

Planning of Primary School Education in Nigeria: Problems and Way Forward

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Abstract Primary school education in Nigeria is design to give the post-nursery education for children aged 6-11. The primary school education had been described as the foundational education that laid the foundation for other educational system. The primary school education is beset with many problems. Poor planning is one of the major problem facing the primary school education in Nigeria. This article discusses the problems facing the planning of primary school education in Nigeria. The article identified; inadequate planning fund, shortage of professional planners with specialization in primary school planning, shortage of data, corruption, political instability, poor capacity development of planners, policies instability, inadequate planning tools and political influence as the problems facing the planning of primary schools education in Nigeria. In order to solve these problems, this article offers the following recommendations: adequate funding of planning of public primary schools, employment of professional planners, provision of materials, generation of current educational data, political stability, policy stability and corruption should be fought in the ministries and agencies of education.

Keywords: Professional, Public, Primary, Planning, Problems

INTRODUCTION

The National Policy on Education (2013) defined a primary school as “Education given in an institution for children” normally aged 6-11. This is the level that prepares pupils for Secondary Education. It is necessary that we inculcate basic skills into learners as specified in the objectives. The National Policy on Education (2013) stated the objectives of primary education are to: inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective

thinking; ensure citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; build character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes; develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment; give the child opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity and finally; provide basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

Ogunode (2021) submitted that the challenges facing administration of public primary schools in Nigeria include: inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, and inadequate data to plan, corruption, weak administrators, ambiguous administrative roles and insecurity challenges. According to Asodike, &Ikpitibo,(undated), and Egwu (2009), some challenges facing primary education in Nigeria include the huge disparity between expected school enrolment and the actual enrolment figure. This leads to difficulties in accurately planning and allocating human, material and financial resources adequate to the various primary schools in the country. Poor management of information to gather accurate data, recording and retrieval of data leads to conflicting statistics about the number of enrolled pupils and new applicants in the system. This means that these vital information are not readily available when needed, thereby creating a vacuum for policy makers, stakeholders and researchers to carry out their functions efficiently.

Asodike, &Ikpitibo,(undated), Omotayo, Iheberene and Maduwesi (2008), also indicated that poor implementation strategy, management and lack of assurance as responsible factors that contributed to the failure of the UBE to attain its goals since its inception

over 10 years ago. Other predicaments include financial problems in terms of misappropriation and embezzlement of funds, and financial crimes of all sorts being perpetuated by those in authority. As a result, there is an absence of adequate financial resources to implement programmes and policies that will promote this level of education. Also incompetence by some teachers and head-teachers leads to poor quality assurance, delivery and supervision in the system. Other challenges include educational wastage in form of truancy, high dropout rate, attrition, and repetition. These problems are associated with poor planning of primary school in Nigeria. Whenever there is a failure of effective planning in educational programme, the result effects are shortage of both human and materials resources which will affect the implementation processes of the programme. When educational programme and system are not well planned, the implication poor planning is poor implementation. The entire educational system in Nigeria started on a poor planning foundation and this is while the entire educational system is where it is today because of poor planning, including the primary school education. Moja (2000) observed that planning, supervision and monitoring mechanisms for the entire education system have been very weak. In view of this submission, this article will discuss the problem facing planning of primary school in Nigeria.

Concept of Educational Planning

Many researchers have forwarded many definitions of educational planning. Akpan (2000) defined educational planning involve a systematic and scientific set of decisions for future action to achieve set educational goals and objectives through effective use of scarce resources. It provides the tool for coordinating and controlling the direction of the educational system so that educational objectives can be realized. It is a process of identifying and classifying educational needs of a nation and the direction education should take and the strategies for implementing decisions concerning educational development. Noun (2007) viewed educational planning as the consideration of unforeseen obstacles and making provision for possible ways of overcoming them. This implies that educational planning calls for a constant evaluation and

modification. If necessary of the related programmes until the expected goals are achieved. For example, if you plan to operate a Nursery and Primary School, it is your duty to get it started, and until pupils graduate from the school, and the school continue to sustain it and achieve its goals, planning, implementing and evaluation will continue. Akpan (2000) maintains that educational planning should reflect the state of development of a nation including the needs and readiness to execute the planned objectives. Thus, educational planning must take into consideration the population growth of children of school age in relation to access to education, educational opportunities and the demand for education. Beeby cited in Okwori (2011) states that educational planning exercises foresight in determining the policy, priorities and cost of educational system having due regards for economic and political realities for the system potentials, for growth and for the needs of the country and of the pupils served by the system. Noun (2007) sees educational planning is the application of a rational and systematic analysis of the process of educational development to make education more effective in responding to the need and the goals of the students and the society.

