

Nigerian Academy of Education

38th Annual Congress

Theme: Nigerian Education System: Past, Present, and Future

Venue:

Conference Hall, National Commission
for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Abuja

Date:

Wednesday, 6th November 2024

POLICIES, REFORM AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Lead Paper Presented by

Hauwa Imam, FCCEAM, MNAE

At the 38th Annual Congress of the Nigerian Educational
Academy

6th November 2024

Abstract

- This paper provides an in-depth look at Nigeria's educational system, focusing on the policies, reforms, and management issues that influence its effectiveness. A major challenge identified is the tendency for policies and reforms to operate in isolation, which hinders the coherence of the educational system. The paper uses a systems theory framework to examine these issues, emphasising the interdependencies within the education system. This theory highlights the ripple effect any policy change can have, stressing the need for a cohesive approach. Finally, it proposes recommendations for a holistic and integrated approach to policy-making and implementation, positioning education as a pivotal force for Nigeria's sustainable development

Overview

This paper examines the development, challenges, and evolution of educational policies and reforms in Nigeria, exploring the complex relationship between policy formulation, reform, and management. Educational policies formulated by government and education authorities establish the guidelines that shape national educational objectives and goals.

However, issues such as inadequate coordination, policy gaps, and limited stakeholder engagement often hinder effective implementation.

Nigeria has undertaken several significant reforms over the decades, addressing the colonial legacies and adapting to new societal needs and economic demands. Despite these efforts, systemic issues such as inconsistent funding, regional disparities, and infrastructure limitations persist.

- **The study proposes a systems theory-based framework for policy formulation and implementation, emphasising interconnectedness, stakeholder collaboration, and adaptability.**
- **Systems theory offers a holistic approach, recognising the interdependence among various components of the educational system and advocating for comprehensive, long-term solutions rather than isolated, short-term fixes.**
- **This framework underscores the need for continuous feedback loops, strategic resource allocation, and resilience to adapt to Nigeria's rapidly changing educational landscape.**
- **By integrating these principles, Nigeria can improve policy outcomes and foster sustainable development, contributing to the nation's socio-economic progress and global competitiveness. The recommendations stress the importance of a unified, systems-oriented approach to policy reform, aiming to build a skilled, innovative workforce and promote equitable access to quality education.**

Introduction

Educational policies are laws, regulations, and guidelines established by governments and education authorities to achieve national educational goals (Gunawan et al., 2023; Firdaus et al., 2023). These policies are typically initiated by government officials, with limited involvement from educators, as policymakers often view them as lacking the capacity for meaningful contributions (Viennet & Pont, 2017). Public policies play a critical role in national development by shaping educational systems that influence societal and political progress (Sudartono & Rachmandhani, 2021).

Introduction (contd.)

Policy formulation is a complex process involving agenda-setting, legal ratification, and balancing technical feasibility with political legitimacy (Alfiyah, 2011; Olsen & O'Neil, 2008).

In Nigeria, recent decades have seen major educational reforms aimed at improving quality, accessibility, and relevance in response to globalisation and technological advances (Chiaha & Nane-Ejeh, 2014). These reforms include curriculum adjustments, skill-based learning, and efforts to enhance teaching quality and expand access in underserved areas (Osagiobare et al., 2019a), with a goal to support Nigeria's economic and social development.

The Problem: Isolated Approach to Education Policy

The main issue identified is that Nigeria's educational policies, reforms, and management are often treated as separate entities, despite their interconnected nature within a complex system. This isolated approach hinders effective implementation and creates policy gaps. Poor coordination between government tiers leads to inconsistent implementation, compounded by weak monitoring systems and frequent leadership changes causing discontinuity.

Policy Gaps:

Hinder effective implementation of educational policies and reforms

Weak Monitoring:

