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Investigative Study on the Implementation of Education Policies in Secondary Schools: A Review of Bangladesh and Nigeria

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Abstract

Education Policy can be seen as a fuel that propels both the curriculum and extracurricular activities in the education system. This research essay has been developed to investigate the implementation of education policies in secondary schools in Bangladesh and Nigeria. Research has shown that a proper implementation of education policies in both Primary, Secondary and Tertiary institutions will in no doubt enhance the academic prowess of students. As regards this, no matter how good a policy might be, if there is an implementation constraint, it will definitely lead to zero archival of the educational objectives. This expository work also discussed the current system of education and the existing education policies of the countries under study and throws light on its success and faultlines. Furthermore, the paper elucidates upon the shortcomings in the implementation of education policies in secondary schools. The research essay concludes by giving certain proposals and recommendations which will aid Governments and Policymakers on how to ensure an effective and efficient implementation of education policies in secondary schools.
Keywords: *Education Policy, Implementation, Secondary Schools, Academic Prowess, Students.*

1.0 Introduction

It is quite obvious that "Education is the key to success" but unfortunately, this proverbial saying seems not to be true in developing countries like Bangladesh and Nigeria as a result of lack of quality and fortified education which is primarily caused by implementation constraints. Policy implementation in education has become a conspicuous national problem that has taken centre stage in developing countries. However as written by (Yawe, 2015, p.1) during the conference speech made by Oyakhilome, the 1984-1986 Governor of Rivers State, Nigeria, in the context of the problem of policy implementation conference on Convention of the Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning in 1986. Oyakhilome rightly stated that: "We know it is difficult to realize planned objectives to be one hundred per cent. But our experience in planning education in this country shows a disturbing gap between planned objectives and attained results". He further opined that "as professionals in the educational field, it may be pertinent to identify whether those critical gaps are as a result of faulty planning or faulty implementation".

However, faulty educational planning by policymakers could serve as a deterrent to effective Implementation of planned policies and this in turn can lead to negative behavioural changes in the academic achievement of secondary school students. Therefore, there is an imminent need to always evaluate and examine the planned policies before their execution. Subsequent sections of this expository essay review provides a framework for a comprehensive analysis of the existing educational policies present in the two countries under study and the current system of education in both countries. It finally elucidates upon some recommendations on how implementation of education policies can be improved in secondary schools. This expository write-up also leaves room for further researchers.

2.0 Definitions

2.1. Education:

As stated by a researcher (Arata, 2020), "education is a discipline which deals with methods of teaching and learning in schools or school-like environments as opposed to various non-formal and informal means of socialization". He further opined that "the term 'Education' can be thought of as the transmission of values and accumulated knowledge of a society". It is similar to what social scientists called socialization or enculturation. Socialization in the aspect of education refers to the process of learning the desired behaviours, values, societal norms, and social skills of individuals who occupy particular roles in society. It can also be seen as the transmission process in which both formal and informal knowledge or skill is transmitted to different generation. On the other hand, enculturation is the process whereby students learn their group's or societal culture through experience, observation, and instruction. Etymologically, the word education is derived from two Latin words "educare" which means to nourish or bring up and "educere" which means to lead forth or draw out. This simply implies that education facilitates learning. However, the knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and culture of a group of people are transferable to other people, through the process of education. Straightforwardly, education is the stepping stone to success. According to passion in education, education is majorly classified into three categories which include Formal, Informal and Non- formal education.

2.1.1 Formal Education

According to (Arif, 2016), formal education is an organized education model, structured and administered by laws and norms, and subject to strict curriculum objectives, methodology and content. Basically, formal learning occurs within the four walls of an institution and it operates with a planned and standardized school curriculum. Straightforwardly, this type of education actively involves the instructor, students and the institution. A researcher (Todaro, 1995), opined that Participants in formal education are very much expected to attend classes, subject themselves to assessment that is meant to take learning to the next stage and it results in the attainment of diplomas and degrees.

2.1.2 Informal Education

Unlike the latter, this kind of education does not take place in the four walls of an institution. It does not follow a planned curriculum and learning can take place at any time unconsciously. As rightly stated by (Novosadova, 2013) researcher, informal learning can take place in families, working environments and among peers.

2.1.3 Non-Formal Education

According to WHO, Non- formal education refers to a wide range of educational initiatives in the community, ranging from home-based learning to government schemes and community initiatives. It includes accredited courses run by well-established institutions as well as locally based operations with little funding. While formal education lacks practical aspects of knowledge, non-formal education basically focuses on students' skills and developmental attitudes.

