



INTERPRETATION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

The study examined interpretation as an effective tool to the implementation of educational policies. Every nation, institution and organization has guiding principles referred to as policies upon which operations are regulated and evaluated. Education policies are formulated by government; these policies are anchored on the nation's philosophy of education. Policy development is fuzzy and complex. It is the product of compromise, negotiation, dispute and struggle. Educational leaders are faced with making sense of policy "from above" and demands aspirations from those below. Interpretation which is the particular way something is understood or explained is considered significant in the course of educational policies implementation to equip educational leaders in the roles of recounting both external and internal pressures. Principles of interpretation stipulate that messages and communications should be provoking, revealing, relate to useful daily living, strive for unity and should be able to address whole. The popular opinion that poor implementation of educational policies has been the bane of education woes; to an extent the actual problem among others is in the interpretation of education policies by school leaders. It is thus recommended among others that there should be interpretation manual vis-à-vis educational policies and it is pertinent that government constitute a team charged with the responsibility of interpreting education policies the ministry of education fashions.

Keywords: Policy, Educational, Educational Policy, Interpretation, Policy Implementation, Government.

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INTRODUCTION

Increasing technological advancement, globalization and the competitiveness of nations have stirred the government, institutions and organizations to constantly implement policies in order to meet up with the changing times. Education is the centre of national development and growth.

According to Nwankwoala (2018), the bid to satisfy society changes and demands most times leads to changes in school management and educational policies.

Implementation means to carry out, to fulfill, produce, and compete. This is different from creating a policy. A policy is often a broad statement of goals, without specific objectives. There is often no specific implementation plan that names actors, actions, and desired results. A policy is often more of a hypothesis; implementation converts a policy into an action program. Policies grow out of ideas, often with multiple and possibly conflicting vague goals. Policies point to a desired casual chain of events, between initial conditions and desired future consequences. Implementation is the action plan to bridge the gap between the two.

Policy implementation can be seen as a process of bargaining. Often, one unit of government cannot force another unit to do (or refrain from doing) something. When participants in a policy process share a common interest in coming to a decision but have divergent values and objectives, the bargaining model is often used to make decisions about implementation. Implementation becomes a process of complex proposals and counter-proposals among different government actors, in which the initial aims of each party are slowly modified to permit an agreement to be reached.

Gang (1982) in Nwankwoala (2018) is of the opinion that one thing is to formulate policies and another is the implementation of such policies. This suggests that it is one thing to implement policies and another is to achieve the purpose of such policies and this is where interpretation comes in. The purposes of policies are achieved when they are effectively implemented. Policy implementation is therefore important to the success of government.

No policy can succeed if the implementation does not bear any relationship with the intentions of the policy maker (Rahmate, 2015). Policy implementation is essentially about trying to accomplish public objectives. Policies are implemented through structures and processes and are usually administered through ministers, department.

Policy implementation encompasses those actions by public or private individuals or groups that are directed at the achievement of goal and objectives set in policy decisions. It involves the creation of a policy delivery system in which specific mechanism are designed and pursued to achieve desired goals. Policy implementation reflects a complex change process where government decisions are transformed into programmes, procedures, regulations, or practice aimed at social betterment (DeGroff & Cargo, 2009). The strategic direction of much of educational policies is frequently justified as a means to enhance economic development leading to a more competitive economy, greater productively and increased wealth. Perhaps, this is why Hoy and Miskel (1978) believed that policies are not only formulated but also programmed, communicated, monitored and evaluated. To effectively implement educational policies and avoid unintended consequences which may deny the stakeholders the full benefits of the policy or waste public resources, the administrators of education need to understand the policy implementation process, Proper interpretation of educational policies is an effective tool to its implementation. All those working in school and colleges must make sense of the policy context and policy agendas as they are faced with the task of implementing policy directions.

The failure or success of policy implementation influences what policy-makers feel they can or want to do in the future. Both the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes of policy implementation influence future policy-making, even though these outcomes cannot be known in advance of implementation.

