



*Review*

## **Policy implementation in Nigerian higher education: implications for effective management**

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**Abstract**

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A policy is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative action will take place. It brings about a meaningful relationship between business objectives and organizational functions as it discourages deviations from planned courses of action. This paper analyses the different approaches adopted in the management of policy implementation in Nigerian tertiary institutions. There is a major focus on the different stages between policy formulation, analysis, implementation and evaluation. The paper also looks at the critical factors affecting effective policy implementation and concludes that the politicization of educational policy formulation in Nigeria has adversely affected the quality of tertiary education in all ramifications. It's recommended, among others, that professionals in the field of education should be fully involved in educational policy formulation and implementation for global acceptability.

**Keywords:** Policy formulation, implementation, tertiary education, organizational functions, national development.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of management of policy implementation of educational policies is not an area educational researchers have over flogged. The value of education to national development demands robust research into all aspects of operation including modern managerial concepts that will ensure the success of the system. All over the world, education is considered as an instrument that facilitates political, economic, social, technological advancement and national development. Considering its relevance, the education sector of Nigeria has sufficient legal provisions and support for the three tiers of government (federal, state and local) and all other stakeholders to participate in its delivery at all levels (Akagbo, 2019). The National Policy on Education (NPE) is one of the legislative provisions which enunciate the country's plan to use education as a tool for transforming

Nigeria technologically (Ake, 2020). The intended goals to be achieved by the universities in Nigeria are clearly stated in the NPE which divided education into four levels which are the pre-primary, primary, junior secondary education, senior secondary and higher/tertiary education (Carry and Sabatier, 2000). In all these, university education makes the optimum contribution to national development. The universities make professional course content reflect national requirements, intensifies and diversifies its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation, makes entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian universities and makes all students to be part of a general programme for all-round improvement (Budd, 2012). In order to achieve set goals by universities in Nigeria, the country has since its

inception experienced changes in policies from one government to another. These changes reflect the various perceptions, understandings and expectations of the government at every given time.

Policies governing universities have changed from universities being owned and managed by regional governments, to a time when universities were included in the concurrent list of the federal government, to a time when National Universities Commission (NUC) was set up to supervise university education on behalf of the federal government, to a period when the private sector is allowed to invest in university education by establishing same etc. All these are policy related actions expected to bring about positive changes in the university system. To ensure that universities perform the roles they are established for and facilitate national development, NUC has since its establishment formulated policies to guide its operations in various areas including the academic programmes content, infrastructural development, university management and governance and access to education etc. In spite of these policies, there seems to be no end to the plethora of problems in the university system. The persistent absurdity between policy formulation, policy implementation and goal attainment calls for a careful investigation of the university system and its processes. Indeed, several research works have identified numerous factors that militate against policy implementation such as communication gap, personnel capacity and dispositional conflict, corruption, ethnic and religious bigotry etc. To effectively implement policies and avoid consequences which may be unintended and deny the society the full benefits of the policy or waste public resources, the managers of universities need to understand the policy implementation processes, the possible limitations to effective policy implementation and develop strategies to mitigate every limitation. It is also important to understand the changing environment in which the policy will be implemented, knowing that the implementation of any policy will result in technical, human and structural changes in the system. University operators or managers are also expected to understand the educational policies of the universities, ensure the right processes, guidelines, strategies and rules for achieving the policies are put in place, understand the policy implementation processes, identify when and where any changes occur in order to manage them, ensure the provision of conducive teaching and learning environment and work with policy makers, teachers, students and all stakeholders in achieving the desired outcomes. An organization that goes through change or injects a change (a new policy) in the system without a plan on how to manage the change, always has a hard time getting employees to accept the new ideas and

achieve the desired goal. In higher education, change can be said to be the new constant, where various kinds of government-initiated reform and modernization attempts are sweeping through the sector around the globe (Base and Meyer, 2015). Policy implementation is often understood as a specific part of the policy-making process, where political ideas are turned into concrete actions and where these actions contribute to create the intended effect behind a specific policy (Burns et al., 2016).

### **Policy as a Concept**

A policy serves the purpose of ensuring that every official action of an organization must have a basis or a backing. Awokoya (2014) feels that “a policy is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative action will take place”. According to him, “policies define the area in which decisions are to be made but it does not give the decision”. A policy brings about a meaningful relationship between business objectives and organizational functions as it discourages deviations from planned courses of action. A policy ensures consistency of action because an organization is governed by approved principles. A policy does not have to be rigid, as there should be room for adjustment if necessary after its formulation. Perhaps this is why Roy and Miskel (2009) believe that “policies are not only formulated but also programmed, communicated, monitored and evaluated”. The non-rigid nature of policies is confirmed by Husseini (2001) when he describes policymaking as a “process of successive approximation to some desired objectives in which what is desired itself continues to change under reconsideration”. In fact, a good policy is one that can be reviewed as the need may arise. A wise policy maker cannot expect all their policies to achieve a one-hundred percent success. Regardless of how good a policy may be, its implementation may introduce some element of imperfection. Policy implementation in tertiary institutions is a conspicuous national problem that has taken a centre stage in Nigeria.

