The Impact of Politics on Educational Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria

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Abstract

This position paper examined "The impact of politics on educational policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria". The theoretical framework was drawn from the elite theory which was informed by the facts that Nigeria political landscape is characterized by elite dominance, with influential individuals and groups shaping policy decisions. This enables participants understand the power dynamics influencing educational policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria. Educational policies formulated by the government are many, but it is worthy to note that due to some constraint they remain under implemented or unimplemented as a result of elite interest, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, inadequate man-power, etc. The paper reviewed the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria from independence, highlighting the historical backgrounds of the impact of politics on this process. It discovered that the negative impacts have impeded the implementation of these policies. The paper therefore concluded that politics and education are interwoven in Nigeria as a result of funding by government. The paper suggested that politicians should adopt fairness, accessibility and equity as the major principle in the implementation of educational policies in order to enhance the standard of education in Nigeria.

Key words: Politics, Education, Government, Policy formulation and Policy implementation

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right that enables individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, and values essential for personal and societal development (UNESCO, 2019). Quality education fosters cognitive, emotional, and social growth, leading to improved life outcomes (Hattie, 2015). Education also plays a critical role in promoting economic growth, social mobility, and sustainable development (World Bank, 2020). Moreover, education empowers individuals to think critically, solve problems, and make informed decisions, contributing to a more equitable society (OECD, 2019). The inequitable distribution of educational resources and low educational outcomes are major concerns (Nwogu, 2017).

Nigeria education sector is crucial for national development (Ake, 2017). However, it faces numerous challenges, including inadequate funding and poor infrastructure (Aluede, 2019). Beyond, the above-mentioned problems are the general problems in pertinent areas such as insecurity, poverty, corruption, politics, illiteracy, agriculture, communication, housing, transportation, health, unemployment, etc. Yet, at one point in time or the other, governments formulated policies to help eradicate these problems. Achebe (1983) cited in Ozor (2004) opined that the problem with Nigeria is the problem of leadership. The inequitable distribution of educational resource and low educational outcome are major concerns (Nwogu, 2017). It is clear that the kind of leaders Nigeria need is the type that will have the political will to implement her policies. Over a decade ago, the Nigeria's budget on education has been on the decline (see Fig. 1). The result was unpaid teacher salaries, degradation of education facilities at all levels and strikes in universities/public schools, culminating in declining literacy rates.

The poor state of education in Nigeria is aptly captured in the national empowerment development strategy (IMF, 2005) as follows: the delivery of education in Nigeria has suffered from years of neglect, compounded by inadequate attention to policy frameworks within the sector. Finding from an ongoing educational sector analysis confirm the poor state of education in Nigeria shows that the national literacy rate is currently 77.62% as at 2021 (GlobalData, 2022) see reference. This is expected to have reduced due to the escalating insecurity in different states which has displaced many people from their homes. How can the educational policy be implemented in a country where 17% of our public school teachers and 40% of the private school teaching workforce are unqualified (https://www.google.com) see reference.

There is an acute shortage of infrastructure and facilities at all levels of education. Access to basic education in Nigeria is inhibited by gender issues, religion and socio-cultural beliefs and practices, among other factors (Nwogu, 2017; Obasi. 2020). Wide disparities in educational standards and learning achievements still persist among rural and urban dwellers. The system emphasizes theoretical knowledge at the expense of technical skills which is imperative to attain the current global trend and meet the target of the sustainable development goal of the country. This calls for urgent review to make our education relevant and practical oriented as well as to meet the global standard.

This study which focuses on impact of politics driven by Nigerian elites and educational policy formulation and implementation will contributes to understanding elite dynamics in educational policy and informs policy reforms that will enable the nation attain the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on education.

Theoretical Framework

This study derives its theoretical foundation from the Elite Theory which is also refers to as elite model or elite perspective. It was propounded by C. Wright Mills in1956 cited in (Obasi, 2020). Elite theory states that small group of powerful individuals, known as the elite, dominate decision-making processes and shape policies to serve their interests (Obasi, 2020). The theory sees the society as classified, divided or stratified into two, with the masses at the bottom and the ruling-class (elites) is at the top. It explains how power is distributed and exercised in societies among the two classes. These elites are the rich and well-educated, who share common beliefs and use their influence to determine public policies. Any policy which went against this class could be predicted to fail. This theory also focuses attention on the role of leadership in policy making. They elites formulate policies based on their own goals, interest and for the preservation of their clique. This model alerts us to the importance of self-interest in policymaking.

