



EDUCATIONAL POLICY REFORMS FOR VALUE DRIVEN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 (SDG)



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Abstract

Education is not just the transferring of knowledge, it is meant to fundamentally shape characters, instill values and prepare individuals to be responsible members of the society as well enable them to make meaningful living. Therefore, educational policy reforms should be aimed at providing value based education through nurturing ethical, moral and social values in learners thereby contributing to the holistic development of students but today we hear students saying 'school na scam' and 'who school epp'. This paper took a cursory look at the possibility of educational policy reforms for value-driven education in the Nigerian secondary schools as a path to Sustainable Development Goal 4, conceptual clarifications, challenges and solutions. The study adopted the qualitative research method because it is non-empirical in nature, hence library based. It has been observed that the educational curricula of Nigeria could not produce expected results for value based education for the actualization of SDG 4. Teachers need to be ICT compliant in order to be able to flow along with their counterparts across the world. Finally, it was recommended that Government should employ holistic approach in designing any educational policy reform so as to ensure that such policies will be able to achieve value driven education and not mere written policies. They should encourage discussions and wide consultations with all stakeholders and desist from enacting one policy on top of the other as well as focus on allowing much time for the implementation of existing policies.

Keywords: Educational policy reforms, Value Driven Education, Nigeria, Secondary Schools, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Introduction

Educational policy reforms are simply sets of guidelines or rules that aim at improving the quality of education and performance of teachers and students both in secondary schools and other levels of education in Nigeria. Educational policy reforms are systematic changes and improvements made within a country's educational framework to enhance its overall effectiveness, accessibility, and

quality. In emerging economies like Nigeria, educational policy reforms in secondary schools have historically focused on expanding access to schooling, with reforms such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme (Federal Ministry of Education, 2019). Other educational reforms policy include focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and Vocational skills, 6-5-4 to 6-6-4 to 6-3-3-4 to 9-3-4 and now proposed 12-4 system. The goal has been to address literacy gaps, reduce school dropout rates, and bridge gender disparities in education. However, despite these efforts, secondary schools in Nigeria face significant challenges, including inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, and regional disparities, particularly between the North and South (Obi and Uchendu, 2020). The whole essence of these educational reforms seems mostly defeated as most of them do really last for a long time.

The aftermath of Nigeria's participation in the First Conference of Africa Minister of Education held in Addis Ababa in 1961 led Nigeria conducting an innovative curriculum conference in 1969 and formulated policy guidelines on standards, procedures, strategies and coordinating roles for qualitative delivery; these guidelines were in line with Addis Ababa resolutions (Olibie, et al. 2017). Ultimately, the first edition of National Policy on Education was framed in 1977. The policy was revised in the second edition in 1981, third and fourth editions in 1998 and 2004 respectively. Further revisions were made in 2007 and 2013 as the fifth and sixth editions, respectively. However, the fifth (2007) edition was a draft and the publication of the 2013(sixth) edition was yet in progress after its approval by the 59th session of National Council on Education (NCE) on 28th June, 2013.

These and other policy documents are adjunct policies and relevant not only for secondary education but also for all other sectors. Nigeria evolving society demands newer skills of its citizens and a re-definition of the concept of what constitutes an educated citizen: a self-motivated person with the ability to think, solve problems, and use higher-order intellectual skills to process information and make informed decisions (Nigerian Education Research and Development Council, NERDC, 2015). NERDC stated that the new curricula and standards seek to strike a balance between the quantity of necessary knowledge and skills on the one hand, and the acquisition of intellectual, social and citizenship dispositions on the other hand which is aimed at value driven education.

These educational policy reforms in secondary schools in Nigeria are often driven by the need to address specific challenges within the system, such as outdated curricula, inadequate teaching methodologies, or unequal access to resources and are far from value driven education. Educational policy reforms can span various areas, including the structure of school systems, teacher training, integration of technology, and the promotion of inclusive education (Olibie, Egboka & Ofojebe, 2017). The goal is to create an environment that supports the holistic development of students, preparing them to meet both local as well as global challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (4). Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) emphasize "inclusive and equitable quality education" as a key priority for global development (United Nations, 2015) but the ability of these to achieve value driven education is where the problem lies.

