



## Educational policy and challenges of implementation in Nigeria, A critical analysis, 1960-2020

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### Abstract

The troubling performance of the educational system in Nigeria has become very worrisome so much so that it had now attracted the concerns of major state actors both locally and internationally. The question is, where have we gone wrong? Is it that the educational policies are faulty or is it that the implementation process is faulty? These are issues that this work seeks to resolve. Therefore, this work majors on a critical analysis of some educational policies like, the U.P.E, U.B.E programme as well as the national policy on education. However, the finding of this work indicates that ineffective implementation of educational policies and lack of political will, lack of continuity of governmental programmes and corruption are major problem facing the implementation process in Nigeria. However this work recommends that Nigeria should as a matter of necessity discontinue with the national policy on education which is fashioned from the American system of education to adopts the model of education practiced by Asian countries such as Japan, China, India etc. that takes into cognizance, the culture of the people and is industrially, scientifically, and technologically inclined.

**Keywords:** Education, implementation, policy programme

### Introduction

In education as in other fields of human endeavor, every official action of an organization must have a backing or basis. It is this purposes that a policy serves. A policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made, but it does not make or implement the decision. It usually provides a general guide that facilitates decision making.

The formulation of an educational policy sets the stage for implementation which according to Ukeje (2003) <sup>[19]</sup>, is perhaps the most important aspect of planning. However policy implementation in education is a conspicuous national problem that has taken center stage in Nigeria as it brings about a meaningful relationship between business objectives and organizational functions as it discourages deviations from planned courses of action. Also a policy ensures consistency of action because an organization is governed by approved principles.

According Awokoya cited in Amaele (2010) <sup>[3]</sup> educational policies are directed towards increasing the quality of life of a people, he noted that the objectives of any policy is to satisfy individual needs, community pressures and the degree of complexity and sophistication to which socialized personnel's must be educated and trained to meet the demands.

Also educational policy issues continue to be a question of critical concern in developing countries in African as a tool of development, this is because the implementation process is mostly hijacked by individuals whose self-interest overshadows the ideas of the said policy. Hence, every society world over that has good developmental objectives must as a matter of necessity monitor the implementation process of every given or outlined policy, else the goals and objectives of the organization or society is put to jeopardy (Tikly 2001), this is because the relationship between education and development has been established such that educational policy is now accepted internationally as a key

development index and it is in recognition of this importance that government world over have made commitments in their countries educational policies for their citizens to have access to education. However, in spite of the provisions outlined by the Nigerian government on policies that concerns education, the sector is still suffering and wallowing on problems relating to poor implementation process, poor planning, poor funding, inadequate staff motivation and welfare etc. it is on this background that it becomes imperative to investigate the various factors responsible for this problems as it relates to educational and policy framework.

### Conceptual Review

#### Policy as a Concept

Policy is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative actions will take place (Obi 2008) <sup>[13]</sup>. A policy can also be seen as the process of making important organizational decisions, including the identification of different alternatives such as programs or spending priorities and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they have. Davis cited in Obi, Lambert, and Obiora (2008) <sup>[13]</sup> stated that a policy is a statement of a principle or group of principles with their supporting rules of action, that conditions and governs the achievement of certain objectives to which a contract or business is targeted on. It can also be seen as the distinct path of action which is suitable for the pursuit of desired goals with a particular content, directing the decision making of an organization or individual (Ukeje 2000).

#### Educational Policy

According to Osokoya (1987) <sup>[17]</sup> education is a distinctive way in which the society through school inducts its young ones into full membership of the society. So every modern society needs some educational polices to guide it in the process of such initiation. Hence educational policies are

initiatives mostly articulated by governments that determines the direction of an education system (Okoroma 2000). Educational policies can also be seen as the basic principles and government policy-making in educational sphere as well as the collection of laws and rules that governs the operation of education system. However it is pertinent to state clearly that not all policies are qualified as an educational policy. This is why Kerr cited in Obi (2008) <sup>[1]</sup> believes that for a policy to identify 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 in education are part and parcel of the educational institutions. Generally policies must be rational and purposeful to stand the test of time but a major constrain facing the policies is mainly anchored on the implementation process. For, of what value will it be that after a tedious process of policy formulation, articulation and planning, and such policy is not made practical. (Karr 1976 cited in Obi 2008) <sup>[1]</sup>. Hence policies in Nigeria most time face a lot of challenges on the implementation stage as over 75 % of policies in Nigeria suffer this Bain and some are made to die naturally.