CONCEPT OF POLICY

The range of conceptual issues embraced by the term policy are too broad to be contained to a single definition rather it is necessary to develop an understanding of policy that reflects its breadth and complexity. One common approach is to conceptualize policy as a programme of action, or set of guidelines that determines how one should proceed given a particular set of circumstances. Blakemore (2003) presents definition of policies as aims or goals, or statements of what ought to happen. There is distinction between objectives and statement of what ought to happen. There is similar distinction identified by Harman (1984) as he views policies as statements of intent, and those that represent plans or programmes of work. Hence, to Harman, policy can also be thought of as a position or stance developed or response to a problem or issue of conflict and directed towards a particular objective.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that policy is systematic rather than random. It is goal-oriented and it is complex it is the co-ordination of several course of action and not one discrete activity. Policy emerges from political pressures and is contained within a political system whose purpose is to transform group conflict over public resources and values into authorized courses of action considering their allocation (Harman, 1984). If policy is to be conceived in terms of the operational statements of values, there must be that those values are continually being contested. It is important to recognize that policy must be viewed as both product and process (Taylor et al., 1997).

Dimock (1980) noticed that policy is a consciously acknowledge rules of conduct that guide the administrative decision. Wehrich and Koontz (2004) described policy as general statement or understanding that guides managers in taking decision. They ensure that decisions fall within certain boundaries. Jenkins in Sharma, Sadana and Kaur (2012) cited in Wali (2018) conceptualize policy as a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors, concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation, where those decisions are within the powers of the actors to achieve. From the above, policy provides the standards for evaluating activities within any institution, organization or Nation.

Its application and effect demonstrate what makes policy so important. Policy outlines our socially accepted norms and practices to assure some form of predictability in the allocation of scarce resources so we can all contribute towards a social outcome. The limitation of seeing policy only as a product is that it disconnects it from policy as a process –there is a failure to see policy as both product and process (Taylor et al., 1997). Furthermore, this conceptualization of policy is de-coupled from the context from which it is taken, what is the purpose of policy? What is it trying to achieve?

The note on policy as the pursuit of fundamentally political objectives is organized in Kogan's study of educational policy making in which he referred to policies as the operational statement of values. The authoritative allocation of values and that conflict over values are played out as much, indeed, more so, in the processes of policy development as in the policy test itself. Bowe et al. (1992) asserts that policy is "made" it is constantly being recontextualized and therefore rather than policy development as a linear process, it should be seen as a cycle made up of 'policy contexts'.

However, the steps in Lasswell (1984) outlined the policy cycle to include: Agenda building as a result of an existing or foreseen problem, formulation and adoption of policy, Policy implementation, policy evaluation and maintenance, succession termination of policy.

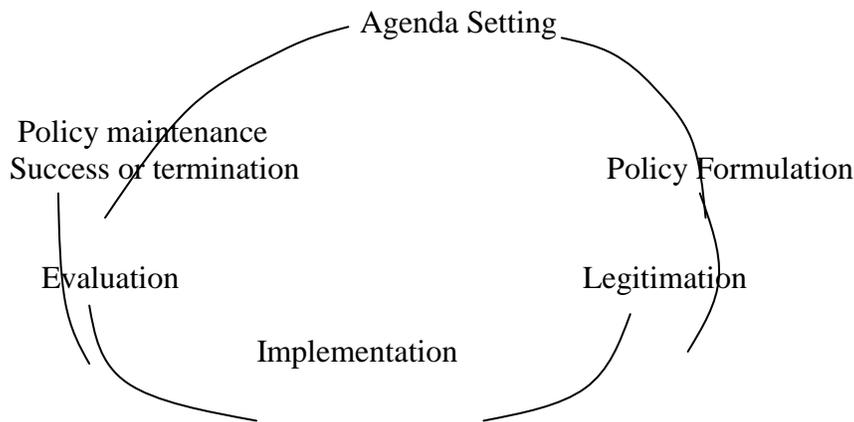


Figure 1: Policy Cycle

The non-rigid nature of policies is confirmed by Lindblom (1959) when he described policy making as a process of successive approximation to some desired objectives. Perhaps, this is why Hoy and Miskel (1978) believed that “policies are not only formulated but also programmed, communicated, monitored and evaluated.

