The Nexus between Political Ideologies and Educational Policies: A Case Study of Nigeria

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Abstract:- This study delves into the relationship between political ideologies and educational policies, with a specific focus on Nigeria. It unravels the nuanced connections shaping the educational landscape within the country, examining how political ideologies impact policy formulation and implementation. By employing a case study approach, the research navigates through Nigeria's diverse political history, exploring how different ideologies have influenced educational agendas. The analysis encompasses the dynamic interplay between political shifts and corresponding changes in educational policies, shedding light on the evolving nature of the educational system. Through an exploration of key historical events and policy reforms, the paper has identified patterns, conflicts, and synergies between political ideologies and educational goals. Additionally, it examines the implications of these interactions on educational outcomes, equity, and access. Understanding this nexus is crucial for policymakers, educators, and researchers, as it provides insights into the forces shaping the educational landscape. Ultimately, the research contributes to a broader discourse on the intersection of politics and education. It recommends adjustment of policies with emphasis on leadership quality and competency. Political Parties should be driven and supported based on ideologies and not personality make-up. This offers valuable lessons for fostering a more resilient and responsive educational system in Nigeria and, by extension, in similar socio-political contexts globally.

Keywords: *Political Ideologies, Educational Policies, Nexus, Nigeria, Influence.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the intricate tapestry of a nation's development, the nexus between political ideologies and educational policies plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of its future generations. According to Collier (2017), while some nations of the world are achieving unprecedented prosperity, others are living in mass poverty. The reason for this disparity can be traced to the political ideologies upheld by individual countries.Political ideologies play a crucial role in shaping policies by providing a framework of beliefs and values that guide decision-making within a government (Harrison &Boyd, 2018). These ideologies influence how leaders perceive the role of the state, the individual, and societal structures. In fact, the economic, educational system and foreign policy including the social values practiced in a state is a reflection of the ideologies upheld by the political actors.

Using Nigeria as a case study, thispaper shall examine how the big ideas in politics, called political ideologies, impact the rules and plansfor education in Nigeria. It is like figuring out the consequential implications of political ideologies on Nigeria's educational framework beginning from the curriculum to what happens in classrooms across Nigeria. Ideological beliefs influence the perception of the government's role. A socialist ideology might advocate for a more significant state presence in the economy, while a libertarian ideology may prioritize minimal government intervention.

II. POLITICAL IDEOLOGY EXPLAINED

In the words of Harrison and Boyd (2018), political ideologyis a system of definite views, ideas, conceptions, and notions adhered to by the political class or political party. It is always a reflection of the system predominant at any given time and they shape the way societies envision governance and societal organization. It can also be seen as diverse belief systems that shape how individuals and societies perceive governance, societal organization, and values. In essence, political ideologies serve as guiding principles that inform the creation, modification, and implementation of policies across various domains, significantly impacting the direction and character of a government's decisions.

In more specific terms, ideologies held by various political actors is connected to the policies they make based on the influence they exert in the making of such polices including educational policies. Cranston (2023) noted that political ideologies offer a vision of an ideal society, outlining fundamental principles and goals. For example, liberalism emphasizes individual freedoms and equality, while conservatism values tradition and stability. Here's a brief overview of some prominent ideologies:

- **Liberalism:** Emphasizes individual freedoms, human rights, democracy, and free-market capitalism. It seeks to balance personal liberty with social equality.
- **Conservatism:** Values tradition, authority, and gradual societal change. Conservatives often advocate for the preservation of established institutions and cultural norms.
- **Socialism:** Focuses on collective ownership of resources, aiming to reduce economic inequality. Socialists seek to establish cooperative forms of governance and redistribute wealth.
- **Communism:** Advocates for a classless, stateless society where the means of production are collectively owned. It envisions a system where wealth and resources are shared equally.

- **Fascism:** Characterized by authoritarianism, nationalism, and a strong central government. Fascist ideologies often involve a dictatorial leader and a rejection of individual liberties in favor of the state.
- **Anarchism:** Rejects hierarchical structures, including government, in favor of voluntary cooperation and decentralized decision-making. Anarchists strive for a society without rulers.

