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# Challenges and Prospects of Educational Policies and Implementation in Nigerian Secondary School System

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By

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### Abstract

*This study examined the challenges and prospects of educational policies and implementation in Nigerian secondary school system. The study adopted a descriptive survey design of quantitative paradigm. The views of 100 secondary school principals and 50 government supervisors in Post Primary School Services Commission, Anambra State were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique of lucky-dip without replacement. The main instrument for data collection was a ten (10) test items questionnaire with four (4) Likert summative scale of 'Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) was used to measure the attitudes of respondents to indicate their degree of approval or disapproval which consists of various statements pertaining to the subject matter. Descriptive statistical tools were employed and data were analyzed using weighted mean. Results of the findings revealed that the challenges of educational policy and Implementation in secondary school system in Anambra state of Nigeria include: lack of political will, lack of continuity of programs, corruption to mention but a few. Based on the findings, recommendations which includes the discontinuation of the National Policy on Education fashioned after the American system and the adoption of the model practiced by Asian countries such as Japan, China and India which takes the culture of the people into consideration. In addition, the provision of qualitative education should be made compulsory and entrenched into the Constitution in order to encourage result-oriented implementation. Sustained political will and eradication of corruption are necessary for effective policy implementation among others, were made and conclusions drawn.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, Prospects, Education policies, Implementation

### **Background of the study**

The Nigerian secondary school system is bedeviled with enormous challenges emanating from the educational policies and its implementation. The poor performance in secondary school system, especially in Anambra State has been very worrisome. Educational policies are made but their implementations are often thwarted or sabotaged. This disheartening situation may be as a result of distortions in the educational system or the ineffective implementation engendered primarily by lack of political will, lack of continuity of programs, and corruption. This has also hindered national growth and development and, until urgent action is taken to review Nigeria's educational policy system, its national aspirations will continue to be compromised. Some of the problems encountered in the implementation of educational policies include non-payment of teacher's salaries, unqualified teachers, under-funding and shortage/unavailability of some needed resources. Furthermore, the problems in educational policy implementation include, frequent change in government, constant strike actions, uninspiring political leadership and poor funding of education to mention but a few. As a result, educational policies are made which usually provide a general guide that does not facilitates decision making. Educational policies provide the direction for educational activities. Contributing on this, Ukeje(2006) opined that the formulation of an educational policy sets the stage for its implementation. Unfortunately, educational policies and goal attainment have been irreconcilable due to implementation constraints. Also, policy implementation in education is a conspicuous national problem that has taken centre stage in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the problem**

It is on record that Nigeria has had several educational policies since 1977 which have continued to be reviewed with the aim to serving the current need of the nation. Regrettably, all the policies have not been fully implemented effectively and efficiently to meet the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians. Hence, there is a glaring educational policy implementation challenges in Nigeria mostly in secondary school education system in Anambra state, which has become a socio-political, economic and educational discourse among scholars and academics. To address these challenges, the study is aptly posed in a question form; to what extent are the educational policies being implemented in secondary school system in Anambra state?

### **Research Questions**

To guide the study, one research question was formulated:

- To what extent are educational policies implemented in secondary school system in Anambra state?

### **Research Hypothesis**

- There is no significant difference in the rating of principals and supervisors on the extent of implementation of policies in secondary school system in Anambra state.

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Conceptual Framework**

##### **The Concept of Educational Policy**

Policies have been defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2014) as ‘a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in the light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions. Policies can also mean the same thing as rules, standing orders, procedures and guides for carrying out action or channeling thinking in support of strategies and tactics particularly in strategic planning. Educational policies encapsulate the principles and government procedures based primarily on material interest and prudence concerning the education of a country (Stevenson, 2006). It consists of a system of administrative guidelines, rules and regulations put in place to direct employees towards the achievement of the national goals of education. This is also initiatives mostly by governments that determine the modus operandi of an educational system. Education policies are thus agreed ways of operating the education system. They also refer to the framework within which education is administered in a given place within specific period.

