EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION: MEETING THE NEEDS OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY THROUGH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Educational policies play a crucial role in creating a pattern for a nation_s development to achieve a worldwide need. The paper x-rayed the educational policies and implementation with a view of meeting the needs of contemporary society through university education for sustainable development in Nigeria. It focuses on the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria within the confines of university education to foster sustainable development. The educational system has been crippled by such and it has affected national development. This paper presents how possible it will be for the university administrators in Nigeria to make policies that will be of the best interest to the students and the larger society to meet their needs, those that are laying down the policies and to who the implemented polices will affect and finally the time by which this is achievable. A detailed literature review of educational policies, policy implementation, university education and sustainable development was enunciated. It highlights the fundamental problems associated with the formulation and implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. The paper balances the distortions in the educational system on lack of funding for implementation policy, willingness for implementation, corruption, and depletion of modern infrastructure. Several suggestions were put forward for a better understanding of achieving an effective educational policy for sustainable development. In conclusion, educational policy implementation is significant for sustainable development in the contemporary society. If all the stakeholders should put into good practice it would yield positive results in meeting up the needs of the contemporary society in Nigeria in the years to come.

Key Words: Educational Policies, Implementation, University Education, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Our tomorrow of today is our action and inaction of the future. This means, he who fails to plan plans to fail. The administrators and policy makers in the universities in Nigeria need to take actions today that will give them a better tomorrow as well as take care of the needs of the society. Society is looking out for graduates with skills and innovation, creative mindsets and ideas, and great thinkers who can be problem solvers to meet the test of time and the needs of society. The world is looking out for graduates who can add value to themselves, the society, nationally and internationally for sustainability. Universities in Nigeria have a role to play in ensuring changes in society, as we cannot be doing the same thing all the time and expect positive results. The administrators of Nigerian universities have to take formidable steps to produce future-fit graduates. The world is dynamic, so requisite information and know-how is needed and the time to change is now. For there to be an overhaul of the system to be effective in the possible shortest time, a new mind set is required. In support of this

Effiong (2013) opined that the word effective refers to producing the results that is wanted or intended or producing a successful result.

University education plays a critical role in preparing individuals to meet the needs of contemporary society, especially concerning sustainable development. In Nigeria, aligning educational policies with sustainable development goals is crucial for addressing societal challenges and fostering long-term prosperity. Policy implementation in the sphere of influence in education is important in enhancing sustainable development. Countries tend to address day to day challenges such as environmental pollution, economic meltdown, inequality, encouraging sustainable development principles in educational principles is crucial. This paper will seek the dynamics that is policy implementation and sustainable development within the educational background while adhering to educational practice with long term effects on economic, societal and environmental goals.

The University system of education became a critical instrument for the establishment of human capital that was required to serve in the new administration as well as in the private sector (Mupimpila & Narayana, 2009). University education is established to meet the needs of society in the areas of inventions, innovation, and provision of skilled manpower of international repute who can stand out or complete favorably, and groundbreaking research in the universities which will impact positively to society. Hence, there are a lot of issues to ponder, such as funding, research, training and supervision in quality education. Meanwhile, planning as contended by Wisdom (2018), is deciding the best alternative among others to perform different managerial operations to achieve the predetermined goals. Planning is an explicit statement of intention that identifies both objectives and the activities needed to achieve them (Djony, 2019). Only educational decisions are regularly taken by nations of the world on the type of education, the curricular content, the ideological base and goals to be attained using education approximate to educational planning (Adiele, Baic & Ohia, 2017). In line with the above assertions, Elujekwute (2019) stated that quality education covers the curriculum content, the instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation policies and procedures which determine the achievement and performance of the learners. Oguntuase (2013) opines that products of the Nigerian University system have at different forums been challenged to test their suitability or otherwise to secure few available white-collar jobs. Arthur (2017) asserts that curriculum in Nigeria is a great problem because of the disparity between policies formulated and the actual implementation. This suggests that concerns connected to graduate employability are given a lot of weight in the developing world, particularly in Nigeria, where there is a skills gap (Oladokun & Olaleye, 2018). Meanwhile, other scholars have reviewed related work but much work is yet to be done in this particular area this is why the researcher has taken up this work on educational policies and implementation: meeting the needs of contemporary society through university education for sustainable development in Nigeria to fill in the missing gap.