Kogan (1975) helpfully located Policy within a context of wider fundamental questions that have already been identified, what is education for? Who is education for? Who decides? The service Kogan provides is to place values at the center of understanding policy. Kogan identified for key values that under pin and inform policies-educational, social, economic and institutional values. In his study, he distinguishes between basic and secondary values with educational, social and economic values being considered as instruct mental or basic and institutional values being considered as consequential or secondary

CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

There is yet to be generally accepted definition of the term ‘education’ because what constitutes education differs from one society to another. Furthermore, there are different forms and levels of education. However, Fafunwa (1974) sees education as a process by which a young child or adult develops the abilities and other behavioural forms which are of positive or acceptable value to the society in which he lives. Castle (1965) opined that education is all that happens to us from the day we were born to the day we die. Okafor (1981) sees education as the process of acculturation by which the individual is assisted to attain the maximum activation of his potentials according to the right reason and to achieve his self-fulfillment or self-realization. From the definition, we can see that education include the following:

- Education prepares individual for life society;
- Education is based on the surrounding society;
- Education provides citizens with the skills, abilities that are worthwhile to survive in the society;
- Education is morally and value- based; and
- Education develops the hidden potentials in an individual.

THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Educational policies are policies that are formulated and implemented by government that determine the direction of an educational system. More so, for a policy to qualify as an educational policy, it must be distinct from other policies Kerr (1976). Educational policies are distinguishable from other policies by the fact that policies on education are part and parcel of educational institutions. Fabunmi (2004) noted that educational policy is the framework within which education is administered in a given place and within specified period.

Education policy has to be a little bit flexible in order to accommodate the dynamics of the society. Educational policy of a nation speaks volumes concerning the economic and social viability of any nation. Education Policies consist of the principles and government policies in the educational sphere as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems. Simply put, education Policy is a past or up to date statement or series of statements which explain, recommend or exclude a course of action or actions to be taken to run the system of education. These statements are usually written, but they could be oral.

Education occurs in many forms for many purposes through many institutions. Examples include early childhood education, kindergarten through to 12th grade, five and four year colleges or universities, graduate and professional education, adult education and job training. Therefore, education policy can directly affect the education people engage in at all ages. Yet despite constraints educational policies do have the potentials to shape educational practice in significant ways.

At its most concrete level, policy determines what level of resources will be provided, how those resources will be allocated, who will have authority to deliver educational services, and how policy makers and educators will be held accountable. At a more abstract level, policy also communicates ideas about what constitutes a good education and how that education can best be achieved. It signals what expectations political decision makers and their constituents hold for the education systems, and it specifies a set of assumptions about the steps needed to achieve those aspirations. Included in those assumptions are judgments about the incentives most likely to change teaching and learning, the preferred institutional arrangements.

Policies are general declarations or reconciliations that channelize thinking in decision making, they are the foundation of development in any sphere of life (Nte, 2005). In essence, Osokoya (1987) stated that educational policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of people. He believes that objectives of any educational policy are to satisfy individual, society and nations need.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

In a very real sense, generation and implementation are continuous features of the policy process. Policy implementation can be defined as the third stage of policy cycle, it means the stage of policy process immediately after the passage of law, it is the action that will be taken to put the law into practices or to solve the problem envisaged by policies. Enactment alone does not ensure that a policy will be successful. Additional steps may be needed to implement the policy in a way that increase the likelihood that the policy will achieve its intended out comes. To this end, it is pertinent to educate the people or organization affected by the new policy, change pre-existing administrative operations and system (or create new ones), monitor and /or enforce the policy as needed. Policies will not work if the process stops at enactment. There is a wide range

of people and organization that can be involved in policy implementation, depending on the level of enactment (from local to national) and the type of policy (from regulation to statute).

Agenda-setting is the first stage in a policy cycle, refers to the processes by which social conditions are recognized and considered to have evolved into a “public problem”- no longer subject to a social or natural destiny, nor belonging to the private sphere – thereby becoming the focus of debate and controversy in the media and in politics (Garraud, 2004). Agenda-setting is critical stages in the policy cycle since its dynamics have a decisive impact on the whole policy process and the policies resulting from it (Lemieux, 2002; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Accordingly, a number of academics have turned their attention to explanatory factors related to policy decisions taken at this stage. Their research leads to the conclusion that agenda-setting is a socially constructed process (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003), in which actors and institutions, influenced by their ideologies, play a fundamental role in determining the problems or issues requiring action on the part of the government.