#### **Problems associated with policy implementation**

The gap that often exist between policy formulation and implementation provokes an inquiry to identify various factors and constrain that affect the effective implementation of educational policies. The problem of policy implementation can be traced back to the planning stage which comes immediately after the formulation of the policy. (Okeke *et al* 2002). This is why Ukeje (2005) stated clearly that good planning will enhance effective implementation. Hence good planning that can facilitate effective implementation ought to be considered, which includes: social environment, political and the financial structure, as well as the statistical problems.

More so, Van Horn and Van Meter (2002) outlined some general explanations for problems associated with policy implementation, namely;

#### **The communication process**

Effective implementation requires that implementers know what they are expected to do. As messages pass through any communication network, distortion are likely to occur which can produce contrary directives, ambiguities, inconsistencies and incompatible requirements. Therefore communication process must be followed swiftly as any misinformation may likely destroy the objective of the outlined programme.

#### **The capability problem**

Ability to implement policies may be hindered by such factors like incompetent staff, insufficient information, political support, inadequate financials resources and the time frame constraints.

#### **Dispositional conflict**

Implementation of a policy may fail because those who are charged with the responsibilities of implementation many refuse to carry out their own assignment as in the executive arm. Hence, it become imperative to consider first, the will power on the part of the executives before floating a programme.

### **A Critical Analysis of Some Educational Policies in Nigeria from 1990**

1. **National policy on education:** Prior to 1977, Nigeria operated an educational policy inherited from Britain at independence; the inability of this policy to duly satisfy the national aspirations of the country rendered it useless and unpopular. Hence in 1969 a national curriculum inference was organized which reviewed the inherited curriculum and identified new national goals for Nigeria's education. Therefore a National seminar was organized by the National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1973 under the chairmanship of Chief S. O. Adebó. This gave birth to the National policy on Education in 1977 (Akangbou, 1985 cited in Jerome 2010).

According to Amaele (2010) <sup>[3]</sup> the National objective of Nigeria is stated in the National policy on education which includes;

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united strong and self-reliant Nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

The writer noted that the center point of the philosophy of Nigerian education is aimed at integrating the individual Nigerian to be a sound and effective citizen by providing equal educational opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary level within and outside the formal school system. The aforementioned if properly implemented would have taken Nigeria to grater height today but the reveres is the case, as Amaela (2010) stated when he critically examined the aims and objectives of the national policy on education on a step by step.

#### **A Freed and Democratic Society**

According to the writer freedom here refers to the individual members of the country. This is because there can never be democracy without freedom. The writer also acknowledge that a civil society that is dictatorial or autocratic is far from being democratic and any leader who fined him or herself into power without respecting the electoral process is not democratic and so the society is nether free or democratic. Amaele (2010) <sup>[3]</sup> explained that as at the time when the curriculum conference was held in Lagos Nigeria in 1969, the country was neither democratic, free nor peaceful. This he said might be the reason for the development of the first objectives selected on the national policy on education in Nigeria. However from 1977, when the policy document became a working document in Nigeria till date the same feared trends of military dictatorship or the rebounded military civilians are the ones coming to occupy the seat of government of our noble nation which off course have bastardized the whole aim of the number one objective that there is no freedom in a country where it not safe for a Nigerian to live in another part of the country freely due to religious ethnic and cultural sentiments and different forms of insecurity problems. (Amaele 2010) <sup>[3]</sup>.

This is very predominant in Nigeria as we have the Boko Haram in the North, the East is overtaken by the unknown gun men, the West is facing challenges relating to bandit, cultist etc. the herbs men are there invading communities in the North Central and Middle-Belt. The militants in the

South. How on earth can we say that the number one objectives of the national policy on education have been conceived from 1977 when the policy became working till date?