Educational Policies

Educational policy seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, the objectives that it is designed to attain, the methods for attaining them and the tools for measuring their success and failure (Etu, Ogi & Jones, 2019). In the Nigerian educational system, there is a connection between educational policies and sustainable development which is important for

a nation to strive to meet an evolving world. This paper dives into the complexity of educational policies highlighting the impact not only on university education but sustainable development. Educational policies are those policies which can include government policies, principles, and laws which are put in place for the establishment and smooth running of the educational system. Government policies are rules, regulations or guidelines supporting the administration or smooth running of an organization to achieve a set objectives or goals (Adetunji, 2015). Education policy can be understood as an assessment of the value system and the needs of the educational situation that is carried out in a planned institution that is general and will serve as a guide in every decision-making so that educational goals in a country can be easily achieved (Dhawan, 2020; Putra, Liriwati, Tahrim, Syafrudin, & Aslan, 2020). The policy has many views in producing a decision or program that departs from the values believed by the government as the party decided so often policies produce values that are not following what was planned in achieving the original goal (Hodges Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). Ebienfa & Paki (2013) concluded that policies therefore play a crucial role in the state and also instrumental to the development and underdevelopment of a given state. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015) stated that educational policy consists of the principles and government policies in the education of laws and rules that govern the operation of educational systems. Educational policies cover a wide range of issues such as those targeting equity, the overall quality of learning outcomes and school and learning environments, the capacity of the system to prepare students for the future, funding, effective governance or evaluation and assessment mechanisms, among others, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD,2015). Educational policies are put in place to address several outcomes when the need arises to help students and better equip them for future endeavors. Furthermore, Thomas, Emilie and Wayne (2018) rightly stated that educational policy analysis is the scholarly study of educational policy that seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, the objectives that are designed to be attained, the methods for attaining them, and the tools for measuring their success or failure. Education policy is part of the public service by departing from the characteristics of public policy, which include policies made through a legal mechanism and then delegated to the executive with legislative and judicial oversight (Scheingold, 2010). Therefore, it is clear that education policy has a significant role in accessing and protecting the supervision of national education activities to run according to the planned objectives (Kusumasari & Alam, 2012). The previous statement that the strategy for improving education policy values from how it is carried out and factors which are very urgent to be achieved and followed by regulations and laws so that in which direction to decide so that the ideal educational goals can be achieved (Rhodes, 2022).

Implementation

Implementation is the carrying out of planned, intentional activities that aim to turn evidence and ideas into policies and practices that work for people in the real world. In other words, it is putting an idea or a plan into action, the ―how‖ as well as the ―what‖. This means that a policy cannot be implemented because the basic principle is irrational, so this is a mere dream (Reimers & Chung, 2019). Policy implementation is trusting the process of bringing into reality a policy through a medium of proposals, programs and projects. Fullan (2015) opines

that education policy implementation is —the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change. The change may be externally imposed or voluntarily sought; explicitly defined in detail or developed and adopted incrementally through use; designed to be used uniformly or deliberately planned so that users can make modifications according to their perceptions of the needs of the situation‖

Research studies have shown that the availability of instructional materials and a good conducive school environment are essential for the proper implementation of education policy and, consequently, the high academic achievement of students (Akinfe, Olofinniyi & Fashiku, 2012). Chukwuemeka (2013) affirmed that mere formulation of policies should become not the major issue in Nigeria but rather their effective implementation. This is to say it is easier saidthan done in practicing what is been said.

