

## **Educational Planning in Nigeria Constraints and Prospects**

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### **Abstract**

The Nigerian education system has undoubtedly encountered a lot of constraints in educational planning and implementation. The country has continued to struggle with the implementation of educational plans due to lack of effective planning. This paper examines some of the peculiar problems militating against effective implementation of educational plans in Nigeria which have almost rendered educational planning impotent. Political, financial and statistical constraints among others have impeded effective educational planning and implementation in Nigeria. The paper again discusses the functions of educational planning, its importance and what is needed in planning education. The paper recommends that mismanagement of educational resources at any level of education in Nigeria be made a criminal act and that frantic efforts be made by government to diversify the economy so as to make funds available for proper planning among others. The paper concludes that educational planning and implementation in Nigeria are faced with a lot of challenges. The way forward in creating a synergy between educational planning and implementation is suggested. Government has to give the desired attention to education if set goals and objectives are to be achieved.

**Keywords:** *Educational Planning, Implementation, Constraints, Prospects*

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### **Background to the Study**

The need for planning in any human endeavour especially education requires no much emphasis. Education is a social science that contributes immensely to the development of an individual as well as the society. Education equips beneficiaries with the necessary skills, values, ideas, attitudes and knowledge that transform the individual or the beneficiaries into a useful and functional member of the society. A careful planning is needed so that scarce resources available in education could be used judiciously in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Nigerian education as enshrined in the National Policy of education in Nigeria (FRN 2013). Maduewesi, (2005) sees education as a veritable instrument for achieving national goals.

The above discussion presupposes that Nigeria as a country that is yearning for development cannot allow things to happen by chance in education. Our educational system must be arranged at every stage in such a way that it meets the needs and aspirations of both the individual and the nation. This process of intelligently trying to organize education in order to respond to the needs of its recipients is what could be termed as educational planning

### **Meaning of Education Planning**

In order to understand what educational planning means, it is pertinent to understand what is meant by planning. Weihrich, Cannice and Koontz (2008) put it that planning involves selecting mission and objectives and deciding on the actions to achieve them. According to Yawe (2010) "planning is the process of determining in advance, what is to be done, including classification of goals, establishment of policies, mapping out of programme and campaigns and determining specific methods or procedures and fixing day-to-day schedules". In agreement planning could also be seen as setting goals, determining what should be done to ensure that the goals are realized in the best possible way.

Educational planning just like planning has received varied meanings from so many authors. Okwori, (2011, p. 2) sees educational planning as:

*Involving the applications of rational methods, systematic analysis or explanation, through the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in terms of responding to the needs of the students and society as a whole.*

According to Olorube, (2013), educational planning in its broadest generic sense is the application of rational systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society. Considering the definitions of educational planning as the process of taking decisions for future action with the view of achieving pre-determined objectives, through optimum use of scarce resources, the process of educational planning could be seen to comprise of three basic functions.

### **Functions of Educational Planning**

- I. Pre-determination of Goals:** Under educational planning goals and targets are clearly set in relation to national development goals. These goals and targets are also

clearly defined and various activities which are to be carried out in order to achieve the educational objectives are mapped out.

- ii. **Allocation of Scarce Resources:** Hence educational resources are scarce and the needs limitless educational planning tries to allocate the resources of time, finance material and human for optimal use in education. Educational planning sees to it that the limited resources are properly and correctly allocated to provide the needed level and the type of education to the beneficiaries.
- iii. **Decision Making:** This is the process of identifying and selecting a course of action to solve a specific problem. Through planning decisions on how best to deal with educational issues are taken. These include; training, allocation of resources, recruitment, promotions, transfers among others as they affect educational planning. Educational planning is basically concerned with the problem of allocating the limited resources devoted to the educational sector among different levels and types of education. This therefore brings to the fore the importance of educational planning.

#### **Importance of Educational Planning**

Different sectors of the economy in the nation compete for the scarce available resources. This places undue pressure on the educational sector to shield some of its plans for education. Okonta (2010) asserts that education has to be planned because there are no significant resources such as finance, material, time and personnel. As earlier stated in this paper Nigeria as a country cannot allow things to happen by chance in education. What then is the rationale for educational planning.