Once the existence of a problem and the need to remedy it is acknowledged (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003), the next stage in the policy cycle is policy formulation, it involves identifying and accessing possible solutions to policy problems, weighing their pros and cons, and deciding which should be accepted and which should be rejected. When options are being identified, policy makers are limited in their room to manoeuvre by constraints of two types. Substantive constraints are related to the nature of the problems itself and entail considerable use of state resources to resolve a problem (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Procedural constraints, which also affect all aspects of the formulation stage, may be characterized either as institutional, based on government procedures, or as tactical, based on relationships between various actors or social groups. According to Howlett and Ramesh, who deal with tactical constraints in some detail, actors and social groups are component parts of subsystems, and the cohesiveness between these two components with respect to discourse (reflecting values and beliefs) and their social bonds has a fundamental influence on policy formulation. The more cohesion there is between the discourse community and interest networks in a policy subsystem, the more resistance there will be to new ideas and new actors. Inversely, a less cohesive subsystem structure that is open to new ideas and new actors will offer better chances for innovation, as long as the government also favors this type of structure. The relationship between the government and social actors is thus a significant factor influencing the formulation of public policies.

Policy is when a decision is carried out through the application of government directives and is confronted with reality (Megie, 2004). There is generally a discrepancy between a policy’s intent and its outcome (Megie, 2004), which stems from the role played by its actors, particularly the public servants entrusted with responsibility for its implementation. Civil servants’ personal tendencies (Ideologies, interests, thinking, etc.) can influence their perceptions and even their intentions when it comes to implementing a policy. In this respect, organizational culture has a decisive influence, since it transmits ideologies and professional norms, as well as agency – specific techniques, which may influence the implementation process (Brook, 1998). External Actors may also help to widen the gap between government intentions and observable outcomes. For example, pressure groups, lobbies or stakeholder having a specific interest in a policy may influence its implementation.

Policy implementation implies discretion and enthusiasm. The process of policy implementation begins with a policy decision expressed in statutory or other official forms. These statues are often in skeleton form and require further development. In order to be able to implement the policy. The statues/ policies are then handed over to the appropriate

Administration Ministry. Department or agency to issue rules and implementation. De Groff and cargo (2009) considered implementation process as carrying out government decisions.

In the policy implementation process, the political executive is essentially like the board of directors in a large corporation with the permanent executive arm as the primary implementer of policies, the legislative arms perform dual roles in the process. The legislative arm makes the laws/policy and also exercise control over the executives through the various house committees. The summary of the policy implementation process is that the political executive formulates policies, supported by the legislatives and the bureaucracy (which is the high- level civic service) the political executive is principally charged with the responsibility of breaking down the policy into programs, processes, structure etc. (if not incorporated in policy already) Ogbogu (2013) opines that the acts, statutes and policies are legal frame works guiding the administration and management of institutions legally provided by the government.

CONCEPT OF INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is a frequent term not only in literary studies. It is used by musicians and layers, actors and priests, translators and psychoanalyst, computer scientists and diagnosticians. Many people have heard the word interpretation. Yet, these words may have wide range of meanings for people based on their back ground training or experience in the interpretative professions.

Once we realize that words cannot refer to things that exist independently of an experience but only to speakers and hearers representations of experiences. It becomes clear that communication is possible only within the bounds of what Maturana (1980) has called a “consensual domain” a domain in which the communicators have adapted their conceptualizations to the conceptualizations of others by a succession of interactive experiences. The notions, concepts, representations or meanings of two communicators, however, can never be compared to establish sameness—they can only be tested for compatibility, and such compatibility as has been or can be established will necessarily be relative, because the number of testing situations in practices is always limited.

The activity of interpreting involves experience, the coordination of conceptual structures abs symbolic representation, that is to say, it involves the very activities of cognition and thus, inevitably a theory of knowledge. In the view of Schmidt (1980) ‘interpretation’ designates either an activity or its result.

