

Education Policy in Nigeria: the Bane of Her Practice of Functional Vocational Education

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Abstract

Poor policy formulation as opined by few individuals has little or no influence on the practice of functional vocational education. This paper therefore sought to find out whether it is true that policy formulation does not significantly influence the practice of functional vocational education in Nigeria as policy implementation does. Two null hypotheses and research questions respectively were formulated to guide the study. A five-point Likert Scale and a 10-item questionnaire were designed for data collection. Mean statistics was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at an alpha level of 0.05. It was found out that policy formulation was equally a major cause of doom in the practice of functional vocational education in Nigeria. The study therefore recommended that equal degree of importance should be given to policy formulation and policy implementation.

Introduction

Education generally is the vehicle for the transmission and inculcation of desirable values, attitudes and behaviours through a deliberate design and use of workable curricula. It is inevitable for self-realization, manpower development and supply in the society, national consciousness, economic and technological advancement, employment generation, among others.

Nigerian government has been making several attempts to ensure that her citizens have access to the kind of education that equips them to compete, succeed, and contribute to national workforce and economy. Unfortunately, government's efforts towards national development are often hampered by ill-prepared workforce. In vibrant societies, science and education are the main factors for development. Education essentially stipulates the quality of human capital.

As observed by Richter (2000), education has to contribute to three most important objectives: (i) to develop an individual, (ii) to develop the society; and (iii) to develop the economy in such a way that skills of people in the labour market corresponds to needs of enterprises and employees. This is to be obtained by a strategy of functional vocational education which has to overcome traditional diversion among various parts of formal and informal education and training. Functional vocational education embraces not only education of the young but of the adults as well for national development. In view of the fact that employment is scarcely found in the job market nowadays, and students' concentration in the study of science, technical and vocational subject necessary now than before it is expedient and timely that attention of all and sundry be drawn to functional vocational education. It is agent which engenders technological and industrial development by producing workers who are capable of creating and utilizing technologies that can combat under-development (Olaitan, 1998). As remarked by Ekong (2002), vocational education aids individuals in the acquisition of skills for entry into the world of work. In reality, this type of education is a vehicle that assists in meeting the manpower needs of a country in business, technical, agricultural, industrial, para-medical, home economics and a host of other clusters of vocational endeavours.

Ubom (2003) stressed that a nation that promotes vocational education promotes the ability of its citizens to qualify for, and hold productive employment. It increases the level of employability and job mobility of graduates, encourages individuals to respect the dignity of labour and develop the feeling that work is both necessary and satisfying (Akpan, 2004). Policies that make this assertion feasible and cherishable are non-existent in the system. It is on the strength of this lapses that this study was undertaken.

Statement of the Problem

It is usually asserted that Nigeria is very good in policy formulation but embarrassingly poor in policy implementation in all sectors of her economy. Educational sector in which vocational education is a sub-set is

not an exemption. If policy is not formulated, it cannot be implemented. Based on the woes usually experienced in policy matters in Nigeria, it is common to blame it all on implementation. This study therefore sought to find out whether policy formulation in Nigeria deserves any blame in the practice of functional vocational education in her education system.

Purpose of the Study

The study intends to assess the parts played by policy formulation and implementation in the practice of functional vocational education in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to access the extent to which:

- (a) policy formulation in Nigeria influences the practice of functional vocational education in her education system?
- (b) policy implementation in Nigeria influences the practice of functional vocational education in her education system.

Research Questions:

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- (i) To what extent does formulation of education policy in Nigeria influence the practice of functional vocational education in her education system?
- (ii) To what extent does implementation of education policy in Nigeria influence the practice of functional vocational education in her education system.

Hypotheses:

The following hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

H₀.1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of lecturers and students on the extent to which policy formulation in Nigeria influences the practice of functional vocational education in her education system.

H₀.2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of lecturers and students on the extent to which policy implementation in Nigeria influences the practice of functional vocational education in her education system.

Research Design

Survey design was used in the study. It is a design used in gathering large-scale data in order to make generalization. It was found appropriate for the study because of its power of description and explanation of data as well as providing for much use of questionnaire.

