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Educational Policy Making in Nigeria: Champions, Necessity, Political Compromises, and its Relevance

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Abstract
Education policy making in Nigeria plays a crucial role in shaping the country's human capital development and socio-economic progress. However, the policy making process is often influenced by political, economic, and social actors key champions such as government bodies, policymakers, and stakeholders, the necessity for policy making, and political compromises. Additionally, the study assesses whether these policies remain relevant in the current educational landscape. Employing a qualitative research approach, secondary data from government reports, policy documents, and scholarly articles were analyzed. Findings suggest that education policies in Nigeria are primarily spearheaded by the Federal Ministry of Education, the National Universities Commission (NUC), and various educational agencies, often shaped by both national priorities and international influences. Political considerations, such as: federal-state relations and funding constraints, significantly impact policy decisions. The study concludes that while some education policies have proven beneficial, many require urgent reform to effectively address 21st-century educational challenges. Recommendations include enhancing stakeholder engagement, improving policy evaluation mechanisms, and increasing investment in education to align policies with national and global best practices.

Keywords: Educational Policy, Policy Making Process, Political compromises, champion, necessity and Relevance.

Introduction

Education policies in Nigeria serve as the foundation for structuring and regulating the country's education system. They influence curriculum development, teacher training, infrastructure planning, funding allocation, and institutional administration (Okafor & Adeyemi, 2022). These policies are designed to address key national priorities, such as reducing illiteracy rates, fostering skill development, and promoting economic growth through human capital investment. However, despite their intended objectives, the formulation and implementation of education policies in Nigeria remain complex and often politically charged.

The need for education policy in Nigeria stems from both historical and contemporary challenges. Historically, the Nigerian education system was influenced by colonial structures that prioritized elitist education, leaving gaps in access and quality (Adebayo, 2021). Post-independence, the government sought to expand access to education and develop a national curriculum that aligned with socio-economic needs. Key policies, such as the National Policy on Education (NPE), first introduced in 1977 and revised multiple times, were aimed at ensuring universal education, vocational training, and higher education development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). However, implementation gaps and political interference have often limited the impact of these policies. One of the major concerns in education policy making is the significant role played by government agencies, stakeholders, and international organizations. The Federal Ministry of Education, State Ministries of Education, and regulatory bodies, such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), are responsible for policy development and implementation (UNESCO, 2023). However, political influences, frequent policy shifts, and inadequate funding have created inconsistencies in the system. It has been observed that many policies are introduced based on political expediency rather than data-driven needs assessments (Ogunyemi, 2023). Also, the involvement of international organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, and UNICEF has shaped many education policies in Nigeria, particularly in areas such as early childhood education, girl-child education, and technical-vocational training (World Bank, 2023). While international influence has contributed positively to curriculum standardization and funding support, it has also raised concerns about policy dependency and external priorities overshadowing local educational needs (Eze & Aliyu, 2022).

Despite numerous policy initiatives, Nigeria's education system continues to struggle with issues such as inadequate infrastructure, low teacher remuneration, and high dropout rates (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). For instance, data from UNESCO (2023) indicates that Nigeria has

the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, estimated at over 20 million, emphasizing the ineffectiveness of certain education policies in achieving universal access. Also, teacher shortages, poor educational infrastructure, and inconsistencies in curriculum implementation have led to a widening gap between policy goals and actual outcomes (Adamu & Yusuf, 2023). Hence, this study aims to examine how education policies are formulated in Nigeria, identify the key champions involved, analyze the rationale behind policy decisions, explore political compromises, and evaluate the continued relevance of existing policies. However, this assignment aims to examine the process of education policy making in Nigeria, identify the key champions involved in shaping these policies, assess the underlying rationale or need for policy interventions, also to analyze political compromises made in policy making and finally to evaluate the continued relevance of education policies in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In an ideal situation, education policy making would involve thorough stakeholder consultations, data-driven decision-making, and a commitment to sustainable development. These policies should address challenges such as access to quality education, teacher training, and infrastructure, ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has an equal opportunity to learn and thrive. However, in Nigeria, the reality often falls short of these expectations.

It has been observed over the years that various education policies have been introduced to improve access and quality. Policies such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program and the National Policy on Education (NPE) were designed to provide free and compulsory education, enhance technical and vocational training, and improve teacher development. However, the implementation of these policies has been inconsistent due to political interference, administrative challenges, and a lack of continuity across different governments. Instead of being shaped by research and expert recommendations, many policies are influenced by political agendas, leading to frequent revisions that disrupt long-term progress. A major challenge in education policy making in Nigeria is the dominance of politics over evidence-based planning. Successive governments introduce new policies that often disregard existing frameworks, resulting in wasted resources and stalled initiatives. Leadership changes frequently lead to abrupt modifications or discontinuation of policies, preventing sustained progress. This inconsistency weakens the overall education system and undermines efforts to achieve national development goals.