1. **Sense of Direction:** Planning provides organizations with goals. The educational goals earmarked serve as a sense of direction to educational institutions, agencies and parastatals hence these organs become aware of what they want to achieve.
2. **Achievement of Objectives:** It is through educational planning that educational objective and goals are set up in relation to the national development goals. Through educational planning, these objectives and goals are clearly identified and the necessary strategies and activities are map out in realizing the objectives and goals of education.
3. **Management of Uncertainty:** The future is full of uncertainties but when we plan we predict the future and so the future is no more uncertain. Saasongu (2005). This implies that when education is planned its future is known today and the confidence is built on what one expects to have in education as the times unfold.
4. **Educational planning promotes spirit of togetherness:** Various units, departments and other education personnel are involved in planning. Their coming together instill the spirit of cohesion as the various ideas; arguments and facts are harmonized into a plan. The final product of their inputs becomes the plan of the organization and this creates spirit of togetherness.

5. **Avoidance of wastages:** Education is principally planned to avoid wastages. Through educational planning what needs to be done is exactly known based on the plan and so the costly mistakes of trial and error in education are avoided or minimized.
6. **Insufficient qualified personnel:** There is a great shortage of quality personnel to teach or man some programmers in our schools. The introduction of new areas of study such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a valid example. Teachers in this area are in short supply in our schools. This calls for planning to take care of this shortage. For instance mounting of such programme in our teachers training institutions through planning.
7. **Population Growth:** The rapid change in population in the society is an inviting factor in educational planning. The population explosion places undue pressure on school personnel, facilities, materials and the finances of the school. Careful educational planning would make provision for this growing population. Facilities, personnel and other resources would be carefully planned to match the increase in school management.

Some other reasons as presented by Gbenu, (2012,p. 252) are stated as follows.

Education for National development: The transformation of the economy from a mono-product one to a gigantic well-industrialized one can best be achieved through educational planning. In order to promote efficiency in education in totality, there is a strong need to have it planned in Nigeria to avoid resource wastage. The complexity of the nature of education, the activities of the administrators and managers within the system in Nigeria and the diffused nature of the goals of education call for proper planning of education in the country.

Besides, one could allude from the reasons for educational planning provided above that due to its importance in any educational cycle, education cannot be left to the market forces of demand and supply as a result of its nature and importance it has on the development of the nation. Conscious planning is therefore needed in achieving its purpose. Furthermore, Okwori, (2011,p. 15) states that we need to have the following when we want to plan in education.

- i. Enrolment data by sex
- ii. Rate of progress and annual repetition of course and forms. You need to know how many, will make it to the next class in order to provide the corresponding resources.
- iii. Unit and aggregate cost: This refers to items such as teachers, salaries, allowances, maintenance etc, while aggregate is the sum total of all the units.
- iv. Manpower requirement forecast of the society. This is to ascertain how many qualified professionals are needed to keep the system going.
- v. Building and equipment needs.
- vi. The social situations and social norms of the society. These include social classes, educational instructions, culture and customs.

Inspite of the laudable importance of educational planning and the functions it plays, there are constraints that militate against effective educational planning.

### **Constraints to Educational Planning in Nigeria**

The educational planner in Nigeria is faced with a number of problems or obstacles which militate against the realization of set objectives. Bosah (2006) notes the following factors as constraints to educational planning in Nigeria.

- i. Political constraint
- ii. Financial constraint
- iii. Statistical constraint
- iv. Personnel constraint and
- v. Pluralism

**Political Constraint:** The Nigerian political system after 58 years of independence is yet to develop a strong political culture of tolerance and spirit of sportsmanship. Election results are greeted with protests and allegations of rigging. The parties defeated in elections more often than not criticize with so much bitterness and deny the peace needed to address its programmes for education and other sectors of the economy. This lack of spirit of sportsmanship among Nigeria politicians is no doubt a serious constraint to government as it finds it difficult if not impossible to come up with universally accepted educational programmes and plans. Each new government comes up with its own programmes which end up not seen the light of the day. Naturally the educational planner had learnt to plan, cancel and replan the country's education with little opportunity to implement plan proposals to a meaningful degree. Political instability has become a disruptive factor in Nigerian's educational planning efforts. Politicians in Nigeria have discovered a vote catching bait in education. They promise free education for all at all levels of education even when resources are slim to maintain the existing ones. In order to make good their campaign promises on assumption of office, educational planners are roped into the dirty jobs of planning for the impossible. This results to crises in the educational system. Crises that will continue to manifest for many years to come.