Educational Policy Implementation

The term education policy implementation is an effort to understand how comprehensive education policies can be understood, especially by parties with an interest in the education system in Indonesia as a public service (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011). Government policies are conflicting with their implementation (Adetunji, 2014). Gbenu (2012) upheld that Nigerian policies are written by knowledgeable writers who have foresight and believe strongly in what they write for the future but the problem arises when it comes to translating theory into policy by implementers. Adeniyi an Ladanu (2016) are of the view that very few studies have considered quality teaching in the Nigerian context in particular, thus, challenging the generalized ability of such studies to a non-western context like Nigeria and Africa. Policy implementation that works in a university system is important in a standard learning environment. This covers an area of research, policies and inclusion initiatives. In periodic evaluations, policy implementation is successful and sustained. Flexibility and adherence to policies must be the order to foster innovation and growth. Constance (2016) as cited in Raji (2020) avers that educational policies are made but their implementations are often thwarted or sabotaged. This disheartening situation may be as a result of distortions in the educational system or the ineffective implementation endangered primarily by lack of political will, a lack of continuity of programs and corruption. Ebong (2016) described educational policy as a powerful instrument or framework for the development of man and the society. On the other hand, well implemented educational policies facilitates the process of impacting knowledge, skills, facts and ideas on individual citizens(Lenchie, 2013) citied in Adesua (2022).

Meeting the Needs of Contemporary Society and the Employability Skills of Graduate
Education serves as a driver to develop highly-skilled youth and meet the needs of the knowledge society which represents a paradigm shift from the beginning of the 21st century(Lessard and Carpentier, 2015). The goal of a successful educational program and thus effective curriculum development should be to meet the needs and current demands of the culture, thesociety, and the expectations of the population being served. This is to be expected as the world is evolving every day. Nigerians are looking for graduates who can be of global competitiveness and for sustainable development, who are worthy of character and learning, character 60% and in learning 40% who are excellent and creative for them to fit into the

society. The universities have to strive to change as the industries change. There is need to try as much as possible to collaborate with the industries and the society to find out the needs of these industries and the society from time to time for sustainability. Where the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) and the Universities fails to review their curriculum and teach what industries and society requires then it means we are in trouble, on the other hand lecturers in the universities in Nigeria must update their knowledge by undergoing for in-service training, self- development and innovative courses to add value to the industries, countries and the society who will absorb the students upon graduation.

University education has to cut edges, and research to create new knowledge and innovation that can convert ideas into wealth creation, jobs and human progress. Graduates lacking adequate knowledge, dexterity and self-transformation cannot be useful to society, nor will they be useful to themselves (Adamu, 2015). Year in and year out there is a massive outpour of graduates, given the growing number of graduates coming out from the various universities into the labor market and the increasing unemployment rate, Government is worried about the situation and needs to take measures to rectify the situation. Policymakers and government are pondering on what the right type of education will be suitable in propelling economic development in the country (Adamu, 2015). Graduates of the country have been able to gain employability skills and some have been absorbed into the private and public sectors of the economy and hence these youths have becomes self-reliant-and economically useful to the country, although a significant number of them were still unemployed (Mupimpila & Narayana, 2009; Cho,2016; Bob,2018). A planned, tried and revised curriculum ensures the interaction of students and teachers (lecturers) in an educational environment, with physical facilities and resources of the school, targeted goals can be achieved (Olamo, et a_ 2019) and in such a way that can contribute to the development of the society (Badugela, 2012). By creating programmes to build members of society who will be dedicated to meeting those needs. By upgrading from traditional method to innovation of international universities like teaching methods,curriculum etc. Building on skill acquisition/entrepreneurship programmes. Using the medium of skills acquisition the youths will be empowered and will give them a sense of independence. The universities in Nigeria would produce graduates that one day will develop the society in all spheres of endeavour. Research is an integral part of the university system that (foster, evaluate) exposed the students to reality of life. Therefore, when students are exposed to challenges to proffer solutions to those challenges in the society, it gives them (students) a sense of belonging and exposure to the needs of the society thereby continue contributing and foster development of the society. Ramon-Yusuf (2019) averts that through the ages, universities as human institutions have been characterized by changes induced by the demands of the societies, which they serve.