Another pressing issue is inadequate funding and inefficient resource allocation. Despite the importance of education, the sector often receives insufficient budgetary allocation, falling below recommended international standards. As a result, many schools face shortages of qualified teachers, learning materials, and proper infrastructure. The lack of

adequate funding affects policy implementation, making it difficult to achieve the intended objectives of improving educational access and quality. Implementation gaps further hinder the success of education policies. Even when well-structured policies are introduced, challenges such as poor monitoring, corruption, and lack of coordination among relevant agencies prevent effective execution. Given these challenges, it is essential to examine how education policies are formulated in Nigeria, who drives these policies, and whether they address genuine needs.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study is to examine in detail how policy of education are made in Nigeria. Specifically, the study is designed to:

1. To examine the process involved in formulating education policies in Nigeria.
2. To identify the key champions involved in the education policy-making process in Nigeria.
3. To investigate the circumstances or needs that prompted the development of specific education policies in Nigeria.
4. To analyze the political compromises involved in the formulation of education policies in Nigeria.
5. To assess the relevance and effectiveness of existing education policies in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the processes involved in formulating education policies in Nigeria?
2. Who are the key champions involved in the education policy-making process in Nigeria?
3. What are the circumstances or needs that prompted the development of specific education policies in Nigeria?
4. What are the political compromises involved in the formulation of education policies in Nigeria?
5. What is the relevance and effectiveness of existing education policies in Nigeria?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, focusing on content analysis of education policy documents, government reports, and academic literature to examine the formulation and implementation of education policies in Nigeria. Primary data sources include government publications such as the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act, which provide an understanding of official policy frameworks and strategic objectives. Also, peer-reviewed journals on Nigerian education policies offer scholarly perspectives on policy effectiveness, challenges, and areas for improvement. Reports from international organizations, including UNESCO and the

World Bank, serve as supplementary sources, providing comparative analyses and global best practices. The study adopts thematic analysis to categorize findings based on key aspects such as policy champions, the underlying rationale for interventions, political influence in policy making, and the continued relevance of these policies.

CONCEPT OF EDUCATION POLICIES

Education policies in Nigeria have evolved significantly over time, shaped by the nation's colonial history and its post-independence development goals. Before British colonization, Nigeria's indigenous education systems were based on practical skills and cultural transmission. However, with the advent of colonial rule, Western-style education was introduced, establishing a formal educational structure that focused on literacy and technical training. After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the government sought to reform the education system to better serve national needs, leading to the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 education system in the 1980s. This system, which provided six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education, and four years of tertiary education, was designed to promote technical and vocational training to support national development (Morris, 2020).

Key milestones in Nigeria's educational policy-making include the implementation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program in 1976, aimed at expanding access to primary education and reducing illiteracy rates. Another significant policy was the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1981, which outlined the goals and structure of the country's educational system, focusing on providing equitable and functional education for all Nigerians (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). The introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in 1999 was a landmark moment, designed to ensure that every child receives nine years of basic education, addressing access disparities across regions and promoting literacy. These milestones reflect the government's attempts to adapt the education system to the changing needs of the country and its population (Nwajiuba & Ijoma, 2019).

The Nigerian government plays a central role in shaping and implementing educational policies through various institutions. The Federal Ministry of Education is tasked with formulating policies, setting standards, and overseeing national education strategies, while state governments are responsible for adapting these policies to meet local needs. Despite this structured approach, challenges such as inadequate funding, political interference, and infrastructural deficits continue to hinder effective policy implementation. For instance, the Nigerian government's push to improve literacy rates through programs like the UBE has been compromised by insufficient resources, political instability, and the misalignment between policy and local realities (Adama, 2021). Nonetheless, government involvement remains crucial for driving educational reforms and addressing persistent challenges in the education sector.

CHAMPIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY MAKING IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, the development and implementation of educational policies are shaped by a wide range of stakeholders, each contributing to the country's educational landscape. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) plays a central role as the primary governmental body responsible for formulating and overseeing policies. It establishes national standards, curricula, and guidelines to ensure quality education across the nation. Additionally, the FME collaborates with key agencies, including the National Universities Commission and the Universal Basic Education Commission, to implement these policies and address emerging challenges, ensuring alignment with global best practices (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020).

Beyond the FME, several other government agencies and stakeholders significantly influence educational policy. State ministries of education adapt national policies to meet regional needs and tackle local challenges, thus promoting inclusive education. Parastatals such as the National Examination Council and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board ensure standardized examinations and admissions processes. Professional organizations, including the Nigerian Union of Teachers, also play a vital role in advocating for the rights of educators and contributing to policy discussions, fostering a collaborative approach to educational development.