### **A Just and Egalitarian Society**

A just and egalitarian society refers to a society where merit takes precedence over mediocrity, justice goes with such attributes like truth, fairness, peace, freedom and even democracy (Amaele, 2010) [3]. He further explains that a just and egalitarian society is one in which justice can neither be delayed nor denied, how well can we say that this is a truism in the Nigerian educational system today? Is a question that requires a lot of explanations. This is because justice and egalitarianism in Nigeria is still a dream, the state of Nigerian educational system calls for a reflective thinking, most of our public schools are reduced to sub-human level with little or no structural facilities and manpower, all in the name of free education for children and wards of the common masses while the rich or those in government send their children outside to study in other parts of the world, leaving the universities and other aspects of education to die a natural death and with little or nothing to write home about.

### **A United and Self-Reliant Nation**

The concept self-reliance is a major determinant of any developing nation world over, hence no nation can achieve unity and strength without being self-reliant. According to Amaele (2010) [3] self-reliance is the availability of manpower within the state, a nation may have every natural potential within her environment but if it lacks the necessary manpower to exploit and utilize such resources such a nation cannot develop, this is why underdevelopment is a major weakness to our nation Nigeria, but the question still remains, where have we gotten it wrong? That up till this day Nigeria is still importing toothpicks, there is no proficient product to claim that this product is made in Nigeria and has some standard branding which can be exported outside the shores of our Nigeria. This however has been attributed to problems pushed down to us by our so-called leaders in Nigeria as they have failed in their policy framework to cater for her youths. All that is attributed with the Nigerian politics is a winner-takes-all syndrome, anyone who gets on the seat of leadership must first enrich himself and family.

### **A Great and Dynamic Economy**

A great and dynamic economy to a nation refers to a country whose economic resources are diversified, a country whose economy is challenged and directed to meet the current demands both locally and nationally (Amaele 2010) [3]. The writer further explained that a dynamic economy refers to a nation that has developed both in manpower and material resources. A nation that can fully tap, manage and distribute her natural resources efficiently. Nigeria as a country has not made any provision for manpower development, the leaders on their own parts are not even making provision for the development of her youth, and rather they end upon sending their children overseas for proper study and when they return, they are made to occupy relevant positions and to continue the exploitative process already kept on ground by their fathers.

Amaele (2010) [3] stated that Nigeria is a mono-economy country where over 90% of the country's total revenue

comes from petroleum. Sadly indeed, this is a sector that is controlled by foreign multinational companies. Also Nigerian soil is naturally blessed both on shore and offshore, with abundance of solid and liquid minerals like gold, iron, crude gas etc. which if properly harnessed, our country would be amongst the world powers today because of our richness in resources but the reverse is the case as Nigeria is classified among the highest debtor nations of the world today, how then can we say that the vision of a great and dynamic economy can be achieved with all this.

### **A Land of Bright and Full Opportunities for all Citizens**

There has never been any of such things like a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens in Nigeria. How does a nation whose major source of income depends on foreign companies aim to achieve the aforementioned objectives, is a very big question that requires a very detailed explanation. It is even surprising that Nigeria as a major oil-producing nation should engage in the importation of refined petroleum products from those countries she sold the crude to, government in and out yet none of them can at least make the various refineries within the country work (Amaele 2000) [3]. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens is a nation that has in it as earlier discussed, a free and dynamic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united strong and self-reliant nation and a dynamic economy. These can only be achieved when proper attention is given to educational policies in Nigeria.

### **Analysis of the UPE and UBE Programmes as Educational Policies in Nigeria**

The implementation of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria started in 1976 under the name universal primary education (U.P.E), the acronym, U.B.E became operational in 1999 when President Olusegun Obasanjo, became dissatisfied with the result of the U.P.E, renamed and launched the program. However, four years later it had been established that the U.B.E and U.P.E were noted to be identical twins and what was launched was an old bottle. The implementation problems that led to the failure and abandonment of the U.P.E programme have also saddled the U.B.E and are about to cripple the program. According to Taiwo cited in Ogbondah (2002) [14] the program was faced with short-sightedness in planning on the part of the federal government, this is because barely four years of its implementation a lot of challenges ranging from low estimation and budgeting, faced the program. However Onabamiro (1974) & Nwankwo (1974) [11] cited in Jerome (2010) gave some recipes for the successful implementation of the U.P.E programme which includes;

1. Accurate statistics of children of school age
2. Adequate number of school structures
3. Adequate number of qualified teachers
4. Sufficient financial provision
5. Adequate publicity to create awareness about the scheme

Despite being equipped with these implementation recipes, the federal government acted inconsistently and everything required for the effective implementation of this aspect of the policy on education was short in supply, hence the program did not achieve its aims and objectives.