University Education

Education _can be defined as the stock of skills, competencies, and other productivity-enhancing characteristics_ (the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2016). Education is a leading determinant of economic growth, employment, and earnings. Ignoring the economic dimension of education would endanger the prosperity of future generations, with widespread repercussions for poverty, social exclusion, and sustainability of social security systems (Woessmann, 2015). He further appealed that policy-makers interested in advancing future prosperity should particularly focus on educational outcomes, rather than inputs or attainment.

Hanushek (2016) suggests that the quality of basic skills is key and that more higher education (university education inclusive) without good basic skills does not pay. University education is education that is attained after secondary school. University education is the stage of education that develops the abilities and knowledge necessary for one to find employment. The society places high value on higher education (university education inclusive) because it is through it that a variety of vocation that contribute to the advancement of society are created (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a). It is an institution of learning that upon conclusion, awards academic degrees in various academic disciplines at the undergraduate and post graduate level. The university environment serves as a ground for students from different spheres of learning who later on emerge as intellectuals for sustainable development. The universities can meet up its goals by undergoing and carrying out qualitative research (which are ground breaking), functional teaching and learning, community serves and a power house for skilled manpower and knowledge generation. Innovation and collaboration as a key to knowledge transfer for the benefit of mankind and the society. What are the new discoveries in these universities? Aspiration, partnership with other institutions is key and the way to go. Quality in education (university education) can be viewed as the ability of the educational system to meet up with the constant demands and expectations of its educational customers which include students, parents, lecturers, staff, and other benefactors etc. (Ofor-Douglas, 2022 b). She further maintained that the essence of quality university education is to improve resourcefulness as well as provide a working and learning environment for lecturers and students. Lampa, Greculescu & Todorescu (2013) asserts that active listening, assuming of responsibilities and solidarity are considered prerequisites to successful relationships based on social cooperation and interaction among pupils and people in general. Pedagogical competence should be understood as a synthesis of cognitive, visual, practical and personal experience(Kondur, et al, 2020).The educational process should be such that even the weakest students are educated in a manner that their actions, present or future, pose no danger to society or even themselves (Lampa, Greculescu & Todorescu, 2013).

Sustainable Development
Sustainable development is development concerned with meeting up the needs of the present generation without forsaking the needs of generations to come. This encompasses social, environmental, economic sustainability in different roles. University education is key in educating generations after generations in better understanding sustainability and upholding an upstanding society. Lampa, Greculescu & Todorescu (2013) consider sustainable development to be a continuous search for improving our daily lives, while minimizing the negative impact brought about by humans on the environment. Sustainable development has been described as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations to come (Ofor-Douglas, 2023a). Strange and Bayley (2008) as cited in Okonta & Nwanokor (2021) posits that sustainable development (SD)means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. UNESCO (2019) stipulates that by 2030, all learners should acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. It is possible with evolving times that teachers and learners alike can uphold sustainable development. Lampa, Greculescu & Todorescu (2013) noted that education for sustainable development is a broad movement concerned with identifying and advancing the kind of

education, teaching and learning policy and practice to ensure social, economic and ecological viability and welfare, now and into the long-term future. Ganira & Odundo (2018) argued that overriding theme of education for sustainable development is integration of values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of curricula to encourage change in behavior that allows a just society for all.

In addition to moral and ethical values, education for sustainable development has various dimensions, such as peace education, medical education, consumer education, among others (Fosnot, 2013; Armstrong, 2011). Ganira & Odundo (2018) noted that integrating sustainable development strategies such as problem-based, inquiry-based, and reflective learning in teaching and learning should motivate learners to become responsible individuals who will solve challenges, respect cultural diversity and contribute to creating a sustainable society.

