

Educational Policy Formulation and Implementation: A Cornerstone of Nigeria's Sustainable Development Agenda

¹Abdulkadir, Ranfat Mamman,

²Garba, Sanni

Mohammed, &

³Bokko, Salisu Ali

^{1&2}School of Education

Department of Educational Foundations,

Niger State College of Education, Minna

³College of Education Bama, Borno State

Article DOI:

10.48028/iiprds/ijsreth.v13.i1.03

Keywords:

Educational Policy, Sustainable Development, Policy Coherence, Capacity Building

Abstract

It is a fact that the sustainable development of a country significantly relates to a strong and efficient educational system. However, an efficient educational system is greatly dependent on a well-formulated policy that is effectively implemented. This paper emphasizes the crucial link between a strong educational system and a nation's sustainable development, highlighting Nigeria's struggles with educational policy formulation and its implementation. The analysis identifies several challenges, including inadequate stakeholder participation, policy incoherence, insufficient funding, weak governance, corruption, and capacity limitations. To address these issues, the paper proposes a framework for revitalizing policy formulation and implementation. Key recommendations include enhancing stakeholder participation for inclusive and transparent processes, aligning educational policies with national development goals, securing adequate funding, strengthening governance through accountability and transparency, and building the capacity of educators and administrators. The paper asserts that these strategies can foster an improved educational environment, leading to better outcomes and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Corresponding Author:

Abdulkadir, Ranfat Mamman

Background to the Study

Nigeria's education system plays a pivotal role in fostering national development. As a country with one of the largest youth populations in Africa, strategic educational policies are essential for equipping individuals with the skills necessary for economic growth and social mobility. The Nigerian education system has a rich history, evolving from indigenous and Islamic practices to the formal Western education introduced by Christian missionaries. Pre-colonial education focused on indigenous knowledge and skills, while Islamic education emphasized religious instruction (Suman & Shanu, 2021). In the 19th century, Christian missionaries established the first formal schools, marking the beginning of Western-style education in Nigeria (Nwauwa, 2020). After gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's education system underwent significant changes.

The government aimed to nationalize education and promote cultural identity while maintaining Western standards (Zoe Talent Solutions, 2023). Over the years, the system has evolved, with the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system and later the 9-3-4 system, which emphasizes basic education (Ugadu, 2024) and of recent the 12-4 system. Education plays a pivotal role in national development by fostering economic growth, social progress, and political stability. A well-educated populace is more likely to be innovative and productive, contributing to a skilled workforce that drives economic diversification and competitiveness (Barro, 1991). Education also empowers individuals with critical thinking skills, enabling them to participate more effectively in democratic processes and hold their leaders accountable, thus promoting good governance (Sen, 1999). Furthermore, education contributes to social cohesion by promoting tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity, which are essential for building a harmonious and inclusive society (UNESCO, 2015). By improving health outcomes, reducing poverty, and fostering gender equality, education acts as a catalyst for overall national progress (World Bank, 2018). In essence, education is an investment in the future, laying the foundation for sustainable and holistic national development. Today, the Nigerian education system comprises primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. While English is the official language of instruction, some schools may use local languages, especially at the primary level (UNICEF 2023). The system faces challenges such as funding, infrastructure, and quality of education, but efforts are being made to address these issues and improve access to education for all Nigerians (Wikipedia, 2023).

The objectives of the study are to look into the present situation with regard to policy formulation and implementation in the Nigerian education by analyzing the existing educational policy framework in Nigeria and discuss the challenges. This includes examining the strengths and weaknesses of current policies, identifying gaps and inconsistencies, and assessing their alignment with national development priorities. Other objectives include;

- 1- To investigate the factors influencing educational policy implementation in Nigeria: This involves exploring the political, economic, social, and institutional factors that facilitate or hinder effective implementation.
- 2- Assess the impact of educational policies on sustainable development outcomes

in Nigeria: This includes examining the relationship between educational policies and key development indicators, such as poverty reduction, economic growth, health outcomes, and social equity.

- 3- Develop recommendations for improving educational policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria: This includes proposing specific strategies for strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing stakeholder engagement, ensuring adequate funding, promoting data-driven decision-making, and addressing disparities in access and quality.