Conceptual Clarification

For a better understanding of the topic of this discourse, the main concepts of the study would be contextually clarified. The concepts are educational policy reforms, value driven education and Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Educational Policy Reforms

Educational policy reforms are conscious and systematic efforts made to bring about change in a country's educational policy so as to improve accessibility and quality. Educational policy reform is the systematic and intentional changes made in the educational system so as to address identified challenges, enhance learning outcomes and promote equitable and effective education for all students

(Okeke et al. 2024). However, in Nigeria secondary schools most of these educational policy reforms face challenges in educational quality and infrastructure thereby failing short of value driven



education and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4. Consequently, Adeyemi (2022) revealed that most public secondary schools in Nigeria suffer from overcrowding, insufficient teaching material and lack of trained teachers which compromises the quality of education especially in rural areas where school attendance is very low.

Value-Driven Education

Value driven education is targeted at inculcating ethics, moral or societal values into the curricula with the intention of achieving holistic formation or development of the students. Amarnath (2022) explained that value driven education is aimed at the development of the total personality of an individual- intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral and spiritual. It includes developing sensitivity to the good, the right and the beautiful, ability to choose the right values in accordance with the highest ideals of life and internalizing and realizing them in thought and action. He further added that the value driven education, calls into play all human facilities- knowing, feeling and doing. The learner should not only be enabled to know the right or the good, but also to care, to feel the appropriate emotion, concern and commitment as well as exercise the will to do the right thing. In other words, value driven education should be able to develop rational critical thinking to educate the emotions, to cultivate the imagination, to strengthen will and to train the character of the learner.

Sustainable Development Goal 4

Sustainable Development Goals are global call for action to end poverty, protect the earth's environment and climate as well as ensure that people everywhere can enjoy peace and prosperity. There are many of SDGs but this paper is focused on goal 4 which is quality education. This is targeted at inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. It is expected that SDG 4 should by 2030 ensure that girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal 4 effective learning outcomes. The question is, how feasible by 2030? Our incessant educational policy reforms that have not really been able to achieve value driven education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. The rate of unemployable graduates produced in this country is alarming, therefore, there is need to look at the educational policy reforms in secondary schools to enable that system produce students that will be useful to the society and make meaningful living.

Literature Review

Secondary education is the pivot of our educational system because it is the intermediate between the primary and tertiary levels. It is of great importance because it determines and influences, to a large extent, not only the input to our tertiary institutions but also transform individuals to be useful within the society they live. Educational policy reforms at the various levels of the education system is necessary. However, the attainment of value driven education is a challenge that keeps reoccurring. Nigeria has been unable to successfully achieve value driven education, despite spending over four years of deliberations at various levels in the process of educational policy reforms (Odukoya et al. 2018). Research revealed some of the challenges to actualization of value driven education: unequal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at all levels, policy on language, frequent changes in policies, among others.

In Nigeria, educational policy reforms are often picked and dropped while in countries like US, the two tier secondary school system still operates with wonderful results and so there is nothing wrong with the 6-3-3-4 system; rather, our problem is that we simply have not embraced educational policy reforms that is aimed at value driven education and as it stands now another educational policy reform is being proposed. Solanke (2012) posited that an important loophole is that those who implement the policy are not fully involved in the policy enunciation. It is not the best for a few secondary school heads, bureaucrat and higher institutional lecturers, politicians alone to formulate policy on secondary education without carrying out national research involving a cross section of secondary school teachers.



Solanke equally noted that political leadership perception of education is another problem affecting educational policy reforms of secondary schools in Nigeria and most leaders do not take educational investment as futuristic investment, as a foundation upon which the future of a nation is built. Hence, most of the educational policy reforms are not fully embraced to know the worthwhileness before introducing another one, the rate of overhauling educational policy reforms in secondary schools has become a thing to lament about. No wonder, the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2020) highlighted concerns about the persistence of substandard education in some African nations despite efforts to improve quality.