### **Conceptualization of Policy Implementation in Tertiary Institutions**

In the field of education, “implementation” is a complex term which has different meaning for different people. The lack of consensus on the definition is noticeable among scholars. The term “implementation” itself may convey a limited approach to the concept. Yet analysis

suggests that the term may require taking into consideration a large variety of factors including the policy making process itself, in addition to context and the actual policy. Alternative terms from educationists include “delivery” (Barber, 2018), “enactment” (Bell and Stevenson, 2015) “realization” (Blanche et al., 2014) or educational change (Borman, 2003). This section proposes a definition of education policy implementation based on a review of the literature. While we use the term “implementation”, as it is the most widely used by policy makers who are the focus of our analysis, the paper aims to give it a more comprehensive meaning. It aims to provide an understanding of what managing education policy implementation entails that can then be used to define its determinants.

## **EDUCATION POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION: BASIC DEFINITIONS**

### **Education Policy**

Educational policies are initiatives mostly by governments that determine the direction of an educational system (Bello, 2012). According to Capano (2011) Education is a distinctive way in which the society inducts its young ones into full membership. So every modern society needs some educational policies to guide it in the process of such initiation. In the view of Kerr (1997), educational policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of a people. He believes that the objective of any policy is to satisfy individual needs, community pressures and the degree of complexity and sophistication to which socialized personnel must be educated and trained to meet these demands.

Education policy in tertiary institutions of learning can be formally understood as the actions taken by governments in relation with educational practices, and how governments address the production and delivery of education in the system. Admittedly, some promote a wider understanding of education policy –i.e. acknowledging the fact private actors or other institutions such as international and non-governmental organizations can originate educational policies (Baguada, 2011). However, this paper focuses on the management of implementation of educational policies generated by public authorities (be they at the central, regional or local level) for the delivery of tertiary education in Nigeria. In this respect, the definition given by Awokoya (2014) is enlightening: education policies are programmes developed by public authorities, informed by values and ideas, directed to education actors and implemented by administrators and education

professionals. Education policies cover a wide range of issues such as those targeting equity, the overall quality of learning outcomes and school and learning environments, or the capacity of the system to prepare students for the future, funding, effective governance or evaluation and assessment mechanisms, among others (Best and Fudge, 1999). Although education policies may refer to programmes affecting the education system from kindergarten to tertiary education (Browne and Wildy, 2008), the analysis in this paper is limited to managing the implementation of policies at tertiary institutions education. Implementation presents similar contexts and challenges at tertiary level, while the issues differ significantly in vocational, secondary and primary education. In addition, it is important to point out that in this paper, we may use education “policy” or “reform” interchangeably; following the analysis in Chris and Gonika (2014) which elaborates on what is education policy and the differences with reform. According to some analysts, it could be just a semantic difference, as reform refers to change in the current education policy, bringing together the policy with the process of change or reform. A perspective central to this paper is to study managing the implementation of policies in tertiary institutions as a change process and therefore, the focus is on policies intending to bring a change to tertiary education.

### **Implementation**

The concept of implementation in education is not clear, as it can take on a range of meanings that include the strict concept of implementation or a much broader conceptualization that refers not only to the process but embraces those factors that surround it. Entries in both Cambridge and Oxford dictionaries define implementation as the act or process of putting a decision or plan into action, specifying it is like “starting to use something” (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2020), and synonym of “execution of organizing elements with the purpose to use them. Implementation” thus suggests a direct object to action, be it a plan or decision. An interesting question is whether the education policy that gets implemented is the same as the one formulated by policy makers. The following distinction drawn in Daniel et al. (2010) allows for some reflection:

*Rhetorical policy refers to broad statements of educational goals often found in national addresses of senior political leaders. Enacted policies are the authoritative statements, decrees, or laws that give explicit standards and direction to the education sector. Implemented policies are the enacted policies, modified or unmodified, as they are being translated into actions*

*through systemic, programmatic, and project-level changes.*

If the “implemented policies” correspond to “enacted policies, modified or unmodified”, then managing the implementation process can hardly be limited to executing a decision.

### **Perspectives on Policy Implementation in Tertiary Institutions**

The idea that implementation refers to the execution of a policy conveys a specific view of the policymaking process, where a policy is first formulated and designed by a central authority, then implemented across the system under this same authority. This perspective has dominated the literature on managing the implementation, but is contested by other approaches for which implementation refers to a much less linear process. Looking at both perspectives can contribute to a comprehensive analysis of managing the implementation policies in tertiary institutions.