The theory posits that power is concentrated in the hands of a small, cohesive group of individuals who shape policies to serve their interests (Domhoff, 2013). This theory suggests that elites use their position to maintain social order and protect their privileges. The elite is characterizes by the following features:

1. Power concentration: Elite theory posits that power is concentrated in the hands of a small, cohesive group of individuals.

2. Unequal distribution: Elites possess disproportionate wealth, influence, and social status.

3. Self-interest: Elites prioritize their own interests over the needs and concerns of the broader population.

4. Limited mobility: Social mobility is restricted, making it difficult for non-elites to enter the elite ranks.

The choice of Elite Theory for this study on "The Impact of Politics on Educational Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria" was informed by the facts that "Nigeria's political landscape is characterized by elite dominance, with influential individuals and groups shaping policy decisions (Ake, 2017)". Despite the limitation of overemphasis on elite interest, the theory helps to analyze how educational policies in Nigeria serve elite interests, potentially perpetuating inequalities as properly highlighted below:

- Nigeria's political landscape: Nigeria's politics is characterized by a strong elite presence, with influential individuals and groups shaping policy decisions.

- Educational policy formulation: Elite theory helps explain how educational policies are formulated to serve the interests of the ruling elite, potentially neglecting the needs of marginalized groups.

- Implementation challenges: Elite theory sheds light on how elite interests can hinder effective policy implementation, leading to disparities in educational outcomes.

- Inequality and social justice: The theory highlights issues of inequality and social injustice in education, which are critical concerns in Nigeria (Ake, 2017; Obasi, 2020).

School are located in communities from where a prominent figure, be it politician, technocrat, business magnet or influential figures while others are meant to trek long distances to access educational institutions.

Conceptual Framework

The major concepts of this study were reviewed as follows: politics, education, government, policy formulation, and policy implementation

Politics

The term "politics" mean different things to different things to different people. It can be referred to as the activities, actions, and policies that are used to gain and exercise power and control over a government or organization (Ake, 2017). It is the distribution of power, resources, and values within a society (Nwogu, 2017). Obasi (2020) defines politics as the art or science of influencing people and shaping public policy. While Ogundiya (2018) states that politics encompasses the struggle for power, interests, and ideologies within a society.

To some, politics is a dirty game" while to others it is a quick gateway to wealth and comfort. Therefore, it is not surprising that politics is too "dirty: to be associated with education which has been traditionally regarded as one of the political mandates or manifestos.

From the foregoing, politics is the act of influencing people, distributing power and group resources, and exercising control over a government or organization to achieve set goals and shape public policy.

Political Issues in Educational Planning

Politics and education constitute the signpost to the development of an institutional literate citizenry for the sustainability and improvement of society. However, the climax which presently pervades our society is not conducive for the promotion of institutional development. Inadequate curricular provisions in the national policy on education, and total absence of infrastructural facilities in our society have been implicated as impediments.

There is thin line between politics and education and according to Okoroma (2004), politics fashions education and education modifies politics, and because of this relationship, there is impact of politics on education. The political system of a nation has an influence on the educational system. This is why it is believed that no nation can outgrow the quality of its education. As it is known that politics involves the allocation of scarce social, economic and cultural resources in individuals, groups and classes, the allocation that goes into education are politically influenced. For this reason, some nations like Nigeria fail to meet the UNESCO standard on the amount that should be allocated to education because of poor educational policy.

The state of education in Nigeria has been affected by the persistent change in the educational policy and poor funding. These two factors are because of poor political ideology in Nigeria. It is not news that most Nigeria politicians often use sustainable development in education as a positive manifesto in their campaigns promises on education. But its impact on education yields and breeds negative results, for example, the friction between Ogun State governor and academic staff union of Moshood Abiola Polytechnic over turning it into a university of science and technology that wasn't properly taught about and handled by the Government. This friction led to a strike which affected the students and the Polytechnic community Adewale, et al., (2022).

Education

Education is the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or university" (UNESCO, 2019). It also refers to the development of knowledge, skills and values necessary for individual and societal growth (Adebayo, 2018). World Bank (2020) defines education as a critical component of human development, enabling individuals to acquire knowledge and skills. Olukoju (2018) states that education encompasses formal and informal learning experiences that shapes individuals and societal outcomes. But I see education as the process of teaching or learning through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and values necessary for personal and societal growth, through formal and informal experiences.