It is evident that these educational policy reforms in Nigeria secondary schools are diversion from Sustainable Development Goals (4) which is inclusive and equitable quality education. These educational policy reforms in secondary schools are often a far cry of what it should be considering the view of ProctorEdu (2024), educational policy reform initiatives may encompass a wide range of changes, including curriculum revisions, instructional strategies, teacher training and professional development, assessment methods, school funding, and educational policies. He further pointed out that the goals of educational policy reform in Nigeria secondary schools often include raising academic standards, closing achievement gaps, fostering innovation in teaching and learning, and preparing students to meet the demands of the evolving workforce and society. Education reform efforts are driven by research data, and evidence-based practices, with the aim of continuously improving the quality and accessibility of education. Ministry of Education, India (2020) indicated that educational policy reforms must ensure quality education within an equitable and inclusive classroom environment that takes care of diverse background, different academic abilities and makes them active participants in the learning process; It must focus less on content retention and more on building critical thinking and problem-solving abilities and in the secondary school system educational policy reforms should consider making students more independent and skill equipped. However, educational policy reforms in Nigeria secondary schools are marred by lots of challenges and do not achieve value driven education. This is visible in the level of unemployment among youths which has led many of them to say audibly that '*school na scam*' and even '*who school epp*'. Overestimation of available resources, under estimation of cost of implementing a plan, inaccurate statistical data, incompetent staff, lack of political support, conflict, over reliance upon external assistance are challenges confronting policy implementation in Nigeria (Joe et al. 2019). Nigeria secondary schools have experienced several reviews, reforms, innovations in educational policies and programmes without achieving value driven education.

As Nigeria strives for development, educational policy reforms in Nigeria secondary schools should play a crucial role in shaping the future of both students and the nation. In today's rapidly changing global environment, the intersection of educational policy reforms and value driven education has become necessary to mitigate the problem of unemployment and idleness. Embracing educational policy reforms to design a future that balances the needs of the present is good. However, it is imperative to preserve resources for future generations through education as a cornerstone focused on attaining Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving such outcomes, however, requires a comprehensive approach to educational policy reforms, one that goes beyond simply improving infrastructure or access to schooling. It involves designing curricula that promote critical thinking, civic engagement, and resilience, while also investing in teacher training and supporting community- based initiatives that strengthen local capacity.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encompasses a set of goals and objectives aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The specific targets and objectives under SDG, as outlined by the United Nations, include: inclusive and equitable quality education, ensure equal access to technical and vocational education, eliminate gender disparities in education, ensure universal literacy and numeracy, promote lifelong learning opportunities and build and upgrade educational facilities. According to the United Nations (2020), education is considered a key driver for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and



Goal 13 (Climate Action). The overall goal of Sustainable Development Goals for Saini et al. (2023) are primarily concerned with promoting sustainable growth via ensuring well-being, economic growth, environmental legislation and academic advancement which could only be achieved through a proactive governmental decision. Thus, in order to have a sustainable world, and to effectively implement other SDGs programmes, it requires knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which can only come through well-articulate and implemented educational policy reforms towards attainment of value-based education.

Challenges to Educational Policy Reforms for Value Driven Education in Nigeria Secondary Schools

Out-Dated Educational Curricula: Curricula could be seen as a sequence or academic order through which a set goal of education is achieved. Curricula of education is a systematic planned of learning activities and experiences in order to achieve behavioural changes. It has been observed that the educational curricula of Nigeria could not produce expected results for value-based education for the actualization of SDGs. School curricula in Nigeria are outdated which cannot be compared to curricula of education in other parts of the world. For Nigeria to be able to achieve SDGs, its educational curricula need to be updated. This was aptly supported by Agbionu et al. (2016), the educational system is dysfunctional, as graduates of many institutions cannot meet the needs of the country, wide disparities exist in educational standard and learning achievements. They further added that the system emphasizes theoretical knowledge and as such secondary school curricula need urgent review to make it relevant to achieve value-based education.

