

## **EDUCATIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN OWERRI EDUCATIONAL ZONE OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated educational policy implementation in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria: The Way Forward. The population of the study consisted of all the teachers in both junior and senior secondary education levels in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria totaling 3448. The sample size is 345 teachers that represent 10% of the entire population. Three research questions guided the descriptive survey. A 32 item structured questionnaire of four point Likert type was used to elicit data from the respondents. Validation of the instruments was carried out by two experts in curriculum studies and measurement and evaluation. The reliability index of 0.82 was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Data analysis was done using mean with 2.5 as the reference for acceptance. The study revealed that a lot of challenges abound for the success of educational policy implementation to include: Inadequate budgeting for education, quality of teachers and instability of government. It was also revealed that the suggested way forward will help ameliorate the challenges of educational policy implementation in both the junior and senior secondary education level in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that government should make adequate and appropriate budget for education, ensure strict monitoring of release of funds to the right direction for success of educational policy implementation in both junior and senior secondary education level in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria; Teachers should embark on in-service training to update their knowledge to be abreast of education innovations and improve quality; there should be stability of government in power to avoid impromptu policy termination.*

**Keywords:** Educational policy, Implementation, Owerri Educational Zone, Challenges, Way forward.

## Introduction

The nation's educational history is punctuated with numerous instances of brilliant conceptualized policies and programmes to include Universal Primary Education (UPE) 6-3-3-4 system, Introductory Technology, Language policy amongst others, which failed to achieve the desired goals at the end, not because they were deigned to fail but because they were poorly implemented, or neglected; Obilo and Sangoleye, (2010). No matter how laudable and lofty the goals of any policy (educational policy inclusive) might be, it shall remain a mirage except it is rightly implemented by policy implementers (the teachers) with the appropriate structures put in place for its implementation.

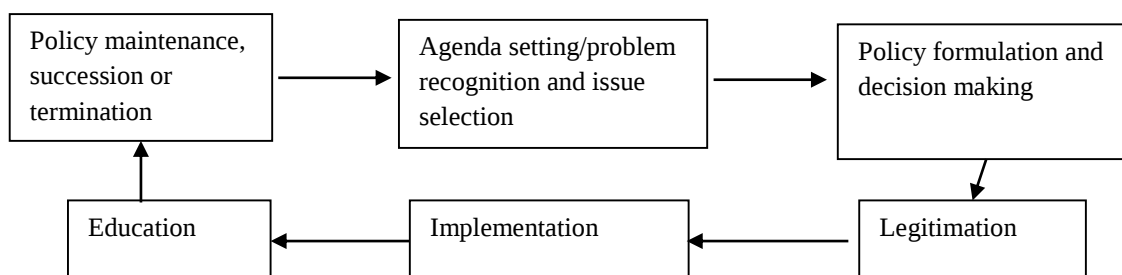
Educational policy is the principle and government policy-making in educational sphere, as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems, (<https://www.definitions.net>). Okoroma (2006) explains that educational policies provide the direction for educational activities. Espinoza (2009) in Romane & Beatriz (2017) saw educational policy as the actions taken by governments in relation with educational practices, and how governments address the production and delivery of education in a given system. Rayon and Van Zantan (2015) in OECD (2017), defined educational policies as programmes developed by public authorities, informed by values and implemented by administrators and education professionals.

OCED (2015), added that education policies cover wide range of issues such as those targeting equity, the overall quality of learning outcomes and school and learning environments or the capacity of the system to prepare students for future living which includes good governance, responsible citizens/good followers.

