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INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NIGERIA'S NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE LEARNING: ISSUES, CONCERNS AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

This paper discussed innovative practices in the National Policy on Education (NPE) with regards to its implementation in attending to this crisis period for sustainable learning in Nigeria. The paper therefore examined all the concepts involved and while ex-raying the section of the policy concerned with planning and administration of education in Nigeria, identified issues, concerns and the way forward for the implementation of the policy to attend to this crisis period for sustainable learning in Nigeria. The paper identified innovative educational management issues such as sharing of responsibilities between all tiers of government and participation and involvement of communities among others. Similarly, it noted concerns such as rift between tiers of government and politicization of community involvement among others. On the way forward, the paper suggested the need for the delineation of the responsibilities of all tiers of government and increased participation of the community in the implementation of the national policy among others.

Keywords: Nigeria's national policy on education, Sustainable learning, Innovative educational management practices

Introduction

In Nigeria, from the time when the National Policy on Education was promulgated in 1977, the policy has undergone several editions at various times. In every circumstance, its revision comes along with it changes and innovations aimed at improving and strengthening the

policy as well as repositioning the educational system of Nigeria. Through this way, the policy's is being seen as responding to the dynamism of educational developments within the sphere of the global practices and competitiveness. There is no doubt, an appreciable head way has been attained over the years in the implementation of the policy with its encapsulated changes and innovations. The results so far have been fruitful although not without some challenges. This is because, the policy still is faced with meeting the challenges of this crisis period for sustainable learning. It is in this perspective that this paper examines the National Policy on Education (NPE), innovative educational management practices in the policy, concept of sustainable learning and implementation. it also analyzed, issues, concerns and the way forward for attending to this crisis period for sustainable learning in Nigeria.

The Concept of the National Policy on Education (NPE)

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was first promulgated in 1977 in Nigeria by the Federal Government of Nigeria under General Olusegun Obasanjo. Its promulgation was anchored from the outcome of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference as well as wide consultations and the report of a follow-up National Seminar on Education of experts from government, educational ministries and establishments, voluntary agencies and international organizations held in 1973, where the developed document culminated into the emergence of and publication of the first National Policy on Education in 1977. The document represents the national guideline for the effective administration, management and implementation of education by all tiers of government. It contains a statement of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards and requirements for quality education delivery in Nigeria. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulates the direction of national policy on education towards ensuring equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels of education and the provision of compulsory, free and universal primary education; free university education; and free adult literacy programme as soon as practicable. It provided the legal framework for all the three tires of government Federal, States and Local to participate in the management and provision of education. Meanwhile, from the first time the document was produced, it was edited and revised in 1981, 1988, 2004 and 2007 respectively as well as the current 6th edition of 2013. Over the years, revision of the document has been necessitated by the need to address noticeable gaps in contents that emerged in the course of implementation, maintain currency, relevance and to give adequate attention to new opportunities, issues and challenges (NPE, 2013).

Educational Management in the National Policy on Education

In the National policy on Education (2013), section 9 which takes care of the management of education in Nigeria is called *Planning and Administration of Education*. Nonetheless, however, the concepts of planning and administration are fundamental elements of management in education. From the beginning, the policy noted in (9) 132 that "the success of any system of education is hinged on proper planning framework, efficient administration and adequate financing". This opening statement entails that the entire success of the Nigerian education system depends solely on its effective management. The policy further stated in section (9) 134 that "the administrative machinery for the national education system shall be based on the following cardinal principles viz;

- a) Shared responsibility for the funding and management of basic education as provided for in the constitution;
- b) Close participation and involvement of the communities in the administration and management of their schools;
- c) Effective communication shall be maintained between local communities and the state on the one hand and national machinery for policy formulation and implementation on the other;
- d) Appropriate devolution of educational functions and responsibilities to states, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Local governments;
- e) Integration of educational development and policy with national objectives and programmes; and
- f) Policy should be evidence-based.

This paper has observed that from among the cardinal principles of administering and management of education stated interalia, conclusions could be drawn about issues that calls for concerns in the

management of education in the implementation of the Nigeria's National Policy on Education.