According to Babalola (2013), educational policies are the principle and government policy in educational sphere, as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of the education system. Educational policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of a people. According to Okoroma (2010), educational policies are also general statements containing principles, regulations and rules which govern, influence and determine the decisions on how to educate the children, where to get them educated, when to get them employed, who to teach them and how to finance their education.

In view of the aforementioned concept of education policies, the policy formulation in Nigeria has a lot of implications for both educational planning and policy. Most of the colonial educational policies had the shortcoming of not taking into account our local peculiarities and not involving Nigerians in their formulation. It is also essential to integrate all the good parts of earlier education policies, whether colonial or post-colonial, into any proposed education policy.

#### **Empirical Framework:**

##### **Challenges militating against educational policy implementation in Nigeria**

Weaver (2010) posits that problems that arise in the implementation process makes it less likely that policy objectives are achieved in many government programs including education. Implementation problems may also damage the morale and external reputations of the agencies in charge of implementation. Although many

implementation problems occur repeatedly across programs and can be predicted in advance. The numerous issues that confront the educational sector in Nigeria particularly in Anambra state are either left unattended or neglected and most often transferred to another administration compound inadvertently the whole system of education in Nigeria. Citing some of the issues, Oluwatobi (2006), noted that indiscipline seemingly is one of the problems militating against implementation of educational policies in the secondary school education system. Crisis in Nigeria educational system has led to 'brain-drain' syndrome which resulted to academic drift of scholars and elites from Nigeria to other parts of the world or other sectors of the economy in search of greener pastures.

Policies promulgated to check these menaces are unheeded. Indiscipline manifests in such areas as examination malpractices, secret cult menace, immoral and unethical behavior, unwanted pregnancies, bribery and corruption to mention but a few. Below are some of the challenges confronting educational policies and implementation in secondary school system in Anambra state.

**Lack of Funds:** lack of funds limits the amount of technical and industrial exposure that trainees acquire in the course of learning. Under-funding raises a lot of other implications on the part of educational policy (Oharisi, 2007). Nigeria's education system is bedeviled with the challenges of underfunding and thus poor infrastructure, inadequate classrooms and teaching aids (projectors, computers, libraries, laboratories etc); paucity of quality teachers/poor or polluted learning environment. Therefore, in such learning environment, educational policies cannot be implemented rather the school system is further plagued with numerous social vices like examination malpractices, cultism, students unrest, strike actions to mention but a few (Aiyamenkhue, 2011).

**Shortage and Unavailability of Resources:** one of the impediments to educational policy implementation is lack of high quality learning resources to support classroom instruction and lack of time to study the guides. Therefore, effective implementation of educational policy is dependent on the presence of adequate resources and supports. In Nigeria, teaching-learning resources-textbooks, students guides, libraries, equipment and other facilities are either lacking in our schools, are in very short-supply or inadequate. Many schools do not have science laboratories or inductor technology workshops; classrooms are insufficient and poorly equipped, class sitting arrangements are nothing to write home about. The astronomical rise in school enrolment compounds the problem, as many school children struggle for the scarce resources. (Abdullahi, 2012)

**Non-Payment of Teachers Salaries and Poor Service Condition:** Poor salaries, no housing (security) and general poor conditions of service by the government demoralizes the teachers who may decide to go into private commercial enterprises like trading for example, to supplement meager salaries thereby using the time of teaching for their private businesses. When these teachers experience all this, teaching and

learning will not be adequately provided and effective educational policy can hardly be realized (Abdullahi, 2012). Based on this, the teachers are no longer committed to their jobs all because they are not well paid unless they are provided with the drive that would energize them or the tools needed, ( that is the proper inputs), else their best could not be tapped or attained and the accomplishment of educational goals would be difficult (Ugwu, 2008).