These ideologies are fluid and can manifest in various forms, adapting to cultural, historical, and geopolitical contexts. Additionally, many political systems incorporate elements from multiple ideologies, creating hybrid models.

III. OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA

The principles guiding education in Nigeria can be divided into two phases namely; the colonial and post independence period. Before the establishment of colonial government in Nigeria, both the southern and northern part of the country had informal education which was geared towards developing preparing people to fit into the society in terms of morals, cultural values and character (Fafunwa, 2004). Then the coming of the Christian missionaries to the southern part of Nigeria brought western education, with the aim of teaching the recipients to read and write in english language and train adequate manpower for civil service and the industrial revolution.

A. Pre-Independent Policies

In this paper, we consider two major policies that governed the administration of education before the independence of Nigeria. These are explained as follows:

➢ *Definition of roles by the state and the Christian missionaries in the governance of education:*

According to Sulaiman (2012), the British government introduced education ordinance in 1882, decentralizing educational administration in Nigeria. By this policy, the three regions in Nigeria were empowered to develop their education policies. This brought a major mile stone in the education sector because it was the first legislation on education covering all the regions in Nigeria.

➢ *Introduction of universal primary education:*

Again, in 1950's the colonial government introduced the universal primary education system, to provide free primary school education to children from age six to twelve years and reducing high level of illiteracy in Nigeria. Though the policy had a general apathy in the muslim dominated northern part of the country, there was significant gains in the western and eastern regions, and this created education gap between the south and the northern region.

B. Educational polices at post independence era

Following Nigeria's independence, educational policies were designed to address various aspects of the education system and promote national consciousness and self reliance (Okparaugo, 2021). From this time, the country has undergone several policy changes to enhance the quality of education. Key policies include:

➢ *National Policy on Education(NPE)*

The 1977 National Policy on Education (NPE)emphasized the importance of equal educational opportunities, relevance of the curriculum, and the integration of technology. In order to achieve the aims of this policy the federal government was empowered by this policy to control and finance education in Nigeria which was a departure from colonial government policy of sharing cost of education between the proprietary bodies, the local communities and the parents (Ibadin, 2004).The final revised edition of the national policy on education was in 2004, which was based on dynamic model of formulating education policies and adapting to changes. Some key features of NPE are:

- It was geared towards developing self reliance and self-sufficient individuals who will meet the country's developmental needs
- It had a broad curriculum that gave equal learning opportunity to every child irrespective of their sex, ability and background.
- It also prescribes an inclusive education to take care of children with special needs, itinerary pupils through Qur'anic education programme as well as programme for out of school children.
- It made education in Nigeria government's responsibility empowering them to centralized control and funding.

➢ *Universal Basic Education (UBE)*

Following a revision of the UPE, the Universal Basic Education policy was enacted which proposed a 9-3-4 education system comprising of six years primary school education and 3 years Junior secondary school after which the candidate is allowed to sit for junior secondary school certificate (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). One major provisions of the policy was the provision of free and compulsory education for the first nine years of a child's schooling. It was also designed to allow students to continue careers through apprenticeship and vocational training after their junior secondary school(Olaniyan and Obadara 2008).

➢ *Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund)*

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) is a government agency established in 2011. Its primary purpose is to provide intervention funds to public tertiary institutions including universities, polytechnics and collegesof education, to enhance their infrastructure, research capabilities, and academic development. TETFund is funded through a two percent (2%) education tax imposed on the assessable profit of all registered companies in Nigeria (Tertiary Education Trust Fund, 2023). The tax is collected by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and remitted to TETFund for allocation.This policy ensures that funds are allocated based on a formula that considers the level of enrollment and academic staff population in beneficiary institutions.

IV. POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES IN NIGERIA

A careful observation of the evolution of political parties ideology in Nigeria before independence showed that parties such as the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) founded by Sir Herbert Macaulay was not only nationalist in orientation but had a progressive and socialist ideology. The NPC (Northern People's Congress) Founded by Sir Ahmadu Bello had elite and conservative ideology while the AG (Action Group) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo had a welfarist ideology.