The Concept of Sustainable Learning

The concept of sustainable learning comprised of two solid wordssustainable and learning. For a good definition of the concept, the two words needs to be defined separately. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English the word sustainable is defined as the ability of something to continue for a long time without causing damage to environment while learning is also defined as knowledge gained through reading and study. Perhaps that was why scholars who defined sustainable in a development index sees it as any process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability connotes the ability to keep something going and keep up the progress made in it for the present generation without making the future generation worse off. Essentially, sustainable learning in the context of this paper is defined as the ability to be seeking knowledge through reading and study in a continuum for the use and services of the present and future generations without any damage to the learner and the learning environment. There is no doubt, today across the globe, the process of education is in a serious learning crisis, such that learners are merely attending schools without the actual learning taking place. This phenomenon is what is termed to be a learning crisis and must be properly addressed through sustainability in learning process. Thus, for this to be achieved in the implementation of the Nigeria's national policy, education must be made a continuum, a long term endeavour, an enduring, integrated and life-long process, targeting the future generations and developing in the system a balanced growth across all levels.

The Concept of Implementation

Implementation has long been recognized as a distinct stage in the policy process where a policy or idea or expectations are transform to action targeted at remedying a social problem. It is characterized by the actions of multiple levels of agencies, institutions, organizations and their actors and is influenced by context throughout. In another conception, Danbaba, et all in Musa, et all (Eds) (2020) defined

implementation as the stage where the preparation made earlier, the plans, designs and analysis proposed are tested to see how real they are". These definitions suggest implementation as an action to translate the proceeding thought into concrete reality; activities directed toward putting a programme into effect; and a process of carrying out an objective of a plan. For example, if a state governor decides to build a school, its implementation will involve building of classrooms, library, laboratories, office blocks, posting of teachers, procurement of equipment books and stationary as well as admittance of students. The process of effective implementation is key to addressing this crisis period for sustainable learning.

The concept of Innovation in Educational Management Practice

Generally, the concept of innovation is an activity that transforms visionary ideas of creativity into products and services that deliver great value. However, scholars have defined innovation in various ways such as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product or process in a work place or organizations. So also Gashua, et al in Musa, et al (Eds.) (2020) posited that innovation encompasses an activity of the mind and manifest in form of physical products. In the context of educational management innovation is referred as a process where educational experts like teachers, students and school administrators in recognition of educational needs think outside the box to provide practical and lasting solutions to the identified or perceived educational problem. In principle therefore and in the context of this paper, innovation is not only the implementation of just new ideas, knowledge and practices but also of improved ideas. Knowledge and practices. Thus, this paper notes principles as contained in the NPE which amounts to innovation with a view to improve the quality of educational management to attend to this crisis period for sustainable learning in Nigeria.

Innovative Management Issues in the implementation of the NPE

For the purpose of this discussion, the following issues that relates to the attainment of the cardinal principles as contained in the NPE as per the management of education to attend to this crisis period for sustainable learning are hereby identified.

1) Sharing of responsibility among all tiers of government: This principle is very fundamental for the administration and management of education in Nigeria. This especially for the fact that, Nigeria is a federal state and provision of educational services cut across all tiers of governments. This has for long been an issue in the management of basic education in Nigeria. For instance, the inception of the NPE in 1977 came along with it the launching of the Federal Government of Nigeria's (FGN) famous Universal Primary Education scheme. Then it was the federal government that shouldered the responsibility of managing the scheme throughout the country. Unfortunately, the scheme failed because the FGN became unable to fund and manage the scheme in spite of its laudable objectives. With the development of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the management of primary education was then transferred to the Local governments system established in the country in 1976. This development further worsened the management and administration of primary education as many Local Government Areas (LGA) became incapacitated to manage the primary education. This was largely due to lack of autonomy as all the LGA were under the control and supervision of the states' governments. With the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in 1999, the FGN established a federal agency the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) through the UBE Act of May 2004 to oversee the FGN intervention to the implementation of the UBE in all the states of the federation. States governments were directed also to establish their own states Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) through the state SUBEB law to enable them to access the FGN intervention fund through the UBEC but still under the supervision of the states. To date available records have shown that many states are unable to access their funds from UBEC due to negligence as well as their inability to remit their counterpart fund. It is worthy to note that the funding arrangement of the UBE by the FGN by allocating 2% of the nations Consolidated Revenue to the implementation of the UBE is a very good innovation. As per this innovation, the funding of the UBE is secured and is

