

Education Policy Instability in Nigeria and Implications for Educational Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Changes in educational policies are one of the major attributes of the Nigerian educational system. This paper examined the causes of educational policy instability in Nigeria and its implications on educational development. The paper employed quantitative and qualitative data. The data were collected from both print and published papers from online publications. The paper concluded that the causes for educational policy instability in the Nigerian educational sector include; capital intensive, poor consultation, political instability, poor coordination and cooperation of policy formulation (lack of synergy between bodies that develop policies), the appointment of Non-professionals as heads of educational institutions, dynamics in educational system and practices and poor formulation of educational policies. The paper also identified wastage in educational resources, low space of development in education and increment of administrative and management expenditure as effects of educational policy instability in the Nigerian educational system. Based on these problems identified, the paper hereby recommended that the government should ensure adequate budgetary allocation to the educational sector for the implementation of educational policies and professionals should be employed in the formulation of educational policies to avoid poor formulation of education policies.

Introduction

The Nigerian educational system is characterized by many challenges. One such challenge in the Nigerian educational system is beset with educational policy instability. The major issue in educational development is educational policy instability. One of the most serious problems threatening the sustainability and development of Nigerian educational systems is inconsistency in the various educational policies at every level of government. This inconsistency in the educational system affects the implementation of educational plans and programmes. Nigerian education cannot perform optimally without stable educational policies.

Nigeria's educational system has witnessed a series of changes in policies and programmes. Some of the changes seem to be desirable while some will make one wonder why some of the other changes were ever initiated (Manafa, 2011; Aluede, 2006). In addition, Manafa (2011) and Ayeni (2000) conclude that many of the changes in educational policies in Nigeria have been

described as the product of confusion. There is, therefore, a high level of uncertainty which is affecting the implementation of Educational policies negatively in Nigeria.

Ogunode & Samuel (2020); Yaro (2017); Philip, Okoroafor, & Iro (2015) and UNICEF (2017) observed that the Nigerian government attached great importance to educational policies due to its relevance which includes among others the provision of sound knowledge to the citizens for adaptation into the larger society. Certain factors impede education policy development which adversely affects the implementation of the policies and subsequent non-accomplishment of educational policy goals including ensuring quality education (Yaro 2017; Odukoya 2011).

The major problem of the system of education is the frequent changes in policies. Several studies confirmed that politics affect the implementation of the National policy on education (Ogunode, Solomon, & Jegede 2021a; Ogunode, Gregory & Abubakar 2020; Ogunode & Jegede, 2021; Odukoya 2011; Ogbonnaya, 2010).

The Nigerian education system has been subjected to a lot of educational policy changes. For instance, Odukoya, Bowale, & Okunlola, (2018) submitted that for about forty years now, Nigeria has been unable to successfully implement the National Policy on Education [NPE]. The policy which came into existence in 1977, after over four years of deliberations at various levels, appeared to have solutions to virtually all core educational problems (FME, 1977). The National Policy on Education, revised in (1989; 1998; 2004, 2007 and 2014), contains every necessary ingredient for the achievement of the goals of the education system.

Odukoya, Bowale, & Okunlola, (2018) cited Mrs. Bola Mosuro, the Proprietress of Access Universal College, Lagos lamented that: "Our problem in this country [Nigeria] is that we often pick and drop policies as we want. There is nothing wrong with the 6-3-3-4 system. We simply have not implemented it well and now we have picked another one". Based on this, it is imperative to examine the causes of educational policy instability in Nigeria and its implications on educational development.

Concept of Policy

Policies are written or unwritten statements that guide present and future thinking, initiatives, actions and decisions of managers. They are written when there are documents somewhere for reference purposes and are unwritten when they are made in form of pronouncements i.e. policy statements by people in power or position of authority. Policies are guides that usually provide the latitude of operations of managers. It makes managers understand the extent to which they can go in the process of decision-making. Egonmwan (1991) views policy as a government programme of action. He believes that it stands for various degrees of goal articulation and normative regulation of government activities: that is what government intends to do or achieve (goal) and how it tends to do it (implementation). Manafa, (2011) defines policy as a plan or course of action especially, one of an organization or government. The policy is a course of action thought to be prudent or tactically helpful; hence, prudence or sagacity; is a statement of commitment to a broad requirement often used in an organization to instruct personnel as to effective. It is also a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome(s) (Wikipedia 2010; Wikipedia (2007).

