

Principles and problems of policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration

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ABSTRACT

Policy implementation has presented the Nigerian educational system with countless obstacles cum problems. This research explored the principles and problems of policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study population was 286 principals. The study sample was 229 principals drawn through a simple random sampling, representing 80% of the population. An instrument, principles and problems of policy implementation for effective secondary school administration was utilized for data collection. Cronbach alpha established a reliability coefficient of 0.89. Mean and standard deviation were used for data collection, while a t-test was utilized to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The researchers found that the principles of policy implementation for effective secondary school administration are founded on ensuring a positive and clear policy statement, flexibility in the policy statement, fact-based policy statement, effectiveness in policy statement communication, openness to review, and properly documented in writing. It was recommended that school principals provide copies of the school policy to all the teachers. The principals should not be subjective in implementing policy for effective school administration. The implication of the study is that principals should adopt effective principles for policy implementation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Like other organizations, the educational system is guided by policies for actions and decisions to conform to the required standard. This is to ensure the effective administration of institutions. Government and school heads make policies for the smooth running of institutions. Policies are made to avert unwarranted situations. Akram and Yang [1], Atakpa and Ayogu [2] maintained that in proffering solutions to problems confronting their people, public policies are applied by Governments. Educational policies are made with regard to education-related issues. Felicia *et al.* [3] maintained that when the government gives initiatives of educational system directions, educational policies are being made. Thajane and Masitsa [4] conceptualize policy as a school's administrative plan of action to achieve a particular aim.

Policies are made at macro and micro levels. At the macro level, the government, through agencies like the ministry of education and education board, make policies in the form of guideline to govern how the schools are administered. In all cases, government policies supersede institutional policies; hence

Jacob and Samuel [5] emphasized that in all the educational system, the federal ministry of education ensures quality control by handling formulation of national policy. Policies are therefore made at various governmental levels with the federal level superseding other tiers of government. At the school level (micro), the school principal makes policies to regulate the activities of staff and students for effective coordination of staff and students. For policies to be owned by all school members, the formulation should be participatory to achieve effective implementation. This is very important for secondary school education. Stakeholders perceive secondary school as a crucial level of education. This is built on the understanding that it promotes numeracy, literacy, and vocational skills acquisitions. Effective completion of secondary school is expected to make the graduate be self-dependent, self-reliant, and an employer of labour owing to the acquisition of numeracy, literacy, and vocational skills. This level of education can also prepare students for the next level, which is the tertiary level of education. To make the assertion about the importance and relevance of secondary education clear, the Federal Republic of Nigeria [6] outlined its objectives to include:

- Provide holders of basic education certificate and junior arabic and islamic studies certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level irrespective of gender, social status, religious, or ethnic background;
- Offer diversified curriculum to cater to the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities, and future roles;
- Provide trained human resources in the applied sciences, technology, and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- Provide entrepreneurial, technical, and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance and agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development;
- Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art, and culture in the context of the world's cultural heritage;
- Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- Foster patriotism, national unity, and security education with an emphasis on common ties despite our diversity; and
- Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others, and appreciate the dignity of labour.

a. Policy implementation

Enyiazu [7] maintained that the act of executing a plan, a policy, or an assignment is policy implementation. Educational planners are interested in policy implementation as it is the only way that educational goals can be attained, and it is the responsibility of the school principal to implement policies made by the government and those made in the school. The lofty and very important goals and objectives of secondary education may be far from being achieved if there is no effective school administration to implement them. School administration is a veritable channel through which policies are implemented in the educational system. School administration poses as an indispensable administration process vital for effective, productive, and efficient running of the school system. The word “administration” is derived from the Latin word “minister”, which means service rendered to others for their welfare, to care for, or to look after people to manage affairs. By this point, we may say that educational administration is the practice of steering a school's human and material assets toward the achievement of its stated mission [8]. Similarly, school administration refers to the total process required to accomplish school goals [9]. Principals, vice principals, programmes administrators, department heads, and staff members in leadership positions are in charge of school administration [10]. It can be deduced from the definitions of school administration that it has to do with the organization and direction of human and material resources to achieve desired results. When school administration achieves its purpose, it can be said to be effective. The school principal is the school's administrator who has to be effective to engender the attainment of goals of education by enlisting the performance of all staff, doing what ought to be done to achieve a goal is termed performance in the educational system [11]. Therefore, policy implementation in the education system entails doing what is right so that the goals of education can be attained. Both teachers and principals in secondary schools are policy implementers. Policies are guidelines to be followed to accomplish a predetermined goal.