2.2. Policy:

The term Policy can be seen as an idea or plan which can be used as a basis for decision making. Policy serves as a bedrock for making a decision especially in the field of education, politics, etc. According to (Terry, 1977)", a policy is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative action will take place". He further stated that "a policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made but it does not give the decision". Furthermore, in the field of education as in any other fields of human endeavour, every official action of an organization must have a backing or a basis. It is this purpose that a policy serves (Okoroma, 2006).

However, irrespective of how good a policy might be, there might still exist some imperfections in its implementation process. Policies are very much important because through them, schools are able to establish rules and procedures and create standards and quality teaching and learning environments for students. Without policies, schools would lack the structure and function necessary to provide the educational needs of students. It is paramount that poor policy planning affects the education system which will definitely lead to poor performance amongst school children. Therefore, there is a need for effective policy planning since it is the bedrock for all educational enterprises.

2.3. **Implementation:**

This is simply the process or act of putting a decision or plan into effect. As rightly stated by (Margaret, 2015), Implementation is the carrying out, execution, or practice of a plan, a method, or any design, idea, model, specification, standard or policy for doing something. As such, implementation is the action that must follow any preliminary thinking in order for something to actually happen. According to (Mitchell, 2011), in his work on "Evidence-based practice in real-world services for young people with complex needs" Implementation is generally defined as a specified set of planned and intentional activities designed to integrate evidence-based practices into real-world settings. During the implementation process, learners are the major factors to be considered. This is as a result of the fact that the learners are the central focus for all educational enterprises. If this is to be viewed as an industry, the learners are raw materials to be furnished as a finished product. Hitherto to this, it is pertinent to consider learners' characteristics during the policy planning and implementation process. High-quality implementations of educational approaches in no doubt have a significant impact on improving students' outcomes. It is observed that the efforts of Governments towards implementation of secondary school education yielded little or no dividend as a result of improper implementation of policies which are caused by lack of basic amenities for practical in sciences and vocational subjects as well as lack of instructional materials to facilitate effective learning in all subjects. It is regardless to say that without adequate and efficient implementation of instruction during teaching and learning, the education policies planned by policymakers in the field of education is nothing but a rolling stone that gathers no moisture.

2.4 Education Policy:

This is simply the laws, rules and regulations which guide the system of education. The operations of the education system solely depend on rules and regulations made by the policymakers which are otherwise called "Education Policy". As rightly stated by Rand Corporations, Education policy includes laws as well as processes and policies that educational organizations, local districts, states, and nations put in place and follow to achieve academic goals. However, Examples of the areas that are subject to debate in education policy, specifically from the field of schools, include school size, class size, school choice, school privatization, tracking, teacher selection, education and certification, teacher pay, teaching methods, curricular content, graduation requirements, school infrastructure investment, and the values that schools are expected to uphold and model (Wikipedia, 2019). Education policymakers are responsible for designing school curriculum, and this designed curriculum is to be implemented in the classroom by teachers during classroom instruction.

3.0 Overview of Bangladesh and Nigeria

3.1 Bangladesh:

3.1.1 Brief History

Bangladesh is a developing country that has been born after the Liberation War. It was previously a part of the Indian subcontinent under British colonial rule during 1945. Although the Indian subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan, the Liberation War has led to the birth of Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971 after the victory on December 16 after the surrender of the country, Pakistan. The state language of Bangladesh after being independent from Pakistan is Bengali and the majority of the population is Muslim. Bangladesh is a densely populated country where 24.3% live under the poverty line (CIA, 2021). The poverty rate is further exacerbated by the increasing unemployment and corruption in the political parties. This can be eradicated by the improvement in the accessibility of educational facilities in every area of the country. While the educational expenditure is 1.3% of the GDP rate of the country, it is essential that the preparation of the National Educational Policy 2010 enables the country to develop and utilize its human capital to the fullest potential.

3.1.2 Current System of Education in Bangladesh

The education system in Bangladesh is quite good compared to various developing countries for the ability of the government to recognize the significance of education for a country. The education sector in Bangladesh is divided into 2 categories: general education and madrasah (Islamic) education. Both the education categories are divided into subcategories: primary, secondary and tertiary education. Primary school consists of basic education required for children of age 6-10. Secondary school consists of education required to sit for the board exams that consist of JSC (Junior Secondary Certificate) in grade 8, (SSC) Secondary School Certificate in grade 10 and HSC (Higher School Certificate) in grade 12. In order to prepare for nationwide board exams, secondary school education is divided into junior secondary school (Grade 6-8) and (Grade 9-10) and higher secondary school (Grade 11-12) (Chowdhury, 2018). On the other hand, *madrasah* schools consist of three types: Quomi, Hafiza and Alia. Quomi *madrasas* do not receive government funding but receive funds from national or international donors. It provides educators with more focus on Arabic literature and Islamic studies. Secondly, Hafiza schools are mainly for the purpose of memorizing the Holy Quran, which is the sacred book of Islam. Moreover, Alia schools are the madrasahs that receive funding from the government which is similar to the general education provided in the country. Alia *madrasah* is divided into primary school (Ehtedayee), secondary school (Dakhil), higher secondary (Alim), bachelors (Fazil) and masters (Kalim).