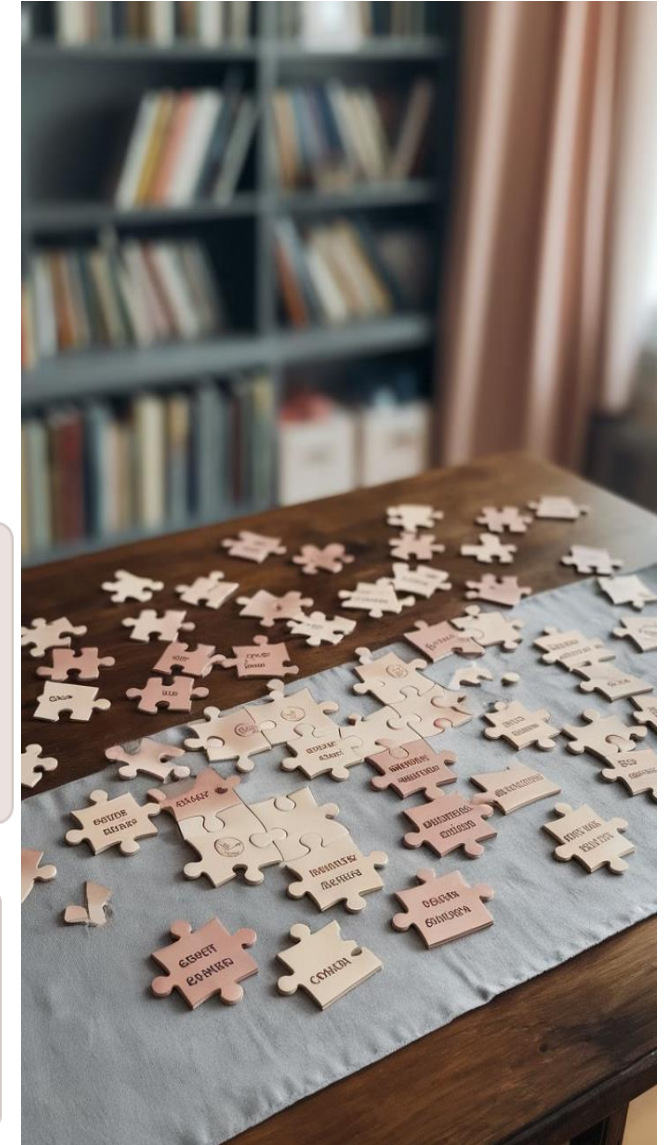
Insufficient oversight of policy implementation

Poor Coordination:

Inconsistent implementation across government tiers

Leadership Changes:

Cause discontinuity in policy execution



Conceptual Framework

- A unified framework based on the systems theory acknowledges the interdependence among various components of quality education. Systems theory, applied to education, emphasises the interconnected nature of the educational system. Any change, such as a new policy, can create ripple effects across all areas, including reforms and management.
- Understanding these connections is crucial for creating compelling, cohesive policies. Moreover, systems theory emphasises the importance of feedback mechanisms, which allow continuous adaptation to the changing educational landscape. This approach is instrumental in building a responsive, resilient education system in Nigeria.
- To illustrate the relationship between policy, reform, and administrative issues, one can visualise it as a flow diagram.

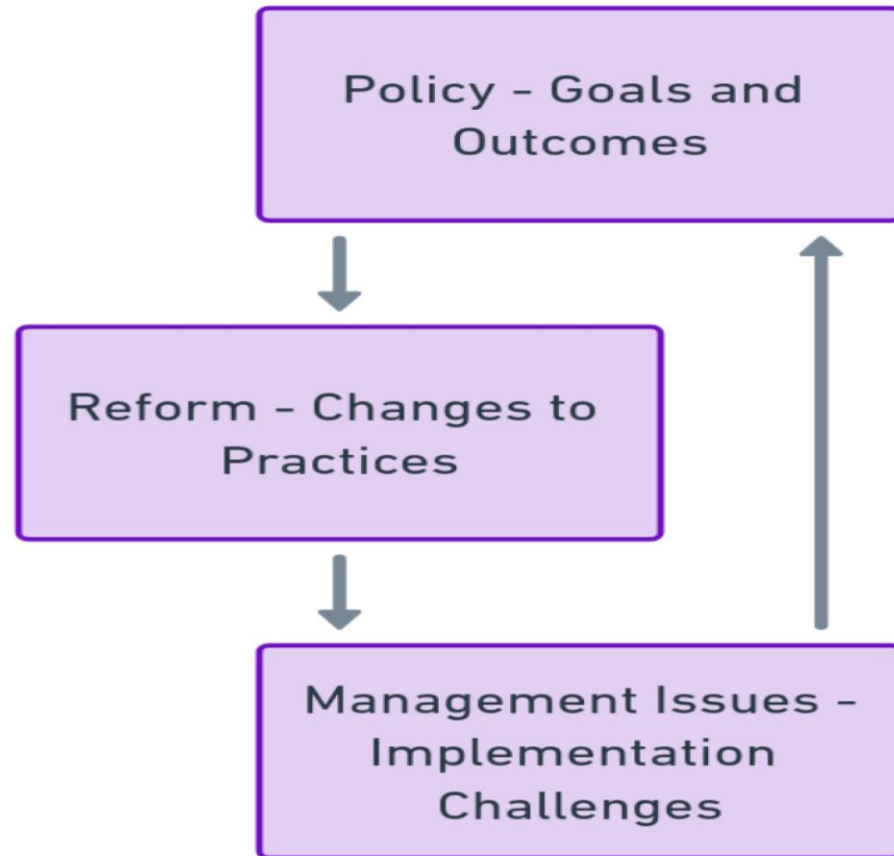


Figure 1. System framework for policy, reform and management issues

Historical Context: Pre-Colonial and Colonial Education

- Before colonialism- Nigerian communities' education policies were rooted in culture and skills acquisition.
- The arrival of Christian missionaries in 1842 introduced Western education, but with narrow curricula tailored to meet evangelical needs.
- This colonial period was marked by the introduction of educational ordinances, such as the 1940 Education Ordinance, aimed at revising the educational system. The need produce clerks for administration and commerce