Government:

Government refers to the institutions and structures that exercise authority and control over a society (Ake, 2017). To Nwogu (2017), government involves the organization and administration of public policies and programs while Obasi, (2020) states that government is responsible for maintaining law and order, providing public services, and protecting citizens'

rights. According to Ogundiya, (2018), government encompasses the executive, legislative, and judicial branches that govern a society.

Government encompasses the institutions, structures, and branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) that exercise authority, maintain law and order, provide public services, and protect citizens' rights.

Government's Participation in Nigerian Education during Colonial Days

A look at the history of education in Nigeria will more or less indicate the important role played by politics on our educational system. As the British Colonial influence in West Africa became stronger, there was the need for well-trained natives to assist in the administration of government agencies. The colonial government began to give grants in-aid to the various missionary groups for the running of schools on the condition that such missions fulfilled the policies of colonial government (Aderinoye, 2016).

In 1886, Lagos was separated from Gold Coast (Ghana) and became the colony and protectorate of Lagos (Ayandele, 2017). This is how the first purely Nigerian Education ordinance was enacted in 1887. The ordinance created a board of education, compromising the governor, members of legislative council, the inspector of schools and four members. This was to make the supervision of schools and grant more effective so increase the involvement of the colonial government.

In 1892 due to the education ordinance, Henry Carr was appointed the inspector of schools, making a significant development in education administration (Olukoju, 2018). A separate education boards were created for the Eastern, Western and central province of Nigeria in 1908. In 1914, the Northern Nigeria was amalgamated under Lord Lugard and this led to this policy on education in 1916 which was partly aimed at educating the Muslims (Ikelegbe, 2006).

A closer assessment of the colonial educational policy in Nigeria shows an element of colonial interest being protected, example the giving of grant and the appointment of the first inspector of education.

Table 1: Federal Government of Nigeria Budget on Education (2014-2023)

Year	Total Budget (NGN trillion)	Education Sector Allocation (%)
2014	4.96	9.5
2015	4.49	8.2

2016	6.07	7.9
2017	7.44	7.4
2018	9.12	7.1
2019	8.92	6.7
2020	10.59	6.5
|2021	13.59	5.6
2022	17.13	5.4
2023	20.51	5.1

Source: Budget Office of the Federation (2014-2023). Federal Government of Nigeria Budget Documents.

A closer analysis of table 1 shows a decline in percentage allocation to the education in the Nigerian Federal government budget in the last decade despite the rise in inflation over the years. This insufficient fund available for education instigates a tougher competition on the available resources which the elites maximizes their opportunity to decide direction of utilization for their own interest. This is bound to elicit inequitable distribution of educational resources and limited access to quality education with a negative policy outcomes and implications.

Policy

Generally, scholars have emphasized policy differently and from various perspectives. Policy refers to a set of principles or guidelines that guide decision-making and action" (Adebayo, 2018). World Bank, (2020), states that policy involves the development and implementation of plans to achieve specific goals. But Olukoju (2018) sees policy as "A deliberate course of action taken by government or organizations to address societal problems". While UNESCO (2019) posits that policy encompasses the rules, regulations, and laws that govern societal behavior. Nwankwoala (2018) defined educational policy as the principles, government policies and collection of laws and rules that govern the conduct of any educational system. To Ezeani (2006) it is the proposed course of action which government intends to implement in respect of a given problem or situation confronting it. Ikelegbe (2006), in a more elaborate form, defined policy as the integrated course and programmes of action that government has set and the

framework or guide it has designed to direct action that provides the direction, the guide and the way to the achievement of certain goals or objectives desired government.