**Change in Government:** This leads to change in its operators as the new person in office may not have interest in education and this poses a problem in the implementation of educational policies (chimezie 2010). Also, depending on who is in power, a well articulated and financial curriculum could be marred at the implementation stage due to financial constraints. Money is needed to set up laboratory equipments and workshops, procure adequate learning resources and pay workers in the education sector. The quality, quantity and adequacy of this have great impact on implementation of educational policies. Therefore in a situation whereby the old government has interest in education and releases enough fund for its effective running, the new government may end up not continuing from where the previous stopped due to lack of interest. Furthermore, poor government policy may trigger incessant strike action, student unrest and/or civil revolt which disrupt continuity and balance in implementation of educational policies (Mbakwe, 2004).

**Corruption:** This practice pervades all segments of government in Nigeria as the perpetrators wallow in enormous financial and material wealth. This has greatly affected education system in Nigeria (Okoroma, 2010). The objectives of most policies in Nigeria are often derailed at the implementation stage due to a number of reasons: The budgets for the implementation of the policies are often passed by lawmakers with strings attached to them, even when the budgets are passed; the executive arm of government is often reluctant to release funds to facilitate implementation. The inadequate funds often released to the operators of the education system (primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions) are not honestly and fully utilized to promote the cause of education. Many corruptly divert much of the available education resources to serve personal interest. Ejiogu (2005) concurs: “The cankerworms of corruption and gross mismanagement of resources have been blamed for the deplorable state of the country’s educational system

**Inadequate Personnel as Head of Ministry:** In a situation whereby Personnel who lack the knowledge and is unqualified/ incompetent in the field of education is appointed as Head of Ministry of Education, he or she would be incapable of ensuring a successful implementation of educational policies (Awokoya, 2011).

**Employment of Incompetent Teachers:** The government tends to employ any how teachers which they can afford to pay regardless of their qualifications having used the money allocated to education for their own personal needs. Much as adequate number and wide variety of teachers are needed for effective educational policy

implementation, the quality of the teachers must not be sacrificed on the altar of quantity (Abdullahi, 2012).

**Ethnicity:** This issue tends to affect the implementation of educational politics as a result of the government considering those in their own geographical areas by allocating money resources to them neglecting other areas (Ukeje, 2008).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design of quantitative paradigm. This study therefore described in a systematic manner the extent of implementation of some policies in secondary school system in Nigeria.

### **Area of the Study**

This study was carried out in Anambra State. The choice of the area was due to the perceived poor education policy implementation in the area.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for the study consisted of 266 secondary school principals and 102 government supervisors in Post Primary Schools Management Board, Anambra State

### **Sample Size and Sampling Methods**

A sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents was drawn using simple random sampling technique of lucky-dip without replacement. This ensured that the sample have equal chances of being selected.

### **Instrument for Data Collection:**

Instrument for data collection consisted of questionnaire.

### **Validation of the Instrument:**

The instrument was validated by experts in Ministry of Education in Anambra State.

### **Reliability of the Instrument:**

Reliability was established by administering the test instrument on respondents in Enugu State which has similar education policy challenges with the area of the study. The results obtained were closely related.

### **Method of Data administration and Collection:**

Two research assistants assisted the researcher in the face-to-face administration and collection of data for the study. All the questionnaires were collected.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected was organized and completed around the research questions, using summative rating scale otherwise called ‘weighted mean.’ The mean values of the four responses were determined by dividing the summation of the frequency of responses with the summation of the scale used.

Mean values ( $\bar{X}$ ) =  $\frac{\sum fx}{\sum x}$

Where  $\sum fx$ = total sum of scores,

$\sum x$ = total number of rating scales,

$x=4+3+2+1=10$

$\bar{x}=10/4=2.50$

Therefore a mean = or > 2.50 is in agreement for the questionnaire items while the mean values < 2.50 shows disagreement. Descriptive statistical tools were employed in the analysis and the data were analyzed using mean.

