PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (2004)

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Abstract

This paper examined implementation issues of Nigeria’s philosophy of education and national educational goals of the National policy on Education (2004). Concepts of policies, implementation and educational policy were discussed. Policy implementation model was also looked into. Nigeria’s philosophy of education and national educational goals as contained in the National policy of Education (2004) were highlighted. Problems such as the cart before the horse syndrome, Poor functional differentiation, weak data base, inadequate resources, population explosion, depressed economy, politics and lack of public support were identified as mitigating factors against implementation of policies in education.

Recommendations were made such as: Government should employ educational planners and administrators in educational policy development and implementation. Modern educational techniques and facilities should be provided. Education data bank be established. Education should be professionalized and funded adequately. Conclusions were drawn that implementation feasibility study be carried out and not based on trial and error.

Introduction

No matter how well an educational policy may be planned, designed and/or formulated, implementation is very important. Implementation is a neglected area of Nigerian education system. Emphasis are placed more on policy planning merely because of the dictum, ‘if you fail to plan, you plan to fail’. However, it has been observed that implementation of policies in education is as important as planning. The beauty of any educational system is manifested in implementation. Just as the slogan: ‘the taste of a food is in the eating’. Anene (2005), asserted that “the quality of education in any system and at any level however, is dependent on proper implementation of the curriculum”. Implementation of policies is very vital because most educational systems in Nigeria failed not as a result of planning but due to implementation process. Many excellent educational policies are marred without any trace at the implementation stage. Lending his voice, Mkpa (2005:9), says: the most critical problem of our country lies, not in the enunciation of policies, indeed not in the prescription of potentially viable strategies in education and other areas of our nation’s life, but rather at the implementation stage. The nation’s educational history is punctuated with numerous instances of brilliantly conceptualized policies and programmes that failed to achieve the desired goals at the end of the day. In each case the problem arose at the implementation stage.

It must be stated that implementation of education policies in Nigerian education system and in contemporary times must not be based on trial and error. That era is over. It is therefore expected that implementers should possess a very high degree of technical and expert knowledge, experience, vision and mission in a system analysis context (Nwadiani, 1997:76).

This paper therefore examines implementation issues: problems and prospects in the National policy on Education 4th edition. This will be treated under the following sub-headings:

1. Concepts of policies, implementation and education policy
3. Nigeria’s philosophy of Education and the national educational goals.
Concepts of Policies and Implementation

Policies, according to Koontz et al (1980) are also regarded “as plans in that they are general statements or understandings which guide or channel thinking and action in decision making”. This means that individuals’ and organizational actions are regulated by policies. Hence, policies ensure that the decisions made are consistent with and contribute to stated goals and objectives. Policies tend to predecide issues and give a unified structure to other types of plans (Adeyemi, 1995:2). However, it is difficult to make policies consistent and integrated enough to facilitate the realization of organizational goals and objectives because policies are often altered, faultered and re-written during implementation.

What is Implementation?

According to Nwadiani (1997), implementation “is the translation of education policy into action involving all activities that are carried out after a policy is formulated, accepted and released”. This is what could be called ‘Omume’. This is the stage where formulated polices and prepared plan documents are executed. It is the most difficult stage in planning the education system in Nigeria. At the implementation stage, administrative efficiency and managerial skills are subjected to great task. Implementation links policy plans with actual performance through the activities of implementation agencies. Nwadiani (1997) also asserted that:

the failure and success of education policies could be explained by implementers because the evolution of policies and the provision of implementation resources do not guarantee the achievement of intended consequences. Unplanned events may distort the vision and intention of policy makers. This is why implementation feasibility must be carried out in education policy management before committing large resources into what will not work.

The above assertion indicates that implementation is a major determinant of the success and/or failure of education system in Nigeria with other resources such as personnel, finance etc put in place.

Educational Policy

The basis for educational policy planning and implementation is the existence of problems and tension with accompanying conflicts from diverse interest groups. This is because humanity does not live in a ‘shangrila’.