However, Canada in Veverka (1994) defined interpretation as a communication process, designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage through involvement with objects, artifacts, landscapes and sites

To interpret an utterance or written piece of language (be it a message or a text) requires something more than the construction of its conventional linguistic meaning in fact to interpret an utterance requires the insertion of whatever is considered its conventional meaning into a specific experiential context.

Tilden (1954) stipulated five principle of interpretation, they are:

- Provoke;
- Relate;
- Reveal;
- Strive for message unity;

- Address the whole

Provoke: communication must provoke curiosity, attention and interest in the audience.

Relate: the interpretation communication must find a way to relate message to everyday life of the visitors give reason for the program.

Reveal: Tilden says that interpretation should reveal the ending or answer of the communication through a unique or unusual perspective of view point. To reveal means to tell the visitors how they can benefit from the program being interpreted.

Strive for message unity: striving for message unity is another principle for interpretation. It means that when we plan or design our program or Service that we should use the right designs to support the presentation of the message. Message unity is the stage setting and props for a theatrical presentation.

Address the whole: the final principle means that all the interpretation should address some main point or theme. The big picture of what is important about policy on education. The main theme is best illustrated by your answer to the question if a visitor spends time going through the programs, what is the message that is driven home.

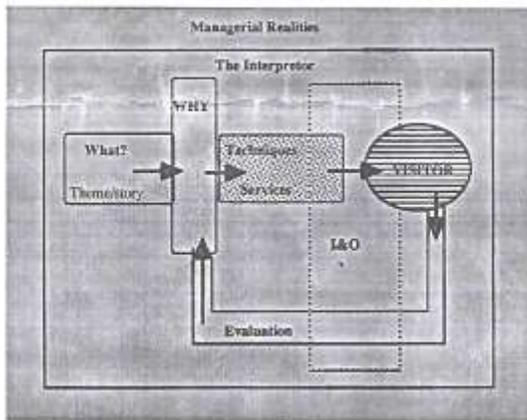


Figure2: Tilden's Model of Interpretation

In this model of interpretive communications, there are several different components. First, is the message (WHAT) that we want to convey, what is the story that we want to tell? Specific objectives that the message, program or services is to accomplish. Another is interpretive techniques that can be used to actually present the message. Lewis (1980) asserted that we are communicating our message to visitors, so it is needful that we do visitors analysis to know as much as possible about them. Each program or services have the individual finger print of the interpreter because we each bring our own unique perspective, personality, background and presentation style to any project or programme.

What is also clear is that meanings are never treated independently of the contexts of people who are doing and saying things that created those meanings are not variables that are

subject to experimental manipulates or that are measurable through survey methods. Efforts to alter socially constructed understandings must proceed along the same lines of group process by which they were created. The dynamic nature of the process of interpretation means that we must take care not to reify the socially constructed images or ideas.

INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Policy meanings are important but understanding those meanings is not simple. It requires deliberate efforts of interpretation. Policy interpretations ask not only what a policy means. But also how a policy means. Interpretations often discover that for both questions, the answer is plural; a policy means more than one thing, and those meanings are conveyed in more than one way.

Policy interpretation is done all the time, though not always deliberately, by practioners and policy Scientifics alike. Of course, a concern with meaning is not new to policy inquiring. Indeed. It constituted a central focus for Harold D. Lasswell from an early period through to his development of a conceptual framework for the policy sciences; the world about us; he wrote, is much richer in meanings than we consciously see (Harold, 1977). Interpretive efforts have, in large part, been framed against the positive presupposition that straight forward, matter of fact observation would provide ready access to an objectives world where meaning was not a problem. The various methodological approaches that share a concern with meaning have complex influence upon policy implementation and they continue to exert influence in new and sometimes unexpected ways. Taylor et al. (1997) developed three aspects of policy: Context, Text, and Consequences.

Context refers to the antecedents and pressures that led to development of a specific policy. This requires an analysis of the economic, social and political factors that gives rise to an emerging policy agenda. However, it goes beyond this and includes a study of the role played by pressure groups and social movements that may have forced policy makers to respond to the issue in the first place.

Text designates how the policy is articulated and framed. What does the policy aim to do? What are the values continued within the policy? Are these explicit, or implicit? Does the policy require action, if so what and by whom?