From the foregoing, policy can be referred to a set of institutional or government principles, guidelines or rules that guide decision-making, action, and behaviours to address societal problems and achieve specific goals, in this case educational goals.
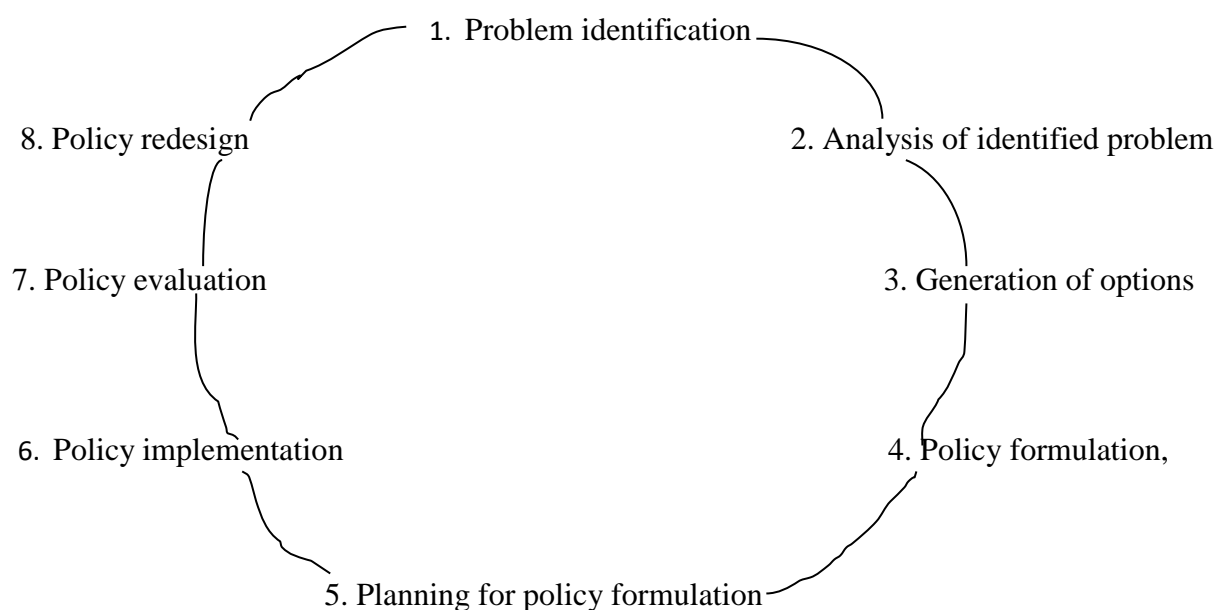
Educational Policy Formulation in Nigeria

Educational policy formulation in Nigeria involves the development of guidelines and principles that shape the education sector. Research has shown that educational policy formulation in Nigeria is influenced by political, economic, and social factors (Ake, 2017; Nwogu, 2017).

Process of Policy Formulation

The process involves agenda-setting, policy design, and decision-making (Obasi, 2020). The process involves agenda-setting, policy design, decision-making, implementation, evaluation and policy redesign. The design of an effective policy, all stakeholders should be involved. Ogundiya (2018), challenges include inadequate funding, lack of political will and bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Anderson, (2019), in his book titled Public Policy-making presented the policy evolution model in a circle consisting of the following stages; problem identification, analysis of identified problem, generation of options, policy formulation, planning for policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation and policy redesign or readjustment.

1. Problem identification
2. Analysis of identified problem
3. Generation of options
4. Policy formulation,
5. Planning for policy formulation
6. Policy implementation
7. Policy evaluation
8. Policy redesign

1. **Problem Identification**: This is the first stage in policy formulation identification of the problem or issue to be addressed, e.g. enrolment, funding, facilities, staffing, etc. which may be inadequate and consequently affect education.

2. **Analysis of Identified Problem**: Experts analyses the problem, its context and implications if not addressed. The resources required and possible expectations when addressed.

3. **Generation of Options**: this involves development of alternative solutions and the feasibility of the alternatives. This is done by policy analyst who are technically equipped relying on available data to generate options.

4. **Policy Formulation**: Creation of a policy is done after the evaluation of the various options selecting the best and most feasible option based on finance, time frame and implementability.

5. **Planning for Policy Formulation**: This the stage used in preparing f or the policy implementation. It begins after the policy has been formulated. It includes; how to mobilize the stakeholders, financial and physical resources with all stakeholders made to understand the need for such policy.

6. **Policy Implementation**: This is the execution stage of the policy. This is a time to turn the plan into action. It is usually difficult to implement policies no matter how well articulated this is as a result of overestimation or underestimation resulting to unexpected surprises.

7. **Policy Evaluation**: This is the assessment of the policy effectiveness after implementation. The impact assessment is conducted to reveal the strength and weaknesses of the implemented policy. That is the SWOT- strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on the policy is analyzed.

8. **Policy Redesign or Readjustment**: The policy formulation framework end with readjustment level. This a reaction to the weaknesses and threats observed during evaluation stage. Redesign of the policy based on evaluation results leads to the policy circle and the beginning of another circle.