There are different policies such as educational policy, economic policy, sports policy, health policy, defence policy and so on. Owolabi (2005) submitted that a policy falls into one category of action, or doing, intentionally undertaken with a specific purpose in mind. Further, an action is qualified to be described as policy because among other things, someone is doing something as an actor and the person undertook the action with a particular purpose in mind. At this stage, there is the initiation of a policy that is large (or otherwise called broad) and Fabunmi (2005) states that policy is a political statement that is backed up with legislation.

There are many forms of policies according to NOUN (2010) and they include; specific policy, programme policy, multi-programme policy and strategy policy.

Specific Policy

The issue-specific policy is a day-to-day, short-term policy aimed at addressing a particular problem or an issue. A policy may be made to solve the problem of late-coming in a school. Lateness is just an issue.

Programme Policy

A programme policy is a policy that focuses on a single programme. It is concerned with the designing of a programme in a particular area. For example, a policy addressing how school libraries should be cited in schools is a programme policy.

Multi-Programme

A multi-programmed policy deals with decisions that address competing programme areas. For example, a policy decision to address the primary and junior secondary education within the UBE programme is a multi-programme policy.

Strategy Policy Programme

The strategy policy deals with large-scale decisions, which require huge resource allocation. The UBE policy programme is a good example. It involves decisions on childhood education, primary education, junior secondary education, non-formal education, and special education. It involves broad resource allocation on personnel, facilities and equipment, structures, mid-day meals etc. The policy directs the actions or activities of an organization (Ogbonnaya 2010).

Concept of Education Policy

There are many definitions given by different authors on educational policy. For instance, NOUN (2010) views educational policy as a general statement containing principles, regulations and rules, that govern many of the decisions on how to educate children, where to get them educated, where to get them employed, who to teach them, how to finance their education, what to teach, how to impart skills, goals, objectives and even the philosophy. An educational policy can be described as the explicit or implicit (written or unwritten) statements of actions that guide the future of education. Babalola (2003) asserts that educational policy is a general statement, which contains the guiding principles and rules that govern many of the decisions that guide the management of education. In Nigeria, we have the National Policy on Education, a document that encompasses the aims, objectives, structure and all aspects of the educational system. From the above, Educational policy can be seen as the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions

NOUN (2010) observes that educational policies are crucial in the realization of the overall goals of the educational system and subsequently the national goals. Education policies constitute the guiding ways through which the education system is effectively operated. Education Policies address various issues in the educational system. Such issues include access to education; equity; equality and educational opportunities; structures; efficiency in education; funding etc.

Educational policy is very important in the realization of educational objectives. The educational policy serves as a direction and guide in piloting affairs of education. Educational objectives cannot be fully achieved without effective educational policy. Educational policy is designed to direct activities and actions that would lead to the attainment of educational objectives. Educational policy is designed to equip the educational system with all that is necessary to launch Nigeria into the future, (politically, socially, morally and technologically). Educational policy is aimed at providing access to quality education for all Nigerian irrespective of the economic, political, or religious status of the parents. Educational policy is meant to address the

issue of imbalance in the provision of education in different parts of the country concerning access, quality of resources and girls' education.

Educational policy is formulated to serve as a blueprint for official action that impacts the general populace. The education policies outline the government's expectations, standards, aims and objectives as well as the requirements that are necessary to ensure quality service delivery. Martins (2005) noted that education policy development in Nigeria was first managed by colonial masters with the aid of ordinances and codes. Educational policies are used to address many problems and issues in education. Educational policies are used to increase enrolment in educational institutions, it is used to improve the quality of education; it is used to ensure improvement in the delivery of educational services (Ogunode, Jegede, & Solomon, 2021a).

Educational policy-making is the process through which policies are made to guide the effective management of education. As aforesaid, the policies are the written or unwritten rules, regulations and guidelines, which are made by the government or the authority of an educational institution or through their agencies or representatives. "Educational policy-making has two major dimensions. They are the ACTORS and the PROCESS. The actors are the 'doers', that is, who makes the policies? While the process is the 'how' of policy-making, that is, how policy is made? I will add the third dimension, which is: why is policy made? Or who is the policy made to serve? This is very important because the 'why' and 'whose interest' of policymaking will largely guide the formulation of the aims and the objectives of policy" (NOUN, 2010).

Concept of Educational Policy Instability

Policy instability is a constant change in educational policies as a result of changes in government. It is the variation in the educational policies of a country. Educational policy instability is the change in educational policies, in the entire educational system or sub-system. Each government rationalized the policy on education on its own accord.