None involvement of all Stakeholders: The problem is educational policy reforms in Nigeria secondary schools are often prepared with the exclusion of some major stakeholders like teachers and alumni. Furthermore, some of these educational policy reforms has not really changed or updated to meet the demands of the time, even in some cases the policies seem unrealistic. Example is the change from 9-3-4 to the proposed 12-4, was the 9-3-4 effective or active in the first place? What necessitated this proposed change to 12-4? If all stakeholders were involved there would have been a wider consultation and idle reasons harnessed.

Technological Improvement: Educational policy reforms should not be theoretical alone such that students in secondary schools can be trained on the use of modern technological devices that can meet current digital demand. Thus, there is a need for improvement in the areas of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools in Nigeria such as modern educational gadgets like computers, modern instructional materials and packages. Therefore, educational policy reforms are important to be backed up with modern infrastructural facilities so as to achieve SDGs.

Solutions of Challenges to Educational Policy Reforms for Value Driven Education in Nigeria Secondary Schools

While the challenges in educational policy reforms are significant, they are not insurmountable in Nigeria secondary schools for value-driven education. There are solutions that can help improve educational policy reforms aimed at value-driven education so as to attain Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Curricula Revision: Educational policy reforms should be targeted at updating or overhauling the curriculum to reflect the skills and knowledge so as to achieve value-driven education. Curricula should not dwell on traditional subjects but also teach essential problem-solving skills like critical thinking, entrepreneurship among others. Educational policy reforms should be targeted at preparing students for global challenges they will face in a rapidly changing world. It should also prepare students for the world of work all geared at value-driven education so as to solve life problems.



Technology Integration: There is needs to increase fund allocation to secondary schools in Nigeria so that the study and use of modern ICT tools can be introduced in secondary schools to help bridge the gap in areas where traditional education systems are lacking. The role of technology in school is to enhance human thinking and to augment the educational process and enable them solve life problems. Furthermore, digital tools can make education more interesting, thereby enabling students to learn at the early stage so as to harness their digital skills for those that are gifted with such.

Conclusion

Educational policy reforms are essential for attaining value driven education so as to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4. Secondary schools in Nigeria change from educational policy reform to another such policy reforms must be value driven to be able to instill in the students the skills and values needed to address economic inequality, environmental sustainability, and everyday life activity. Educational policy reforms should not merely aim at improving academic outcomes but should also focus on shaping individuals that would be able to face everyday challenges of life and be useful to the society.

It is obvious that educational policy reforms in secondary education in Nigeria face many challenges however, there is great prospect if only the expected areas of attention could be analyzed, adopted and judiciously reformed to produce better citizens. When policies that ought to be the road maps that guide the education sector of any nation are not well reformed it creates problem in the society that citizens see education as a ‘scam’ because after passing through educational institutions, the education they received becomes useless to them and they see it as waste of their time.

Recommendations

1. Detailed analysis of the implications of major government policies such as promulgation of Universal Basic education (UBE) and changes in the curricula structures. They should be validated in relation to requisite resources (in the immediate, medium to long-term future) and changes in the existing policy and regulatory framework.
2. Policy makers should enact educational policy reform not to satisfy the government in power but to achieve value driven education.
3. Government should employ holistic approach in designing any educational policy reform so as to ensure that such policies will be able to achieve value driven education and not mere written policies. They should encourage discussions and wide consultations with all stakeholders and desist from enacting one policy on top of the other also focus on allowing much time for the implementation of existing policies.
4. More funds in line with UNESCO directive of at least 15 per cent to 20 or even up to 26 percent should be allocated to education, so as to increase funds made available for secondary schools in Nigeria to strengthen the system.
5. There is need for the relevant government agencies to strengthen the implementation of recent educational policies by ensuring adequate training and resources for teachers and school administrators to effectively apply these reforms in the classroom so as to achieve value driven education.

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