**Educational Policy Formulation and Analysis:
Challenges and Coping Strategies**

[1]Oyeromi Samson Olumuyiwa, [1]Folajogun .O. Akinkuowo & [2]T. Sola Kareem
[1]Training and Research Department, National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), Ondo, Nigeria.
[2]The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Department of Purchasing & Supply, Ibadan, Nigeria.
e-mail: Iamforchrist2014@gmail.com

Abstract

The importance and functions of quality education are well recognized. Education clearly needs well –designed programmes which could be developed by education policy makers. This paper examined what is policy, sources of educational policy, policy making and formulation. The paper equally discussed the needs for educational policy, educational policy process and conceptual framework for educational policy planning and Analysis. Finally, policy trend under military and civilian rule, the basic challenges, coping strategies and conclusion were drawn.

Key Words: Education Policy, Policy Formulation, Coping Strategies, Policy trend.

Introduction

In the world today, the importance of quality education is well recognized because it performs important functions which are political, economical, social and cultural in any society whether simple or complex. It is as a result of this that the education process is tailored towards developing and building the body and mind using all available resources in the most prudent way to make the educated man most useful to himself, the society and the nation at large. The curriculum of formal education has to be developed to cater for the societal needs in all ramifications: that is the political, economical, social and cultural needs of the society will be incorporated in the educational curriculum of that society.

Education clearly needs well- designed programmes with clear mission, which must be developed by education policy makers, including Education Ministers, members of Governing Boards, and others, who need to understand the special needs and opportunities that education faces in the Society. In developing countries, Nigeria in particular is struggling with knowledge economy and is facing a problem of developing the skills required for the twenty- first century. This challenge must be well understood by the policy makers and education must be geared towards producing men and woman willing to fight an intellectual battle for self- confidence and self- assertion as equal players in the emerging globalize world.

In the light of these concerns, this paper is interested in:

- Analyzing educational policy;
- Highlighting the major challenges that educational policy makers faces in the country, and
- Finding solutions to these challenges.

Educational development and meaningful growth hardly take place without planning. Indeed, for a country to experience real growth and development, it requires a clearly defined development strategy. The strategy must allow for optimal or very intensive utilization of resources with which she is endowed. This therefore calls for a deliberate conscious effort by the

government to provide the environment conducive for development. It is very necessary however, for the government not only to set the goals and objectives but also to play an active role in undertaking some productive activities to achieve the set targets. Whatever form it takes, such deliberate and conscious efforts are often referred to as planning. It could be policy-based or project-based (Omole 1992 cited in Adepoju, 1999)

Similarly, towards the realization of certain goals and objectives, there is the need for a guiding framework and control. A policy is a guiding principle or a course of action considered to be expedient, prudent or advantageous (Ajayi, 1995). Control is a process of monitoring enterprise operation to ensure that it accomplishes the planned objectives (Babalola, 1992). The implementation of educational policy, therefore will regulate and control the conduct of the national educational system which must be geared to the special need and aims of a nation (Edem, 1982).

In Nigeria, like many other countries of the world, many attempts have been made towards outlining the objectives and goals which reflect ideological principles and defining the procedures for the attainment of the desired goals (Riggers and Myers, 1961). In fact, the most distinct scenario about the Nigerian educational system, according to Obilade (1989), is the constant change in educational policies. It would be most charitable to state that the only consistent feature of the system is its inconsistency in terms of policy formulation and implementation.

There is no doubt that most of the educational policies in Nigerian before the National Policy on Education (FRN) (2013) have not been nationalistic in their orientation and scope. Hence, the tendencies therefore were for one sector of the educational system to be favoured at the expense of others.

At one time, the primary sector was favoured (the introduction of Free Primary Education Scheme in 1955 and 1957 in the Western and Eastern Regions respectively and the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1976.AT another time, the secondary education and higher education levels were favoured. This was demonstrated in the takeover of secondary schools in and the establishment of more universities in 1970s. According to World Bank (1990), there can be good policies that fail to be implemented; there can also be 'bad' policies that are fully implemented.

Afigbo (1986) once remarked that;

> *Plans or policy objectives no matter how well articulated, remain idle Platitudes and more wishes until they are completed. The implementation stage in any planning process therefore addresses itself to the question of practicability.*

It is well known that plans which may be effective or ineffective are dependent on how well plans are implemented or executed. The constant changes in the educational policies to a greater extent depend on the educational goals of an administration and these in turn have created chaotic educational system in Nigeria.