In light of this discussion, effective school administration has to do with proper organization and direction of human and as material resources to achieve stated school goals and objectives and laid down policy. Akporehe [12] maintained that actions in the school system are giving official backing by policies. Moreover, effective school administration and operations support an education that goes beyond imparting knowledge, meeting personnel's daily needs, creating a safe environment, and providing appropriate medical care and mental health support [13]. The indicators of effective school administration are: the effective setting of a school's budget, accounting for local and federal funding, knowing who and when to delegate, knowing when to hire teachers, ensuring the implementation of curriculum, assistance in the management of some behavioral and classroom activities, knowing when to provide teachers with tools they need to succeed in their classrooms and the provision of disciplinary actions accordingly [10].

This implied that the success of the school system depends to a large extent on the school principals. Cohen *et al.* [14] maintained that principals are instructional leaders. As noted by Nwodim [15] certain structures and policies on the ground to achieve an ambitious educational system, such as; training and retraining of teachers, construction of model primary schools; renovation and refurbishment of existing structures and facilities; training and retraining of teachers amongst others. However, the Achilles' hill of policy achievement is implementation. Recent studies have shown that most principals have shown low commitment to discharge their statutory responsibilities, leading to ineffectiveness. Amadi [16] conducted a study on education policy changes and effective administration with a sample of 273 principals. The finding showed that for school administrators to function at the optimal level, educational policy changes need to be made; for effective school administration, principals are exposed to different types of managerial skills to be able to cope with the new system which they will, in-turn impact to his staff for efficient and effective school administration. This is bolstered by Huguet [17], who revealed that a greater number of principals do not understand administrative principles, leading to the lowering of their productivity. Most public secondary schools are in the mirage of poor administration [18]. This is more so, schools where the principals face administrative challenges [16]. Similarly, there is low productivity in public secondary schools [19]. This uncelebrated state of affairss in the administration and productivity in secondary schools may be attributed to many factors. Some of these factors that may cause issues in school administration are principles of policy implementation [9]. Therefore, this study focused on policy implementation principles and problems for effective school administration in secondary schools.

b. Principles of policy implementation

Principles are stipulated and well-defined processes that guide the administrator and supervisor in the execution of job responsibility [20]. In the educational system, it is tagged principles of educational administration, which implies the system of rules, punishments, and behavioral strategies appropriate to regulating students and maintaining order in schools [21]. Gulzar further enlisted the principles of administration to include working on positive goals, ensuring a conducive learning environment, effective sharing of responsibility, cooperation, equality, creativity, community involvement, and the rule of law. In the same vain, Raji [22] identified principles of policy implementation to include positive and understandable policy statements, flexibility, fact-based policy statements, school-objective based, proper communication of school policy statements, constant evaluation of policy, and written documentation of policy statement. The application of principles in school policy implementation is faced with some challenges. Some of the frequent and identifiable challenges are lack of vision of the top management, poor work attitude of personnel, lack of finance, lack of clear policy statement, lack of motivation, poor policy orientation, and politics in education [22]. Gift and Osuji [23] reported challenges, such as inadequate facilities, cultism/security, and leadership issues. The role principles and problems play in the implementation of education policy are worth studying to proffer solutions that lead to the actualization of education goals and objectives. Therefore, the study investigated principles and problems of policy implementation for effective secondary school administration.