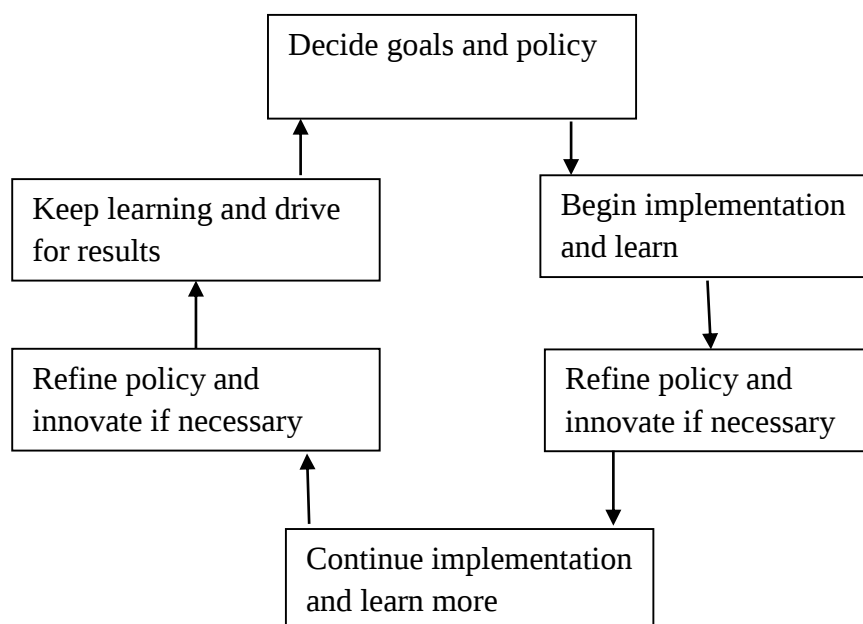
Educational policy implementation therefore from the views of the educationalists, looks at implementation as "delivery" (Barber, 2008), "realization" (Donaldgon, 2015), educational change (Fullan, 2015). In the same vein, Mkpa and Izuagba (2012) defined implementation as the act or process of putting a decision or plan into action. She added that it also involves the execution of a policy that has been formulated.

The above explanations define educational policy implementation as the process or act of putting the educational policies that have been formulated into action. It also means executing the educational policies that has been formulated through structures that have been put in place, following these though patterns:

The policy cycle theory adapted from OECD (2015)



A policy usually proposes a vision to achieve, set goals to meet, and also spell out means of reaching the goals. For this, implementation is a process of executing what the policy has spelt out, ways of attaining to these goals and means of attaining the goals. Taking a close look at Barber (2015) on what was termed “How to think about implementation”, one will see that through these steps/phases educational policies can be realized, thus:



In a study done by Grant makers for Educations (2011), on implementing education policy, it was found that threats to success of policy implementation include lack of sustained leadership, resistance from key stakeholders, capacity/knowledge of stakeholders and financial resources. OECD (2017), are also of the above findings that capacity of the implementers, resistance of society and knowledge of the stakeholders are challenges to the successful implementation of educational policy. Based on their findings, suggestions include that there should be adequate pre-service and in service training for teachers for adequate policy implementation. Secondly, finances channeled to the realization of the educational policy. Furthermore, in a similar study carried by Ukpong (2017), it was revealed that some hindrances to educational policy implementation include: inadequate finding of education; poor planning/ineffective implementation of educational plans and objectives; poor school mapping as pupils travel from far to school, poor supervision and monitoring, poor infrastructure (offices, desks etc.), inadequate number of qualified monitoring officers; bribery and corruptions. Ukpong recommended that there should be political stability, due consideration should be given to supervision and monitoring, improved funding and recruitment of qualified teachers. No wonder the FRN (2013), asserted that no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. Adebowale and Alao in their own study found that the militating factors to success of educational policy implementation include on the part of teachers:- teachers’ skills, teachers’ attitudes and teachers’ training.

Implications are that where all these are faulty, success is hindered. Teachers need quality training for quality attitude and quality skills.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the numerous laudable, lofty and beautiful educational policies formulated by the government, for the change and reformation of the educational sector/schools, the impacts are not felt in the school system and the entire educational sector. No changes/innovations are observed by the end.

One wonders, what is the problem with its implementation having been formulated already? It is on this premise that the researchers embarked on this study to find out the challenges of implementing educational policy and then determine the way forward.