Educational policy Defined:

Policy has been defined in different forms by different scholars. It has been defined as a course-setting involving decisions of the widest ramifications and longest time perspective in the life of an organization or institution (Gbadamosi, 2005).It has also been defined by Lindelon as cited in Gbadamosi, (2005) as a system of industrial, corporate and planned action aimed at achieving set objectives.

To Anderson, (cited in Gbadamosi, 2005) policy is a principle, a cause of action followed by an action or set of actions in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. Richard cited in Gbadamosi (2005) says that policies are the product of a series of complex action. They are the better described as part of the process rather than as the result of policy making which implies choices realised at a single point in time. He equally sees policy as a long series of related activities rather than a discreet line of action.

Policy could also be viewed as guide for action, a guidance which may be simple or complex, general or specific, broad or narrow, vague or exact, discretionary or detailed, qualitative and public or private. It may be implicitly or explicitly stated (Gbadamosi, 2005).Policy is a guiding principle or a course of action considered being expedient, prudent or advantageous. According to Lasswell and Kaplan (1970), a policy is a projected programme of goals, values and practices. Fredrick (1963) cited in Adepoju (2000) however stated that "policy is essential for the country and is a basic statement of aims and ideas to guide actions of the entire system or organization.

Educational policy is therefore a projected programme, which specifies the goals, values and practices of educational system. It is a statement which guides and directs all actions directed at achieving national development through education sector. Educational policy according to Edem (1982) regulates and controls the conduct of national educational system, which must be geared to the special needs, and aims of a nation. Any official statement made by the government either by the Federal or state and which guides the practice of education is often referred to as educational policy (Adepoju, 1999).

Sources of Educational Policy in Nigeria

Policies are formulated to bring about change in status quo or to maintain, and to legalise an operation or action in the system. Adepoju (1997) emphasizes that new educational policy, being a projected programme, which specifies the goals, values and practices of educational system, evolves in response to changing society.

Thus, educational policy evolves to:
- Meet the demands of individuals and interest groups (provision of private benefits),
- Meet the demands of the larger society (provision of social benefits) and
- Meet the world of technological change and development.

The major sources of educational policies in Nigeria are the Federal and State government. This is because, education was placed in the con-current list where both Federal and State governments can legislate. Local education Authorities (LEAs) are sometimes delegated to make policies that may influence educational system in their respective areas of jurisdiction particularly on items that are designated as residual items.

Policy Making and Formulation

Generally speaking, policy making involves a series of more or less related activities rather than a one and for all activity. It always involves the attention of the policy makers on the processes and ultimate decisions. Policy formulation embraces implementation, feedback and evaluation which might bring about a change of policy. For government to accomplish its objective, it has to make policies and come up with programmes that are capable of achieving the goal(s) of the state which is the welfare of the people. This is done through formulation of appropriate public policy,

which is not essentially the responsibility of a central authority. However, broad policies are selected centrally. Policy formed at the lower level should be in line with the broadly stated policy of the central authority. All policies have stated objectives.

Needs for Educational policy
The needs are as follows:
- The need to specify the goals, values and practices of an educational system in the country;
- The need to specify and set a limit to a course of action related to education in the country;
- The need to regulate and control the conduct of the national educational system in line with the needs and aspiration of people.
- Acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his or her society.
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around;
- The need to achieve political, socio-economic and cultural progress in the country, and
- The need to reform educational system among others.

The science of policy making and formulation:
Policy making involves decisions – making (Edem, 1982). Consequently, policy formulation involves basic systematic procedures of selecting the best way of reaching a pre-determined goal. The ability of an individual to make rational decisions may be limited by many endogenous and exogenous variables. For instance, the choice of the methods of formulating educational policies remains the prerogatives of the initiator. In the same vein, educational policy making and formulation may be influenced by the need to impress donor agencies with all that this may imply in terms of unsound goals and inappropriate models (World Bank, 1990). A government with an authoritarian view of its responsibility may consider its duty to impose its policies on the nation.

Nonetheless, national decisions on educational policy is contingent upon the use of the basic scientific methods which are in the following stages:
- Identification and definition of the problem.
- Analysis of the problem.
- Identification of alternatives
- Drawing up of inferences or conclusion

It should be emphasized that, each of the identified stages should be given due consideration if a logical conclusion is to be arrived at.