c. Principal principles and policy implementation

Principal principles are those qualities that a principal need to exhibit that can engender cooperation and synergy of the school community to work towards goal attainment. Giving a clear policy statement draft can lead to effective school administration. This can be achieved through effective communication. Vega-Ramírez *et al.* [24] opined that the dissemination and coherence with entity associated with the policy is important. The teachers and stakeholders must understand the policy to cooperate with the school administrator. Therefore, principal managerial skills like good leadership can influence administrative effectiveness and, by implication, affect policy implementation. Manafa [25] conducted a study in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria on principals' managerial skills and administrative effectiveness using 289 vice principals. The pearson product moment correlation co-efficient test showed that supervision, organization skills, and communication had a significant relationship between principal managerial skills and administrative effectiveness. In a related study, Ukaigwe *et al.* [26] and Galle *et al.* [27] found that principal leadership skills can help in providing teachers who are committed to goals, help the teacher to be adaptable to changing situation among others. Funding is an important issue in policy implementation. Agbai *et al.* [28] lamented that funding is one of the greatest factors bedeviling education as all aspects of policy implementation require funding.

2. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

Van Meter and Van Horn [29] policy implementation theory forms the study's theoretical model. The model encapsulated six factors: i) policy standards and policy implementation objectives; ii) resources and incentives for policy implementation; iii) communication activities between organizations; iv) characteristics of policy implementing institutions; v) the political, social and economic environment; and vi) disposition and

attitude of policy implementers. These factors enunciate the necessary productive imperatives needed as principles for policy implementation. Their non-consideration could impinge on policy implementation. Policy objectives must be well stated and communicated in measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound manner for easy implementation. Policy must be communicated to the implementers in an understandable and interpretable form. No policy can be implemented without the provision of the right resources- fiscally and physically. A hostile environment created by the principal leadership or society can discourage teachers' effectiveness, thereby impacting children's learning and leading to poor policy implementation. The attitude of teachers and principals to work can lead to the achievement of policy and goals of education. A dedicated and hardworking workforce is a panacea to policy achievement, as principals and teachers are the most important policy-implementing agents in the educational system. They need to be dedicated to duty, grounded in their subject areas and love the job for effective teaching and learning in school. Joel *et al.* [30] have criticized the hastily and expedience manner which educational policies conceived in Nigeria that have led to unachievable targets because of the variety of issues and possibilities associated with the allocation and utilization of available human and material resources.

a. RQs

- RQ1: What are the principles of policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration?
- RQ2: What are the problems of policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration?

b. Hypotheses

- H1: There is no significant difference between male and female principals on the principles of policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration.
- H2: There is no significant difference between male and female principals on the problems of policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Research design

The study is an expose facto design. The study adopted the descriptive survey method. In expose facto design, the researcher usually has no control over the variables of interest and therefore cannot manipulate them. In survey method, the researcher seeks information from a large population through a sample. The survey method covers a large area. In this study, all the public secondary school in River State were in the scope of the study.

3.2. Sample and sampling technique

The population of the study is 286 principals in the 286 public secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample size is 229 principals drawn through simple random sampling, representing 80% of the population. An instrument, principles and problem of policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration (PPPIRESSA), was used for data collection. The instrument is a 14-item measure that was structured with response format of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1), respectively. The instrument has two sections. The first section contains the respondents' demographic information, such as school location, gender, and designation. The second section has two clusters of A and B. Section A has seven items that measure principles of policy implementation. At the same time, section B also uses seven items to measure the challenges in policy implementation. The instrument PPPIRESSA was validated by three professors who are experts in test construction in the Department of Educational Management and Foundation in Delta State University, Abraka. Cronbach alpha established an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.89 for PPPIRESSA. The instrument was administered by the researcher and three research assistants who were educated on instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used for data collection, while a t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data in Table 1 revealed that items with serial numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 have their various mean values above the criterion mean value of 2.50 and were agreed by the respondents as the principles of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration. The principles of policy implementation reconsideration are the provision of clear policy statement draft reconsideration, inputting flexibility in policy reconsideration, proper communication of policy reconsideration, proper communication of policy reconsideration, accommodation of routine evaluation of policy statement, reconsideration of policies

based to reflect the objectives prescribed, removal of personal reflections in policy reconsideration, and written documentation of policy statements.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation scores of principals on the principles of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration

S/N	Items	Male principals			Female principals		
		Mean	Std	Decision	Mean	Std	Decision
1	Clear policy statement draft reconsideration can lead to effective school administration	3.19	0.51	Agreed	3.12	0.52	Agreed
2	Inputting flexibility in policy reconsideration can lead to effective school administration	3.24	0.54	Agreed	3.24	0.55	Agreed
3	Proper communication of policy reconsideration can lead to effective school administration	3.38	0.59	Agreed	3.35	0.59	Agreed
4	Accommodation of routine evaluation of policy statements can lead to effective school administration	3.17	0.38	Agreed	3.08	0.38	Agreed
5	Reconsideration of policies based on reflecting the objectives prescribed can lead to effective school administration.	3.16	0.37	Agreed	3.18	0.38	Agreed
6	Removal of personal reflections in policy reconsideration can lead to effective school administration.	3.12	0.32	Agreed	3.12	0.33	Agreed
7	Written documentation of policy statements can lead to effective school administration	3.23	0.65	Agreed	3.3	0.65	Agreed
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.21	0.48		3.19	0.49	

- RQ2: What are the problems of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration?

Data in Table 2 revealed that items with serial numbers 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 have their various mean values above the criterion mean value of 2.50 and were agreed by the respondents as problems of principles of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration. The problems of policy implementation reconsideration are the negative attitude of school personnel towards, lack of vision the school management, inadequate availability of finance, lack of clarity of policy statement, lack of motivation, lack of policy orientation, and politics in education in the area of resources procurement.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation scores of principals on the problems of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration

S/N	Items	Male principals			Female principals		
		Mean	Std	Decision	Mean	Std	Decision
1	Negative attitude of school personnel towards policy implementation hinders effective school administration	2.95	0.41	Agreed	2.94	0.42	Agreed
2	Lack of vision the school management affects effective school administration	2.94	0.53	Agreed	2.94	0.54	Agreed
3	Inadequate availability of finance affects effective school administration	3.00	0.33	Agreed	3.00	0.35	Agreed
4	Lack of clarity of policy statement hinders effective school administration	3.01	0.61	Agreed	2.99	0.59	Agreed
5	Lack of motivation hinders effective school administration	3.05	0.23	Agreed	3.06	0.24	Agreed
6	Lack of policy orientation leads to poor school administration	2.84	0.37	Agreed	2.82	0.38	Agreed
7	Politics in education in the area of resource procurement hinders effective school administration	2.73	0.56	Agreed	2.70	0.58	Agreed
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	2.93	0.43		2.92	0.44	

- H1: There is no significant difference between male and female principal's responses on principles of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration.

Data in Table 3 revealed that male principals have mean and standard scores of 22.49 and 1.96, while female teachers have mean and standard deviation scores of 22.47 and 1.99, respectively. With a degree of freedom of 227, the t-calculated value of 0.10 is not significant because the significant value of 0.92 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference between male and female principals on policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration. This indicated that both male and female principals do not differ in their views on the principles of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration.

- H2: There is no significant difference between male and female principals on the problems of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration.

Data in Table 4 revealed that male principals have mean and standard scores of 20.53 and 1.55, while female teachers have mean and standard deviation scores of 20.46 and 1.58, respectively. With a degree of freedom of 227, the t-calculated value of 0.29 is not significant because the significant value of 0.77 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference between male and female principals on the problems of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration. This implied that both male and female principals share the same view on problems of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration.