According to Solanke(2013), what differentiates one political party from another is their ideologies on educational issues, economic policies, welfare issues etc. But in Nigeria, political parties are often defined by personalities in the party or which party is in charge at the federal level and not any specific ideology on contemporary issues. In light of this, Odunze (2013) asserts that unlike other nations like UK and US where their political ideologies is on solving unemployment, fighting crimes, reducing povertyand managing theeconomy, Nigeria's political space is dominated with political leaders switching parties frequently indicating that our political parties have no defined ideological beliefs or the members are merely self- serving.Obviously, this has had a significant influence and impact on the creation and most importantly the implementation of educational policies.

V. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

The relationship between education and politics is bi-directional because both factors mutually reinforce each other. The political system provides needed funding and policies for the educational sector while the educational sector in turn produces trained personnel and citizens that participates in the political system (Fabunmi, 2005).Education is a vital platform for the transmission and sharing of political ideologies. Educational institutions through classroom discussions, curriculum and teaching materials shape the political beliefs, values and orientation of the students. Also, the content and delivery of education can be influenced by the prevailing political ideology, reflecting the dominant political narratives of a society.

On the other hand, political decisions and policies has a great impact on educational systems given that government bodies and policymakers decides resources allocation, standard of curriculum, training of teachers and other reforms. Similarly, education plays an important role in preparing individuals for active citizenship and political participation. Civic education, social studies and political science courses can provide knowledge about processes, rights and responsibilities. This knowledge can in turn foster critical thinking, informed decision making and political engagement among citizens.

In addition, Nigeria's diverse linguistic landscape influences language policies in education. English is the official language, but there is an emphasis on promoting indigenous languages at the primary education level.

In the history of education in Nigeria, the second republic is renowned to have brought with it the highest degree of politicization of education (Aladegbola&Jaiyeola, 2016). Amongst the dominant parties at the time, it was considered that the issue of free education was a tool of political strategy and reduced to the mere rhetoric of slogans.The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), which prided itself as a welfarist party was the only party that categorically premised its ideology on the determination of the free education agenda at all levels, while the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) anchored its ideology on education to be provided "when practicable" (Aladegbola&Jaiyeola, 2016). The Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) had a slightly different posture from the NPN as it had anchored its ideology on education to be given "when feasible" (Aladegbola&Jaiyeola, 2016).

This precedent, in hindsight could be said to have been dangerous as it had laid the foundation for the existing problems present in the impact of politics on the educational system in Nigeria. However, during the fourth republic, president Goodluck Jonathan took the initiative of promoting education amongst the nomadic pastoralists majorly living in the northern part of the country, and thereby established the Almajiri schools.

The programme is considered to have been a failure owing to poor implementation (Mom, 2022). The former Minister of Education, AdamuAdamu had attributed part of the failure of the programme to some governors in the Northern region of deliberately spoiling education at the primary level (Mom, 2022). This failure has earlier pointed out is mainly as a result of lack of political will and this remains a theme in recurrent theme in the failure of the Nigerian educational system.

VI. ACTORS AND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE

The role of critical actors on educational policies is vital in examining the level of influence each exerts and how that has placed or set the standards on the policies in the educational sector. As expected, each actor's influence is unequal, as it heavily relies on the power and authority – political or otherwise exercised. According to McCowan, Janmaat, and Rao (2016), notable actors influencing educational policies are the government, students, political parties, and interest groups, with the government being the highest-ranked stakeholder. The reason for this is plausible as the government is the primary determinant of setting the standard or direction in which the country moves, and this is not only a Nigeria factor but a global one. Hence, the burden of the creation, execution and administration of policies largely rests on its shoulders.

A. Government

Examining the interaction between government and education in Nigeria, Guda and Mando (2020) express that education and politics are not new phenomena but have existed since colonial administration. To understand the crucial role or intervention government plays in education, it seems apposite to state that the bulk funding comes mainly

from the government's purse, and management primarily rests on the government (Friedman, 1955). For instance, educational subsidies to public institutions and, more recently, the introduction of student loans by the government portray the government's role in education. Furthermore, licenses required to operate educational institutions are the government's responsibility. These core responsibilities taken by the government set part of the stage in defining educational policies in Nigeria. Education for all has been a mantra of successive Nigerian governments for decades. Hence, the Federal Government of Nigeria holds, as one of its core beliefs in its philosophy of education, that "education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion and any peculiar challenges" (FGN, 2013).