### **The Policy Cycle Approach**

A major issue in defining public policy implementation is the following question: where does implementation start and what role does it play in the policy process? Aeron et al. (2011) emphasize the tight links between a policy and managing its implementation: “we can work neither with a definition of policy that excludes any implementation nor one that includes all management of implementation”. The distinction that is sought here is how to distinguish the object (the public policy) from its implementation process. Defining the relationships between the two depends on the perspective one has of the policy process. One of the most influential approaches among analysts is the policy cycle approach, which splits the policy process into discrete and chronological stages, with one of them being implementation. A policy usually proposes a vision to achieve, set goals to meet, and may even spell out the means to reach them. In such a case, top-down implementation often refers to the process of executing what the policy mandates, to reach the goals stated and with the means outlined in the policy statutes. In a nutshell, policy implementation can be defined as the carrying out of a basic policy decision usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions. Ideally, that decision identifies the problem(s) to be addressed, stipulates the objective(s) to be pursued, and in a variety of ways, ‘structures’ the implementation process. The

process normally runs through a number of stages beginning with passage of the basic statute, followed by the policy Agenda-setting (Burns et al., 2016).

The policy cycle approach remains in use –albeit with some adjustments, because it is considered the most straight-forward way to present an analysis and recommendations to policy makers (Adams et al., 2001) and because it may be simpler to make actionable. An example of a modern top-down approach to managing policy implementation is Prime Ministers Delivery Unit (PMDU) developed during Blair’s government in the United Kingdom. “Delivery” explicitly conveys the PMDU’s top-down perspective on implementation: the Unit’s primary mission was to “ensure the delivery of the Prime Minister’s top public service priority outcomes by 2020” (Barber, 2008). Termed “deliverology”, this methodology structures the PMDU’s approach to delivery, and is based on pragmatic project management methods applied to policy implementation (Barber, 2008). The delivery staff ensures that clear priorities are set, each associated with a limited number of specific, measurable and ambitious targets. The implementation plan is necessary for effectiveness, but does not have to be on point from the beginning. It remains flexible to accommodate the lessons learnt by the implementation team throughout the process. Delivery is thus tightly linked with regular data collection, monitoring and analysis.

### **Bottom-up Theories**

Bottom-up approaches see management of policy implementation as a “process of interaction and negotiation, taking place over time, between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends” (Barnabas and Fudge, 2018). The main contribution of bottom-up approaches to managing the tertiary policy implementation is their normative stand: what matters is not how policy makers at the top get their will executed but the reactions of those on the ground at the end of the line whose reactions shape the implementation process, and the policy itself (Ake, 2020). Ake explains that the real question in policy implementation is how to support civil servants so they do not have to resort to routines that help them meet the pressure but decrease the quality of their service to end users of the policy. Another important contribution of bottom-up theorists is their highlighting the role of politics in implementation. Similar to the political economy of reform, authors such as Budd (2012) insist on the continuous negotiations that take place throughout the policy process. Compromising and getting actors on

board with the policy does not stop with the formulation, which makes management of the implementation process just the continuation of political debates. However, while bottom-up scholars bring new knowledge on the power relations down the policy-making process, they do not provide clear responses on how to tackle the challenges they identify.

### Recognizing Policy Complexity

Some approaches attempt to blend contributions from top-down and bottom-up approaches to make the knowledge they produce useful to policymaking. While many of these are general approaches, they are relevant to tertiary education policy. Frameworks have been developed as alternatives to the policy cycle approach, aiming to better clarify the complexity of policy making. Among them we can highlight Paul Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework (Burns et al., 2016), which makes a fundamental hypothesis about managing policy changes: for a major policy change to occur some kind of perturbation, negotiation and policy-oriented learning has to happen, along with a change in the coalition in power or a shift in the ideas successful with the coalition in power in the subsystem. A significant approach uses the concept of networks to analyze policy implementation. Based on the concept of "mutual dependencies" (Base and Meyer, 2015), emphasize the role of networks because in complex policy systems, actors do not yield resources to implement a policy by themselves (Bello, 2012). This situation is seen especially in modern education systems, where multiple actors must interact and co-ordinate with each other, governments included. The "enactment" phase shapes the policy and its outcomes, rather than simply execute the policy. From their perspective, education policy implementation should be understood as the web of processes through which policies are interpreted, translated and reconstructed, rather than a simple process of execution (Bell and Stevenson, 2015).

### Determinants of Education Policy Implementation in Tertiary Institutions

This Section presents and reviews the key determinants of education policy implementation in tertiary institutions for clearer understanding of the process. The aim of the analysis is to have the elements to develop a determinant framework on education policy implementation. In determinant frameworks, "each type of determinant typically comprises a number of individual barriers

(hinders, impediments) and/or enablers (facilitators), which are seen as independent variables that have an impact on implementation outcomes (Daniel et al., 2010). This section identifies a set of key determinants that either hinder or enable implementation outcomes. Four dimensions are crucial to take into account when approaching education policy implementation:

i. **The policy design:** the way a policy is debated and framed, the logic it suggests between the policy problem and the solution it offers and the feasibility of the latter determine to a great extent whether a policy can be implemented and how.

ii. **The stakeholders and their engagement:** education policies are implemented by individuals and organizations, making them central to the implementation process both because of their own characteristics and to their interactions with other determinants.

