is implementation, a plan without adequate action is useless (Ololube, 2024).

Similarly, Joel et al. (2019) identified the following factors as challenges of educational policy implementation:

- Over estimation of available resources;
- Under estimation of cost of implementing a plan;
- Over reliance upon external assistance;
- Inaccurate statistical data;
- Frequent changes in educational policies and programmes.

### **Way Forward**

Quality and effectiveness in all standards entail the application of the right tools in driving the set objectives. Nigerian nation as respect and addressed as the giant of Africa has a lot of prospects in her education if proper management is employed. The nation's endowment is capable of transforming the educational sector if the necessary forces needed to drive the system to the right direction are created Nwosu (2020). In view of this, Joel et al. (2019), supported that if policies programmes are well funded, implemented and monitored, it will yield desired results.

To achieve effective and quality education for national development in Nigeria, total overhauling of the system is required to put necessary things in place for full functionality. In addition, enriching the curriculum and bridging the gap between theory and implementation is also important. Apart from the aforementioned, reorientation and redirection of the shifted focus of leadership from education to politics, as well as the revitalisation of incentive structure for motivation of staff. Finally, the leadership of the educational system should be derived of mediocre, and the right people used at the right places to ensure effectiveness (Nwosu, 2020).

### **CONCLUSION**

The above review exposed the ineffectiveness and lack of quality in education, due to lack of policy implementation. It is true that the government has been accused of not paying proper attention to the educational sector generally, but what are the contributions of those in charge of education both at the higher and lower levels. The truth is that in as much as the government does not allocate the 26% recommended by UNESCO, It has also voted huge amount of money into education on yearly basis. Education system is suffering from corruption, misappropriation of funds, bad leadership and mismanagement and can only be salvaged through the extermination of the hindering factors and implementation of proper policies.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the above, the government should:

- Provide funds for education.
- There should be timeline for every policy.
- Adequate and reliable data is very important for planning the system.
- Policies should be studied and be implemented one at time.

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