The Process and Implementation of Policy
Educational policy and implementation have a framework. It entails the description of the course, which the policy maker proposes that the education will take in order to achieve some defined objectives. Basically, policy process is cyclic, flowing from policy formulation stage to the state of system analysis to finally implementation and evaluation/reviewing stage where a feedback or report is fed into the beginning stage of policy formulation.

According to Gbadamosi (2005), in Nigeria, the policy formulation process can be divided into seven stages viz;
- Analyzing the existing situation

- Generating new policy options
- Evaluating the policy options
- Ratifying a policy option
- Implementing the policy option
- Assessing the policy option
- Re-cycling

Analyzing the existing situation: The choice of any policy is functional related to time and space. Policy analysis should therefore consider the basic forces in society that may be creating the situations which institutions and individuals may have to respond. To analyse any educational policy, we have to consider the existing situations in the environment. We need to direct our search light on the geography of a country, the political and economic contexts, issues in education and dynamics of change in the country.

The background information will help us to better understand what we may find in our analysis. To understand how educational policy decisions are arrived at in any country we have to be capable of analyzing the political environment in that country. No policy analyst can ignore the interplay of politics and education. Politics provides the life wire of education, just as education is a veritable instrument in the playing of modern politics. An educational policy analyst must be aware of the reciprocal roles of education and economy. He/she must have some idea about financial resources of the country as to know what project is affordable and he/she must be in a position to assess what the economic sector requires from education. An analyst needs to be aware of the dynamics of change within a social system. In analyzing the existing situation, cognizance must also be taken of the evolutionary trend of major issues in education.

Generating new policy options

Haddad (1995) identifies four different ways of generating new policy options. According to him, educational policy options can be generated in systematic, incremental, adhoc and importation modes. The generation of policy options can follow an organized pattern of collecting and analyzing data, inducing policy options and refining the options.

Data can be derived from a series of research findings, native wisdom, and professional knowledge or from the periodic analysis of the educational sector. Based on the facts on the issues being considered, policy options are generated by an appeal to the inductive method of reasoning. Educational policy option can emerge from outside the educational system. This is what Haddad (1995) termed as adhoc way of generating policy options. Events in some systems, apparently unrelated to education can crop up and eventually cause a need for a new educational policy. Lastly, policy options can emerge from contact with outside influence. The world is a global village. Educational innovations in Greece can easily be replicated in Nigeria. Policy options are sometimes consciously and unconsciously imported.

Evaluating Policy Options: In an ideal situation, the various policy options emerging should be subjected to thorough deliberations. Public debates, debates in the mass media, informal debates to shape the opinion of the people, debates by officers in the ministry of education and legislative debates are essential if an educational policy is to pass the test of time. The essence of the debates should be to evaluate the purpose of each policy option in terms of its desirability, effectiveness, justness and affordability.

Selecting a Policy Option: Because the level of consensus, support and acceptance of the selected policy option is critical towards successful implementation of political features of conflict resolution through bargaining, compromising and agreeing also tend to underline educational policy making. Adoption or ratification of a policy is the outcome of the bargaining and tradeoffs between the actors.

Implementing the Policy Option: To implement a policy option a schedule of activities need to be drawn upon who is to do what, when and how, 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.

Successful implementation requires the mobilization of political support. To succeed at the implementation stage, a policy must not only be well conceptualized, it must be well managed.

Assessing the Policy Impact: Determining an appropriate time to assess the impact of an educational policy requires native intelligence. A policy assessment check can take place when the implementation has been on, long enough to produce results.

An analyst needs to find answers to these questions when assessing the impact of a policy.
- Are the means for achieving the policy purpose effective – effectiveness questions.
- Are the means for doing, whenever obtain right? Justness question
- Are the costs, measured both in expenditure of resources and undesirable results tolerable? Affordability question
- Are the impacts of the policy desirable? Desirability question

If the answer to any of the questions is negative then an adjustment of the policy is required. Even when policy impact assessment reveals desirable policy outputs it is useful to re-examine policy decisions over time to determine what adjustments are needed.