According to Noun (2012) the coverage of educational planning includes:

- (i) Finance: - Educational planning is interested in the judicious use of funds allocated to education. It plans for revenue, handles costing and budgeting in education.
- (ii) Personnel: - The adequacy in quantity and quality, training, the specialization, the trend in growth overtime make up the part of education planning coverage.
- (iii) Physical Resources: - The provision in quantity and quality of facilities, their utilization, their distribution and the general plant planning is within the ambit of educational planning.
- (iv) Programmes and Services: - The organization, the patterns of activities and development overtime.
- (v) Aims and Objectives:- The formulation, the expectations and aspirations, the expected outputs are parts of educational planning interests.

(vi) Alternative Decisions: - The preparation, which enables policy makers to make rational choices is an integral part of educational planning coverage. Ogunode, Gregory & Abubakar, (2020) also disclosed that educational planning covers the sub-component of the educational system like manpower planning, school plant planning, infrastructural facilities planning, academic planning, lesson planning, financial planning for schools, etc.

Ogunode, Gregory & Abubakar, (2020) observed that there are many factors that determine the effectiveness of educational planning and some factors include; the attitude of the political office holder toward educational planning, the funds available for planning of education, the planning tools available, the number of educational professional planner, the level of capacity development for educational planners and political stability. Educational planning covers planning of the early child education, basic education, junior secondary education, senior secondary education and the higher education. Education administrators also plan for special education, gender education, mass education, adult education and science education, etc.

Concept of Primary School Planning

Planning of primary school entails the act of outlining the objectives and programme of primary school and strategically identifying the means of realizing the set objectives and goals. Planning of primary school implies the processes of defining the future programmes, policies and objectives and systematically outlines the various resources that will realize the programmes, policies and objectives of the primary school within a time frame. The objectives of planning of primary school educational are to achieve the aims and objectives of primary education. Planning of primary school education is a key to effective implementation of primary school education in Nigeria. The effective implementation of primary school education depends on effective planning. Primary school education must be given maximum planning in order to realize its objectives. Failure to plan systematically is the beginning of implementation problems.

The importance of planning primary school education include:

- a. to ensure smooth implementation of the plan;
- b. to reduce educational wastage;
- c. to ensure effective allocation of resources;
- d. to ensure delivery of quality of primary school education.
- e. to ensure adequate provision of manpower and infrastructural facilities

Problems facing Planning of Primary school in Nigeria

The primary school education faces many planning problems. These problems include: inadequate planning fund, shortage of professional planners with specialization in primary school planning, shortage of data, corruption; political instability, poor capacity development of planners, policies instability, inadequate planning tools and political influence.

Inadequate Planning Fund

Inadequate planning fund is a very big problem facing the planning of primary school education in Nigeria. The allocation for planning of primary school education in Nigeria is inadequate. It has been observed that the general budgetary allocation for the administration of primary school in Nigeria is inadequate. It is below the 26% UNESCO recommendation for educational administration for the developing countries like Nigeria. Supervision, monitoring and planning sub-sector of education gets their allocation from the general allocation for the entire educational sector which have been described by Ogunode (2020) as inadequate for implementing primary school programme and policies. The poor funding of primary school education in Nigeria is affecting the supervision, monitoring and evaluation and planning of the primary school education. For Noun (2007), another related problem that is encountered in the process of educational planning in Nigeria is that of economic constraints. Adequate allocation of resources is necessary for a successful implementation of educational programmes. However, due to political consideration and the high rate of inflation, educational programmes in the country have

been unrealistic in relation to resources. The planner underestimates the cost of such programme and continues to overestimate the anticipated revenue with which to execute the plans. This situation had been worsened by the worldwide economic recession.