Daly (2013) mentioned that sound principles should provide the basis for the first step toward operationally. The main principle is to limit the human scales to a level which is commensurate with the carrying capacity of the environment, for once the human activity exceeds the carrying capacity, and there will be a deviation from the path of sustainable development. Armstrong (2011) contends that skills associated with education for sustainable development are expansive and include collaboration and cooperation, conflict resolution, creativity, imagination, future mindedness, knowledge transfer, meaningful communication and civic engagement. Lampa, Greculescu & Todorescu (2013) noted that education for sustainable development is central to preparing learners for lifelong learning, an adaptive quality that makes the learner more malleable in a time when most societies are experiencing dramatic social, environmental and economic transformation.

Opanda (2013) postulated that the major thrusts to foster education include improving basic education; and to develop public understanding, awareness and training.Ganira & Odundo (2018) assert that adoption of education for sustainable development pedagogies into the basic education curriculum requires appropriate teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to modify behaviour and take actions for sustainable development. Wandabi (2019), the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) provides an opportunity to nurture every learner_s potential through quality education. Olaifa (2012) convincingly declares that sustainable development ―demands the commitment, pro-activism and popular participation, not neglecting the sustenance of the natural environment to be able to eke out and sustain a good life, beneficial to all within the polity.

Republic of Kenya (2017) holds that the teaching of values, especially at the basic education level, is expected to facilitate achievement of the curriculum reforms_ vision, particularly with respect to developing ethical citizens .The CBC environmental education, disaster risk reduction, safety and security education, financial literacy, poverty education, countering terrorism, extreme violence and radicalization, gender issues and animal welfare (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Armstrong (2011) asserts that three primary perspectives underpin constructivism, that is, endogenous, exogenous, and dialectical. Arguably, some of the common strategies for the development of relevant skills are collaborative activities, systems instruction, multigenerational analysis, problem-based assignments, inquiry and action research (Fosnot, 2013). To achieve these, all those involved in the delivery of education for sustainable development must practice what they preach (Fosnot, 2013). This calls for a

redefinition of their mission and a review of their curricula because school curriculum is considered important to achieve the educational purposes for sustainable development (Alelaimat & Taha, 2014).With the new curriculum on board, Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), the agent that is regulating universities in Nigeria, National Universities Commission (NUC) is to provide 70 percent minimum core courses while the Universities is to produced 30 percent courses of its curriculum. Let us keep our fingers crossed and see how this will yield positive result to the whole nation, the industries and companies and the needs of the society.

ISSUES

Implementation of several policies is a problem which university education is facing in carrying out their educational duties and obligations. There are issues facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigerian educational system such as University education. They include: **Lack of Funds:** Funding is the process whereby a sum of money is provided by a particular source. Insufficient funding poses a formidable challenge to policy implementation.   Ozurumba (2013) explains that the adequate funding of education is pertinent for the growth of the economy and as such, the Nigerian government must educate people to understand that the government alone cannot fund the educational sector. Akinditure,   Ayodele   & Osiki (2012) observed that funding of education programmes was not only found to be inadequate but was also based on the priority of the ruling Government. In 2021 only 5.6% allocation of the national budget was given to education, the lowest percentage allocation since 2011 (FME, 2021).

Mohammad (2015) stated that in response to the global need and demand for finance, there is need for universities to maintain professional and academic strategic alliances with other universities and business community. Furthermore, Joel, Ogi & Ikpe (2019) rightly identified funding and inconsistency in educational policies and programs as the problems facing educational policy implementation distortion in the communication process.