Consequences if policy texts are open to differing interpretation by practitioners, then, this is also likely to result in differences in implementation. Such differences will then be magnified as the unique conditions prevailing in each institution that further shape the implementation of the policy. Distortions and gaps appear in the implementation process, resulting in what is at best described as 'refraction'.

In addition to this framework, Taylor et al. offered a four level model process from educational policies formulation to educational policies implementation.

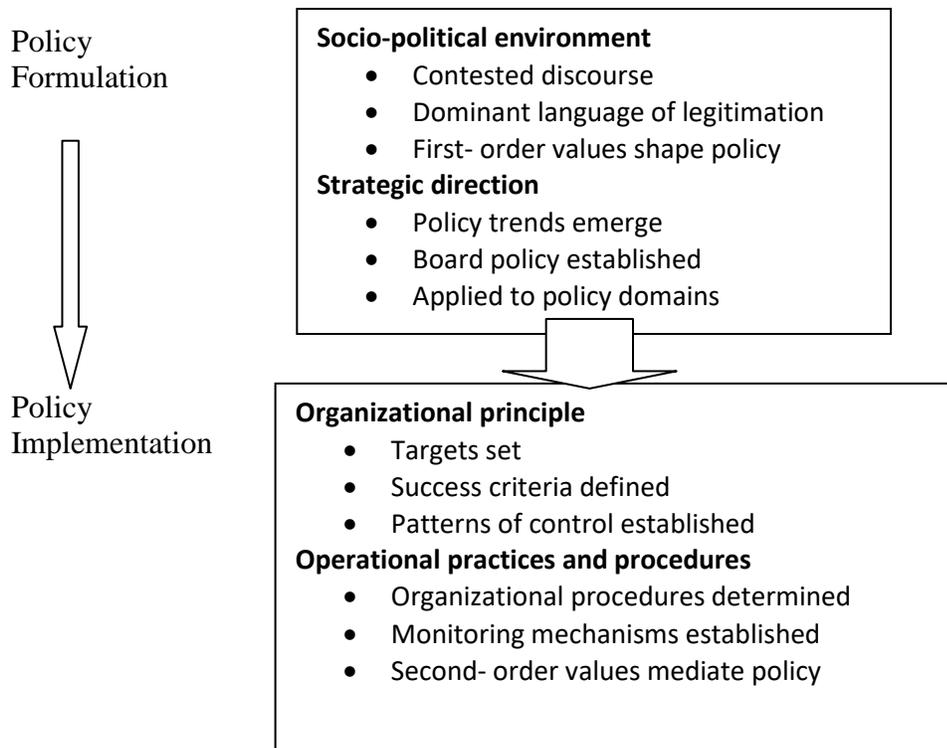


Figure 3: Taylor et al. (1997). Four level model process.

- The Social Political environment from which policy based on the dominant discourse, is derived and within which its overarching guiding principles are formulated;
- The strategic direction which emanates from the socio political environment and which broadly defines policy and establishes its success criteria as they apply to spheres of activity such as education;
- Organizational principles which indicate the parameters within which policy is to be implemented in those spheres of activity.
- Operational practices, based on the organizational principles, which are the detailed organizational arrangements that are necessary to implement the policy at the institutional level and to translate such policy implementation into institutional procedures and specific programs of action.

The socio-political environment shapes the discourse, a strategic direction develops in which specific educational policies become more clearly defined and success criteria are established. As policy test emerge with greater clarity this in turn shapes the organization principles, and ultimately the operational practices, that shape the experience of policy at an institutional level. In reality, this is not a tidy linear process in which policy progresses obediently from one stage to the next. Differences in emphasis, difference in interpretation and differences in attitudes to policy are ever present and will in large part reflect the differences in value that underpin policies implementation.