**Data Analysis and Results:**

Research Question:

- To what extent are educational policies implemented in the secondary school system in Anambra state?

**The mean scores on the extent of implementation of education policies in secondary school system of Anambra state.  
(Principals:100) (Supervisors:50)**

| S/N | ITEMS   | X    | Decision | X    | Decision |
|-----|---|------|----------|------|----------|
| 1.  | Provision of at least one teacher for technical and vocational courses in school. | 2.12 | Disagree | 2.31 | Disagree |
| 2.  | Provision of free textbooks and exercise books to students in school.             | 2.41 | Disagree | 2.17 | Disagree |
| 3.  | Non involvement of teachers and students in examination malpractice.              | 2.39 | Disagree | 2.23 | Disagree |
| 4.  | Coverage of syllabus/scheme of work in all subjects by teachers.                  | 2.18 | Disagree | 2.26 | Disagree |
| 5.  | Regular supervision and evaluation of teaching and learning in schools.           | 2.27 | Disagree | 2.46 | Disagree |
| 6.  | Continuous assessment of the students twice in a week in all the subjects.        | 2.29 | Disagree | 2.11 | Disagree |
| 7.  | Provision of opportunities for all secondary school leavers for higher education. | 2.31 | Disagree | 2.34 | Disagree |
| 8.  | Availability of qualified, experienced and dedicated teachers and principals.     | 2.41 | Disagree | 2.35 | Disagree |
| 9.  | Intensification of discipline and hard work among teachers and students.          | 2.33 | Disagree | 2.22 | Disagree |
| 10. | Availability of infrastructures and instructional materials in schools.           | 2.25 | Disagree | 2.29 | Disagree |

**Discussion of the Result**

The data in the table above showed that both the principals and the supervisors disagreed with all the items on the extent of education policy implementation in secondary school system of Anambra State. This is because their mean scores were below the mean value of 2.50. This implies that there is no provision of at least one teacher for technical and vocational courses in school, no provision of free textbooks and exercise books to students in school, involvement of teachers and students in examination malpractice, non coverage of syllabus/scheme of work in all subjects by teachers, non regular supervision and evaluation of teaching and learning in schools, no continuous assessment of the students twice in a week in all the subjects, non provision of opportunities for all secondary school leavers for higher education, non availability of qualified, experienced and dedicated teachers and principals, non intensification of discipline and hard work among teachers and students, non availability of infrastructures and instructional materials in schools.

### **Conclusion**

Paper is of the view that it is essential that formulators should begin to initiate educational policies that will promote and sustain unity, equity and development of educational sector in Nigeria. Since education brings a positive change in the life of someone. It should not be taken for granted. Its policies should be strictly adhered to and all efforts made by both the teachers, administrators, students and government to ensure the aim are achieved. Also, based on the problems encountered in implementing these educational policies/programs that can salvage our collective dilemma should be deliberated on instead of the fruitless disposition of lamentation. This way we can redeem and salvage what is left from our endangered education system.

### **Recommendation**

- Government at all levels must commit vast resources towards the school infrastructures and education manpower to the extent that the propagation of worthwhile knowledge can be guaranteed.
- There should be continuity in government policy even if there is change in government. The government should allocate funds to the education system to run the school. They also have interest in that field and visit all schools frequently to ensure the necessary equipment/facilities, instructional materials, infrastructures and all that are necessary things needed for effective teaching and learning are provided so that the purpose for the educational policy will be achieved.
- Every effort should be made to eradicate corruption from all spheres of Nigeria's various programs so that available resources can be utilized for public interest.
- Discontinuation of the National Policy on Education fashioned after the American system and the adoption of the model practiced by Asian countries such as Japan, China and India which takes the culture of the people into consideration.
- Provision of qualitative education should be made compulsory and entrenched into the Constitution in order to encourage result-oriented implementation.

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