Causes of Educational Policy Instability in Nigeria

The reasons for policy instability in the Nigerian educational sector include; capital-intensive implementation plan, poor consultation, change in government, poor coordination and cooperations, the appointment of Non-professionals as heads of educational institutions, changes in educational system and practices and poor formulation of educational policies.

Capital Intensive implementation plans

Poor funding of education in Nigeria has resulted in education policy instability in Nigeria. Some educational policies required a huge sum of financial commitment to be able to implement them. NOUN (2010) observed that many educational policies in Nigeria have been subjected to changes because of the large funds required to implement them. The educational policies require adequate and regular funding to boost the usefulness of the emerging plan. Funds required for the implementation of education policies are not always provided adequately. The money required to procure human and material resources for the full implementation of education policies is not adequate. A lot of money is required to construct classrooms, laboratories, workshops and other plants required for effective schooling. Apart from building, a large sum of money is also needed to purchase the non-building facilities and equipment such as books, reagents, furniture, etc. Many educational policies involve massive construction of buildings, especially new classrooms, laboratories and workshops, and expansion of old ones as well as recruitment and training of personnel. It has been observed that financial allocation to educational policy plan implementation by all tiers of government in Nigeria is inadequate, considering the school-age population. While the allocation is considered to be inadequate, there is also the problem of internal misallocation, misappropriation and outright corruption within institutions and among the agencies responsible for the management and allocation of resources to the schools and institutions at all levels of education. Ogunode, Chijindu, & Jegede (2022);

Ogunode, Johnson & Olatunde-Aiyedun, (2022); NOUN (2013) observes that education policy without economic backing, especially funding may fail. Similarly, the population of the country, its structure, and its size and growth over time may affect the implementation of policy. The size of financial allocation to education is largely determined by the country's wealth as well as its population. Adeniyi (2015) states that even though education policies in Nigeria were designed to provide sound knowledge to the citizens for adaptation to the larger society, the trend of education policy development was constrained by certain factors that adversely affect the implementation of the policies. These include poor funding, inconsistent policies and lack of institutional capacity or bureaucratic weaknesses among others. The dropping of one policy implies adopting another one which constituted educational policy instability. Ogunode & Adanna (2022) and Manafa (2011) observe that one of them is over-ambitious Policy goals: - some policy objectives are too laudable that it will be too difficult for the Federal Government to achieve such objectives. Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme was a laudable programme because according to Aluede (2006) it could not succeed for the fact that the Federal Government estimated the number of pupils that will want to benefit from the programme, but could not determine the number of teachers, school buildings and amount of money that would be required to make the programme functional.

Poor Consultation

Poor consultation in the process of educational policy formulation is another factor that is responsible for the instability of educational policies in Nigeria. Educational policy formulation required systematic consultation. Every stakeholder in the educational sector needs to be consulted. The input of the various segment of society is needed in the educational policies. According to Haddad (1994), for a policy planning process to be effectively actualized, the need to mobilize political support must be recognized as necessary for every aspect of policy implementation. Mobilization of supports for any educational policy plan is very important; as such a serious effort should be involved to publicize and advertise the purpose of the policy plan for total acceptance by the public who are the major beneficiaries. This is very important in plural nations like Nigeria with diverse cultures, values, spatial distribution and so many other diversities. Mobilization ensures value orientation. It will intimate the public of the short-term and long-term benefits of such policy plans that will be implemented for the provision of individuals and the nation. It has been observed that due to a shortage of time, many educational policies were formulated without full consultation from the educational stakeholders in the country. This poor consultation during educational policy formulation in Nigeria has led to educational policy instability in the Nigerian educational system. Kingdom and Maekae (2013) pointed out that despite the critical position of education in development agenda, education development in Nigeria was grossly hampered due to the politicization of education policies, political instability and corruption among others. The authors further pointed out that the challenges of education policy development were a result of neglecting the relevance and roles of stakeholders, especially concerning inputs and decision making.

