
Appropriate Policy Formulation and Implementation as an Impetus Towards Qualitative Education in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

A policy consists of a plan by some agents to do something for some purposes whenever a particular condition occurs. Educational policy is the thinking at a high level of abstraction which expresses educational goals and the means of achieving them. It gives a guide to day-to-day administration as to the lines along which the educational system should be conducted. A democratic policy requires working with people to derive the policy therefore some stakeholders in education policy making process were identified. Educational policies are made at two distinct levels which were explained with a diagram. For quality educational policies, policy makers must ensure their desirability, effectiveness, justness and affordability. To implement a policy, a schedule of activities need to be drawn indicating who is to do what, when and how and these were explained under implementation of policy options. Some points were highlighted as reasons for poor implementation in Nigeria, while some recommendations were made towards effective policy implementation in Nigeria.

A policy consists of a plan by some agents to do something in particular, for some purposes whenever a particular condition occurs or is obtained. Educational policy is the thinking at a high level of abstraction which expresses educational goals and the means of achieving them. It is the basis of day-to-day administration and serves as a guide to administrators when deciding the lines along which the educational system should be conducted.

Educational policy is public policy. Who can be the real agent of public policy? Individual or a group of people or ministry or the President may initiate a bill to the parliament, the parliament passes the bill and the President signs the bill to make it become a law. Then a Ministry oversees the implementation or even implements it. The

agents of non-personal policies can be grouped into two. These are authorizing agent and an implementing agent.

An implementing agent of a policy can be any person or persons, ministries or agents rightfully acting for and on behalf of the authorizing agent but also has the power to initiative a bill e.g. Ministry of Education, etc. An authorizing agent is the one who has power to make such policies; it is always the person or body who has been assigned within the structure or constitution of the organization or nation the task of making such policies. On this, Edem (1982) commented that “unequivocally, this responsibility belongs to the government which is the lawful custodian of the society’s heritage and the body specifically charged with the responsibility of directing, planning and controlling its aspirations”. A democratic policy requires working with people to derive the policy, in order to make it desirable and justified. However in a totalitarian government, the government may just choose to work for result without consulting the people in working out or formulating the policy.

Educational Policy Making Process

Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2003) postulated that the following categories of people should be part of the stakeholders in education policy making process:

1. Consumers of education: These are the students who enjoy the educational services provide in schools. (This should however include parents who may desire a particular type of education for their children). They should contribute to the formulation of educational policies that affect them.
2. Host community: Representatives of the community should be involved as schools are located in the community.
3. Participants in education: These are the teaching and non-teaching staff. Their involvement and commitment to educational excellence necessitates their involvement in policy making and implementation. Therefore, teachers, principals or institutional heads, educational administrators, school inspectors, etc, should all be involved.
4. Employers of labour: All employers of labor should also be involved in policy making as their organizations will eventually employ the product of the school or education system.
5. The government: Every educational policy to be initiated needs government of the day’s backing and that of the ruling party before it can be adopted.

Other sectors of the economy should also be involved, such as health, agriculture, housing, technology, finance, external affairs, transportation, law and order, oil, because they make their inputs into education.

Educational Policy

A policy must always have a purpose whether stated or implied. Most educational purposes are stated while some are implied.

According to Owolabi (2005) the practice of education becomes largely unsystematic when it is not guided by any policy. If a society shows no interest in the systematic conduct of education, the society does not need any education policy. Educational policies are policies made inside or outside educational institution for guiding the conduct of educational activities. These policies may be on curricular activities, pedagogical policies, resource policies or distributional policies.

Educational policies are formulated at two distinct levels to guide the systematic conduct of education. Policies to guide the overall conduct of each category of educational activities are generally made by the government, through the President or the Ministry or department of education. Such policies are for the whole education system (or country). They are system policies. Another group of educational policies made within the confines of system policies (nested in system policies), are policies of lower levels of management and they include policies made by educational parastatals, schools, head of institutions, faculties or departments, teachers, etc. These are called institutional policies. By virtue of the fact that the authority of the government is of a higher order than that of an educational institution, institutional policies are nested in the policies of the government policies.