Shortage of Professional Planners with Specialization in Primary School

Shortage of professional planners with specialization in primary school planning is another problem facing the planning of primary school education in Nigeria. The number of educational planners graduating in the Nigerian higher institutions with specialization in the primary school education is limited and is affecting the planning of primary school education in the country. Noun (2007) observed that lack of sufficiently well trained personnel in the planning units of the

Ministries of Education is another problem. These units require people with the ability to carry out project development in the educational service in order to realize the goals set by the planners. The units in the Ministries therefore lack specialist such as educational planners, statisticians, programmers, and analyst, who could effectively develop and ensure successful execution of plans. This is partly as a result of the rigidity of the educational system which is not responding adequately to the need to place people who are trained in educational planning in the appropriate position. The wrong notion that anyone who has served in the Ministry of Education for a long period could automatically occupy such planning Units in the Ministries where there are directors of planning as people who just rose through the ranks with no cognate experience in the skill of planning. In addition, the few available specialists who are employed in the planning divisions of education sometimes opt for the private sector as a result of the poor conditions of service offered in the Ministry. According to Adeyemi and Oguntimehin (2000), there are not enough experts in Nigeria on educational planning. There are small units in the ministries of education which are responsible for educational planning. These units are often staffed with educational officers who rose from the rank. Almost all of them have no formal training in educational planning and statistics. They can rarely use the information gathered to interpret the educational

situation of the country for proper planning of educational reform to improve educational quality.

Inadequate of Data

Inadequate data is another big problem facing the planning of primary school education in Nigeria. British (2014) observed that access to reliable and complete information on education in Nigeria has for a long time proved difficult. The development of a national database for education statistics has been slow and various data generating agencies (including the Federal Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission, National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics) often used different sample designs, methods of data collection, analysis and reporting, different modes of disaggregation and definitions of indicators. The absence of rudimentary data at school and local level in many areas is often viewed as a crisis, inhibiting the development of effective education planning, monitoring, programming and policy-making. Educational data for planning education in Nigeria are statistics of schools (number, size, location, available facilities and equipment), staff and teacher statistics (number, sex, age, teaching subject, qualification, position or grade), pupil statistics (number, sex, age, level and grade), finance statistics (income, capital expenditure, recurrent expenditure), (Akinwumiju, 1995; Raji, 2016), stock statistics (enrolment by age and level), flow statistics (promotion rate, repetition rate, drop-out rate, transition rate, admission rate) has as its basic source, school records like the admission/withdrawal register, attendance register, log book, salary/financial records, inspection record, report book, duty roaster etc, although it is usually compiled by education authorities like the Ministry of Education for planning. The process of educational planning in Nigeria is also hampered by the critical problem of inadequate statistical data. For any meaningful planning to be carried out, statistic is very crucial. However, so reliable census has been conducted in country (Noun 2009).

Corruption

Corruption in the ministries and department of education is another problem facing the planning of primary school education in Nigeria. Corruption has

penetrated the Nigerian educational institutions. Funds released for the programme like planning, supervision, monitoring and evaluation and projects have been looted or mismanaged by some officers or administrative within the ministries and department of education. Corruption has penetrated the ministry of education. Funds made available for planning have been diverted by officers working in the various agencies and department handling planning of education. Corruption is one of the biggest challenges preventing the effective planning of education in Nigeria. Ogunode, (2021) and Gbenu, (2012) observed that high level of corruption and wastage of resources in which the limited fund made available is diverted into personal purses and sometimes used for projects not budgeted for. Transparency International says 66 percent of the money Nigerian governments allocate to education is stolen by corrupt officials. Premium times, (2020) reports that corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). “This affects education access, quality, inclusion and learning outcomes with devastating consequences, not only for national economic growth but also for the life chances of children, their families and communities,” the report said. The report highlighted “Resource misallocation, corrupt procurement, exchange of sex for grades, examination malpractices, fake qualifications, teacher absenteeism, and corrupt recruitment practices” as the various corruption risks and challenges facing education systems in all the countries.