Political Instability

NOUN (2010) asserts that the educational system in Nigeria has witnessed various policy enactments and plans. Unfortunately, many of them never saw the light of the day. In a few cases, they are implemented, but not full implementation. Many end up on the papers either as a blueprint or white paper. Many well-intended policies in the past were aborted in the course of implementation. This was common during military rule when the polity was very unstable due to coups and counter-coups. A new regime of rulers always failed to sustain the implementation of the educational policies and programmes of their predecessors. The instability of governance did a lot of havoc in this regard for a long time in the country. However, it is envisaged that different political parties with different visions and manifestoes may not implement educational policies and plans in the same way. For example, the recent teachers' salary adjustment has not been

implemented or partially implemented by some states. Even the payment of the counterpart funds by states in the funding arrangement of UBE implementation has not been fully done. Many states have boldly antagonized the plan of providing the UBE children with mid-day meals. The situations where educational policies are not implemented or partially implemented cannot usher in educational development that could aid the realization of national aspirations. Yaro (2017) opined that frequent revision of education policies manifesting from political instability brings about a gap between the formulation and implementation of education policies. This is because every government that comes into power will want to make some amendments or even change the education policies to suit its purpose. This adversely affects education policy development. according to Manafa (2011) for instance, in 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme. The scheme was abandoned midway due to a change of government and other logistic problems. UNICEF (2017); World Bank (2017); Yaro (2017) observed that political instability is a major obstacle to the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

Poor Coordination and Cooperation in planning.

The poor coordination and cooperation of educational policies in Nigeria have resulted in instability in the educational policies in the country. NOUN (2010) documented that coordination and cooperation in planning education are necessary to adapt education policy plan implementation to the dynamics of the national economy. Effective coordination and cooperation are essential in a plural country like Nigeria to be realistic when education is being planned, it must always attune to the resources available in line with the economic indices. There is no need to implement free education by different governments within a country if the dictate of the national economy cannot support such. The politicization of education plan implementation can be minimized when there is effective coordination and cooperation among tiers of government and their several agencies, especially during the planning process. Yekini (2013) observed that inconsistent policies, brain drain, constant strike action, inadequate instructional materials and corruption, greatly crippled education policy development in Nigeria.

Appointment of Non-professionals as heads of educational institutions

The appointment of Non-professionals as heads of educational institutions especially the federal ministry and state ministry of education have led to the instability of educational policies in Nigeria. Ogunode & Josiah (2021) opines that the realization of the educational objectives depends on the quality of leaders appointed to oversee the affairs of different agencies and parastatals of education in the Country. Educational leadership matters to effectively administer the affairs of educational institutions. Failure in the Nigerian educational system can be traced to the various leaders appointed to head the various educational institutions who are less qualified or do not have experience in educational management and administration. The government appoints whosoever they think to handle the ministry of education unlike the health sector where the minister must be a medical practitioner. Therefore, the failure of the government to recognize education as a profession that must always be handled by an educational expert or administrator is contributing to the problems facing educational institutions. Udida, Bassey, & Udofia, (2009) and Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory & Abubakar (2020) opined that many school administrators appointed to oversee the administration and management of some educational institutions are very weak in terms of administration and management. Some of them do not have the qualifications, experiences and knowledge required to successfully manage such institutions to a place of glory.

Changes in Educational System and Practices

Because of the dynamic nature of education and the educational system, this leads to reformations and changes in the practices of educational processes over time to meet up with current socio-economic trends in the country. The innovation in the resources use in the

educational sector call for changes in policies and programme to meet these changing needs; what quantity can lead to efficiency? Ogunode, Jegede, & Solomon, (2021a) states that we are living in a world that is full of changes and every government has to adjust their policies to meet up with the current challenges.

Poor Formulation of Educational Policies

Poor policies' formulation at the early stage of planning is another problem affecting the implementation of education policies in Nigeria (Ogunode, Jegede & Solomon, 2021). Okoroma (2006) cited Aghenta (1984) that for education to achieve all ends, it has to be carefully planned. The plan must take into considerations the needs of the society; the political, socio-cultural, economic, military, scientific, and technological realities of the environment are very important to its survival. However, the methods and approaches adopted for the planning of early childhood education were faulty. Christine & Hayatu (2014) observed that from the approach, the success of the implementation of education policy may be a mirage. The approach contradicted or violated the known rule of systematic planning. Ogunode & Samuel (2020) opined that poor policy articulation or formulation is another problem responsible for the poor implementation of educational policies in Nigeria because of the poor capacity of educational policy designers and lack of exposure to new approaches and methods of formulating policies. The Federal Government is poor in articulating its educational policies. If the educational policies are not properly formulated or articulated, it will be difficult to implement such policies and this would result in changes in the policies.