**Statistical Constraint:** Nigeria as a country appears very poor at record keeping. Some vital records that assist educational planners in forecasting resources as human, financial and material for making preparations in the present for positive educational development in the future are lacking. The inability of the country to conduct an acceptable census, coupled with the absence of both birth and death records make it increasingly difficult for education to be planned in Nigeria. The situation where past populations figures are unreliable and birth and death records lacking could only be described as hopeless in an attempt to offer its citizenry planned education.

**Financial Constraint:** Educational planners often complain of lack of funds to execute carefully mapped out plans. There are many attributive factors to this scenario. Over dependency on crude oil as the only revenue source for the country, mismanagement of the scarce funds and embezzlement worsen the already bad situation. As a result, of the undeniable fact that resources are scarce, education is left to compete with other sectors of the economy. This makes nonsense of the educational budget and expected resources for the implementation of educational programme or plans.

**Personnel Constraint:** In Nigeria, there is the phenomenon of "good fatherism" political consideration are usually given in terms of appointments and deployment. People who are ill-equipped to function in strategic planning positions are given such responsibilities. These square pegs in round holes end up messing up educational planning process. Relatively, the attitudes of Nigerian workers to work which leaves so many planning issues unattended to impedes effective educational planning.

**Pluralism:** Nigeria is a pluralistic society. The number of plural divides are many. Namely, language, religion and education. Employment, sitting of projects and programmes are often based on these divides rather than on merit and feasibility. Some programmes, appointments and plans are fought and stifled on these lines, making it difficult to have an effective educational plan.

Yawe (2010) identifies youth population explosion, wasteful imbalance with the educational system, the rising cost of education, inadequacy of planning facilities, political instability, inadequate information as constraints of educational planning. The constraints identified point to the fact that educational planning and implementation in Nigeria would hardly synchronize unless certain steps are taken to aid implementation of such plans.

#### **Towards Closing the Gap between Educational Planning and Implementation**

In order to close the gap between educational planning and implementation, feasible steps to achieving implementation with realistic plans have to be adopted. The following recommendations could be useful.

1. Mismanagement of educational resources at any level of education in Nigeria should be made a serious criminal offence attracting no less than 25 years imprisonment, this will deter other criminally minded officials in indulging in such acts.
2. The planning and research units in the country's ministries of education should be strengthened. Adequate funds should be made available for the training and retraining of planning personnel to acquire skills in the new technology of records keeping.
3. Frantic efforts should be made by the government to diversify the economy so as to have enough funds for the implementation of carefully mapped out plans.
4. Deployment or appointment of staff to the planning unit or department should be based on competence and proficiency. People without the requisite knowledge of planning could be assigned to handle others offices. To this end stakeholders involved in planning should be trained and re-trained.
5. Corruption at all levels of education must be reduced to the barest minimum so as to curtail mismanagement and misappropriation of educational funds.
6. Education should be separated from politics. Rules of engagements especially employment of staff of planning department must be strictly followed.
7. Nigerian politicians have to be given a re-orientation so as to imbibe the spirit of sportsmanship by allowing any party that comes into power to implement her educational programmes without distractions.
8. Only realistic educational plans should be introduced in the country's educational system. "white elephant programmes" for political patronage must be avoided.

9. Twenty five percent of the country's budget should be allocated to education. This will make funds available for the implementation of educational plans.
10. Projects monitoring committees should be made of people with proven integrity.

### **Conclusion**

Educational planning and implementation in Nigeria is constrained by several factors from political constraints to the problem of pluralism and other factors mentioned in the paper. If these obstacles are to be removed, government has to give the desired attention to education especially educational planning. This is premised on the fact that failure to achieve educational goals and objectives starts for improper planning. The desire of government to give citizens the right quality and quantity of education can only be realized when education is properly planned. The synergy needed between planning and implementation could only be made feasible if mismanagement of educational resources at any level of education is considered a criminal offence and frantic efforts to diversify the country's revenue sources are made by government among other factors suggested in the paper.

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