Conceptual and theoretical frame work

Educational Policy Formulation

Educational policy formulation is the process of creating and designing plans, strategies, and guidelines to guide the development and improvement of education systems. It involves identifying educational goals, analyzing current challenges and needs, and making decisions about how to achieve desired outcomes (Jacob & Samuel, 2020). This process often includes input from various stakeholders, such as educators, administrators, policymakers, and community members (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Educational policy formulation is a professional activity stakeholder engage in to narrow the space between intention and result. The educational policy formulation should be based on a careful analysis of the present situation (Sanni 2020). In Nigeria, policy formulation involves major interest group and stakeholders in education that includes the National University Commission, the National Board for technical Education, the National Colleges of Education, Universal Basic Education board e.t.c thus for any nation to flourish and attain the highest possible level of all-round development sound and functional education is necessary. It is also pointed out that for any educational system to be functional, effective and productive, comprehensive, all-encompassing and well-developed policy is essential because it is the policy that guides managers, administrators and actual policy implementers on their role functions and expected outcomes.

Educational Policy Implementation

Educational policy implementation, on the other hand, is the process of putting those formulated policies into action and ensuring they achieve their intended outcomes (Jacob & Samuel, 2020). It involves translating the policy goals and strategies into concrete programs, initiatives, and practices within educational institutions and communities. This phase requires careful planning, resource allocation, and ongoing monitoring to ensure that policies are effectively implemented and achieve their intended impact. Educational policy implementation is a process where concerted effort are made by the administrators and all the stakeholders in educational system to transform the policy from paper statement to actual practice. Emmanuel, (2018) has opined that implementers of educational policies are those experts charged with the responsibilities of putting into practice or bringing in to reality the prescriptions of the national educational policy. Nwankwoala, (2018) expressly opined that there should be training of personnel that are to carry the educational policy implementation alongside to enable them participate in the said educational policy formulation process.

Theoretical Framework

The two prominent theories that portrays a clear understanding of the relationship between education and sustainable development includes the following:

Human Capital Theory: This theory posits that education is an investment in human capital, which refers to the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individuals (Schultz & Becker, 1964). From this perspective, education contributes to sustainable development by enhancing productivity, fostering innovation, and promoting economic growth (Lucas, 1988). A well-educated population is seen as more adaptable to changing economic conditions and better equipped to develop and implement sustainable solutions to societal challenges. By increasing individual earning potential and contributing to a more skilled workforce, education becomes a driver of economic growth, a crucial component of sustainable development. However, critics argue that Human Capital Theory oversimplifies the complex relationship between education and development, neglecting the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of sustainability (Marginson, 1997).

Systems Theory: Systems theory views education as an interconnected system embedded within broader social, economic, and environmental systems (Bertalanffy, 1968). This perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding the interactions and feedback loops between different components of the education system and the wider context in which it operates. In the context of sustainable development, Systems Theory highlights the need for a holistic approach to educational policy and planning, one that considers the interconnectedness of education with other sectors and the environment (Sterling, 2001). For example, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) aims to integrate sustainability principles into all levels and aspects of education, recognizing that education is not just about acquiring knowledge and skills but also about fostering values and attitudes that promote sustainability (UNESCO, 2017). Systems Theory also emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in promoting sustainable development through education. It recognizes that achieving sustainability requires collective action and that education can play a key role in empowering individuals and communities to participate in this process.

Relating the Theories to Educational Policy Formulation and Implementation

Both theories offer valuable insights for educational policy formulation and implementation aimed at achieving sustainable development. Human Capital Theory underscores the importance of investing in education to develop a skilled workforce that can drive economic growth, which is a key pillar of sustainable development. Policies should focus on improving access to quality education at all levels, promoting relevant skills development, and fostering innovation. Systems Theory highlights the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to educational policy, one that considers the interconnectedness of education with other sectors and the environment (Ben 2009). Educational Policies should promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), encourage stakeholder engagement, and foster collaboration across different sectors. By

combining the insights from both theories, policymakers can develop more effective and sustainable educational policies that contribute to national development goals.

Overview of Nigeria's Educational Policies.

Nigeria's educational policies have evolved significantly, with key initiatives aimed at improving access, quality, and relevance. Here's an overview of some prominent aspects of some major educational policies that include:

Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy

The UBE program, launched in 1999, aims to provide free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years. It encompasses Early Child Care and Development Education (ECCDE), primary school, and junior secondary school. The objective is to eradicate illiteracy, reduce poverty, and foster national development.