iii. **The institutional, policy and societal context:** the institutional setting comprises the formal and informal social constraints that regulate the implementation process in a given education system. The other policies in place in education and other sectors also need to be taken into account because they may facilitate or hinder the implementation process.

iv. **The implementation strategy:** the implementation strategy refers to the operational plan that guides the process to make the policy happen in effect. The implementation strategy can be assimilated to the policy's theory of change, i.e. the operational plan explaining how to make the policy happen in effect, while the policy design included mostly its theoretical underpinnings. Some authors blend the implementation strategy with the policy itself, because they are considered parts of the policy statute -i.e. the document or decision(s) that frame the goals or objectives, tools, rules and targets, and structural relationships between agents for a given policy (Browne and Wildy, 2008). Roy and Miskel, (2009) posit that the policy may provide a vision the implementations strategy has to realize, but the latter is more action-oriented, and ought to be flexible enough to cope with the unexpected (Awokeya, 2014). Differentiating between the two is useful, because it highlights strategic determinants of the implementation process that could be overlooked otherwise. Five elements of the implementation plan were identified across several of the selected frameworks: task allocation and accountability, objectives and tools, resources, timing, and communication and engagement strategy with education stakeholders.

### Task Allocation and Accountability Mechanisms

A policy needs some clarity and visibility regarding who is

supposed to manage the implementation of what, and who is responsible in case a given step of the implementation goes wrong. The distribution of tasks and responsibility is determined first by the institutional structure in place in a given education system. Each educational policy may nevertheless require some details on who implements what. The implementation strategy usually identifies key stakeholders and their corresponding responsibilities. Aaron et al. (2011) suggest that the policy statute can assign roles to implementing agencies based on their disposition regarding the policy –e.g. whether their decision rules are favorable to the policy goals. In most technical views of the policy process, the policy statute determines how much discretion key implementers may have –i.e. how much change they can bring to core elements of the policy (Kerr, 1997)..

### Objectives

The over-arching goals, logic and vision of a policy need to be refined in operational terms. Theorizing “deliverology”, Barber insists on the importance of defining and prioritizing among targets for effective management of policy implementation process. Because a strategy usually involves several goals and initiatives to reach them, attention must be paid to its overall coherence and to its priorities. Successful policy implementers have established a small number of clear, high-priority, measurable, ambitious but feasible goals focused on student outcomes, which do not distort practices within the school system (Adams et al., 2011). In Ontario, Canada, setting three common priorities for the Energizing Ontario Education initiative (in 2004 and 2008) helped the province harness implementation efforts towards achieving its vision of a high-quality, equitable and attractive public education system (Brewer and Deleon, 2008).

### Policy Tools

Multiple policy tools have emerged since the 1990s, creating more options for policy designers or implementers to put education policy into effect. As the education sector became more complex, so did the instruments: top-down mechanisms of command and control were complemented by more elaborate tools such as capacity-building or school-community partnerships to achieve the policy objectives (Chris and Ganika, 2014). Choosing one policy instrument over another affects the dynamics of implementation. It may require hiring

consultants; training staff, providing financial or other incentives; or testing several tools in case actors are highly uncertain about the way to go. In the United States, Comprehensive School Reform models that were more specific about the means to reach the policy goals in the late 1990s determined the fidelity of the management of policy implementation process i.e. how well implementation outcomes fit the policy goals. In a different setting, being too specific about the tools might hinder implementation. Capano (2011) suggests that in a context where there is high uncertainty and lack of consensus on the means to reach the policy goals, such as improving educational outcomes for all, consulting practitioners and experimenting may be a more effective strategy than specifying the tools right away.

### Communication and Engagement Strategy with Stakeholders

The language of a policy may not necessarily be understood by the actors who are expected to implement it (Daniel et al., 2010). A policy must gather political support among actors and across implementation levels if it is to be implemented (Kerr, 1997). With a large number of vocal stakeholders in the education sector, policy designers are encouraged to plan for engaging stakeholders as early as possible in the process of policy making (Barnabas and Fudge, 2018) and also to communicate clearly on the goals, objectives and processes required for the policy. Engaging stakeholders in the design process may serve several purposes: making sure the key message and logic of the policy are transmitted correctly to actors, build consensus around the objectives, tools and other means to achieve the policy goals (Bello, 2012). By doing so, it can build support for the policy, thus limiting the number of factors that may oppose the policy throughout the management of the implementation process (Base and Meyer, 2015). Engaging with stakeholders is also a way to heed the reality of practitioners’ daily activities throughout the process, which allows for avoiding obstacles or changing courses if some measures do not align with local needs.