Population

The study had a population of 600 subjects made up of 400 final year students in the Department of Vocational Education and 200 lecturers from the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study was 400. Simple random sampling technique was used to get a sample frame of 260 for the students and a sample frame of 140 for the lecturers.

Instrumentation

A 10-item questionnaire tagged "Policy Formulation and Implementation Questionnaire (POFIQ)" was used to collect data for the study. The researchers used a five point Likert Scale Response Continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) with 4 as weight; Agree (A) with 3 as weight; undecided (U) with 0 as weight; Disagree (D) with 2 as weight and Strongly Disagree (SD) with 1 as weight.

The instrument was submitted to two experts in the Department of Measurement and Evaluation and one expert in the Department of Vocational Education, all in the University of Uyo for validation. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through the use of Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 from which a reliability index of 0.86 was recorded.

Administration of the Instrument

The instrument was administered to the sampled respondents by the researchers. The researchers guided the respondents in their responses, and collected back the instrument at the end.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean) was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at an alpha level of .05.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does formulation of education policy in Nigeria influence the practice of functional vocational education in her education system?

Table 1

Lecturers' and students' Mean Rating on the Influence of Education Policy Formulation on the Practice of Functional Vocational Education

S/N	Statement Items	Degree of Response					Total No.	Grand Total	Mean	Remarks
		SA (4)	A (3)	U (0)	D (2)	SD (1)				
1.	Influence of Policy Formulation Policy formulation is a fundamental problem in Nigeria.	200	100	0	75	25	1275	400	3.19	Accepted
2.	Policy makers in Nigeria have never been serious in policy formulation.	150	160	0	70	20	1240	400	3.10	Accepted
3.	Policy formulation is a tedious job.	300	100	0	0	0	1500	400	3.75	Accepted
4.	Policy formulation should be a job for the experts only.	210	80	0	50	60	1240	400	3.10	Accepted
5.	Poor policy formulation usually leads to poor implementation.	80	70	0	100	150	880	400	2.20	Not Accepted
Total		940	510	0	295	255	6135	2000	3.07	Accepted

Cut-off Point = 2.50

Data in Table 1 showed that policy formulation do also influence the practice of functional vocational education. The analysis showed the mean of the total mean score of 3.07 and the cut-off point of 2.50. Responses on four out of the five statement items under Influence of Policy Formulation confirm the result of the analysis in the Table.

Research Question 2: To what extent does implementation of education policy in Nigeria influence the practice of functional vocational education in her education system?

Table 2
Lecturers' and students' Mean Rating on the Influence of Education Policy Implementation on the Practice of Functional Vocational Education

S/N	Statement Items	Degree of Response					Total No.	Grand Total	Mean	Remarks
		SA (4)	A (3)	U (0)	D (2)	SD (1)				
6.	Influence of Policy Implementation Policy implementation is not as difficult as policy formulation.	100	50	0	100	150	900	400	2.25	Not Accepted
7.	Policy implementation in Nigeria often lacks objectivity.	50	80	0	140	130	850	400	2.13	Not Accepted
8.	Poor policy implementation is usually the cause of frequent changes of policies.	190	120	0	30	60	1240	400	3.10	Accepted
9.	Policy implementation needs no expertise in execution.	70	180	0	50	100	1020	400	2.55	Accepted
10.	Policy implementation requires more resources than policy formulation.	160	155	0	30	55	1220	400	3.05	Accepted
Total		570	585	0	350	495	5230	2000	2.62	Accepted

Cut-off Point = 2.50

Data in Table 2 showed the mean of the total mean score of 2.62 as compared with a cut-off point of 2.50. Thus, the meaning is that Policy Implementation influences the practice of functional vocational education as commonly opined by the public.

Testing of Hypotheses

H₀.1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of lecturers and students on the extent to which policy formulation in Nigeria influences the practice of functional vocational education in her education system.

Table 3
Influence of Education policy Formulation on the practice of Functional vocational education in Nigeria

Influence of policy formulation	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	α
Lecturers	140	35.25	2.48	1	214	1.66	0.05
Students	260	30.12	2.21	397			
Total	400	65.37	4.69	398			

Data in Table 3 showed t-cal of 2.14 with t-crit of 1.66 sat an alpha level of 0.05. Since t-cal is greater than t-crit, the null hypotheses is rejected, meaning that education policy formulation actually influences the practice of functional vocational education as erroneously thought otherwise by the public.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of lecturers and students on the extent to which policy implementation in Nigeria influences the practice of functional vocational education in her education system.