National Policy on Education: 1977 Inception

The first National Policy on Education in Nigeria was introduced in 1977, following recommendations from the 1969 National Curriculum Conference and the Ashby Commission. It aimed to address inadequacies in the colonial education system and align with post-colonial Nigeria's cultural, economic, and social realities. The policy introduced the 6-3-3-4 structure: six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary, and four years of tertiary education. It emphasized science and technology education, equal access to education, and the promotion of national development and self-reliance.



6-3-3-4 Structure

New educational system structure



Science Focus

Emphasis on science and technology



Equal Access

Promotion of educational equality

National Policy on Education: 1977 Inception

The first National Policy on Education in Nigeria was introduced in 1977, following recommendations from the 1969 National Curriculum Conference and the Ashby Commission. It aimed to address inadequacies in the colonial education system and align with post-colonial Nigeria's cultural, economic, and social realities. The policy introduced the 6-3-3-4 structure: six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary, and four years of tertiary education. It emphasized science and technology education, equal access to education, and the promotion of national development and self-reliance.



6-3-3-4 Structure

New educational system structure



Science Focus

Emphasis on science and technology



Equal Access

Promotion of educational equality



Policy Revisions: 1981-2004

The National Policy on Education underwent several revisions to address implementation challenges and adapt to changing needs. The 1981 revision fine-tuned objectives in response to funding and infrastructure issues. The 1998 update focused on globalization demands and ICT integration. The 2004 revision supported the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, launched in 1999, providing free and compulsory education for the first nine years of schooling. This aimed to address low enrollment and high dropout rates, particularly in rural areas and among girls.

1

1981

Fine-tuning objectives

2

1998

Focus on globalization and ICT

3

2004

Support for UBE program



Reform Strategies & Challenges

Nigeria has explored various strategies to address educational challenges, including decentralization of educational governance and integration of traditional knowledge into curricula. Efforts to leverage technology for enhancing teaching and learning have been made, particularly in rural areas. However, reforms have faced persistent challenges such as regional disparities, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure. Quality assurance mechanisms have been identified as crucial for transforming the education system, particularly at the secondary level.

Decentralization

Empowering local governments in education

Technology Integration

Leveraging ICT for improved learning

Quality Assurance

Implementing monitoring frameworks

Persistent Challenges

Funding, infrastructure, regional disparities



Teacher Education & Skills Development

Reforms have focused on improving teacher education, with efforts to strengthen recruitment, training, and professional development. Programs have been implemented to attract and retain qualified teachers, including enhancing skills, improving remuneration, and career progression. There has been a push to equip teachers with 21st-century skills to prepare students for the modern labor market. Additionally, reforms have emphasized practical, skill-based learning to align graduates with labor market demands and address youth unemployment.



Teacher Training

Enhanced recruitment and development



21st Century Skills

Focus on modern competencies



Career Development

Improved progression opportunities

Critique of Reform Efforts

Critics argue that educational reforms in Nigeria have been carried out piecemeal and lack a cohesive long-term strategy. The reforms have failed to address deep-rooted challenges such as poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, and persistent regional inequalities. Some propose more radical reforms, including a comprehensive overhaul of the curriculum, substantial increases in funding, and restructuring of teacher training programs. There is a call for a national consensus on educational priorities, coupled with a commitment to long-term planning and sustained investment.

1 Piecemeal Approach

Reforms lack cohesive long-term strategy

2 Unaddressed Challenges

Funding, infrastructure, and regional inequalities persist

3 Call for Radical Reform

Comprehensive overhaul of curriculum and funding needed

4 National Consensus

Need for agreed educational priorities and sustained investment

Critique of Reform Efforts

Critics argue that educational reforms in Nigeria have been carried out piecemeal and lack a cohesive long-term strategy. The reforms have failed to address deep-rooted challenges such as poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, and persistent regional inequalities. Some propose more radical reforms, including a comprehensive overhaul of the curriculum, substantial increases in funding, and restructuring of teacher training programs. There is a call for a national consensus on educational priorities, coupled with a commitment to long-term planning and sustained investment.