### Resources

The inputs necessary for management of educational policy implementation consist mainly of the funding, technology and knowledge available to the actors, as well as their capacity to use them. The amount, quality and distribution of these resources allocated to implementation determine to a great extent when and

how a policy is implemented (Best and Fudge, 1999). A recurring issue with resources is not only about whether they are available for implementation, or in sufficient quantities, but how they are used, and what for (Adams et al., 2001); i.e. what the resource strategy is. Funding issues relevant to education policy implementation include whether there is enough funding, where it comes from, whether it is earmarked and who decides how to allocate it. According to Budd (2012), there is a threshold level of funding below which implementing institutions (e.g. governmental agencies) will not be able to achieve the implementation goals they were allocated. In a descriptive study of the funding strategies for School Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) being implemented in the early 2010s in the United States, Aeron et al. (2011) found that the states where large-scale implementation was particularly effective had a common approach to using multiple funding sources for implementation. A World Bank comparative study on funding formulas in Eastern Europe showed that a determining factor of early implementation was whether the authorities set additional funding for specific measures of the policy. Information and communication technologies are considered a powerful lever for educational change (Ake, 2020) and create opportunities and threats for implementing education policy. Hussein (2001) explains how technologies are a powerful means of accelerating “change in practice”, but not an effective driver of educational change by themselves.

### **Data Monitoring and Accountability**

Knowledge constitutes a valuable implementation instrument that informs decision making, improves the dialogue with actors and contributes to process transparency. Knowledge is “assimilated information and the understanding of how to use it” (Borman, 2003). There are various types of knowledge that can be relevant at different levels of the management of policy implementation process; data on student achievement signals the academic performance of an education system, while research findings may inform best practices. A major role for international organizations such as the OECD is to make this knowledge available and usable for policy makers and practitioners. Knowledge is also a source for actors to shape and revise their beliefs, which impacts their attitude in the management of the implementation process. Understanding the mechanisms through which actors learn and process information is crucial to manage knowledge for effective management of the policy

implementation. By linking models of governance to learning modes, Burns et al. (2016) offer a powerful tool to analyze learning processes given an education system’s type of governance. The diversity in learning modes and models of governance is important to take into account when trying to replicate or adapt implementation strategies from other education systems. Context-specific and practitioner knowledge is crucial to carry out a policy at the school and district level. The data collected throughout the implementation process allows implementers to update their strategy if needed, and may contribute to adjusting implementation according to local imperatives. Monitoring mechanisms should thus be designed to be flexible, support the policy goals, and provide public information without weighing down on school’s daily activities (Blanche et al., 2014). Too much control during the implementation process might indeed be presented by teachers for instance, who tend to see heavy monitoring mechanisms as a lack of trust in their profession (Hussein, 2001). In complex systems, the data collected through monitoring can also serve to hold stakeholders accountable throughout the system. Up-to-date data contributes to measuring progress of the implementation process. In some contexts, studies have found that having higher accountability standards on education policy implementers resulted in a more effective and qualitative implementation. For instance the United States’ School Wellness Programmes that had to be in place by 2006 were implemented more effectively and with fewer challenges when implementers were required to be transparent, subjected to careful oversight by the district and performing a systematic evaluation of the programme (Budd, 2012). Accountability mechanisms can nonetheless have a negative influence over the management of the implementation process. To be effective, they must be considered in the local context and might have to be adapted depending on the stages of the process (Barber, 2008). Awokeya (2014) found out that high-stakes accountability mechanisms were more likely to hinder effective implementation if not aligned with the Comprehensive School Reform model adopted in schools by 2000.

### **Timing**

The timing and pace set for implementation determine to a large extent how the process unfolds. An implementation strategy defines a timeline common to the main stakeholders, even though it is complex to define when implementation starts and when it stops (Aron et al., 2011). When managing the implementing process of a policy, actors are called to arbitrate between

acting fast to meet electoral necessities, and taking the time to polish the implementation strategy, engage with stakeholders and let the policy sink in. Such dilemma is well summarized by Barber (2008), when using “ambition”, “urgency” and “irreversibility” as key words of “deliverology”. The effects of timing and pace on the management of the implementation process are uncertain, but should not be overlooked because they are directly linked with the scope of implementation, and its potential outcomes. Studies suggest that at too fast a pace, stakeholders may not be able or willing to implement; too slow, the implementation process may lose momentum or drain the system’s resources. The study on curricular reform in Hong Kong concludes for instance that the tight timing imposed on teachers and principals threatened effective implementation of the policy (Bello, 2012). A study of the reform on education system decentralization in Sweden leans towards the same conclusion: the shift to decentralization was too sudden, leaving no time for municipalities to organize and take ownership of the reform (Baguada, 2011). The pace of implementation is linked to the nature of the change the policy aims for: even comprehensive reforms may start with incremental changes, before the systemic changes can be effective. The effect of timing on implementation thus depends on the degree of acceptability of the policy, and on the system’s capacity to implement (Brewer and Deleon, 2008). A striking example is the Czech commitment to create consensus on the school-leaving examination (Cerry and Sabatier, 2000): the stakeholders took fourteen years to test, modify, discuss and agree on a format that was finally introduced in 2011. Taking into account the time dimension in implementation requires policy actors to adopt a long-term perspective on education policy, while keeping up the dynamic of the process in the short-term.