Instability of Heads of Educational institutions

Another factor responsible for instability in Nigerian educational policies is the problem of changes in the heads of various educational institutions especially the ministers of education and commissioner of education at the state level. The Federal minister of education is saddled with the responsibility of coordinating all activities that will lead to the formulation of educational policy. According to NEEDS (2014), the responsibility for administering the education sector in Nigeria is shared among the federal, state and local governments. Thus, in the country's constitution, education is on the concurrent list, but the Federal Government is empowered to regulate all its sectors, engage in policy formation and ensure quality control. Also, the provisions of the constitution allow each tier of government to focus its responsibilities mainly on a level of education. The Federal Government is involved directly in tertiary education. The states take care of secondary education, while the local governments handle primary education. Coordination of policy at the political level is handled by the National Council of Education, the highest policymaking body chaired by the Federal Minister of Education and includes all the State Commissioners of Education. This body is advised by the Joint Consultative Committee on Education, which consists of all the Federal and State Directors of Education, Chief Executives of education statutory bodies, and Directors of University Institutes of Education. The stability of the tenure of the federal minister of education and state commissioner of education matters in the realization of the objectives of education. The frequent changes in the leadership of the federal and state ministry of education and other commissions, and agencies affect policy formulation, planning and implementation. For instance, from 1999 to 2022, the government of Nigeria appointed up to 16 to 18 federal ministers of education to head the federal ministry of education. These changes in the heads of educational institutions have resulted in instability in educational policies.

The implication of Educational Policy Instability in Nigeria

There are many effects of the instability of educational policies in Nigeria. Some of the implications include; wastage of educational resources, low space of development in education and increased in administrative and management expenditure



Wastage in Educational Resources

Wastage in educational resources is a major implication of the instability of educational policies. The change in any educational policies at half implementation would result in a huge waste of educational resources. For instance, Ogunode, Ndubuisi, & Jegede (2022) observed that the high rate of financial resources being wasted in the system could be responsible for the inadequacy of funds. Researchers have agreed that lots of money have been wasted and mismanaged in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, which if properly managed would have given the system a better face look. With reduced education wastage, Nwaka, (n.d) submitted that more citizens would have access to education, hence literacy level will increase. When more people are literate and enlightened, economic and national development will accelerate hence students are equipped with the skills that will translate into productivity. Reduced education wastage in higher education translates into greater earnings for the individual graduate over time.

Low Space of Development in Education

Instability in educational policies in Nigeria has led to the low space of development in the educational sector. One of the major factors that have caused slow development in the educational system in Nigeria is the inconsistency of educational policies. Many laudable education policies have emerged in time past in Nigeria, but due to changes in government and other factors, such policies were halted. According to Ogunode (2020), the problem facing education in Nigeria is not about the policies because Nigeria has some of the best education policies that if well implemented should have helped to transform the entire educational system. The problem with Nigeria is that sound educational policies are always not fully implemented and are subjected to changes.

Increment in the Administrative and Management Expenditure

Instability in educational policies in Nigeria has led to an increment in administrative costs and management expenditures. The continuous changes in educational policies at every level of government that include federal, state and local government have cost the government a large sum of money. The changes in the educational policies in Nigeria have led to an increase in the cost of running education programmes. Several Millions of naira are incurred on the implementation of educational policies and halfway into implementation, the policies are changed and another new policy is introduced.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Changes in educational policies are one of the major attributes of the Nigerian educational system. This paper examined the causes of educational policy instability in Nigeria and its' effects on educational development. The paper concluded that the causes for educational policy instability in the Nigerian educational sector include; capital intensive policy implementation, poor consultation, political instability, poor coordination and cooperation of policy formulation, the appointment of Non-professionals as heads of educational institutions, dynamics in the educational system and practices and poor formulation of educational policies. The paper also identified wastage in educational resources, low space of development in education and increase in administrative and management expenditure as effects of educational policy instability in the Nigerian educational system.

Based on these problems identified, the following are recommended;

1. The government should ensure adequate budgetary allocation to the educational sector for the implementation of educational policies. The amount allocated to the education sector should at least conform with the recommendation of UNESCO of allocating at least 26% of a country's budget to education. Not only this, the personnel responsible for utilizing such funds should be trained to have fiscal discipline so that the funds will not be misappropriated.

2. Professionals should be employed in the formulation of educational policies to avoid poor planning and formulation of education policies.
3. Educational policies should be properly planned, coordinated and systematically drafted for easy implementation. Many educational policy plans crashed during implementation stage due to poor planning.
4. The government in power should ensure to involve all educational stakeholders, especially political parties whenever they are planning to come up with educational policies. The involvement of all stakeholders and the political factors will sustain the policy whenever there is a change in government.
5. The government should ensure that persons appointed to various education boards and councils to manage educational institutions and agencies should be of high integrity, with relevant qualifications and cognate experience. This will help to reduce poor policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria.

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