Nesting of Educational Policies

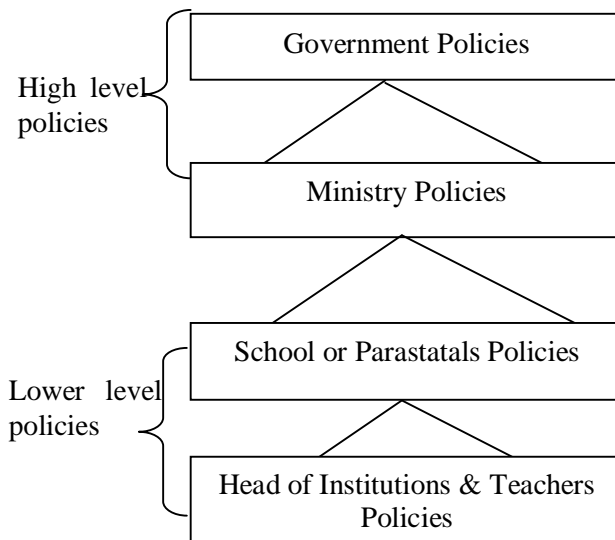


Fig.1 Levels of Educational Policies

Some Specific Policy Thrusts within the Educational System

Some of the issues of policy at high level (Government and Ministry) described above are mostly environmental and fundamental conditions to determine the overall educational policy since the main purpose of education is to promote the well-being of

the whole nation. However, within the education sector itself, certain major policy thrusts emerge in response to the requirements of the institutions, community and the teachers. According to Awokoya (1983), examples of such internal policy – thrusts are:

(a) ***Structural and Organizational Policies:-*** In our National Policy on Education (2004), a six year primary and three year of junior secondary school, were regarded as Basic Education. A three year of senior secondary school and four year of tertiary education were structurally laid down for the country. What to teach and materials to use to achieve the objectives at each level of the structure are decided by the parastatals under the ministry of education such as National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), National University Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Commission of Colleges of Education (NCCE), the institutions concerned, the heads of institutions, the teachers, etc.

(b) ***Quantitative and Physical Plant Policies:-*** Policy decisions for quantitative and physical plant development arises from the fact that a population of 140 million will have primary school enrolment of several millions and more teachers may likely be employed to take care of rapidly expanding figures of enrolment at all levels of education. Projection of both capital and recurrent expenditure needed should be made. Policy developments to meet these costs are inescapable if our national objectives are to be attained. These are made within the education system itself

(c) ***Qualitative Development Policies:-***The qualitative development policies hinge around the language of instruction and the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the society which are structured within the system. National development must be matched by a curriculum which ensures agricultural, industrial, commercial, scientific, social and cultural development. Some of the curriculum contents are decided at parastatal or institutional levels.

(d) ***Administrative and Planning Policies:-*** In the making of National Policy of Education both Federal, State, local and institutional levels are involved. At federal and state levels, administrative arrangement on international education and external aids are made. In planning and in administrative matters, many parallels decisions may exist between federal and state governments organs but the provision of the constitution imposes that of federal as overall. Government parastatals or agents are also involved in planning and administrative process within the country.

(e) ***Implementation Strategies and Policies:-*** The implementation strategies and policies are crucial in countries like Nigeria where a philosophy of developmentalism permeated every activities in every sector and move towards technology and democracy in full play. Such policy must be decided within the education system. Federal, state and local administrations have been used in the past and they should continue to be used with their cadres of administrators, educationists, commissions,

boards and committees. These are parts of the policies internal to education system that must be decided upon.

Improving the Quality of Educational Policies

Educational policy makers must be pre-occupied with the rationality and justifiability of educational policy choices. The following points are very important for every educational policy maker in order to make education serve the needs of the people and nation. The points can be grouped under four areas: Desirability, Effectiveness, Justness and Affordability, as deduced from Edem (1982), Awokoya, (1983) and Owolabi (2005).