- guaranteed, and will make for the achievement of the lofty goals of the UBE programme in Nigeria. In this perspective, this part of the provision of the NPE requiring sharing of responsibility in the management of basic education is a laudable innovation.
- 2) Participation and involvement of communities: This was stated clearly in section 10 (154) of the policy that "government welcomes and encourages the participation of local communities, individuals and organizations". This clause aptly captured the provision of participation of all stakeholders in the general management of education in Nigeria. Presently, there are lots of innovative practices that have been in place as a result of the creation of this provision in the NPE. Some of these innovative practices include the Parent Teachers Associations (PTA), School Based Management Committees (SBMC) with the latter given a prominent place in section 9 (141) which is made to be responsible for the management of schools in each community. In the context of this paper, the SBMC initiative is considered as an outstanding innovative practice in the management of education in Nigeria. The SBMC is a committee that is established in the school which compose of people of the community who are committed to the growth and development of education in the area the school is cited. It is an initiative directed at increasing and sustaining community participation in school management, aimed at providing a managerial support in the day to day running of basic education schools thereby initiating the members of the community into taking ownership of their schools. Its functions centered on collaborating with all relevant stakeholders in the community to sensitize and mobilize parents on enrolment, attendance and retention of the children in the primary schools' level. Furthermore, it ensures monitoring of staff with regard to school attendance and teachers' effectiveness, support the head teachers in innovative leadership and effectiveness in the management of schools, ensuring proper maintenance of school physical facilities, assisting in the procurement of teaching and learning materials, as well as ensuring proper

- accountability of all funds generated and expended in the management of the school.
- 3) Communication between the local community and the state: In education, it is always the duty of the community to provide inputs into the school while the school nurtured and transform the inputs into solving societal problems. Inputs in form of the students/pupils, curriculum contents, facilities and teachers are being provided into the school by the community. In the same way, the school on its part reciprocate by training useful human resources that will be used in the development and transforming of the society. As such, this innovative practice of communication between the two is very essential for ensuring effective management of schools and by extension, the entire education system. The significance of this innovation is it provide adequate utilization of all human and material resources within the community where the school is located. This innovative practice also provides linkages between the school, community and the state especially in policy formulation and implementation in the school system. Thus, before a policy is formulated in the management of schools, the community is being communicated either through the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) or the SBMC who will organize the provision of the inputs to the policy from the society.
- 4) Devolution of functions and responsibilities: This principle involves the decentralization of powers, functions and responsibilities of the management and administration of education to states, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and the Local Governments for ease of coordination of the education system. The Nigerian education has suffered over centralization in its management for a long time. For instance, primary education used to be managed by the federal government at its inception until when the states and local governments were created. However, it is interesting to note that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended, has placed the management of education under the concurrent legislative lists. Thus, just as federal government legislate on the provision of education, so also states and local governments can also

make legislation on the management of education in their domains. This is a very good development and made distinction between education agencies and establishments in their functions and responsibilities under federal, states and local governments in the country. For instance, the federal government controlled and manage federal universities and federal agencies of education under the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) while the states manage all states owned tertiary education and agencies under the various states Ministries of Education (SMoE) and the local government basically in charge of the basic education system. This, although a good arrangement but remain an issue in the administration and management of education in Nigeria.

5) Integration of policy with national objectives: This principle entails total alignment of all policies enunciated at the federal, states and the local governments with the national objectives or what the NPE called the Philosophy of Nigerian Education. According to the policy, the Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on set of beliefs which includes consideration of education as an instrument for national development and social change vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria aiming at maximizing the creative potentials and skills of individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society a compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of any peculiarity and for education to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society. This is an issue especially with the current trends of crisis bedeviling the Nigerian political system which is affecting its corporate existence.

Concerns on the Implementation of the NPE

The discussion so far has depicted prevalence of serious implications of innovative practices of educational management on the implementation of the Nigeria's NPE. In the opinion of this paper, the followings are the concerns on the innovative practices on the implementation of the NPE.

a) Rift between the tiers of governments: The NPE has recognized each tire of government as having a responsibility in the

administration and management of education in the country. However, there exist some disagreements which is causing concern on the implementation of the NPE with regards to some levels of education. For instance, the states government are in disagreements with the counterpart funding for UBEC intervention fund claiming that the responsibility of the management of primary education is solely a state matter. At the same time, the Local governments councils are also claiming responsibility of managing primary education and which carries more weight as per the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was the first time that management of primary education was transferred to the Local Government Councils. Going by this which also have not changed till date remained a matter of concern, because of the fact that funds meant for the management of primary education is coming from the federal government by way of deduction from the statutory allocations of local government councils is aggravating the management of primary education in the country (Yabo, 2016, Yabo, 2017)

b) Politicization of community involvement: Recent trends have shown that, there is too much politicization of community involvement into the management of education in the country. For instance, the NPE recognized the establishment of SBMC, PTA and Old students' associations for support in the management of basic education. These are community committees that have been widely known to be voluntarily instrumental to many developments in their various school systems. Now that it has been enunciated in the NPE, suggests that there will be increased efforts on their part in that direction. Unfortunately, Since the commencement of the establishment of the SBMC's in the country, there has been so much of political interference in the composition of its members. For instance, members of the SBMC, PTA and Old Boys associations are sometimes selected not elected, and being dominated by spouses of teachers, influential or powerful as well as people from privileged background (Yabo, 2022a). This has resulted to selection, election or appointing as the case may be people who have no capacity, competence or