### **Policy as a Concept of Change in Tertiary Institutions**

Policies guide the world. Ake (2020) argued that policy is a general guide to actions that helps in management. It is the compass that directs the management of any organization or institution in its day to day affairs. Barber (2008) argued that policy serves the purpose of ensuring that every official action of an organization has a basis or a backing. A policy brings about meaningful relationship between business objectives and organizational functions as it discourages deviation from planned courses of action. This is why Adams et al. (2001) stated that a policy is a statement of principles with supporting rules of actions and guidelines that govern the achievement of goals to which a business is directed. Roy and Miskel

(2009) defined public policy as a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. Policies are usually geared towards solving problems. This might be the reason why Budd (2012) opined that policies are considered as tools used to solve problems, provide general guidance and activities, ensure focus and provide control mechanism. Policies can be understood as political, managerial, financial and administrative mechanisms arranged to reach explicit goals. Regulatory policies are used to maintain order and prohibit unnecessary behaviors that may be dangerous to society. In the University environment, policies are formulated and managed in order to bring about the necessary social, technological, cultural, and economical changes for the overall development of the nation. Daniel (2010) stated that no policy can succeed if the implementation does not bear any relationship with the intentions of the policy makers. In the educational sector, Capano (2011) therefore defined educational policies as government’s initiatives that determine the direction of the educational system. All educational policies are therefore formulated to direct activities of the institutions towards the betterment of the lives of the citizens. Educational policies are used as tools to ensure that changes occur in the educational system. Hence in the Tertiary institutions, policies are formulated, implemented and its impact evaluated to guide programme development, students access to education/admission processes, infrastructural development, discipline, staff recruitment, administrative processes etc. Akagbo (2019), summarized the functions of educational policies as policy decisions made by the society itself through its elected representatives which determine the direction of educational system of a local, state or federal government. The implication of the above in the university environment is that all the different types of policies are formulated and implemented at different times to help management achieve different goals at different times in various areas of tertiary education management. It is on the above premise that several educational policies have been formulated over the years. The tertiary institutions are managed through the formulation and implementation of appropriate policies by the authorized bodies and commissions. According to Hussein (2011) the Federal Government through the National Universities Commission implements appropriate policies for the universities. It is in the same vein that the Federal Government ensures the infrastructural development of tertiary institutions through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). These bodies formulate and implement policies based on the focus of the leadership of the nation at any time. Various



policies have been formulated in the interest of education for the purpose of facilitating some expected change. Policies cannot be formulated if a change is not expected. It is the vehicle through which change is seen in any system. This explains why there has been major policy summersault or inconsistencies in the higher education in Nigeria (Adams et al., 2001).

### **Key Challenges of Managing Policy Implementation**

As our economies and societies have evolved from industrial to becoming knowledge based, education has become crucial for individual and social progress. Education systems are now more than ever required to provide high-quality education and competencies, in addition to new demands for well-being and values, to enable young generations to design and contribute to our fast-paced, global economy. But education policies may not reach the classroom, failing to achieve their intended outcomes, because of weak implementation processes. The literature reveals a range of reasons preventing implementation from being effective. Among others, we can highlight a lack of focus on the implementation processes when defining policies at the system level, the lack of recognition that these change processes require engaging people at the core and the need to revise implementation frameworks to adapt to new complex governance systems. These challenges call for the need to review current implementation approaches to see if they are adapted to education policy making in the 21st century and especially, whether they are able to support the development of professional processes that can contribute to success in the policy process.

### **Corruption**

If anything has contributed greatly to the stagnation of corporate development of Nigeria, it is this virus called 'corruption'. It is found in all aspects of human endeavour in Nigeria. Its prominence in Nigeria has earned our nation a place of negative prominence in the world. Ake (2020) noted: The 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index, released by Transparency International (TI), the watchdog on global corruption, ranks Nigeria as the third most corrupt country in the world. In 2003, the organization ranked Nigeria second, a one-step improvement from the previous position as the most corrupt country in the world. This is because corruption pervades all segments of Nigeria's national life. Despite enormous oil and gas wealth at the disposal of the country, basic things of life such as food, shelter, portable

water, electricity, good roads and education have become luxuries to the citizens. However, people at the various levels of government and their agents wallow in enormous financial and material wealth. Corruption has contributed to the stagnation of the development of education in Nigeria. Some good educational policies have been put in place. An example is the National Policy on Education already discussed. The designers of the policy, from all intents and purposes, were quite visionary. Since the re-establishment of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the state of education has further deteriorated. The UNESCO standard for education for all nations of the world is 26% of the national budget. During the era of dictatorship (military government) in Nigeria, education received as much as 13%, but the present democratic government in Nigeria has fallen short of this. For example, in 2001, it allocated 8% to education. In 2004, the Federal Government's provision for education was a dismal 5.6% of the budget.