Re-cycling: In an ideal setting, the process of analyzing existing conditions, generating, evaluating and selecting policy options, implementing policies and assessing their impacts should be iterative. Unfortunately, this is not often the practice.
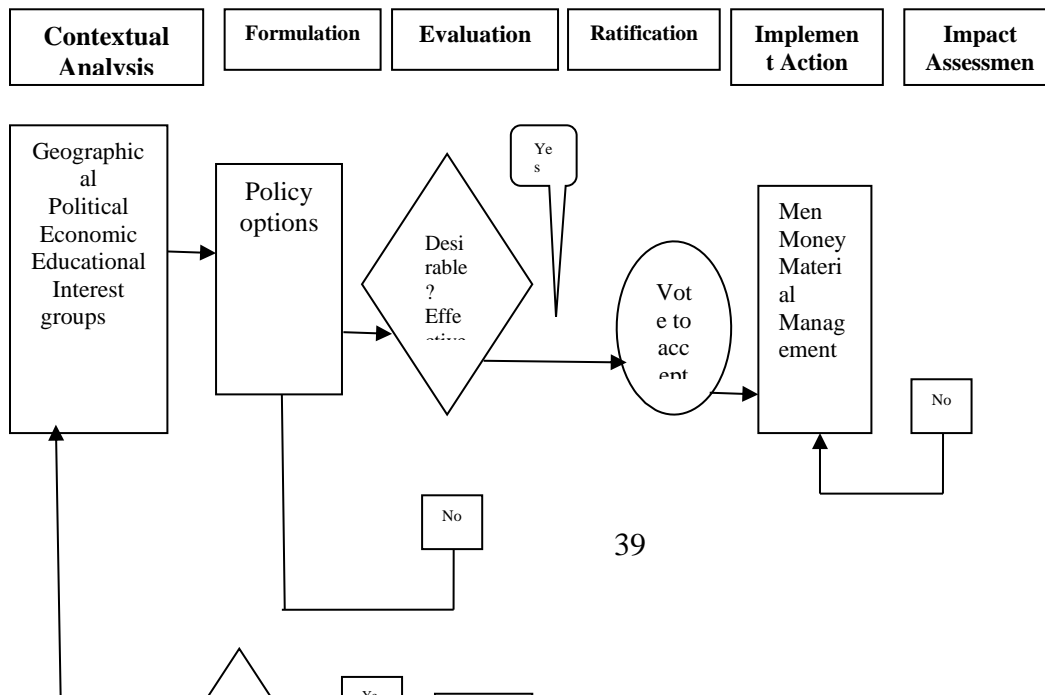

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Figure 1: conceptual framework for educational policy formulation and analysis. Source: adapted from Owolabi, J. (2005) policy making and educational policy analysis (West African Edition): Makerere University Printing pg252.

To fully get to the root cause of the myriad of challenges in the Nigerian educational policy system it is necessary to trace the evolution of educational policies in Nigeria and analyse the impact of the policies on education in the country with a view to determining at what stages policy planning was deficient and inadequate or when implementation failed. We shall focus attention on the periods of military and civilian rule.

Policy Trend Under the Military

There was considerable Federal Government participation in education at all levels throughout the country between 1966 and 1979. The government's policy thrust was in the direction of curriculum development, centralization of control and management of schools, the formulation and introduction of a National Policy on Education and provision of Basic Universal Primary Education. The government provided leadership in curriculum development with the establishment of the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CEDAC) at the University of Lagos, and the Organization of the National Curriculum Conference, which was held in Lagos from 8th to 12th September, 1969(Jaiyesinmi, 2004).

It was some of the salient issues raised at the 1969 National Curriculum Conference that led to the government takeover of schools through the public Education Act of 1970. One of those issues was who should control, manage and carry the financial responsibilities for schools. (Jaiyesinmi, 2004)

Some of the reasons given by government for taken over of schools were:

(i)   That the 1967 – 1970 war's destruction of schools was immense and government was anxious to make schools functional in the shortest possible time.

(ii) To secure central control and integrated system in order to guarantee uniform standards and fair distribution of educational facilities and thereby reduce cost.

(iii)   To provide stability, satisfy people's basic educational and national needs, combat sectionalism, religious conflict and disloyalty to the cause of a united Nigeria through management and finance of education by accredited representatives of the people.

(iv)   To provide good citizens through good education. Thus, the transfer of all schools to the state became effective on 26 May, 1970. (Fajana, 1980).

The 1969 curriculum conference also provided the foundation upon which the National Policy on Education was formulated. The conference discussed a wide variety of issues concerning Nigerian education and these issues formed the major components of the National Policy on Education introduced in 1997 and revised in 1981, 2004 and 2013. The document contains the plans and policies of the government on education. It established a philosophy of Nigerian education based on the declared national objectives of creating a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a unified, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economic, and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens. The policy also changed the nation's educational structure from the former 6-5-2-3 to 6-3-3-4 systems and now 1-6-3-3-4 according to National Policy on Education approved by National Council of Education in 2013(FRN, 2013).