The U.B.E came to existence in September 1999, so far available records have not shown any departure from the

U.P.E trend. The situation appears even worse due to the level of corruption in Nigeria. Okoroma (2003) <sup>[16]</sup> state that the effective implementation of the U.B.E program revealed significant inadequacy in the implementation efforts. Among the constrains that impede effective implementation where;

1. Inadequate qualified teachers
2. Insufficiency of fund
3. Inadequate teaching and learning facilities
4. Poor motivation of teachers
5. Lack of guidance and counseling service

The aforementioned problems are the same as those that handicapped the implementation of the U.P.E. This indicates that the re-launching of the U.P.E with a new nomenclature of U.B.E did not result from any lesson that was learned from the failure of the U.P.E. hence, the quality of education at the primary level in some state have worsened than the pre-1976 era. Taiwo (2015) stipulated that over 15years later, there are still complains of poor standard of secondary education in Nigeria and that the poly which was initiated to guarantee functional education after the American model has become even worse than the British system that was adjudged non-developmental, however, studies, conferences and individuals have confirmed that the goals of the secondary education policy have not been achieved due to ineffective implementation of the policy programme.

### **Nigerian Factors that Militate against the Implementation of educational Policies**

1. **Political Instability:** The Nigerian education is still in a deplorable state till today because most policy programmes on the development of education in Nigeria have never been followed or implemented. Apart from the general problem of policy implementation, common in most developing African countries, some factors are identified as peculiar to Nigeria which have affected education. Nigeria is seen as the giants of Africa in terms of natural abundance of oil and gas, but ironically most individuals still live below the poverty line of one dollar per day. Between 1960 to 2020, the country had faced series of change in governance, some of which do not even serve for long or complete their term in office before been overthrown by the military. In 45years, Nigeria had fifteen head of states out of which only six were democratically elected into office, others came through military coup. Even though educational policies were formulated by various governments, political instability discouraged the implementation process, as most government who came into power are faced with relative uncertainly which may lead to lose of power or office. Hence, every political player will be in a hurry to help himself either with more wealth before he was replaced by another. This in turn affects the implementation process in Nigeria.
2. **Corruption:** Corruption prevails over all segments of Nigerian national life, this is because in spite of the enormous natural resources present at the disposal of the country, basic amenities of life such as shelter, food, water, electricity, good roads and education are very scarce commodity to her citizens. Adesina (2004) noted

that the transparency international (TI), which serves as the watch dog on global corruption, ranked Nigeria as the third most corrupt country in the world in 2003, by 2004, the organization ranked Nigeria as the second most corrupt nation which serve as a step upwards rather than reducing., corruption had kept the Nigerian education on a stagnant position with little or no development, a lot of educational policies have been proposed but had failed at the implementation phase which is connected by one corrupt practice or the other like the national policy on education already discussed.

The re-establishment of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the state of education has deteriorated rapidly. The UNESCO standard for education for all nations of the world placed 26% of the national budget. During the military rule in Nigeria, the educational sector got as much as 13%, but the present democratic dispensations in Nigeria has fallen short of this for example, in 2001; only 8% was allocated to the educational sector.

The implication is that the educational sector is already in a big problem, Again, corruption in Education gained more weight in 2005 when President Olusegun Obsanjo made a broadcast to the nations alleging that some members of the national assembly demanded and collected N55million from professor Fabian Oslyi (former minister of Education), the senate president and five other senators were involved in the deal, Obasanjo noted that the bribe was to enable the national Assemble to approve an enhanced budget for the ministry of education (Obasanjo 2005) <sup>[12]</sup>. This shows that the refusal to accede to such a bribery demand meant doom for the educational sector. Adighije (2005) stipulated that bribery to the national assembly is a normal practice and that every minister does it so that his demands are carried out.