Stakeholders in Educational Policy Formulation

The key stakeholders in policy formulation include government officials, educators, and civil society organizations (Adebayo, 2018). Educational stakeholders include; ministries of education at various levels, educational administrators, parents, students, host community and civil society organizations,

Need for Good Understanding of the Process of Policy Formulation

There is dire need for a good understanding of the process of policy formulation. This understanding is apt to positively influence the policy thus formulated. It is also likely to enhance to acceptability of such policy its implementation.

Lobbying and advocacy are vital processes involved in policy formulation. There is also a dire need for a thorough understanding of the principles and operation of lobbying and advocacy. The correct application of these indispensable principles is vital for the successful translation of research findings into national educational policy formation and implementation. Bureaucratic bottlenecks, which are common in many developing countries, further elongates the period of policy formulation. This, therefore, often necessitates the need to patiently wait on the policy administrators for long. This naturally translates to more expenses on hotel accommodation, feeding, transportation and communication expenses. These expenses are hardly budgeted for; hence the limited research findings that have been successfully translated into national policies in Nigeria till date.

Policy Implementation

Furthermore, it is one thing to succeed in getting research findings translated into national policies; it is another ballgame altogether getting them implemented. This may often necessitate further following-up and intensive lobbying. Part of the problem here has to do with incessant changes in government and paucity of technocrats within the government. Lack of understanding of the power of well-being formulated policy and diligent implementation in effecting educational and national development apparently account for this (Odukoya, Bowale, & Okulola, 2018).

Impact of Politics on Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria

Politics has both positive and negative implications of policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria. Anderson, (2019) itemizes the following positive and negative impacts as presented below. Thus, buttress the implications and challenges imposed on policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria.

Educational Policies in Nigeria

Here are four educational policies in Nigeria that failed due to various challenges:

6-3-3-4 Education Policy: Introduced in 1998, this policy aimed to provide functional technology-based education to sustain the economy. However, its implementation was hindered by lack of adequate funding, infrastructure, and political instability (Adebayo, 2020).

National Policy on Education (1977): This policy sought to facilitate Nigeria's developmental needs, but its implementation was affected by frequent changes in government, leading to inconsistency and lack of continuity (Ogundipe, 2022).

Curriculum Conference Policy (1969): Held nine years after Nigeria's independence, this policy aimed to re-examine the curriculum and national goals for education. However, its implementation was hindered by political interference, leading to a disconnection between policy formulation and implementation.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy: Launched in 1999, UBE aimed to eliminate illiteracy and raise education opportunities. However, it failed to deliver significant success due to inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and ineffective management (Salihu and Jamil, 2015; Etuk, Ering, and Ajake, 2012) [1]. The UBE program also faced challenges in achieving Education for All (EFA) due to weak institutional capacity and lack of community involvement (Okoro, 2010).

These policies highlight the challenges faced by Nigeria's education sector due to political instability, corruption, and lack of continuity.

Positive Impacts of Politics in Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria

- **Greater Citizen Participation:** Politics encourages citizens' inclusiveness and involvement in policy-making processes, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered and enabling effective implementation. This they do directly of through their representatives.

- **Accountability and Transparency:** Political competition promotes accountability and transparency in policy implementation, reducing corruption and ensuring the credibility of the government's commitment to policies

- **Representation of Interests**: Politics ensures various interest groups are represented, protecting minority rights and promoting regulatory quality.

- **Effective Resource Allocation**: Politics influences resource allocation, prioritizing critical areas and enabling the formulation and implementation of sound policies .

- **Policy Evaluation and Adjustment**: Politics facilitates continuous policy evaluation and adjustment, improving effectiveness and enabling the transformation of Nigeria into a more developed nation

- **National Development**: Politics drives policy decisions, shaping Nigeria's national development agenda and addressing societal problems**.**

Negative Impacts of Politics on Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria

✓ **Partisan Politics**: Partisanship hinders policy consensus, slowing implementation and creating bureaucratic obstacles.

✓ **Corruption and Nepotism**: Politics can lead to corrupt practices and nepotism, undermining policy effectiveness and distorting resource allocation

✓ **Inefficient Resource Allocation**: Political interests often distort resource allocation, prioritizing personal gains over national development **.**

✓ **Policy Inconsistency:** Frequent policy changes due to political transitions create uncertainty, impeding effective policy implementation

✓ **Lack of Expertise**: Political appointments may overlook expertise, compromising policy implementation and effectiveness.