3.1.3 Existing Education Policies in Bangladesh.

National Education Policy is an integral part of the development of a nation, and Bangladesh has recognized it since the birth of the country when Bangabandhu was the Prime Minister during the Liberation War. Although there were strong policies regarding education at that time, the gruesome murder of the father of the nation and his family has led to the values, spirits and goals of the Liberation War to be diminished which included Education Policy. After taking over the role of the Prime Minister through his daughter, Sheikh Hasina, she has taken many initiatives along with the Awami League, for improvements in the drafting and preparation of the National Education Policy in 2009. A draft policy paper has been prepared by the 18-member committee which included national professor, Kabir Chowdhury as the chair. While different meetings and seminars have been held to draft the policies, it has been shared with many people for their feedback.

After being finalized in 2010, it has been shared with many relevant stakeholders such as teachers, students, businessmen and so on for their recommendations and suggestions. The primary objectives of the education policy were:

      a)   To Eradicate illiteracy for all

      b)   Keeping pace with the development of science and technology

c)   A qualitative increase in the governmental and non-governmental investment and cooperation in education

d)   Instil moral values, patriotism, accountability, honesty and social responsibility among young students

      e)   Achieve Vision 2021 which improves the quality of life

So the basic changes that have been made are the evaluation of the standard of learning and examination methods. (NEP, 2010) This is worth looking into due to increasing corruption and mismanagement of the educational resources in Bangladesh.

Nevertheless, the policies are yet to be fully implemented and a new policy brief has to be made after massive changes in the education sector due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2 Nigeria as a Country:

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, basically referred to as the Giant of Africa is a country located in West Africa. Nigeria is bordered by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger and it shares maritime borders with Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, and São Tomé and Príncipe. However, with an area of 923,768 km², Nigeria is almost four times the size of the UK or slightly more than twice the size of the United state, (Nationsonline, 2014).

The main river of Nigeria is River Niger where its name originated. The country was governed by the British protectorate not until late 1960 when it gained its independence. The countries' population surged up to two hundred and eight million, nine hundred and two thousand, five hundred and eighty-five (208,902,585) as of Monday, January 18, 2021 (Worldometers, 2021) with over 250 ethnic groups having different culture, language and religion. The population size of Nigeria makes it the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world (Nationsonline, 2014). Going forward to the economic sector, Nigeria has emerged as Africa's largest economy, with a GDP in 2017 estimated at US$ 508 billion (International monetary fund). The country is richly blessed with Natural resources like oil, minerals and gas.

Nevertheless, the economy of Nigeria has continued to grow at a rapid of 6-8% per annum, which is primarily caused by growth in agriculture, telecommunications, and services (Nationsonline, 2014). Consequently, irrespective of Nigeria's diverse economy, her unemployment rate increased to 7.96% (Plecher, 2020). The unemployment rate caused almost half of the country's population to live below US $2 per day.

3.2.1 Current system of Education in Nigeria.

In some years back, Nigeria operates on a 6-3-3-4 system of education. The figures simply mean, six (6) years in primary school, three (3) years in junior secondary school, three (3) years in senior secondary school and four (4) years in higher institution. This system of education was designed in 1983 with the sole aim of producing competent and diligent graduates who will contribute positively to societal growth. That is, graduates who are able to make use of their head, heart and hand (the three 3H of Education). Unfortunately, this system of education was out- ruled because of its ineffectiveness in Nigeria which is caused as a result of unavailability of resources and funds, and lack of administrative rules.