1 Piecemeal Approach

Reforms lack cohesive long-term strategy

2 Unaddressed Challenges

Funding, infrastructure, and regional inequalities persist

3 Call for Radical Reform

Comprehensive overhaul of curriculum and funding needed

4 National Consensus

Need for agreed educational priorities and sustained investment

Systems Theory Application in Education Policy

- The paper recommends applying systems theory principles in policy-making and implementation. This approach recognises the interconnectedness of educational policies and promotes a holistic approach to reform. It emphasises the importance of considering how new policies impact existing structures and stakeholders and acknowledges the potential for unintended consequences. Systems theory also highlights the value of feedback loops in policy design and implementation, encouraging ongoing evaluation and stakeholder input for continuous improvement.

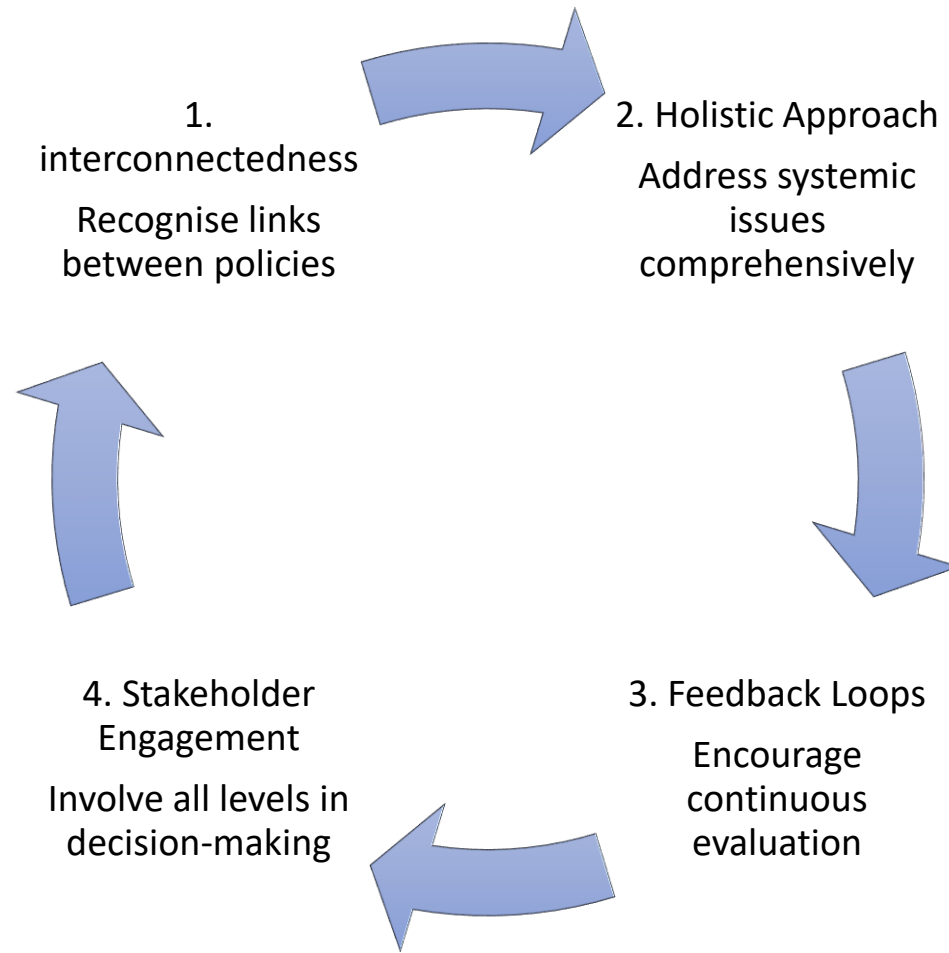


Figure 2. Application of systems theory in educational policy

Conclusion and Future Directions

- The paper concludes that while progress has been made in expanding access and introducing skill-based learning, challenges remain in ensuring quality and equity in Nigerian education.
- Moving forward, a more comprehensive and well-coordinated approach to policymaking and implementation of educational reforms is essential. This approach should address systemic issues, focus on developing a skilled workforce, and promote innovation
- . By applying systems theory principles, policymakers and educational leaders can better understand the complexities of the education system, fostering more effective, equitable, and sustainable improvements in the quality of education for national development.

Summary of Key Points

Systemic Challenges: Nigeria's education policies and reforms often face isolation, impacting policy cohesiveness and outcomes.

Systems Theory: Framework applied to understand interdependencies within the education system, supporting cohesive policy reform.

Holistic Recommendations: Proposal for a unified approach to enhance educational policy, reform, and management for sustainable impact.

Thank you all for listening

Hauwa Imam, FCCEAM, MNAE

080365929543

drhauwa imam@gmail.com