Table 3. t-test result of the mean difference between male and female principals responses on the principles of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t-cal	Sig.	Alpha level	Decision
Male principals	128	22.49	1.96	227	0.10	0.92	0.05	Not significant
Female principals	101	22.47	1.99					

Table 4. t-test result of the mean difference between male and females on the problems of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t-cal	Sig.	Alpha level	Decision
Male principals	128	20.52	1.55	227	0.29	0.77	0.05	Not significant
Female principals	101	20.46	1.58					

The study revealed that the principles of policy implementation reconsideration are the provision of clear policy statement draft reconsideration, inputting flexibility in policy reconsideration, proper communication of policy reconsideration, proper communication of policy reconsideration, accommodation of routine evaluation of policy statement, reconsideration of policies based to reflect the objectives prescribed, removal of personal reflections in policy reconsideration and written documentation of policy statements. This finding is boasted by Amadi [16] whose study finding showed that for school administrators to function at the optimal level, educational policy changes need to be made; for effective school administration, principals are exposed to different types of managerial skills to be able to cope with the new system which they will in-turn impact to his staff for efficient and effective school administration. The finding showed that for school administrators to function at the optimal level, educational policy changes need to be made; for effective school administration, principals are exposed to different types of managerial skills to be able to cope with the new system which they will, in-turn impact to his staff for efficient and effective school administration. Buttressing this study was asserting that principles are germane in effective policy implementation [20]. This is in corroboration of this study; the principles in policy administration are geared towards working on positive goals, ensuring a conducive learning environment, effective sharing of responsibility, cooperation, equality, creativity, community involvement, and the rule of law. In the same vein, Raji [22] found that the principles of policy implementation are positive and understandable policy statement, flexibility, fact-based policy statement, school-objective based, proper communication of school policy statement, constant evaluation of policy, and written documentation of policy statement. This study has shown that principles are required for policy implementation for effective school administration in secondary schools. The hypothesis revealed no significant difference between male and female principals on the principles of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration. The hypothesis is accepted because the male and female principals perceived the principles alike.

The study has shown that the problems of policy implementation reconsideration are negative attitude of school personnel towards, lack of vision the school management, inadequate availability of finance, lack of clarity of policy statement, lack of motivation, lack of policy orientation and politics in education in the area of resources procurement. The study finding is in agreement with that of Raji [22] who revealed lack of vision of the top management, the poor work attitude of personnel, lack of finance, lack of clear policy statement, lack of motivation, poor policy orientation, and politics in education are major policy implementation challenges. In the same vein, the finding concurred with that of Gift and Osuji [23], who found some challenges, such as inadequate facilities, cultism/security, and leadership issues as hindrances to effective policy implementation for school administration. The role problems of policy implementation play in education is such that it will hinder the full realization of education policy and effective education goals and objectives. The hypothesis showed no significant difference between male and female principals on the problems of policy implementation reconsideration for effective secondary school administration.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there are principles and problems associated with policy implementation reconsiderations for effective secondary school administration. Specifically, the researchers concluded that the principles involved in policy implementation ranged from ensuring clear policy statement draft reconsideration, inputting flexibility in policy reconsideration, and proper policy communication to proper policy communication. More so, the challenges ranged from the negative attitude of school personnel to a lack of policy orientation. Implications for educational planning: the implications for educational planners are that educational policies should be clearly stated and well-communicated to stakeholders. Principals should be part of the planning process for effective implementation. The study has implications for the provision of facilities to execute educational policies in secondary schools. The findings also have implications for the capacity development of principals for effective administrative leadership of the schools to enhance effective use of human and material resources to achieve educational goals. There are also implications for policymakers to integrate policy implementers in the policy formulation process for the effective implementation of policies. Recommendations: i) the school principals should provide all the teachers copies of the school policy; ii) the principals should not be subjective in implementing policy for effective school administration; and iii) the principals should fully get involved in development programmes.




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