Specifically, the study sets out to do the following:-

1. Find out the challenges of educational policy implementation.
2. Determine whether teacher quality is also a challenge to educational policy implementation.
3. Ascertain the way forward in ameliorating the challenges of educational policy implementation.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the challenges of educational policy implementation?
2. Is the quality of teachers a challenge of educational policy implementation?
3. What are the suggested ways forward in ameliorating the ascertained challenges of educational policy implementation?

### **Method**

The study employed descriptive survey design that solicited information from teachers in both junior and senior secondary education levels. The population of the study consists of all teachers in the junior and senior secondary schools from Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria summing up to 3448 (Junior, 1964 and Senior, 1484).

Simple random sample with non-replacement technique was used to select sample of 345 teachers that represent 10% of the entire population. The instrument employed for data collection was 32 item structured questionnaire of four-point likert type of strongly agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point, developed by the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The A section of it, provided background information while B section dealt with questionnaire items as it relates to the respective research questions.

This instrument was validated by two experts in curriculum studies and measurement and evaluation, of which their inputs were effected during the final draft. The instrument was further subjected to a test-retest reliability using 64 teachers outside the population. Data generated were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation and a Co-efficient of 0.82 was realized. This was adjudged.

The instrument was administered on 345 teachers by the researchers with the help of a research-assistant. There was a 100% return of all questionnaires administered due to on-the-spot administration. Data generated was analyzed using mean as tool to answer the research questions. Any item that scored 2.5 and above is regarded as being agreed or accepted, while any item that scored below 2.5 is regarded as being disagreed or rejected.

## Results

### Research Question One: What are the challenges of educational policy implementation?

| S/N | Items                                                            | SA            | A            | D           | SD           | X    | Decision |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------|----------|
| 1   | Inadequate budgeting for education                               | 340<br>(1360) | 05<br>(15)   | -           | -            | 3.98 | Accepted |
| 2   | Non-involvement of policy implementers during policy formulation | 259<br>(1036) | 46<br>(138)  | 6<br>(12)   | 34<br>(34)   | 3.5  | Accepted |
| 3   | Unconducive school environment                                   | 100<br>(400)  | 79<br>(237)  | 66<br>(132) | 100<br>(100) | 2.5  | Accepted |
| 4   | Poor working condition                                           | 201<br>(804)  | 28<br>(84)   | 96<br>(192) | 20<br>(20)   | 3.2  | Accepted |
| 5   | Non-stability of Government                                      | 344<br>(1376) | 01<br>(03)   | -           | -            | 3.99 | Accepted |
| 6   | Inadequate agenda selection                                      | 70<br>(280)   | 89<br>(267)  | 74<br>(148) | 112<br>(112) | 2.33 | Rejected |
| 7   | Lack of policy maintenance                                       | 250<br>(1000) | 29<br>(87)   | 30<br>(60)  | 36<br>(36)   | 3.4  | Accepted |
| 8   | Impromptu policy termination                                     | 198<br>(792)  | 47<br>(141)  | 40<br>(80)  | 60<br>(60)   | 3.1  | Accepted |
| 9   | Resistance from stakeholders/society                             | 69<br>(276)   | 59<br>(177)  | 72<br>(144) | 145<br>(145) | 2.1  | Rejected |
| 10  | Inadequate resources                                             | 107<br>(428)  | 154<br>(462) | 20<br>(40)  | 64<br>(64)   | 2.9  | Accepted |
| 11  | Lack of appropriate structure                                    | 304<br>(1216) | 21<br>(63)   | 20<br>(20)  | -            | 3.8  | Accepted |
| 12  | Poor planning on part of all stakeholders                        | 211<br>(844)  | 39<br>(117)  | 41<br>(82)  | 54<br>(54)   | 3.2  | Accepted |
| 13  | Poor school mapping                                              | 208<br>(832)  | 41<br>(123)  | 21<br>(42)  | 75<br>(75)   | 3.1  | Accepted |
| 14  | Negative attitude of teachers                                    | 99<br>(396)   | 87<br>(261)  | 72<br>(144) | 87<br>(87)   | 2.6  | Accepted |
| 15  | Poor supervision/monitoring                                      | 311<br>(1244) | 34<br>(102)  | -           | -            | 3.61 | Accepted |
| 16  | Bribery and corruption                                           | 344<br>(1374) | 01<br>(03)   | -           | -            | 3.99 | Accepted |

In table one above, data presented there, indicate existence of numerous challenges of educational policy implementation in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State of Nigeria. Analysis of all the items shows that 14 out of the 16 items have mean scores up to and above the reference mean of 2.5.