Implementation Challenges of the Universal Basic Education

The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) oversees the program, with State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) handling state-level implementation. Funding is a critical aspect, with the federal government providing grants. Challenges faced in its implementation include

- i- Inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a shortage of qualified teachers.
- ii- The problem of ensuring consistent funding from state government has been a large hindrance.
- iii- There are also issues with large class sizes, and a lack of proper equipment, especially in laboratory settings.
- iv- There are also issues regarding consistent monitoring and evaluation of the UBE program's progress.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme was planned to bring about positive change in the educational system through quality, functional, and free education, but this dream has met bottlenecks, barriers through high enrollment with inadequate classroom space, lack of laboratories, dilapidated infrastructure

Stem Education Policy

A growing focus in Nigerian educational policy is on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This emphasis aims to equip students with the skills needed for the 21st-century workforce to drive technological innovation and put Nigeria forward into technological growth, and STEM education is seen as a key component of this. STEM education is crucial for Nigeria's development, aiming to foster innovation and technological advancement.

Implementation Challenges of STEM Educational Policy

The Nigerian government recognizes the importance of STEM and has incorporated it into national education policies. Efforts are being made to revise curricula, promote

teacher training, and improve access to STEM resources. There is a growing push to increase the amount of digital literacy, and computer skills, in the education system. However, its implementation faces significant challenges. Here's an overview:

- a- A major obstacle is the lack of sufficient funding for STEM education. This limits the availability of resources, equipment, and infrastructure.
- b- There's a significant shortage of qualified STEM teachers, particularly in rural areas. Many teachers lack the necessary training and expertise.
- c- Many schools lack adequate laboratory facilities, equipment, and technology, hindering practical STEM learning.
- d- There's a noticeable gender gap in STEM participation, with fewer girls pursuing STEM subjects. Societal stereotypes and cultural biases contribute to this issue.
- e- Access to technology, including computers and the Internet, is limited in many schools, particularly in rural areas. This restricts students' exposure to digital learning resources.
- f- The curriculum can be overly theoretical, and not practical enough. This leads to students not having the real-world applicable skills that they need

However, addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving government, educators, and the private sector. Investing in teacher training, infrastructure development, and technology access is crucial. It is also very important to create curriculums that apply to the Nigerian economy, and that will create jobs for the students. In essence, while Nigeria recognizes the importance of STEM education, overcoming the existing challenges is crucial for its effective implementation and for the nation's future technological and economic development.

ICT in Education Policy

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into Nigeria's education system is recognized as a vital step towards enhancing learning outcomes and preparing students for the digital age. This involves providing schools with computers, internet access, and digital learning resources. ICT is seen as a tool to enhance teaching and learning, improve access to education, and bridge the digital divide. These policies aim to enhance digital literacy among students and teachers, improve access to quality educational resources and prepare students for the demands of a technology-driven world. Nigeria's National Policy on Education emphasizes the importance of ICT in teaching and learning. The National Policy on ICT in Education provides a framework for the systematic integration of technology across all levels of education.

Implementation Challenges of ICT in Education Policy

Here's a breakdown of the policy, its implementation, and the challenges faced. The implementation of the ICT policy starts by government, through agencies like the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), has initiated programs to provide schools with ICT infrastructure. Efforts are being made to train teachers in ICT skills. There are also initiatives that are trying to provide internet connectivity to schools.

Challenges of successful implementation of ICT in Nigeria includes Infrastructural Deficits, lack of Reliable electricity supply, Widespread internet connectivity problem, especially in rural areas and insufficient access to computers and other digital devices. Another challenge is the lack of teachers with necessary ICT skills and training to effectively integrate technology into their teaching. In addition, limited funding hinders the procurement of ICT equipment, infrastructure development, and teacher training programs. There is the problem of poor planning in integrating ICT into the curriculum and development of relevant digital content.

Revitalizing the Process of Formulating and Implementing Educational Policy for Sustainable Development

Revitalizing the process of formulating and implementing educational policy is crucial for achieving sustainable development. Education is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, as it empowers individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to address current and future challenges (UNESCO, 2017). Thus, a robust educational policy framework ensures that education systems are aligned with sustainable development goals, promoting quality education, lifelong learning, and inclusivity (Okafor & Egenti, 2021). Effective policy implementation translates these goals into tangible actions, fostering innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills essential for building a sustainable future (Arszulowicz 2025). By prioritizing education policy revitalization, nations can unlock the transformative potential of education and pave the way for a more sustainable and equitable world. This framework should outline the key principles, processes, and mechanisms for developing and implementing educational policies that contribute to the country's sustainable development goals

The key areas for revitalizing educational policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria, aiming to create a more effective and responsive system are itemized as follows

1. **Foundational Principles:** Policies should align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), and integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations (UNESCO, 2017). This includes promoting education for sustainable development (ESD) across all levels.
2. **Inclusivity:** Policies must cater to the diverse needs of all learners, including girls, children with disabilities, marginalized communities, and those in conflict-affected areas (UNICEF, 2021). Equity in access, quality, and outcomes should be prioritized.
3. **Relevance:** The curriculum and pedagogy should be relevant to the Nigerian context, addressing national challenges and preparing learners for the 21st-century workforce (World Bank, 2020). This includes a focus on skills development, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy.
4. **Accountability:** Clear mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and accountability are essential at all levels, from policy development to implementation and impact assessment (Okafor & Egenti, 2021). Transparency and citizen engagement should be fostered.