### **Insufficient focus on implementation**

Viewing education as a driver to develop highly-skilled youth and meet the needs of the knowledge society represents a paradigm shift from the beginning of the 21st century (Aeron et al., 2011). This shift has caused policy makers and other stakeholders to pay more attention to schools' performance and to raise their expectations about the quality and the scope of the services delivered in schools. Governments have undertaken reforms to respond to these expectations. In one country, educators may for example have to deal simultaneously with enhancing the equity and quality of educational outcomes, reforming the way teachers are trained and changing the way students are evaluated. Whether formulated policies take effect "in the world of action" is not clear, however (Barber, 2008). Few studies actually document reform impact or can specify what factors contribute to the policy's success. It is also challenging to measure policy outcomes in education because they take time to appear, and because it may be difficult to attribute learning performance outcomes to one specific policy. **Implementation as a change process is** embedded within the policy that gets properly managed and implemented to bring about an effective change to the tertiary education sector. For example, implementing a new curriculum at the school level mostly implies changing schools and teachers' practices, their beliefs, and the materials used. On the other hand, a policy introducing new school funding formulas requires district leaders and Provosts, Rectors and VCs to change the way individual school systems are managed and funded

(Akagbo, 2019). Reforming education is no easy task, however. As noted in Chris and Gonika (2014) about the American public schools, “schools and districts do not go out of business” and follow their everyday activities in teaching and learning. According to a study on public sector activities, there is an entrenched tradition for education to stick to the status quo and resist change in a number of countries (Husseini, 2011). Given the cost of reforms and the uncertainty about the outcomes, stakeholders may prefer sticking to the status quo rather than changing (Bello, 2012). As most policies aim to bring a change to how education works, implementing them requires facing multiple challenges in the process. These include among others, communication and co-ordination issues, problems with organizational resources, capacity and compliance of the policy operators and policy targets (Kerr, 1997). Different approaches to educational change or policy reform emphasizes a range of challenges to implementation. Organization theory and public administration literature for example, emphasize the importance of overcoming resistance from stakeholders, to build support, to provide a plan and resources for change, and to find a way to embed the policy in daily routines to make the change sustainable (Barber, 2008). For instance, schools may lack capacity and resources to implement reforms –such as funding, training or technology. The political economy of reform looks at limited public budgets and resistance by interest groups, which policy makers must find a way to bypass in order to reform effectively.

### Enacting Change in Complex Education Systems

Recent developments in the literature have shown how education is taking shape in increasingly complex environments, which affects the way modern education systems are governed (Ake, 2020). Complex systems are characterized by new structures and new behaviours that emerge and the interactions between multiple actors. The number and type of actors that get involved with education policy have grown. Regional and local administrators, school leaders, teachers, parents and other actors are keen to defend their own vision of education, based on deeply rooted and largely personal belief systems. These actors engage in heated political debates about what priorities to give to education, and take initiatives to bring new policies into schools. These evolutions have changed the relationships between the various levels of decision-making and execution. In some systems, decentralization allows local and regional decision makers, and district and school leaders to weigh more in the policymaking process, and to adapt policies

to certain local priorities. More generally, tertiary education systems are moving from essentially top-down structures to more horizontal interactions in which negotiation and co-construction are in order. These systems are non-linear; they rely on feedback to shape their own evolution. They operate on multiple time-scales and at several levels simultaneously (Budd, 2012). These new dynamics create more challenging situations for policy implementation. Change programmes in public organizations tend to fail for reasons such as a lack of vision, incapacity to communicate, or failure to strike the right balance between marginal changes and structural transformations (Burns et al., 2016).

Barnabas and Fudge (2018) noted that planned policy management and implementation is constrained by the following factors:

- i. **Over-estimation of available resources** – This is a situation where estimated resources are greater than actual available resources to implement a programme.
- ii. **Under-estimation of the costs of implementing a plan** – This happens when cost-estimates do not make adequate provisions for inflation and actual implementation costs become unmanageable
- iii. **Over-reliance upon external assistance** – Plans that substantially rely upon assistance from foreign sources for their implementation run into hitches when such aid fails to come, and
- iv. **Inaccurate statistical data** – Planning and management of tertiary education requires accurate and up-to-date data. Plans that do not adequately provide for this usually have implementation problems.

Furthermore, Blanche et al., (2014) have also advanced three general explanations for unsuccessful planning, management and implementation of programmes, namely:

- i. **The communication process** – Effective implementation requires that implementers know what they are expected to do; as messages pass through any communication network, distortions are likely to occur which can produce contrary directives, ambiguities, inconsistencies and incompatible requirements;
- ii. **The capability problem** – Ability to manage and implement policies may be hindered by such factors as incompetent staff, insufficient information, political support, inadequate financial resources and impossible time constraints, and
- iii. **Dispositional conflicts**– Management and implementation of a policy may fail because those charged with the responsibility of implementation refuse to carry out their own assignments.