As a result of these shortcomings, a new system of education known as 9-3-4 was introduced and that is the current and present system of education in Nigeria. The 9-3-4 system known as Universal Basic Education (UBE) simply implies that every child will spend the first 9-years of basic and compulsory education called primary education and Junior Secondary School (JSS-3) level, 3 (three) years in the senior secondary school, and 4 (four) years in the tertiary institutions (Isaac, 2020). Primary education begins at the age of 5 (five) and age 2 (two) for Nursery classes for the majority of school-going children in Nigeria. Nigerian primary education consists of Nursery class otherwise known as kindergarten. The Nursery class is divided into three; Nursery one (1), Nursery two (2) and Nursery three (3). School children spent three years in the Nursery class before being enrolled in Primary one (1). At Primary six, the students are being prepared to write Common Entrance Examinations and First School Leaving Examinations which will qualify them to be enrolled in Secondary schools. In Nigeria, secondary education is divided into two namely; Junior secondary school (JSS), and Senior secondary school (SSS). Students spent three years in both Junior and Senior Secondary making it six (6) years in Secondary schools. In the three years of Junior secondary school education, students are to be taught core subjects like "English Language, Mathematics, Home Economics, Basic Science, Social Studies, Introductory Technology" e.t.c.

However, for Senior Secondary School Education, students are to take core subjects such as "English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Economics" e.t.c. These subjects are meant for students in Science classes. Additionally, Students in Arts and Commercial classes are to take core subjects like "English Language, Commerce, Accounting, Governments, Geography, Literature in English" and so on. These subjects prepared them to write West African Senior School Examination (WASSCE), National Examination Council (NECO) and Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) during their final year in senior secondary schools before heading forward to Tertiary institutions. Nigeria tertiary institutions consist of Universities both (Public and Private), Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. Students normally spent four (4) to Nine (9) years in tertiary institutions depending on the course of study. In general, Nigeria is currently using the 9-3-4 system of education. The 9-3-4 system of education was designed to prepare Nigerians for the social, political, cultural and economic realities of the nation. Its major aim was self-reliance. Unfortunately, the 9-3-4 system of education is only in principle but not in practice (Isaac, 2020).

3.2.2 Existing Education Policies in Nigeria.

Every nation across the globe has its own national policy on education. After the first two decades of Nigeria's independence, there were different conferences and seminars which are geared towards stopping the colonial education, planned by colonial masters to the satisfaction of their taste and not for the betterment and well being of the Nigerians. The first conference tagged "National curriculum conference" was conducted in the year 1969, and the conference was broadly attended by a cross-section of Nigerians. According to the National Policy on Education, The conference was scheduled as a result of general dissatisfaction with the existing education system which had relatively become irrelevant to the national needs, aspirations and goals of Nigerians.

On completion of the Conference, a seminar of experts from a wide range of interest groups within Nigeria was convened in 1973. The seminar was attended by voluntary agencies and external bodies, and there was a deliberation on what a national policy in education for an independent and sovereign Nigeria should be (National Policy on Education). As rightly stated by Nigeria Education Research and Development Council in National Policy on Education, below are the existing Nigerian education policies and innovation changes:

- Lifting of the suspension order on "Open and Distance Learning Programme" by the Government.

- Revitalization and expansion of the National Mathematical Centre (NMC).

- Establishment of the Teachers Registration Council (TRC).

- Introduction of information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the school curriculum as a second official language.

- Introduction of French Language in the primary and secondary schools curriculum as a second official language.

- Introduction of minimum number of subjects to be taken by SSCE candidates.

- The integration of basic education in the programme of Quranic schools, to ensure equal opportunity and effective implementation of UBE.

- Repositioning science, technical and vocational education in the scheme of national education for optimum performance; and

- General contextual change to reflect the state of professional practice in education, among others.

Going forward, the major aims and objectives of Nigeria's education policy as stated by National policy on Education include;

A. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.

B. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of individuals and the Nigerian society.

C. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.

D. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mentally and physically as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Straightforwardly, all these national education policies were formulated with the sole aim of creating a suitable and efficient education atmosphere. Moreover, the objectives of secondary school education are also clearly stated in the National Policy on Education. These objectives are rightly stated thus:

- Preparation for useful living within the society; and

- Preparation for higher education (National Policy on Education, 2004).

Consequently, some of these policies are yet to be fully implemented thus making the Nigerian system of education to be in a deplorable state and these could be a result of a lack of adequate resources and funds.