Policy Formulation Process

In overcoming some of the challenges faced in the policy formulation stage there is a need to consider that policies should be evidence-based considering the specific challenges and opportunities within the Nigeria education system grounded in a robust data and research, based on regular needs assessments and data collection are crucial (Agbazure 2020). Other consideration includes

1. **Participatory Activity:** A broad range of stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, communities, civil society organizations, and experts, should be actively involved in policy formulation (NPE, 2014). This ensures ownership and relevance.
2. **Strategic Planning:** Clear goals, objectives, targets, and timelines should be established for each policy. A long-term vision for education in Nigeria is essential, guiding policy development and implementation.
3. **Policy Coherence:** Coordination and alignment across different ministries, departments, and agencies are crucial to avoid duplication and ensure policy coherence (UNESCO, 2017). This requires strong leadership and inter-ministerial collaboration.
4. **Consistent government policies:** There is a need for government to be consistent in its policies to ensure continuity of policy implementation even after a regime change.
5. **Establishment of management information system unit:** This will enable the storage of reliable educational data that can be easily retrieved and used in effective planning and implementation of educational policies.

Policy Implementation Process

An ideal policy implementation process should involves Investing in the professional development of teachers, administrators, and education officials is essential for effective implementation (World Bank, 2020). Continuous training and support should be provided. Other necessary consideration includes:

1. **Resource Mobilization:** Adequate financial resources must be allocated for policy implementation. Diversification of funding sources, including public-private partnerships, should be explored.
2. **Decentralization:** Empowering local communities and schools to manage education can improve responsiveness and accountability (NPE, 2014). This requires clear guidelines and capacity building at the local level.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular monitoring and evaluation are essential to track progress, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments to policies and implementation strategies (Okafor & Egenti, 2021). Impact assessments should be conducted to measure the effectiveness of policies. Active participation of communities in education governance and monitoring can enhance accountability and improve outcomes.
4. **Political Will:** Strong political commitment and leadership are crucial for prioritizing education and ensuring effective policy implementation.
5. **Good Governance:** Transparency, accountability, and rule of law are essential for creating an enabling environment for education sector development.

In Nigeria, effective educational policies are crucial for addressing the country's development challenges. By investing in education, the government can promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and foster social mobility. However, it is important to ensure that educational policies are well-implemented and address the specific needs and challenges of the Nigerian context. Education policies significantly impact economic growth, poverty alleviation, and gender equality. Case studies from other developing nations, such as Rwanda and Malaysia, illustrate the transformative power of well-implemented education policies. Nigeria's commitment to SDG (Quality Education) is evident in policy documents, but achieving these goals requires stronger institutional mechanisms.

Conclusion

Education is a cornerstone of sustainable development in Nigeria. While the country has made strides in expanding access to education, significant challenges remain in ensuring quality, equity, and relevance. To unlock the full potential of education as a driver of sustainable development, Nigeria must address implementation gaps through improved governance, increased accountability, and enhanced institutional capacity, promoting policy stability and avoiding frequent changes that disrupt progress, developing policies that are sensitive to the diverse needs and contexts of different communities, use data and evidence to inform policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation and lastly increasing public expenditure on education and diversifying funding sources. By prioritizing these areas, Nigeria can create a more effective and sustainable education system that empowers its citizens, drives economic growth, reduces poverty, and promotes social mobility, ultimately contributing to the nation's sustainable development goals. Education is not just a social good; it is a strategic investment in Nigeria's future.

Way Forward

Policy actors in the Nigerian context are diverse and operate at various levels, influencing the formulation and implementation of educational policies. The actors include, government officials, policy makers, educators, parents and community members, students, civil organization, International Organization. Therefore, there is a need to:

1. Strengthening policy implementation through accountability framework alongside having a clear definition of roles and responsibilities and developing a specific measurable achievable, relevant and time-bound mechanism that will track toward policy goal.
2. Enhancing funding and investment in education through increase budgetary allocation and strengthening financial management systems in the education sector to improve accountability, reduce corruption, and ensure that resources are used effectively.
3. Establish monitoring mechanisms to track progress on policy implementation and identify any challenges or deviations from the plan as well as conduct regular evaluations of policy impact to assess whether it is achieving its intended outcomes and identify areas for improvement.