### Research Question Two: Is the quality of Teachers a challenge to educational policy implementation?

| S/N | Items        | SA           | A            | D            | SD           | $\bar{X}$ | Decision |
|-----|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| 17  | NCE          | 212<br>(848) | 98<br>(294)  | 15<br>(30)   | 20<br>(20)   | 3.45      | Accepted |
| 18  | HND with PDE | 171<br>(684) | 126<br>(378) | 18<br>(36)   | 30<br>(30)   | 3.26      | Accepted |
| 19  | B.ED         | 146<br>(584) | 151<br>(453) | 32<br>(64)   | 16<br>(16)   | 3.24      | Accepted |
| 20  | M.ED         | 102<br>(408) | 89<br>(267)  | 109<br>(218) | 45<br>(45)   | 2.71      | Accepted |
| 21  | Ph.D         | 70<br>(280)  | 89<br>(267)  | 74<br>(148)  | 112<br>(112) | 2.33      | Rejected |

From the data presented on table two above, it is observable that majority of the respondents are of the view that quality of teachers is basically B.Ed and a few teachers with M.Ed. This is seen in all the items with scores above reference mean of 2.5, in exception of those with Ph.D that scored 2.33 been below reference mean of 2.5.

### Research Question Three: What is the suggested way forward in ameliorating the ascertained challenges of educational policy implementation?

The following should help in ameliorating the challenges of educational policy implementation

| S/N | Items                                                        | SA            | A           | D            | SD         | $\bar{X}$ | Decision |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------|----------|
| 22  | Adequate budgeting for education                             | 322<br>(1328) | 13<br>(39)  | -            | -          | 4         | Accepted |
| 23  | Involvement of policy implementers during policy formulation | 298<br>(1192) | 47<br>(141) | -            | -          | 3.85      | Accepted |
| 24  | Conducive Environment                                        | 230<br>(920)  | 45<br>(135) | 38<br>(76)   | 32<br>(32) | 3.4       | Accepted |
| 25  | Enhanced working condition                                   | 255<br>(1020) | 45<br>(135) | 14<br>(28)   | 20<br>(20) | 3.48      | Accepted |
| 26  | Sustainability of Government                                 | 304<br>(1216) | 32<br>(96)  | 6<br>(12)    | 3<br>(3)   | 3.84      | Accepted |
| 27  | Adequate resources/structure                                 | 227<br>(908)  | 72<br>(216) | 36<br>(72)   | 10<br>(10) | 3.49      | Accepted |
| 28  | Positive attitude of teachers                                | 235<br>(936)  | 73<br>(219) | 25<br>(50)   | 12<br>(12) | 3.52      | Accepted |
| 29  | Effective and Efficient Supervision & Monitoring.            | 286<br>(1144) | 36<br>(108) | 7<br>(14)    | 4<br>(4)   | 3.7       | Accepted |
| 30  | Society devoid of bribery and corruption                     | 230<br>(920)  | 45<br>(135) | 38<br>(76)   | 32<br>(32) | 3.4       | Accepted |
| 31  | Employment of professional teachers                          | 239<br>(956)  | 73<br>(219) | 22<br>(44)   | 11<br>(11) | 3.56      | Accepted |
| 32  | Enrolment for in-service training for teachers               | 102<br>(408)  | 89<br>(267) | 109<br>(218) | 45<br>(45) | 2.71      | Accepted |

From the means of 4,3.85,3.4,3.48,3.84,3.49,3.52,3.7,3.4,3.56 and 2.71 respectively that are above the reference mean of 2.5. It is obvious from the items on table 3 above, that the respondents

are of the view that the suggested way forward will help ameliorate the challenges of educational policy implementation.