3.2.3 Shortcomings/ hindrances to Proper Implementation of Education Policies in Secondary Schools.

Secondary schools are the level of schooling when students prepare themselves for the job market. Although certain subjects are relevant such as Science or Commerce, there are still a few lagging in how education policies can be implemented in secondary schools. Secondary school is defined as "a school intermediate between primary school and college and usually offering general, technical, vocational or college-preparatory courses. The first challenge is the budget allocation for schooling. When there is a fixed amount of budget and there is a general consensus among the parliament members for the importance of primary school, there is less possibility for secondary school to receive an adequate amount of funding and resources compared to primary schools. Secondly, because of the lack of funding or increasing level of corruption, secondary school facilities might not be updated according to the advancement of technologies around the world. Moreover, due to the rapid globalization, there is a changing demand in the job market because of the restructuring process to remain competitive, reduce cost and improve diversity in the workforce. This can have a negative impact on which policy would be appropriate to implement to ensure that the budget for the secondary school is properly allocated. For example, whether the government should invest more in vocational training or secondary school. When the secondary schools are not updated according to the demands of the job market, there is an increasing number of unemployment. And developing countries suffer severely from higher levels of unemployment.

Additionally, the Nigerian government has made some efforts towards refurbishment of her education system since their independence from the British protectorate in 1960. Unfortunately, these efforts have yielded little or no dividends. Some prevailing factors have been identified as a constraint towards the effective implementation of education policies. These constraints as includes but not limited to:

- Inadequate qualified teachers: Most of the teachers in secondary schools lack teachers training which basically makes them to be unqualified. As a result of this, they find it difficult to effectively implement the planned curriculum to the learners during classroom instruction. The learners are the central focus for all educational enterprises, in the case where the learners are not carried along during the classroom teaching and learning process, the already planned policies will remain un-achieved.

- Inadequate Learning Facilities: It is quite disheartening that most secondary schools in developing countries used outdated materials during teaching and learning. Most of them do not even have laboratory rooms where science students can experiment with the theories being taught to them in the classroom. Practically, this state of learning causes low performance of secondary school students in their academics. Therefore, the anomaly of outdated teaching and learning materials in no doubt hinders the effective implementation of education policies in secondary schools.

- Lack of funding: Proper funding of the education sector plays a significant role in the achievement of the instructional objectives. Some essential policies are left unplanned as a result of insufficient funds for their implementation. More so, most secondary schools in developing countries like Bangladesh and Nigeria are faced with dilapidated buildings, poor structures and inadequate learning environments. These detrimental factors affect students negatively in their cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. Successful implementation solely depends on resources, because of this, the government should be committed to the funding of the school system through adequate budgetary allocation and non-governmental organizations should as well help the governments in contributing to school development as part of their corporate social responsibility.

4.0 Lessons learnt from Bangladesh and Nigeria and Recommendations

Having seen the essentiality of education policy in the education sector, there is a need to ensure efficient implementation of planned policies so that educational objectives can be duly achieved. In a bid to achieve this, all hands must be on deck.

However, as rightly stated by OECD as cited by (Romane, 2017, p. 1), for policy to be effectively implemented, it is pertinent for all determinants to be taken into consideration. These determinants by OECD include:

1. Smart Policy design: There is a need for policy design. It will help policymakers to be conscious of the type of policy to be formulated which will not deviate from the resources available for its implementation. For instance, if a new curriculum requires the use of high technology equipment, which schools cannot afford, the policy may fail to be implemented unless some budget is available at the national or local level.

2. Stakeholder engagement: A stakeholder is not only a person who supports an organization financially but also a person who helps in putting into practice the agendas of the organization. Therefore, Teachers both in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary settings are great stakeholders to be inclusive during policy planning and formulations. This is because teachers are very close to the students, they understand students' feelings and take cognizance of their grasping proficiency and most importantly, they are in charge of implementing the planned policies during classroom instruction. As regards this, the teachers' thoughts and opinions during the policy process will definitely promote effective implementation.

Going forward, the Government on the other hand should ensure effective funding of the education sector. Most of the formulated Policies yielded no dividends as a result of insufficient funds for effective implementation. However, it has been observed that some of the little money deposited in the education sector is being embezzled by corrupt leaders. Every effort should be made to eradicate corruption from all spheres so that available resources can be utilized for public interest.

Additionally, both Bangladesh and Nigeria governments and notable leaders should develop the necessary political will for education to grow. This can be achieved by setting a punishable law for mismanagement of educational resources at all levels. If need be, this punishable law should be included in the constitution of the countries under study.

5.0 Conclusions

A policy is directed towards achieving certain goals and objectives and this can be adequately ascertained through implementation. A planned education policy will remain null and void if there is an implementation constraint. From the aforementioned points on the literature review, it is pertinent to say that a lot of works are to be done to ensure effective implementation of education policies in the two countries under study.

However, if the short-comings like unavailability of teaching and learning resources and materials, insufficient school funding, unqualified teachers, corrupt leaders, etc could be adequately addressed, the school system will definitely be a ground where professionals and experts who will contribute positively towards societal growth are produced.

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