Table 4
Influence of Education Policy Implementation on the Practice of Functional Vocation Education in Nigeria

Influence of policy implementation	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	α
Lecturers	160	43.35	4.7	1	2.21	1.68	0.05
Students	240	42.82	4.15	397			
Total	400	86.17	8.86	398			

Data in Table 4 showed t-cal. of 2.21 and t-crit. of 1.68 at 0.05 level of significance. The value of t-cal is greater than that of t-crit. The null hypotheses is therefore not accepted, meaning that policy implementation do influence the practice of functional vocational education in Nigeria as rightly observed by the public.

Findings

The following findings were made in the study:

- (i) Policy formulation was as strong as policy implementation in influencing the practice of functional vocational education in Nigeria.
- (ii) It was erroneous to think that policy makers in Nigeria have never been serious in policy formulation.
- (iii) It was also erroneous to feel that poor policy formulation usually results to poor implementation.
- (iv) Policy implementation needed more resources than policy formulation for it to be successful.

Discussion of Findings

This study found out that policy formulation and implementation have affected Vocational Education in Nigeria since what she has in the name of Vocational Education is not functional. Functional Vocational Education is based on the provision and use of adequate resources and not on the provision of large quantity of resources as is the case presently (Udofot, 2004). The practice of functional vocational education in Nigeria has been affected adversely by policy formulation and implementation. It has been viewed by (Awoyinfa, 2013) that policy implementation influences functional vocational education more than policy formulation. Based on the responses given to the items of the instrument and the testing of the null hypotheses, it has been established that both policy formulation and implementation strongly influence the practice of functional vocational education.

Research question one and two had 3.07 and 2.62 respectively as their mean scores while Null hypotheses 1 and 2 had calculated t-values of 2.14 and 2.21 as compared with critical t-values of 1.66 and 1.68 respectively to confirm the fact established. The blame usually meted to policy implementation alone and exonerating policy formulation from the prevalent ills in practising functional vocational education is to certain extent deceitful. In confirming the effect of policy formulation on vocational education, Ademola (2005) explained that there are no linkages between technical colleges, advanced craft schools and tertiary institutions for academic advancement to the top. He further stresses that those who branch out to vocational education in technical colleges and advanced craft schools after many years' basic education are made to face imminent stagnation in the academic pursuit. All these problems are traceable to poor policy formulation in the system. In conformity with Ademola's explanation, Edinyang (2006) lamented that some of those terminating at advanced craft schools can surprisingly perform well in tertiary institutions if given the opportunity. The result of the analysis in Table 4 reveals that policy implementation significantly influences the practice of functional vocational education. Functional vocational education promotes employability, engenders job mobility and encourages respect to dignity of work. The favourable outcomes cannot be realized if policy implementation is not properly and jealously executed. In most of the learning institutions today, there are no tools or equipment for implementing functional vocational education (Asuquo, 2012). At where there are, they are inadequate or obsolete. Thus teachers are prevented from utilizing and promoting their specialized skills and expertise from which the students can benefit. Ubom (2004) therefore lamented that a situation whereby there are no tools and equipment for practising functional vocational education is unhealthy and disturbing especially in the sustainable development of the students.

Conclusion

The practice of functional vocational education in Nigeria is engulfed by teething problems of policy formulation and policy implementation. The situation in no mean measure has affected the economy of the country since many people do not acquire the needed manipulative skills to stimulate the economy for marked reduction in the rate of unemployment. Functional vocational education produces workers who are capable of developing and utilizing technologies for economic and industrial growth. It is a means of meeting the manpower needs of the nation qualitatively and quantitatively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should provide adequate resources for the implementation of policies formulated.
2. Great care and caution should be demonstrated in policy formulation in order to avert frequent changes of policies.
3. Experienced professionals in Vocational Education should be appointed into the policy making bodies in the educational system of the nation.
4. Vocational education should be introduced into and made functional in all academic programmes in all institutions of learning as a means of creating awareness that enables students to imbibe the practice of functional vocational education.

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