Nevertheless, while this philosophy, on the surface, aims at the Federal government to make education accessible to its citizenry, it seems like a lofty philosophy that has been left to drown only the sheets of paper and mere rhetoric during election campaigns. The situation proves true because there is gross underfunding and continuous minimal budgetary allocation for education (Guda&Mando, 2020; Ukpong, 2017); less attention is drawn to the sector, and it is little wonder that the educational sector keeps suffering setbacks in its development. Hence, the educational policies developed by the government are counter-productive and have led to a decline in educational standards. On the other hand, with cases of military takeover of government at different times in the history of Nigeria, educational policies, as with other policies, were set by decrees at the instance of the military head of government.

Despite the role of government in education, one of the drawbacks is the need to continue programmes and policies by successive governments. This has been a recurrent theme within the Nigerian space, and it lies as one of the foundational errors that has led the country to be underdeveloped, including the educational sector. A factor responsible for this in Nigeria is that certain political offices are usually offered as rewards for supporters of candidates that have emerged victorious in elections, so merit or adequate capacity in a particular role is not considered a yardstick in selecting those at the helm of affairs. The continuous transitions between governments have seen both improvements and drawbacks in the educational sector at the state and federal levels. The lack of a continuum in policy development has further hampered the programmes to develop the educational sector and other critical sectors of the Nigerian economy.

The ripple effect of bad policy management has caused the educational level In the country to fall to the dumps, and it is often a sad tale that the citizens bear. However, the private sector is poised to find ways of reviving the sector's fallen state but still needs to be confronted with dealing with the government, which limits its scope and operation. Hence, the educational sector continues. On the government side, negligence, selfish interest, and endemic corruption have led to both deficient educational policies and poor implementation of educational policies. For example, the aim of creating Universal Basic Education (UBE), despite its lofty agenda to bring about positive outcomes in the educational system through quality, functional and accessible education, has failed in many ways (Kolapo, 2011). The UBE, among others, is an example of some of the policy programmes designed by the government, yet unable to achieve a positive change.

B. Interest Groups

Undoubtedly, the government holds sway in determining the factors to set educational policies. But another visible and potent actor in the development and determination of educational policies is the interest groups represented by such bodies as the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), among others. Without them, the educational system could have long collapsed if it solely relied on the government to set the pace.

Interest groups are primarily to check, moderate, and, at the same time, quash the [deliberate] actions and intentions of the government. Ismail (2008) opines that the influence of interest groups in the formulation and moderation of educational policies becomes necessary when some decisions intended for policies by the government are sometimes not in alignment or are incompatible with the group's interest, which most times represents the interest of the general public. At such times, the interest groups find a way to draw the government's attention to slide into being dictatorial in policy formulation or management by usually calling for negotiation.

Major interest groups and stakeholders in education are involved in the creation and execution of policies in Nigeria (Williams, 2022). They include Federal and State ministries of education, the National Universities Commission, the National Board for Technical Education, the Educational Research and Development Council, the state school Management Board, the state secondary Technical Education Board, the state Universal Education Board, the Local Government Education Authorities, the National Council for Nomadic Education and the National Business and Technical Education Board among others (Ekpiken & Ifere, 2015).

VII. IMPACT OF POLITICS ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

There is a relationship between politics and education like the two are inseparable. Omoregie and Omoike (2013) address this by saying that "they are both necessary for the functioning of the social system of the society". One of the ways through which politics impacts education is exhibited through the manifesto, candidates presented for elections and in a bit of a way, the policies developed and issued by the government in power. This led to Olayinka (2018) positing that "political party influences planning, administration and management of the educational sector in power." Further, going by the words of Olayinka (2018), "implementation of educational policies operate within the political framework of the community". Therefore, political administrators, primarily represented by the government in power, set the direction of educational policies.