According to Nwankwo (1981), educational policies may be regarded as a “definite authoritative courses of action recommended by the government in power as expedient to the problems of people’s education”. This implies that educational policies are initiated and implemented by government to address education problems or to meet the educational needs of a nation. In reality, educational policies are either the result of democratic deliberations in an atmosphere of consultations or they are imposed on the people. It is the concormise reached in the resolution of societal conflicts over people’s education at any point in time clarifying their aspirations and ideologies. For instance, the 6-3-3-4 system of education was a policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria to meet the educational need of the country in terms of knowledge and skills acquisitions. The extend of
successful implementation of the policy programme was not satisfactory that is why the recent 9-3-4 system was introduced to correct the lapses inherent in the formal system.

It is imperative that educational policy planning be entered on consensus permitting incentives for collective actions from those who share and influences policy objectives. If there is no compromise, there must be crisis because of conflicting interest from stakeholders in education. However, there may not be total compromise.

**Policy Implementation Model**

Van Horn and Van Meter (1975) propounded a model on public policy implementation. This model is very relevant in education because education is a public social service. The model highlighted six variables that are interrelated in influencing policy implementation process. These variables provide the actual linkage between policy intentions and performance – implementation. They include:

1. **Policy Standards and Objectives:** These are set goals and objectives to be achieved in the policy. They are potent factors influencing policy implementation. If they are clearly stated in quantitative and qualitative terms, policy implementers would know those things that are expected of them and the likely options to adopt. Well stated policy standards and objectives eliminate ambiguity and attract positive support and acceptability.

2. **Policy Resources:** These are inputs required to successfully implement the policy. They make a lot of difference in educational policy implementation. For effective and efficient implantation of education policies in the Nigerian education system, policy resources such as trained personnel (implementer and analysts), fund, facilities, time, logistics, authority and learner – benefactors are eminent. Inadequate resources can hinder the implementation of education policies.

3. **Inter-Governmental Communication and Enforcement:** Well channeled communication promotes effectiveness and efficiency in policy implementation and eradicates policy clumsiness. Enforcement enhances compliance among policy implementers. This could be in form of incentives, sanctions, moral-suasion, persuasion, applaud or direct intimidation if need be.

4. **Characteristics of Implementing Agencies:** Established and acceptable procedure(s) must be put in place for effective policy implementation in Nigerian education system. The organizational superstructure, quality and quantity of human resources as well as understanding the policy would go a long way in policy implementation in education.
v. Economic, Social and political Conditions: These are the overall policy climate in which the policy evolve and operates. They are potential factors in policy implementation. The Nigeria 6-3-3-4 education policy lagged behind because of the unanticipated policy environment in terms of economic depression and political instability.

vi. Disposition of Implementers: The disposition of implementers of educational policies could have either a positive or a negative effect on the system. Implementers either take side or remain neutral in policy implementation. If they are negatively disposed to the policy because of their interest, the resultant outcome is poor performance.

However, policy implementation model should encourage a system of feedback to determine the extent of implementation and modification. This was lacking in Van Horn and Van Meter’s model of policy implementation.

**Figure 1 – Policy Implementation Model**

Sources: Van Horn and Van Meter (1975)


FRN (2004: 6-8) states that in Nigeria’s philosophy of Education, we believe that:-

a) education is an instrument for national development, to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspect of education;
b) education fosters the worth and development of the individuals, for each individual’s sake, and for the general development of the society;

c) every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability; and

d) there is need for functional, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine the individual’s direction in education.

Nevertheless, the issue here is the implementation. Education is yet to develop cordial inter-personal relations among Nigerians, foster individual worth as many Nigerian’s worship and adore wealth rather than personality. The education system is not free from distortion and dysfunctional sequel to strike actions inadequate funding etc. there is educational disparity in form of public and private schools. Public schools are further classified into Federal and State own schools, unity and modern schools with varying degrees of funding. All these does not guarantee equal access to education as stated in section 1:4© of the National policy on Education.

The National Educational Goals, which derive from the philosophy, are therefore:-

a) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;

b) the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;

c) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and

d) the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Sequel to the above, we are to see ourselves as one Nigerians without tribal, ethnic, religious and cultural sentiments. The issues of religious intolerance, ethnic rivalry and regional marginalization should not be held off. Education should inculcate in the citizenry moral and spiritual principles in inter-personal and human relations.