Thus, in terms of translating policy into practices, the four levels are in a hierarchical relationship, the first two being concerned with policy formulation and the second two with

policy implementation. The four levels are nested Barr and Dreeben (1983) in the sense that educational policy; derive from the wider socio-political discourse is mediated through The formulation of a strategic direction in the national and regional context, which in turn, generate organizational processes within schools, are located and curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment determined. In this way, policy legitimized and derived from, for example, human capital theory, is translated into activities in the school and classroom. It can be seen, therefore, that an analysis of the debated with the sociopolitical environment that give rise to educational policy can facilitate a more detailed understanding of the context element of the Taylor et al. (1997) framework. The strategic direction and organizational principles provide further insight into the test of policy, its aims and purposes, while an examination of operational practices will focus attention on the consequences of policy, its interpretation and implementation.

Furthermore, Van Horn and Van Meter (1977) have also advanced three general explanations for unsuccessful implementation of programs, among which is the communication process: Effective implementation requires that implementers know what they are expected to do; as messages pass through any communication network, distortions are likely to occur which can produce contrary directives, ambiguities inconsistencies and incompatible requirements.

Translating a legal or philosophical ideal into practice requires that policy makers, educators, parents and the public agree on what the ideal means and how it should be applied in classrooms. Teachers are both controlling agents and controlled subjects, in any educational system. They manage, develop, and thereby control the classroom in one or the other way; while they are at the same time trained and recruited to implement the curriculum and wider educational policies of which they have no direct ownership. Furthermore, Education and schooling are known to be social mobilization: a sufficient quantity of good-quality schooling has been associated with an increase in cultural, social and eventually also economic capital, and both national governments and international organizations have linked the performance of school systems to people's well-being and economics.

CONCLUSION

Education is an instrument for excellence. It liberates people from poverty and ignorance. Ukeje (1956) believes that 'education is for life and for living'. It is an investment in people which pays untold divided ends to the society. Considering the literature reviewed policy implementation is a process that is dyrome and complex. Its effectiveness depends on the implementers.

Educational policies do not operate in a vacuum, as such, administrators of education must understand the need to adequately interpret polices before their implementation. It is observed that there is a difference between interpretation and implementation but they are hardly clear models for interpretation of educational policies. Every implementer of educational policy must understand those to be affected by the poly and ensure that they are part of the process through policy interpretation.

The importance of education to national development is no longer in doubt. The issue that agitates the mind is the effect of poor implementation of educational policies. Ake (1988) enunciated education as the process of becoming the best we can be. With the numerous crises in the educational system engendered by poor policy implementation, it is doubtful whether its recipients are really becoming the best as expected. If not, what is our fate? Summarily, effective implementation of educational polices demands that:

- **The problems should be clearly stated:** High-level policy goals need to be matched with analysis of what problem government is trying to tackle and used to make good judgments on where to focus attention in the educational sector.
- **Working with the wider system:** Policies are never implemented onto a blank canvas; they must compete for resources and attention with other national policies and local priorities – and can draw upon some of the assets that often already exist.
- **Staying close to implementers:** Bringing others into policy making is important especially the grass root implementers (teachers and School heads), but once implementation begins, central government also needs to keep strong links with where change is happening to understand how policies are working in the real world.
- **Staying focused:** Continuity is an essential ingredient of effective implementation of educational policies; long time-spans introduce significance to achieving policy goals.
- **Use of ministers to drive progress:** While politics can add many complications to implementation of educational policies, ministers play a crucial role in setting milestones momentum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is urgent need for effective implementation of educational policies as such the following recommendations are advanced:

- Educational policies should be provoking, revealing, should relate to everyday life, should strive for unity of purpose and should be able to address the ‘whole’;
- There should be policy interpretation Manual vis-à-vis educational policies; and
- Government should constitute a team charged with the responsibility for interpreting educational policies fashioned by ministry of education.

FURTHER RESEARCH

An empirical research to ascertain the extent to which educational policies are interpreted to the policy implementers in schools and colleges.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Educational: Pertaining to acquiring knowledge, skill and understanding your acquire from teaching and learning.

Policy: Policy is a statement prescribing goals, objectives, core values and ways of the implantation of an organization.

Educational policy: This is the document which prescribes the objectives and standards, structures, strategies management and guidelines for achieving national educational goals and objectives.

Policy implementation: this is using the prescriptions of the policy to achieve the described goals of the education.

Interpretation: The action of explain the meaning of something.

Government: Group of people with the authority to government a country or state.