The Civilian Rule

According to Jaiyesinmi (2004) he observed that the changing nature of the political terrain of the country since 1979 largely determined the policy trend of education in Nigeria. Although the second republic was short lived, the political programmes of the political parties as contained in their manifestos determined the education policies in the areas controlled by each of the parties. This resulted in diversities in government policies in the management and planning of education.

For instance, while the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) declared free primary and secondary education in the states it controlled, the rival National Party of Nigeria (NPN) controlled states promised free and qualitative education as at when practicable. The pattern of control and management of education in the states controlled by the other political parties' was largely dictated by the parties political manifestos. Thus, politics largely determined the policies guiding management of schools, and this trend has continued since the inauguration of the civilian administration in May 1999.

The Basic Challenges
Gap between the planners and policy implementers:

In Nigeria, there has been a wide gap between educational planners and policy makers, the executors or implementers of the various educational policies. The planners have not always been involved at the planning stage and this had in no small measure affected the implementation of such plans and policies adversely. In a situation where school administrators, teachers, and other school personnel have no say in the policy making process and on the policy that finally emerges, the implementation of such a policy is likely to be problematic.

In the history of educational planning, agencies do not give adequate consideration to involve the implementers of such plans and policies. This has been hampering successful implementation of educational plans and policies.

Political factor: This is one of the major challenges facing our educational policies in Nigeria. Since 1960, lack of political stability has been amplified by occasional premature or forcible termination of governments which eventually led to discontinuity of long-term or systematic

policy planning or implementation in Nigeria. The political climate in Nigeria has not been conducive enough to give room for continuity of good educational plans and policies because every successive political leader would want to be identified with new policies and thereby suspend the one he met. Even though, policies may be quite sound and progressive, it would require new designs and plans of action, which may have high cost implications.

New policy implies that the education planners and policy makers are often forced to abandon a plan or policy still on the drawing board to take to new one which must be moulded to meet the current political demands. Political instability in Nigeria has in fact made the realization of educational objectives of the National development plans a difficult task if not impossible.

Frequent Change of Policies: Often times, educational policies are changed by Nigerian government. These are consequent upon the fast changing socio-economic and political factors but these affect the planning of education. Many policies have been jettisoned before they were ready for implementation because of government directives and counter directives.

Misplacement of Priorities: Nigerian policy makers have been criticized for putting too much emphasis on the quantitative expansion of education as opposed to quantitative improvement. Of course, placing much emphasis on what should not be emphasized has been one of the challenges to policy success in Nigeria.

Lack of Monitoring, Supervision and Evaluation System: Most of the educational policies in Nigeria have not been supported with effective monitoring and supervision mechanism. The success of any good educational policy depends to a great extent on efficiency of the supervision machinery. There are schools that have not received any inspectors for about three-school-year. It is possible to use the inspectors in more positive ways as resource persons and as agents of plan and policy implementation. Such inspections can yield adequate data or plan evaluation and review. In Nigeria, it is often easier to make plans or policies but to ensure the realization of the objectives of such plans and policies is often difficult. Most policies often end at the spot of preparation.

Coping Strategies
For educational policy to be sound and effective the following coping strategies should be considered.
- There is need for well- defined and clearly stated objectives of the Plan and policy.
- There is need for the provision of monitoring, coordination, supervision and evaluation machineries which will serve as follow- up to the planned policy.
- A much more stable government, void of frequent military interventions should evolve.
- There is need for a centralized decision- making structure to guide against distortion in the course of achieving a basic objective.
- There is the need for disciplined and effective leadership, train and use educational planners and policy analysts for the purpose of planning policy and not in experienced people.
- There is need for improved resource management which can solve the problem created by economy and which has been dictated by the international oil market.
- There is need for the stabilization of the economy by reducing the fiscal drags and ranges resources for the educating system that is prudently managed.

Conclusion

Educational policy regulates and controls the conduct of the national education system which must be geared towards the needs of the nation. Educational policy and implementation have a framework. They entail the description the course which policy maker proposes the education to take in order to achieve some defined objectives. Basically the process of policy making is cyclic, flowing from policy formulation stage to feed back stage.

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