1. **Desirability:** There must be a purpose for making an educational policy. The purpose must cater for the desire of the society or nation in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitude they wish to inculcate into their young ones. The objectives of the education system must take cognizance of the laws, custom and practices of the people.
2. **Effectiveness:** The policy must be clear and implementable for administrators in charge of implementation. There should be no ambiguity or obstacles to the implementation in order to make effective implementation.
3. **Justness:** The purpose and objectives of the policy must be relevant to the needs and aspirations of the people. The policy must satisfy various sections and segments of the nation or society in term of values, moral and relevance to the public life.
4. **Affordability:** The cost of the implementation must be within the scope of available resources. The contents must be achievable within the available resources and not out of proportion.

Other issue to be Considered

(i) **National Policy** – This is a general guideline for decision-making in an organization, system or a nation. Educational policies are themselves standing plans, which are definite authoritative guides to actions which has been laid down by educational authorities or government as steps and instrument to satisfy the educational needs of the people. For instance, the National Policy on Education (NPE) provides the foundation for educational planning at the national and state levels. As contained in the National Policy on Education (2004), the overall philosophy of Nigeria was firstly identified which are:-

- (a) live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice.
 - (b) Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.
- Later the five main national goals of Nigeria which were regarded as necessary foundation on which the nation's education was built were also stated. These are:-
- (a) a free and democratic society;
 - (b) a just and egalitarian society;

- (c) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) a great and dynamic economy;
- (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

Both the philosophy and the national goals were the policies of the government that will direct the development of educational policy plan in Nigeria.

- (ii) **National Educational Goals:** -National educational policy is a statement which guides the National Education goals and objectives which are always contained in the National Policy. This statement of educational goal are geared to the special needs and aims of a nation. The goals are desired output from the education system and process which ultimately, becomes the most fundamental of all subject matter in educational planning process.
- (iii) **Demographic Factor:-** A number of demographic variables in the population are capable of influencing or even determining the level and direction of educational planning in a nation. Some of these factors are ethnic diversity, population distribution by gender and age, distribution of population by economic activities and by sectoral occupation and geographical distribution. Nigeria is a multi-cultural nation with many ethnic and cultural groups. This has given rise to concepts such as “unity in diversity”, “national integration” as contained in our constitution.
- (iv) **Economic factors:-** The state of economy of a nation always affects the educational planning in that nation. Economic factors always guide planners in fitting education policy plans into available resources.

Other issues such as religion, culture and socio-political issues are factors that can be deduced from the participants.

Implementing the Policy Option

To implement a policy option, a schedule of activities need to be drawn up on who is to do what, when and how.

Implementation by Administrative Agencies

In any modern political systems, policy implementation is formally the activities of a complex array of administrative agencies often referred to as bureaucracies. Administrative agencies are often provided with broad and ambiguous statutory mandate that leave them with much discretion to decide what should and should not be done on some matters. Such statutory mandates are essentially directives to the agencies involved to go out and breakdown the policies to achievable units, fill in details, make policy more concrete and make more definite adjustments in areas where there are conflicting interests. (Under this condition the administrative process becomes an extension of the legislative process). However, since administrative policy decisions are mostly routine in nature, they are unlikely to produce controversies or conflicts.

Administrative agencies involved in the implementation of education policy in Nigeria are at various levels. At federal level are the Federal Ministry of Education with the involvement of various departments, education parastatals and agencies such as

Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), National Universities Education (NUC), National Commission on Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Teachers' Institute, (NTI), National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and examination bodies such as West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examinations Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB). At state level are the state ministries of education as well as state school boards, state Universal Basic Education Boards and State Agencies for Mass Education.

At local government level, there are Local Government Universal Basic Education Authority and the Department for Mass Education (formerly known as Department of Adults Education). Although, ministries of education and educational agencies are primary implementers of educational policy in Nigeria, many other players may also be involved and contribute in various ways to the execution of policies. These may include other ministries, pressure groups, community organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc

Allocation of Resources

Physical resources must be allocated and made available; Financial resources have to be allocated in a way to minimize implementation delays; Required personnel must be released from their other commitments and made to face their new assignments; they must possess the technical know-how and be made to operate in a clearly structured administrative system. Today in Nigeria, qualified policy makers and implementers are grossly inadequate. So also in all institutions at various levels, there is shortage of teachers and other forms of personnel.