Political and institutional dynamics heavily influence Nigeria's educational policies. Political leaders often drive policy directions in response to their agendas and constituents' concerns, leading to shifts in policy with each administration. Institutional champions, such as the capacity of educational bodies and inter-agency collaborations, also significantly impact policy making and execution. However, challenges like political interference, inconsistent funding, and bureaucratic hurdles can undermine the effectiveness of educational reforms, signaling the need for systemic changes to improve stability and efficiency within the education sector. Furthermore, international organizations and NGOs, such as the World Bank and UNICEF, contribute significantly by providing funding, expertise, and advocacy, aiming to enhance educational access and quality. Their efforts help inform policy development, ensuring it addresses the diverse needs of Nigerian communities (World Bank, 2024).

PROCESS OF EDUCATION POLICY MAKING IN NIGERIA

The process of education policy making in Nigeria follows series of stages, including problem identification, agenda setting, policy design, implementation, and evaluation (Anderson, 2019). Policy development often begins with identifying gaps or inefficiencies in the education sector, such as low enrollment rates, inadequate infrastructure, and poor teacher training (Federal Ministry of Education, 2024). The Nigerian government, through the Federal Ministry of Education, commissions research and consults with experts to design policies that address these challenges.

However, despite the structured approach, the policy making process is frequently hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and funding constraints (World Bank, 2023). Policies such as the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act were formulated with well-defined objectives, but their implementation has often faced setbacks due to inadequate resources and poor coordination between federal, state, and local governments (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Scholars argue that these challenges undermine the effectiveness of the policy-making process and contribute to persistent issues in Nigeria's education sector (Kingdon, 2014).

KEY CHAMPIONS IN EDUCATIONALPOLICY MAKING

Several champions influence education policy in Nigeria, including government institutions, policymakers, international organizations, and civil society groups (Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2017). The Federal Ministry of Education plays a central role in designing and implementing policies, working alongside agencies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) (Federal Ministry of Education, 2024).

Beyond government bodies, stakeholders such as international development partners (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank) also contribute to policy making by providing technical expertise, funding, and advocacy support (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). Additionally, professional associations, teacher unions, and civil society organizations influence policy decisions through lobbying, research, and public campaigns (Transparency International, 2024). Despite the involvement of multiple stakeholders, scholars argue that the participation of local communities and grassroots organizations remains limited. Many policies are formulated at the federal level with little input from teachers, parents, and students, resulting in policies that may not fully address the realities faced by schools, particularly in rural areas (Statista, 2024).

RATIONALE FOR EDUCATION POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Education policies in Nigeria are designed to address key national challenges, including improving literacy rates, enhancing access to quality education, and aligning the education system with labor market demands (National Planning Commission, 2021). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program was introduced to tackle low primary and secondary school enrollment rates and reduce dropout rates, particularly among disadvantaged communities (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Another major rationale for policy intervention is the need to improve the quality of education (UNESCO, 2024). Reports suggest that despite an increase in school enrollment, learning outcomes remain poor due to outdated curricula, unqualified

teachers, and a lack of modern teaching facilities (World Bank, 2024). Policies such as the Teacher Professional Development Program and the Education Sector Support Program in Nigeria (ESSPIN) were introduced to address these issues by strengthening teacher training and improving school management (Research Gate, 2024).

Furthermore, education policies have been shaped by Nigeria's broader economic and social development goals (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). The emphasis on technical and vocational education is aimed at equipping students with practical skills to reduce youth unemployment and enhance the country's industrial growth (Reuters, 2025a). However, critics argue that while these policies are well-intended, their implementation has often been inconsistent due to weak monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Financial Times, 2025).

POLITICAL COMPROMISES IN POLICY MAKING

The formulation of education policies in Nigeria is not immune to political compromises (Dye, 2020). Government decisions on education policies are often influenced by political interests, regional considerations, and electoral promises rather than purely educational needs (Afrobarometer, 2024). Studies indicate that successive administrations have introduced new policies or modified existing ones to align with their political agenda, sometimes without sufficient continuity or assessment of previous policies (Kingdon, 2014). For example, the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy has been affected by power struggles between federal and state governments, leading to funding delays and uneven execution across different states (World Bank, 2023). Similarly, the frequent changes in the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education have contributed to inconsistencies in policy direction, as each new minister introduces reforms that may not align with long-term strategic plans (The Guardian, 2024).

Political considerations also play a role in budgetary allocations for the education sector (Transparency International, 2024). While international standards recommend that at least 15-20% of a country's budget be allocated to education, Nigeria has consistently allocated less, with funds often redirected to other sectors based on political priorities (Reuters, 2025b). This has led to underfunded schools, inadequate teacher salaries, and infrastructural decay, further weakening the education system (Federal Ministry of Education, 2024).