Corruption: Corruption is when morals, principles are impaired. It is an act that lacks integrity and moral upstanding. Okoroma (2006) pointed out that the objectives of most policies in Nigeria are often deviated at the implementation stage due to a number of reasons: such as the budgets for the implementation of the policies are often passed by lawmakers with strings attached to them; even when the budgets are passed, the executive arm of government is often reluctant to release the fund to facilitate implementation and the inadequate funds often released to the operators of the education system (primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions) are not honestly and fully utilized to promote the cause of education. Chimobi (2010) emphasized that corruption has eaten so deep into the government and economy that everyone seems to be blinded by it and has almost become an accepted way of life in Nigeria. Ejiogu (2015) stated that the disease of corruption and the obvious mismanagement of resources for the shocking state of the education system in Nigeria.

Devoid of Modern Infrastructure: Infrastructure is the physical structure which can include in this case buildings, facilities, and power supply in the day to day to day running of the university.The lack of modern infrastructure in university education refers to a deficiency in contemporary and advanced facilities, equipment, and technology necessary for a vibrant and

effective learning environment. This may include outdated classrooms, insufficient laboratories, obsolete research facilities, and limited access to modern technology. Inadequate infrastructure hampers the effective implementation of educational policies. Enfola ((2016) rightly put that the educational sector is one of the critical sector that influences both developmental growth .The growth of the educational sector is weakened by inadequate infrastructure in transforming higher institutions for sustainability and national development cannot be over emphasized. Furthermore, infrastructure development in higher institutions would influence the externalities and attract international research funding and output. Gbenu (2012) listed that inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities, teaching aids and instructional materials in schools, poor remuneration of teacher (lecturers), and poor conditions of service reduces teachers commitment to teaching. Ofor-Douglas (2022c) acknowledges that the lack of infrastructure that should be available to assist students education and development in other life skills causes those in public schools to be second to those in private school who know the practical and theoretical aspect of their courses.

Willingness for implementation:

The success in implementing policy in a university environment depends on the administrators who are responsible for executing the proposed change they want to see. Sadly, this is easier said than done. Inconsistent policies and regulations may hinder the integration of sustainable development principles into university education. Individuals within universities and the government can delay the implementation of policies and initiatives with a glaring resistance to reforming university curricula and practices.

Access to infrastructure and technology

In any educational background it is imperative that there is an adequate provision of both physical and technological facilities, facilities such as laboratories, classrooms, libraries, internet services. In all access to such facilities will lead to an enhancement of learning and its methods which will give students an edge and a different learning experience. Unequal access to such facilities exist in environments leading to educational inequalities. Educational policies play a major role in addressing the inequality by allocation of resources particularly funds though canbe twarted by implementation challenges.

Resource Allocation

There is need for equal distribution of resource allocation in educational institutions. This will ensure that students have equal access to education and its benefits irrespective of their background. Challenges will arise in the form of priorities, politics and limited funds. Sadly, this is not the case as there is an absence of accountability and transparency to ensure all round efficiency.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the role of educational policies which will come in play to meet contemporary needs in views of university education in Nigeria. There is a long way to go before policy implementation can be achieved in a university setting as there is need for communication amongst the individuals in the university. There is need to address the critical issues and propose several recommendations thus laying a foundation for sustainable development By implementing these strategies, Nigeria can effectively meet the needs of

contemporary society through university education for sustainable development, paving the way for a more prosperous and equitable future.

Suggestions

In addressing the issues faced in the process of policy implementation which is essential for creating a conducive environment for academic excellence, students with employability skills and a sustainable environment. The possible suggestions on how to curb these issues are listed below

1. Fund raising should not only be limited to the government but can be gotten from several collaborations, private individuals through philanthropic efforts. External funding such as research grant is also plausible.
2. Transparency and accountability measures should be put in place to prevent corruption.
3. Several panels, bodies can be established to monitor policy implementation to make sure itis put into effect and also to ensure judicious use of funds coming into the university.
4. Internal and external audits should be done to assess funding, policy implementation, academic standard, so as to prevent any form of corruption.
5. There should be a maintenance culture for the purpose of preserving infrastructure.
6. Areas of infrastructural necessity should be assessed to find out which facility is lacking.

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