People's Involvement

Owolabi (2005) suggested that successful implementation of an educational policy requires the mobilization of political support. Systematic experimentation and recorded experiences show that involving the people to be affected by a policy in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes will make the policy more acceptable and its implementation more successful. People must be psychologically ready to accept the policy. Therefore, the policy must be well publicized. All those to be affected by a policy must see that this new policy is theirs, borne out of their personal needs, and not forced on them by any outside agent. All the stakeholders in education must be sensitized to the new initiative.

Evaluation and Re-cycling

In an ideal setting, the process of analyzing existing conditions, implementing policies and assessing their impacts should be interactive. Unfortunately, this is not often the practice in Nigeria. The results of impact assessment should be ploughed back into policy if they are ever carried out. If there is any impact assessment, it ends as a stock taking exercise. When an innovative educational leader detects a public yearning for change in policy he facilitates a fresh beginning of the process. He should consult

the results of the previous experiences. The conclusion of a policy analysis is meant to provide inputs into a new policy cycle and the process of recycling should never end. According to Haddad (1995), ‘the conclusion of the policy analysis is never to conclude’.

Conceptual Framework for Educational Policy Planning and Analysis

(Adopted from Owolabi, 2005)

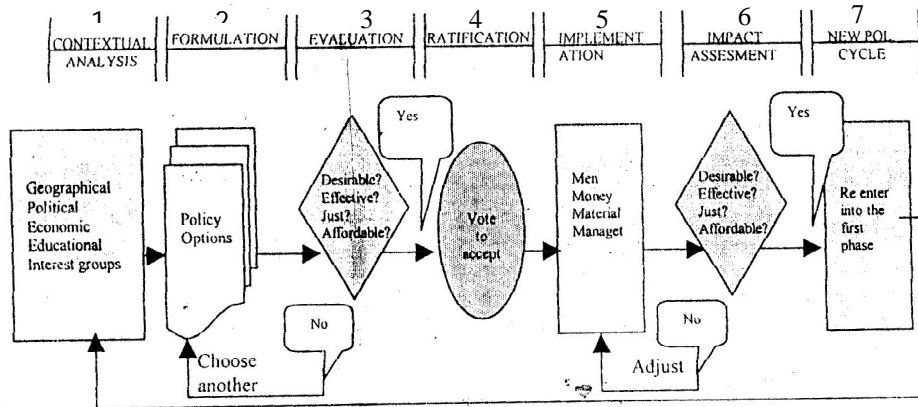


Fig.2 Framework for Recycling Education Policy

The diagram shows that:-

1. In making choice of policy option, education policy planners consider and analyze the geographical, cultural, political as well as educational and economic interest of the people.
2. With the analysis in the first step, the planners lay down several options in step 2 from which they accept or adopt one.
3. At step 3, the planners evaluate the options and choose one which is considered to be desirable, effective, just and affordable.
4. In step 4, final ratification is made on the one option adopted, with acceptance vote.
5. The implementation starts by providing required human resources, money, materials, equipment and other facilities as well as management acumen needed for implementation of the policy.
6. After many years of implementation, the impact of the policy is assessed through the monitoring, coordination, supervision and evaluation machineries. The issues of its desirability, effectiveness, just and affordability must be reevaluated. The outcome of it is noted as an instrument for entering into another cycle.
7. The evaluation at step 6 will give the outcome of the previous policy implemented. The outcome will be used to enter into a new policy circle as it

begins with step 1 again – “The conclusion of the policy analysis is never to conclude”. This should be done in respect of the present policy in Nigeria.

Problems of Educational Policies in Nigeria and other African Countries

The fate of many educational policies in Africa has been that of barren, unmethodical and dispassionate implementation and abandonment. Owolabi, (2005) observed that the reason why educational policy implementation are recording low success rates in African countries is that the policies are not often justifiable on rational grounds and they ought not to have been made at all because poor policy choice is doomed to fail. Several reasons that could be adduced for implementation failure particularly in African countries include:

1. **Poor Leadership:** Most of our policy makers in education system are politicians who do not care about efficient formulation and implementation of educational policies. They then reach decisions which are not based on full understanding of technical consideration as a result good educational plans are often dismissed because they are politically unacceptable inspite of their technical merits and a times, modified to achieve the desired political objectives. For instance Adeyemi and Oguntimilehin (2000) claimed that during the 1979 – 83 civil rules in Nigeria, educational policies and practices varied from state to state depending on the party in power, hence UPE (Universal Primary Education) was maintained in some states while in others it died a natural death. The implementation of the 6-3-3-4 education system was disturbed by politics. This shows that there is no distinction between political and technical aspect of educational decisions. They are much concerned with their selfish and political interest.
2. **Poor Programme Management:** The management of educational policies in Africa has been poor, particularly in Nigeria. Many implementers are not trained in educational administration and planning. On many occasions, there had been deviations from original policies planned as a result of faulty implementation.
3. **Lack of Accurate Statistical Data:** Lack of accurate statistical data and unreliable national census have tended to render efforts relating to facilities formulation and implementation of educational policies. Success of the various forms of policy formulation and implementation rests on reliable data.
4. **Economic Constraint:** For effective implementation of educational policies, there is need for adequate fiscal resources to develop it. In Nigeria as well as in other African countries, the percentage of the government budget earmarked for education is always small, hence there is always not enough fund to provide necessary facilities and the running costs to schools. In Nigeria today, this is a major bone of contention between the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the government at both federal and state levels.
5. **Inadequate Teaching Manpower:** It has been discovered that qualified manpower in terms of teachers have been in short supply to the system. They may be available in the labour market but not employed to serve in the system.

6. **Administrative bottleneck:** Implementation of many policies are subjected to rigours of bureaucracy and this may delay commencement of good plans thereby increasing the problems of time span. There is a gap between policies and their implementations which may lead to lack of achievement of stated objectives.
7. **Corruption:** There is corruption among the political leaders and the senior government officials in the country which has hampered successful implementation of some aspect of our educational policies. Corruption has been described by many intellectuals as “number one endemic African problem”.
8. **Inadequate skilled educational key policy planners:** Another aspect that constitutes a problem is that planning of education is an intellectual process which requires a difficult kind of thought. It involves the ability to manipulate a complex array of abstract ideas and the combination of various cause-effect variables. Therefore policy planning requires appropriate training or preparation of the intellect to be able to cope with the task of educational planning. Most of the present planners are not so trained in the field, but rather found themselves on the table and they do it haphazardly.

Conclusion

The trends so far described have brought to light the process of policy formulation and problems of educational implementation in Nigeria and Africa in general. Policies should be generated from the needs of the people. It must be desirable, just and affordable. We are facing challenges in the technological age and as a people, we must make effort to move forward with other parts of the world. Policies formulated must be the type that will promote our development.

Recommendations

For effective implementation of policies in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made.

1. Efforts should be made by the government to divorce education from politics, to enable education policy makers and experts evolve an integrated system of education for national development.
2. The present education system should be reviewed and related to the needs of the productive and service sectors, thus establishing proper linkage between education and the needs in the world of work.
3. The government should establish and promulgate a standing fund policy on education that will survive any regime or political party in power. Government at various levels should increase its financial allocations to education and consider the implementation of the 26% allocation of their budget to education as recommended by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Dare, 2009).
4. Adequate trained teachers should be employed to teach at every level of our education system. Without adequate trained teachers, objectives set from the policies may not be achieved.

5. There is need to control the rate of policy changes in order to give room for continuity and long-term planning.
6. Objectives of our educational policies should always be clearly stated.
7. There is need to put in place the monitoring, coordination, supervision and evaluation machineries which will serve as follow-up to planned policy.
8. The government should put in place the effective use of Management Information System (MIS) for educational policy makers and equip the agencies concerned with adequate number of computers. Our educational planning system must march on with other parts of the world.
9. There should be the development of practical instruments to promote close contact between those in charge of policy planning and research as well as teachers and the society as a whole, e.g. joint councils, advisory committees, etc. could be set up to facilitate this proposal.
10. Finally, efforts should be made to reduce human errors in educational policy making as well as corrupt practices among educational policy implementers and administrators. Corrupt officials caught misappropriating or embezzling funds meant for education should be appropriately punished to deter others and to encourage government at various levels to appropriate more funds to education.

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