A recent study conducted by Bello (2012) to assess the effectiveness of management and implementation of education policies revealed significant inadequacy in the

implementation efforts. Among the constraints that impede effective implementation are:

- Inadequate qualified teachers
- Insufficiency of funds
- Inadequate teaching and learning facilities
- Poor motivation of teachers, and
- Lack of guidance and counseling services.

### **Implications of Policy Management and Implementation for Tertiary Education Development**

Education is an instrument for excellence. It liberates people from poverty and ignorance. Best and Fudge (1999) believe that “education is for life and for living. It is an investment in people which pays untold dividends to the society. When that investment is not made or is made inadequately, the society suffers a loss”. Presumably it is in recognition of this importance of education that the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provided at Section 18 as follows:

Free adult literacy programmes (FRN, 1999:18). It is in pursuance of this constitutional provision that the National Policy on Education was developed and accepted. Nigeria’s educational philosophy is also anchored on this constitutional mandate. The importance of education to national development is no longer in doubt. The issue that agitates the mind is the effect of poor implementation of educational policies on the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. It was Ake (2019) who said that “education is the process of becoming the best we can be”. With the numerous crises in the tertiary educational system engendered by poor policy implementation, it is doubtful whether its recipients are really becoming the best as expected. If not, what is the fate of Nigeria? The euphoria with which Nigerians welcomed the National Policy on Education has died down and been replaced with despondency due to non-performance. The National Educational Research Council Report of the Baguada Seminar of September 1980 captured this euphoria as expressed in that seminar thus: The introduction of the new system of education is deemed crucial to the management and implementation of the philosophy of “developmentalism”. It is hoped that when fully operational, it will help transform the society and launch the nation along the developmental trajectory that will lead us to a state of parity with the advanced world (Baguada, 2011). The ineffective implementation of the various programmes canvassed by the National Policy on Education has relegated these hopes and optimism to back-stage. Nigeria is caught between one ‘evil’ (the rejected British educational system which is still unofficially practiced) and one ‘saint’ (the accepted

American educational system which we can neither officially nor unofficially practice). Consequently, the conservatism of the British educational system which helped us to maintain our traditional values and a healthy society has been lost. On the other hand, the American system with its potential for technological development and growth has failed to make any difference in our society because we have not learned anything. If Nigeria continues to hide under the umbrella of the National Policy on Education conscious of the implementation problems, our national aspirations will suffer greater impediments. Our national development will only rely on miracles, if any. The British system of education was found inadequate for Nigeria’s developmental purposes. It is also true that the American system has failed in Nigeria because of our sociological circumstances. We need not continue to deceive ourselves with a national educational policy that has been found unworkable else in the future there will be no policy to lay hold on.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the literature reviewed, we can conclude that the management and implementation of policies in tertiary educational systems in Nigeria are constrained by the following factors.

- Most educational policies are well focused but the planning and management is often defective, making implementation difficult.
- Resources available for the management and implementation of a given educational policy are often over-estimated and thereby elicit unrealistic expectations that fail to materialize.
- Since educational policies are usually translated into plans before implementation, studies have shown that the costs of management and implementation of such plans have often been under-estimated. Most educational policies have become stalled at the planning stage.
- Reliable data have not been a popular feature in planning, management and implementation of educational policies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This situation has not facilitated the effective implementation of educational plans.
- The management and implementation of policies in tertiary institutions is often hindered by the interplay of politics, which may sometimes relegate reality to obscurity.
- Qualified Lecturer/ teachers are not in sufficient numbers in the entire tertiary educational system in Nigeria.
- Facilities such as classrooms, offices, laboratories, workshops, libraries, power, water et cetera are basic

requirements in every school system. These have been found to be grossly inadequate in most Nigerian tertiary institutions.

- Insufficiency of funds for implementing educational policies in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions is a problem that has recurred in almost every sphere.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need for a workable educational policy in Tertiary Institutions of Nigerian educational system. It is for this reason that the following recommendations are put forward:

- The present national tertiary educational policy should be disbanded on account of its non-workability.
- An indigenous system of education fashioned after the models operated by Asian countries should be adopted. Ideas that are alien to the cultures of Nigeria should be avoided because they are bound to fail.
- Education should be removed from the sphere of politics. It should be made purely a constitutional matter, but not as provided by the 1999 constitution which allows escape routes for political leaders. When the constitution states that "Government shall as and when practicable, provide free education at different levels", the right to education has been denied the citizens and political leaders may be non-committal as the provision of education becomes a discretionary matter.
- The entrenchment of education as a non-negotiable right of every citizen in the constitution would help check corruption in that sector. Corruption is largely responsible for the failure of the National Policy on Education and other policies in Nigeria.
- Mismanagement of tertiary educational resources at any level should be made a serious offence attracting a minimum of five years' imprisonment. This should be included in the next constitution of Nigeria. It is believed that in the presence of corruption no new system of education can succeed.
- Nigerian governments and leaders should develop the necessary political will for education to grow.
- Every effort should be made to eradicate corruption from all spheres of Nigeria's various programmes so that available resources can be utilized for public interest. Government lacks the political will for effective implementation.

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