### **Decision**

The result of research question one, table 1, shows that numerous challenges abound which militate against successful educational policy implementation in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State of Nigeria. This is observed from mean scores of 16 items = 3.8, 3.5, 2.5, 3.2, 3.99, 3.4, 3.1, 3.9, 2.8, 3.2, 3.1, 2.6, 3.61 and 3.99, all above the reference mean of 2.5. Only two items scored 2.33 and 2.1, which are below the reference mean. This finding agrees with the findings of Grantmakers for Education (2011), OECD (2017), Ukpung (2017) who found out that lack of sustained leadership, inadequate budgeting, lack of resources, bribery and corruption amongst are challenges to successful educational policy implementation. It was only on one item that this finding disagreed with Grantmakers for Education (2011), which is on the issue of resistance from stakeholders/ society. It also rejected the issue of inadequate agenda selection signifying that, agenda/issue selection was appropriate (OECD,2016), rather the problem is with implementation. Also in agreement with this finding is OECD (2015) in its policy cycle theory, where it was noted that policy maintenance will lead to success of any policy implementation while lack of policy maintenance will lead to its failure.

On the second research question, as displayed in table 2, that sought to answer question on whether quality of teachers is a challenge of educational policy implementation, the result shows that respondents are of the opinion that quality of teachers are basically NCE, HND with PDE and B.ED, with a few teachers above reference mean with M.ED. This is evidenced in mean scores of items 17 (3.45), 18 (3.26), 19 (3.24) and 20 (2.71), all being accepted except item 21 (2.33) which was rejected for being below the reference mean of 2.5. There is concord between this finding and the findings of Adebowale and Alao (undated), that teachers' training, where it is half-baked will pose a challenge to the success of educational policy implementation. They equally found out that rigorous training leads to quality skills and better attitude of teachers for a successful educational policy implementation.

This find is also in line with the assertion of the FRN (2013) on teacher quality and teacher factor, that no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers, implying that teachers need to be trained and retrained, which involves resources and for adequate provision of structure.

The third research question, table 3, sought to ascertain way forward in ameliorating challenges of educational policy implementation in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. From the data collected, the respondents agreed that suggested way forward will help ameliorate the challenges of educational policy implementation. This is noticed in the mean scores of all the items 22(4), 23(3.85), 24(3.4), 25(3.48), 26(3.84), 27(3.49), 27(3.52), 29(3.7), 30(3.4), 31(3.56) and 32(2.71) respectively being above the reference mean of 2.5 for acceptance. The findings are in consonance with the findings and recommendations of Ukpung (2017), OECD (2017); Grantmakers for Education (2011) and Barber (2015), for their recommendations that the reversal of the ascertained challenges will help ameliorate the challenges of educational policy implementation. By implication, it also means that, the reversal of the above ascertained challenges will help ameliorate challenges of educational policy implementation in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria.

## Conclusion

Educational policy implementation is militated by numerous challenges in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria as have being found out by the study. It has also being found out that the suggested way forward will help ameliorate the numerous challenges of educational policy implementation in Imo State, Nigeria.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend that;

- ❖ The Government should make adequate and appropriate budget for education. They should monitor to ensure the funds are released and channeled to the right direction for a successful educational policy implementation in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria.
- ❖ There should be adequate and effective involvement of policy implementers (teachers) from Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria during policy formulation for proper direction.
- ❖ School environment should be made conducive by stakeholders for appropriate result and harvest.
- ❖ Implementers working condition should be enhanced, remunerations given when due.
- ❖ There should be stability of government in power to avoid impromptu policy termination, thereby leading to success of educational policy implementation in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria.
- ❖ Teachers, for the love of their profession should embark on in-service training programmes to update their knowledge for them to be abreast of innovations in the educational sector and also improve their quality which will lead to better attitude and better skills.
- ❖ Society should shun bribery and corruption, being honest by having a fair dealing with whatever money that is entrusted upon them. Fair deal, will help them use the fund appropriate by providing the resources, structure and equipment needed for the realization of the educational policy implementation.

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