✓ **Ethnic and Religious Bias**: Politics can perpetuate ethnic and religious biases, marginalizing certain groups and undermining social cohesion.

✓ **Inadequate Citizen Engagement**: Politics may disregard citizen input, undermining democratic principles and the credibility of policy formulation**.** The continued use of a top-bottom approach in policy formulation and implementation can hinder citizen participation, leading to policies that don't address the actual needs of the people

✓ **Bureaucratic Red Tape:** Political interference can create bureaucratic botttleneck, delaying implementation and hindering policy progress**.** Bureaucratic inefficiencies can impede the effectiveness of public policy in solving societal problems

✓ **Patronage and Clientelism**: Politics fosters patronage and clientelism, undermining policy integrity and effectiveness

✓ **Instability and Conflict**: Politics can fuel instability and conflict, derailing policy progress and national development.

✓ **Inadequate Policy Definition**: Unclear policy definitions of policy by the policy makers who are agents of the government can lead to confusion and inconsistencies during implementation, undermining policy effectiveness.

✓ **Retrospective Policy Analysis**: The lack of retrospective analysis of policy implementation can hinder learning from past experiences, leading to repeated mistakes.

Other negative impacts of politics on policy formulation and implementations include;

✓ **Inequality in distribution of educational resources:** It encourages inequitable and uneven distribution of educational facilities as political opponents of the ruling government suffer setbacks and slashing of budgets by the ruling party.

- ✓ **Distortion of Educational Plan:** The priorities laid down in the educational plan are subjected to substantial distortions in the interest of the ruling party or the political class as project selection and implementation now depend on political payoff.

- ✓ **Incompetent Administrators:** The inefficient and incompetent administrators who offer the no resistance are often preferred to occupy the strategic positions within the plan administration (Adebayo, et al., (2019).

- ✓ **Conservative Attitude of some Administrators:** The maintenances of traditional ways of behaviour frequently mean that educational plans are not taken seriously and as such have little chance of being carried out.

- ✓ **Indiscipline of Politicians:** The lack of discipline by political office holders in the implementation of educational plans.

- ✓ **Inadequate Funding:** Undue ambitions plan targets and poor financial controls account for many failures to carry out planned projects.

- ✓ **Political patronage:** Political patronage inhibits effective and rational educational planning as most of the planners have no planning expertise and they plan in accordance with the ruling party dictates to secure their appointment.

Conclusion

It is imperative therefore, that planners should recognize and consider the political realities of a nation in educational planning efforts. Politics, which pervades all spheres of life, is an inevitable ingredient of any subjects "as man is a political being". But the political scenario in Nigeria is characterized by acute political discipline which manifests itself in political prejudge; conflicts and political scheming that are variance with positive development. Unlike in societies where the area of planning or decision making by politicians is kept relatively small, the situation in developing the planning societies like ours is such that politicians dominate the planning efforts and dictate the directions of planning.

The result generally is poor planning directives which culminate in deficient educational system constantly needing review. Okeke, et al, (2020) observed that, "poor planning is often accompanied by dissipated effort, wasted resources and poor results". In fact, educational planning tends to be overwhelmed by political instability in Nigeria which as interfered with most activities including planning of education.

Suggestions

In line with the above discussions in this paper, the following suggestions are hereby offered

1. Government at all levels should quit playing politics with education. Government should place education in a wider context of public service reform, as an essential element in fostering values of openness and democracy. This can be achieved when people with adequate experience and expertise as educators attain leadership positions responsible for forming an implementing educational policy.

2. Government should institute san annual specialized seminar/training session on the significance and process of policy formulation and implementation for researchers and for key government functionaries.

3. Appointments into educational leadership positions should be done by merit and not for political cronies.

4. Supervisory teams should be set up to check mate unethical practices in the field of educational planning, policy formulation and implementation.

5. Budgetary allocations should be reviewed upwardly to help professional planners do the job of policy formulation and implementation.

6. Policy reforms should be undertaken to decentralize policy formulation through community and other stakeholders' involvement.

7. Transparency and accountability mechanisms should be established in order to ensure elite accountability.

8. Educational resource allocation should be equitably distributed according to needs.

9. Implementation and monitoring of the established policies will ensure effective policy implementation.

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