Political Instability

Political instability is another problem facing the planning of primary school in Nigeria. The problem of politics also includes administrative instability. Most times, what is obtainable is that new administration comes in with another style of decision-making and therefore, already formulated plans as well as those in the formulation process are disrupted or discontinued. Political instability is a very serious problem facing the development of planning of primary school education in Nigeria. There is a high level of political instability in the political system of the local government in Nigeria. Majorities of state conduct their local government election every two years, which

is directly affecting the planning of primary school education. At the primary school education, micro-planning is done and the political instability is affecting the programme micro-planning. Ogunode (2021) argued that political instability is another problem preventing effective planning of education in Nigeria. The Nigerian political structure and system is designed for change of government on every four. The changes in government affect planning processes because different political party have their different agenda and programmes. Ololube, (2013) & Ogunode (2021) observed that the existing political arrangement has influenced the control over educational planning in Nigeria. Political instability has had its toll on educational programmes. Planning process started by one administration is brutally interrupted by the next, and the differences between federal and state government education policies are quite challenging. Noun (2007) observed that political instability in the country also disrupts planning and the implementation of educational programmes. For instance, the constitutional crisis of 1953, the military coup d'état of 1966, 1976, 1983 and 1985, coupled with the protracted Civil War of 1967-70, have all disrupted the process of planning and the continuity of educational plans in Nigeria. As a result of such a political crisis, some plans that have reached advance stages were abandoned while others were hurriedly introduced. The impact of these unsettle political conditions was felt in three major ways.

Poor Capacity Development of Planners

Poor capacity development programme of educational planners presently working in the local education authority departments is affecting the planning of primary school education. Many educational planners since employed in the services of the local education authority as planning officers have attended none capacity development programme to improve their planning knowledge and skills. According to Fabunmi (2004) “most of the planning officers are not trained in educational planning. Most of them studied disciplines in humanities, thus, they are not suitable for the task they are performing. How can a specialist in history be asked to plan education.

Inadequate Planning Tools

Inadequate planning tools are another problem facing the planning of primary school education in Nigeria. The majorities of local education authority departments handling the micro-planning of the primary school education do not have adequate planning materials. Many educational planners working in the department of a primary school in local education authority do not have planning tools to work with. Noun (2007) submitted that another important constraint of educational planning in Nigeria has to do with inadequate planning tools. Such as calculating machines, computers and other materials and facilities that are essential for effective planning. It is equally important to note that educational planners in the country are not adequately consulted before policies that are related to education are planned. There is the tendency for them to develop programmes on policies that are not clear to them or that may be difficult for them to justify.

Political Influence

Political influence is another challenge facing the planning of primary school education in Nigeria. It is one of the factor preventing the development of educational planning in the aspects of primary schools in Nigeria. Political office holders and politician influence planning programme to favour their interest and political agenda. Noun (2007) observed that the process of educational planning in Nigeria faces a lot of constraints. One of such is the political constraints. Educational Planning is based on the ideology and the policies of the government. Sometimes, such policies are made without giving adequate consideration to their implications. As a result, the planner is often requested to plan base on policies, which might be difficult or too expensive to implement under the prevailing circumstances and the available resources. To this effect planners often prepare unrealistic plans or face a situation whereby his plans are rejected by the approving body.

Way Forward

The following were put forward as recommendation to solve the problems identified in the paper:

1. The government should ensure educational data are generated constantly in the country to make planning easy for educational planners.

2. The government should increase funding of the entire educational sector and allocate more funds to planning agencies and departments in the country;
3. The government should motivate educational planners and provide for their working tools like calculating machines, planning software and computers in their offices to aid effective educational planning in the country.
4. The government should employ more professional planners and deploy them to the ministries, departments and agencies that need more hands in planning activities;
5. The government should monitor funds released for planning programme in all the ministries, department and agencies to avoid been diverted to private hands by officials in the ministries.
6. The government should develop a model that allows participation of all political actors in the country to participate in policy formulation and project planning so that the exit of one political party from office will not stop the implementation of the plan already done.
7. The politicians and political actors in the government should allow the educational planners to do their work professionally and should avoid to influence their planning document to favour more allocation to their constituencies.
8. The government should ensure educational planners working in the ministries, agencies and department of education should be trained constantly to boost their planning capacity. Training on forecasting, projection and planning methods should be emphasized.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article discussed the concept of primary school education, educational planning, planning of primary school education. The paper established that planning of primary school education is key to effective implementation of primary school education in Nigeria. The paper identified; inadequate planning fund, shortage of professional planners with specialization in primary school planning, shortage of data, corruption, political instability, poor capacity

development of planners, policies instability, inadequate planning tools and political influence as the problems facing the planning of primary schools education in Nigeria. In order to solve these problems, the paper recommended that: adequate funding of planning of public primary schools, employment of professional planners, provision of materials, generation of current educational data, political stability, policy stability and corruption should be fought in the ministries and agencies of education.

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