In more definite terms, politics bears an overarching influence on educational outcomes. It is, however, key to note that political ideologies formed by political parties or governments draw a lasting impact on the educational structure obtainable in a country; Nigeria is no different. Lack of political ideology has been considered as one of the contributing factors worsening the educational system (Erezi, 2019). This point's weight was solidly captured in a statement once made by a former deputy governor of Ekiti State, ModupeAdeolaAdelabu, when she said, "Education has been established as the foundation of ideology in any society. Its efficiency is felt in a society where the politics have an ideology, where Nigeria is lacking, thus suffering our educational system" (Erezi, 2019).

VIII. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

Analysis would reveal that Nigeria cannot be said to be lacking in policy creation. The main challenge, however, is in the area of policy implementation and continuation. This is the point where aspirations are turned to reality, but it sounds, as in the Nigerian case, a marveling situation where lofty policies have either been churned out without remarkable execution or abandoned at the process of implementation, and this calls for a thorough examination.

Okoroma (2006) attributed the cause of the malfunctions in the educational system in Nigeria to a lack of potent policy implementation. He considers it to be fundamentally a result of a lack of political will, endemic corruption and lack of continuity. Dissecting Okoroma's findings, of course, will reveal that these factors, as he rightly pointed out, are among the fundamental issues bedevilling the Nigerian educational system. However, it is worth asking how long these problems will persist and be corrected. Also, the lack of adequate human and material resources also contributes to the problems, and these problems often breed the implementation gap—which refers to the gulf between stated policy and actualisation of the objectives (Makinde, 2005).

From the flow of challenges highlighted so far, it is equally important to note that another albatross to the lack of development in educational policies in the country stems from selecting policies to implement, most of which need more ideological significance. This issue still has its roots, mainly in the political space within the country. The selection of policies could be traced to the government or other educational sector stakeholders to cherry-pick policies deemed appropriate to favour a class or section of people within the country. For example, establishing the Almajiri schools in the North drives home the point.

Failure in policy implementation leads to a systematic failure, which is the present situation in Nigeria. It is conceived that creating policies is often not a problem in many developing nations; however, these policies cannot produce tangible results (Makinde, 2005; Bolaji, Gray & Campbell-Evans, 2015). In the words of Bolaji et al. (2005), "Achieving the desired goal of any public intention is the hallmark of policy realisation." Hence, for the ability to

better educational policy outcomes, it is imperative that a considerable focus be placed on policy implementation.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

With the troubleshooting of the challenges, it is necessary to draw out specific recommendations that would steer the educational sector on a better path, translate to better outcomes for the educational sector, and have a holistic effect on Nigeria. First, policy adjustments must be taken into consideration by the government. Static policies must be addressed, and practical and tangible policies that can effect positive change in the educational system must be introduced.

Second, there should be a focus on leadership and less impact of politics on the educational sector. Politics of allotting sensitive offices like education should not be politicized but rather should be awarded to technocrats from the field to reposition Nigeria's educational system. Third, priority must be placed on the welfare of teachers and other essential actors within the educational system.

Lastly, it is also necessary that all stakeholders in the sector should have all hands on deck to ensure continuous research development to foster better outcomes and not rely solely on the government. Similarly, bureaucratic bottlenecks need to be reduced. Keiser (2011) admitted that "bureaucratic alignment in policy realization positively or negatively affects policy decisions." The institutional framework for the educational sector needs to be strengthened.

X. CONCLUSION

It is evident that how leaders think about running the country can really affect how schools work in terms of the policies guiding and fueling it and Nigeria is not an exception. As Nigeria navigates its socio-political currents, this paper had the aim of unravelling the intricate interplay between ideological underpinnings and the educational landscape, shedding light on the consequential implications for the nation's educational framework. Given all the challenges highlighted in examining the Nigerian educational terrain and prevalent challenges, mainly in policy implementation, it is essential that education, being a veritable tool for effecting meaningful change, should be left to be managed by specialized experts or technocrats to address the current and inherent flaws in the system. In another breath, it is equally important to reiterate that the government needs to reduce political influence on the educational sector. It would inevitably lead to a new dimension in Nigeria's educational process. Therefore, practical policy establishment and implementation should be streamlined to usher in Nigeria's birth of a new political and educational history.

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