Most educational policies in Nigerian education system failed because of certain factors that were peculiar to them. Some never leave the planning stage while others fail during implementation. According to Inbar (1981), “implementation is the Achilles heels of educational policy planning”.

Ukeje et al (1992), concluded among other things that lacks of stability, continuity, working tools, lack of understanding of the policies and political will are responsible for the failure of educational polices. This implies that implementation is a major determinant of failure in educational policies.

Other problems responsible for educational polices failure in Nigerian education system include:

1. The cart Before the Horse Syndrome:- This is the process of starting educational policies or programmes before planning. Most national leaders make public pronouncements about educational programmes without any regard to due process. For instance, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was launched on 30th September, 1999 in Sokoto State while the bill establishing it was passed in 2004.

2. Poor Functional Differentiation:- The functionality between educational policy planning and implementation has been ineffective. The educational policy objectives of National policy on
Education (2004) is too vague. They were not based on systematic needs, strategic plans and implementation resources.

3. Weak Data Base: Inaccurate and inadequate data have been the tradition of policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria education system.

4. Inadequate Resources: Human, material, financial and time resources in educational policy implementation are always in short supply. Only the learners are in enough supply. This is why educational policy implementation has not been effective and efficient.

5. Population Explosion: The actual pupils and students environment always out-numbers the projected or anticipated enrolment because of increasing population growth rate. Like the Universal Primary Education (1955 and 1957) programmes that failed because of unprecedented enrolment rate, the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) as contained in National Policy on Education (NPE) will not be problem free.

6. Depressing Economy: The inflationary trend, low per capital income and growing mismatch between education and economy will adversely affect the implementation of the provisions of the National Policy on Education 2004 editions.

7. Politics: Aghenta (1992) asserted that … there is always a marked difference between the Federal and State policies and practices in education”. National leaders – politicians uses education as a vote catching tool with unrealistic promises. The success of any policy implementation in education in Nigeria among other things depends on the political will of the government to support such policy.

8. Lack of public support: The assumption that the public will always support any educational policy or programme provided has proved otherwise. Educational policies should be rooted on the needs of the people. Any educational policy tailored toward this will have the support of the people. All stake holders in education should be involved in its policies formulation and implementation.

Conclusion

The failure and/or success of Nigerian education system could be best explained by implementers because the formulation of educational policies and the provision of adequate resources do not guarantee the attainment of intended programmes. Unprojected events and time series may change the vision and intention of policy designers. This is where implementation is very crucial in Nigerian education system. Implementation feasibility study should be evolved and made ‘part and parcel’ of policy formulation and management.

Implementation of education policies in Nigeria and elsewhere should not be based on trial and error or experiment to avoid wastage in resources commitment.

Recommendations

To ensure effective and efficient implementation of the Nigeria’s philosophy of education and the national educational goals in Nigeria education system, the following recommendations are made:

Government should employ educational planners and administrators in developing educational policies. Mediocre and political loyalists should not be mandated to formulate the nation’s educational policies and consequent implement.

Government should encourage meaningful collaborative effort by all concerned in education business in policy planning and implementation.
Modern educational techniques and facilities should be provided at all levels of education system in Nigeria in order to developmental, physical, social abilities and competence needed for individual and national development.


Government should establish Education Data Bank to redress the problems of inaccurate, obsolete and inadequate data in educational policies planning and implementation in Nigerian education system.

Nigerian education system should be rooted on the metaphysics of the society to have full support of all and sundry in its implementation.

Concrete and feasible educational policies should always be designed. All ambiguity should be avoided.

More educational opportunities should be created while existing once expanded to guarantee access to education by all Nigerians at the various levels.

Professionally trained educational planners and administrators armed with modern techniques of educational management should be in charge of Nigerian education.

The stipulation of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) as minimum qualification for entry into education profession – teaching should be strictly adhere to. This will go a long way in inculcating educational ethics into the teachers who are co-implementers of the Nigeria’s philosophy of education and the national educational goals.

Government should establish conducive socio-economic and political atmosphere for successful implementation of educational policies and programmes. There should be genuine commitment towards education policies and implementation.

Education should be adequately funded and accountability given adequate priority.

References