Osuji (2005) <sup>[18]</sup>, who was involved in the corruption scandal admitted having given N55million to the senate committee on education but said it was a public relations gift and not a bribe. He further stressed that most ministers do same to have their budgets passed in line with their padded proposal. The implication is that this demonic practice has been ongoing for years of democracy in Nigeria to the detriment of the educational sector; from the above it is now clear to state that the corrupt practice in Nigeria to a large extent affects the implementation process at different stages. The cankerworms of corruption and gross miss-management of resources have been blamed for the deplorable state of the educational sector (Ejiogu 2005).

### **Implication for National Development:**

3. Education is for life and for living. It is an investment in people which push untold dividends to the society and when such investment is not made or is made inadequately, the society tend to suffer (Ukeje 1996) it is on this background that the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria provided at section 18 of its paragraph the follow;
  1. Government shall direct its policy toward ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
  2. Government shall promote science and technology
  3. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy and to this end, Government shall as and when practicable provide.

- a. Free, compulsory and universal primary education
- b. Free secondary education
- c. Free university education and
- d. Free adult and literacy programs (FRN, 1999).

Therefore it is on this background that the national policy on education was developed and accepted as the Nigerian educational philosophy is anchored on this constitutional mandate. The importance of education to national development is no longer doubt as no nation without development ideologies can survive, but the issue is anchored on the effect of poor implementation of educational policies. This is why Ake (1988) noted that education is the process of becoming the best we can be, but with the different crisis on the education sector engendered by poor implementation of policies, it is doubtful whether its recipients are really becoming the best as expected and if not what is the faith of Nigerian education. Also the effective implementation of the various programs canvassed by the national policy on education has relegated this hope and optimism to back stage, our major problem is caught in between lines of rejecting the British educational system which is unofficially practiced up till date and accepting but not practicing the American system of education with its potential for technological advancement. Therefore Nigeria continues to hide under the umbrella of the national policy on education conscious of the implementation problems, our national aspirations will suffer greater impediments, and our national development will only rely on miracles and divine interventions for growth to occur. Hence, the British system of education was found inadequate for Nigeria's developmental purposes, it is also a clear fact that the American system of education has failed in Nigeria because of our sociological impediments, we need not to continue to deceive ourselves with a national education policy that has been found unworkable due to most of the constrains in this work, but seek to formulate and build on our own kind of educational system which is practical in meaning and develops more on it for a better future.

### Conclusion

From the literature reviewed, one can conclude that the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria is constrained by the following:

- Most educational policies are well focused but the planning is often defective thereby making implementation difficult.
- The resources available for the implementation of a given educational policy are often over-estimated and there by elicit unrealistic exceptions that fail to materialize.
- The implementation of education policies is also often hindered by the interplay of politics, which may sometimes relegate reality to obscurity.
- Facilities such as classrooms, offices, laboratories, workshops libraries, power water etc. are basic requirements in every school system. These have been found to be grossly inadequate in most Nigerian educational institution.
- Insufficiency of funds for implementing educational policies in Nigeria is a problem that has recurred in almost every implementation study.

- Corruption at all levels hinders the implementation of educational policies and programs, as government lacks the political will for effective implementation.

### Recommendation

Our nation is in urgent need of a practicable and workable educational policy, and it is on this background that the following recommendations are made;

1. The present national policy on education should be disbanded on the accounts of its non-workability.
2. An indigenous system of education fashioned after the models operated by Asian countries should be adopted, and the ideas that are alien to our culture as Africans (Nigerians) should be avoided totally because they are bound to fail.
3. Corruption practices should not be treated or allowed in the educational sector because corruption is mainly responsible for the failure of the national policy on education, in fact new laws should be made that placed corrupt practice to be punishable by death.
4. Mismanagement of educational resources at all levels should be taken seriously and those found guilty should be made to serve jail terms not less than five years, not for individuals to come up with the bullet statement that snake swallow money meant for project in the educational system.
5. Nigeria government and its leaders should develop positive political will and continuity in governance to enable growth in the system.
6. Every effort should be made to eradicate corruption from all level of Nigerian programs so that available resources can be utilized for public interest.

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