- requisite knowledge and experience to bring about improvement and development of schools' management in basic education. Meanwhile, it is a common knowledge that the education sector is very well politicized so much so that from teachers, head teachers as well as principal officers in the education sector needs one or two affiliations with political parties before appointed to serve in the education system.
- c) Disconnect between local community and the state: The state and the school are to link themselves in the formulation and development of policies and programmes meant for school improvement. There is at present an innovation which requires the school managers and the SBMC to come together and develop a School Improvement Plan (SIP), where priorities in school management are identified and selected for implementation. However, little attention is given to this initiative both in its development and implementation at the school level (Yabo, 2023a).
- d) Government poor commitment to educational objectives: This has been a phenomenon in the administration and management of education globally and especially in Nigeria. The educational goals are supposed to drive the efforts of the government, planners and managers of education. But as noted by scholars, experience in some countries including Nigeria has shown that governments are reluctant in their commitment to innovations and strategic goals in educational management (Musa, et all 2020). This often leads to misplacement of priorities and eventual wastages.
- e) Change of leadership: Many times good innovations may be developed and mounted for the development of educational management by a leader e.g President, Minister of Education or Chairmen/Executive Secretaries of educational establishments but their tenure may be short-lived and could not implement the innovation. In Nigeria over the years it has become a tradition of frequent change of leadership in education Ministry whereby each of the appointed Minister more often than not come up with his/her own innovations and a new method of implementation. For instance, available records have shown that Nigeria from 1958-2015 (57 years) has

had 55 federal and states Ministers of education (Yabo,2017). This shows that each Minister spent an average of one year in office which is too inadequate to manifest any success or achievement in the implementation of any innovation in educational management in Nigeria. This has affected continuity in the case of many outstanding policies and programmes of government meant to perfect and guarantee a sound educational management practice for the country.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The role of education in national development cannot be overemphasized. This therefore makes it imperative for government all over the world to strategize and develop not only policies, but innovative policies that could account for the dynamism of educational management practices at all times. As the world changes, so also the human approach to matters of concerns for human capital development must also change. Meanwhile, this paper hereby suggest the way forward as follows:

a) Delineation of roles between tiers of government: As it were there is a mix-up in the roles being played by the three tires of government in the management of education in Nigeria. For instance, the Federal Government is providing intervention through the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) is contributing 2% from its Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) and thus cannot be conveniently justified especially that the federal government has no primary school under its control to manage, because by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the management of primary schools is the sole responsibility of the local government council. Similarly, the FGN should hand over the management of the Federal Government Unity Secondary schools/Colleges to state and stop overbearing the Federal Ministry of Education in spending over 80% of its allocation on them when also the states government are running secondary education (Yabo, 2017). Duties and responsibilities of management of education in Nigeria though a shared responsibility must be clearly separated and each tier allowed to function effectively.

- b) Ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the NPE: The federal Government should consider itself as a policy making body and insist on total implementation of its policy guidelines across the state of the federation. It should take its position as the watch dog, quality assurance and educational policy guidelines monitor and enforcer of rules and regulations guiding the management of education in Nigeria.
- c) States government and Local Government reconciliation: The state government level, that is another place where politics take precedence in the management of education. As the primary education teacher's salary for instance is paid from the accounts of the local government councils, appointment of key personnel at the Local Government Education Authorities should be fully reconciled ensure that only competent officers and who are from the LGA are appointed. This will reduce wrangling, mismanagement of resources and increased accountability of officers to the local government councils for optimum performance.
- d) Increased Community participation and involvement: This is very significant because globally, education is becoming the responsibility of all. Communities and societies are considered as critical stakeholders in the management of education. Since the NPE has recognized that, it is only worthwhile that it should be strengthened to achieve result.
- e) Effective monitoring and supervision of educational service: No matter the amount of human, material and financial resources provided in the management of education if adequate and effective supervision is not done, achievement of objectives of education cannot be guaranteed. It is through this constant and effective supervision that obsolete principles are identified, fresh and innovative ideas are initiated and successes are being achieved.

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