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The process of making education policy in Nigeria involves multiple stakeholders working through a structured yet often challenging framework that requires continuous adaptation to meet evolving needs. While there have been significant strides made since independence regarding inclusivity and access to education, persistent challenges remain that require concerted efforts from all sectors involved.

Key Champions in EducationalPolicy making

Education policy making in Nigeria involves multiple stakeholders, with government agencies playing a pivotal role. The Federal Ministry of Education is primarily responsible for policy design, coordination, and implementation at the national level, ensuring alignment with Nigeria's broader development goals (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). Other key champions include the National Universities Commission (NUC), which regulates higher education institutions, and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), which oversees policies related to basic education (UBEC, 2021). Legislative bodies, such as the House Committee on Basic Education and Services, also influence policy direction by overseeing implementation and budget allocations (National Assembly, 2023). International organizations further shape education policies through funding and technical support. For instance, the World Bank approved a $1.57 billion loan in 2024, allocating $500 million to address governance issues in education and healthcare (World Bank, 2024).

Rationale and Policy Need

Education policies in Nigeria emerge as responses to key national and international challenges. A major driver is low literacy rates, especially in rural areas. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy was introduced to combat this, ensuring compulsory and tuition-free primary and junior secondary education (UBEC, 2021). Despite this, Nigeria still has over 10.5 million out-of-school children, the highest in the world (UNESCO, 2023). Another key policy rationale is workforce development. Nigeria faces a growing skills gap between educational outcomes and labor market demands. Policies emphasizing technical and vocational education aim to equip students with employable skills (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). Also, education policies align with international commitments such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), which advocate for inclusive, equitable, and quality education (United Nations, 2023). Similarly, global financial institutions shape Nigeria's education policies through conditional funding. For instance, the World Bank's 2024 loan agreement emphasizes structural reforms in education and digital learning (World Bank, 2024). These external influences often shape domestic policy priorities, sometimes overriding local needs.

Political Compromises in Educational Policy making

Education policymaking in Nigeria often involves political bargaining. One significant issue is federal-state tensions over education funding and control. While the federal government formulates policies, state and local governments handle implementation, leading to disparities in execution. For instance, the UBE Act mandates states to provide counterpart funding, yet many states fail to meet their obligations, delaying school infrastructure projects and teacher recruitment (UBEC, 2021). In addition, political parties

influence education funding and reforms. Successive administrations often revise or discontinue policies initiated by previous governments, undermining long-term planning (Adebayo, 2022). External champions also play a role in donor-driven policies sometimes conflicting with national priorities, leading to policy compromises (World Bank, 2024).

Relevance of Current Education Policies

The effectiveness of Nigeria's education policies remains a subject of debate. While the UBE scheme has improved literacy rates and school enrollment, its implementation remains uneven due to infrastructural challenges, teacher shortages, and funding gaps (UNESCO, 2023). At the tertiary level, inadequate financing continues to fuel labour disputes. For instance, between 2010 and 2023, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) embarked on strikes for a cumulative period of 1,587 days due to poor funding and poor working conditions (Adekunle, 2023). This submits that current education policies fail to address the root causes of industrial actions, affecting the stability of higher education. Policies promoting digital learning and STEM education aim to enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness, but infrastructure deficits and digital access gaps hinder their effectiveness (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). While some policies remain relevant in principle, systemic inefficiencies continue to undermine their impact, necessitating urgent reforms to improve education outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Education policy making in Nigeria is a dynamic process influenced by political, economic, and social factors. While policies such as the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act have made significant contributions to improving access to education, various challenges persist, including inadequate funding, political interference, and poor implementation mechanisms. Political transitions and shifts in government priorities often lead to inconsistencies in policy execution, undermining long-term progress. Moreover, external influences, such as international donor conditions and global education trends, play a role in shaping education policies in the country. Despite efforts to enhance the education sector, issues such as teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and frequent industrial actions in tertiary institutions continue to hinder policy effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made.

1. Effective education policies should be developed through broad consultations with relevant stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, private sector representatives, and community leaders. The government should establish

structured platforms for stakeholder engagement, ensuring that policies reflect the diverse needs of different regions and communities in Nigeria.

2. The government should increase the national budget allocation for education, in line with the UNESCO recommendation of at least 15-20% of total government expenditure. Additionally, innovative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and education bonds, should be explored to reduce over-reliance on government budgets and political influences in funding decisions.
3. There is a need for robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track the progress of education policies. Regular assessments should be conducted to measure the impact of policies and identify gaps that require adjustments.
4. There is a need to review and revise outdated policies to incorporate technological advancements, 21st-century skills, and inclusive education practices. Aligning policies with global trends will enhance Nigeria's competitiveness in the global knowledge economy and equip students with relevant skills for future job markets.

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