4. Involve citizens and stakeholders in policy monitoring and evaluation through mechanisms such as public consultations, surveys, and feedback platforms.
5. Strengthen the capacity of government agencies and implementing organizations to effectively implement policies and monitor performance and ensure investment in training and development for staff involved in policy implementation to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge.
6. There is a need to utilize technology to improve efficiency in education management, enhance learning outcomes, and expand access to education, particularly in remote and underserved area.
7. Policy making should be based on robust data and evidence to inform policy formulation and evaluation.

References

- Adesina, S. (1977). *Planning and educational development in Nigeria*, Lagos: John West Publications.
- Agbazuere, A. C. B. (2020). Challenges of public policy making and execution in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 16(7), 130-141.
- Aikman, S., & Unterhalter, E. (2005). *Beyond access: Transforming policy and practice for gender equality in education*. Oxfam GB.
- Ajayi, J. F. A. (1965). *Christian missions and the making of Nigeria, 1841-1891*. Ibadan University Press.
- Arszulowicz, M. (2025). Sustainable development: Challenges and solutions. In *Governance Strategies for Effective Sustainable Development* (pp. 241-260). IGI Global.
- Barro, R. J. (1991). Economic growth in a cross section of countries. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 106(2), 407-443.
- Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*, University of Chicago Press.
- Ben-Peretz, M. (2009). *Policy-making in education: A holistic approach in response to global changes*. R&L Education.
- Bertalanffy, L. von. (1968). *General system theory: Foundations, development, applications*, George Braziller.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). Greenwood Press.

- Dryden, L. M., Bourdillon, H., & Colombijn, M. (2019). *Families, education, and social change: The limits of policy*. UCL Press.
- Fafunwa, A. B. (1974). *History of education in Nigeria*, Allen & Unwin.
- FRN. (2004). *National policy on education*, Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- FRN. (2014). *National Policy on education* (6th ed.), Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Future Learn. (2023). *Explore: education in Nigeria*, <https://www.futurelearn.com/>
- Graham, S. F. (1966). *Government and mission education in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1919*, Ibadan University Press.
- Hunwick, J. O. (2002). *Timbuktu and the Songhay empire: A selection of documents*, Brill
- Jacob, S., & Samuel, M. O. (2020). Comparative analysis of educational policy formulation and implementation strategies in developed and developing countries, *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI)*, 7(1), 19-26.
- Lucas, R. E. (1988). On the mechanics of economic development, *Journal of monetary economics*, 22(1), 3-42.
- Marginson, S. (1997). *Educating for the twenty-first century: The contribution of human capital theory to educational policy*, Oxford University Press.
- NPE. (2013). *National policy on education*, Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Nwauwa, A. O. (2020). Western education and the rise of a new African elite in West Africa, In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*.
- Patton, M. Q. (2010). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*, Sage.
- Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American economic review*, 51(1), 1-17.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*, Oxford University Press.
- Sterling, S. (2001). *Sustainable education: Re-visioning learning and change*, Green Books.
- Sutton, M., & Spratt, J. (2016). *Policy and practice in education: A reader*, Routledge.
- Suman, A. K., & Shanu, S. K. (2021). Gleaning Wisdom from Ancestral heritage: Indigenous Knowledge traditions and the national education policy, *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 13(02), 2522-2532.

- Transparency International. (2019). *Global Corruption Report 2019: Corruption and education*, Transparency International.
- Ugadu, S. O. (2024). History and its Relevance to Nigeria's development in the 21st century (1960-2020). Ebonyi State college of education, *Ikwo Journal of Educational Research*, 9(3).
- UNESCO. (2015). *Education for All global monitoring report 2015: Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?*. UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2017). *Education for sustainable development goals: Learning for the world we want*. UNESCO
- UNICEF. (2023). *History of education in Nigeria*, <https://www.unicef.org/about/milestones/>
- UNICEF. (2019). *The state of the world's children 2019. Children, food and nutrition: Growing well in a changing world*. UNICEF.
- Viennet, L., & Pont, B. (2017). *The OECD Handbook for Policy Analysts*, OECD Publishing.
- Wikipedia. (2023). *Education in Nigeria*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Nigeria
- World Bank. (2018). *World development report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise*, World Bank.
- Zoe Talent Solutions. (2023). *Exploring the history of education in Nigeria*, <https://thechronicleofeducation.net/2018/03/14/re-introducing-history-in-nigerian-schools-a-new-curriculum-that-fosters-nation-building-is-needed-prof-olutayo/>