

# Politics of Education in Nigeria: Government Influence and Its Implications

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## ABSTRACT

*There has been an inseparable link between politics and education in the society. The fact that politics and government decisions can affect all aspects of society has closely linked education to politics. Government policies and political decisions regulate nearly everything that happens in the society including education. Adopting qualitative document analysis design and anchored on Political Economy of Education Theory, this article explores how politics and government influence education and its implication on the structure and quality of education delivery in Nigeria from colonial period to date. Specifically, this article addresses the following research questions: (i) In what ways do politics and government influence the structure and delivery of education in Nigeria? (ii) What are the implications of influence of politics and government on Nigerian educational system? Based on data from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and newspapers, the findings of this study show that politics and government influence the educational system through funding, policy formulation and implementation, appointment of educational leaders, curriculum development and implementation, and admission policies, among others. The implication of government influence is that when the government does not handle well any of the means through which they influence education, it will affect negatively the standard and quality of education in Nigeria. All the stakeholders in education and the general public need to understand the relationship between the government and education. The knowledge will enable the stakeholders to support the government in making policies that will promote quality education.*

## INTRODUCTION

Scholars and authors have defined politics in various ways to capture its complexity. One of the early and influential definitions of politics comes from Lasswell, who defined politics as "who gets what, when, and how" (Hubert, 2020, p. 7). Hubert analysed this definition and described *who* to be any member of a political community - ranging from individuals and groups to corporations, unions, and politicians; *What* as government programs, resources, rights, and privileges; *when* as timing; and *How* as the processes by which members of a political community secure what they desire, whether through democratic or undemocratic, open or closed, fair or unfair methods, and through institutional arrangements like laws, regulations, and practices such as voting, lobbying, and decision-making. Expanding on Lasswell's concept, Hubert (2020) defined politics as the legitimate struggle for limited resources, rights, and privileges within the spheres of government, economy, and society. Politics has also been defined as any interaction among individuals, groups, or institutions striving to make collective decisions or address shared problems (Rom et al., 2022).

Political interactions extend beyond government into corporate, academic, and religious spheres, as well as everyday life. According to Roskin et al. (2017), politics is present wherever people interact to make collective decisions. Buttressing this, Parsons (2017) also noted that unless one lives alone on a desert island, everyone is involved in politics in some ways, whether in workplaces, families, or classrooms where formal education takes place.

Education is one the aspects of the society that is affected by politics. Education is the process through which requisite knowledge, skill and values are inculcated in individuals for personal development and that of the society. Different authors have defined education in different ways. Fafunwa (1974/2018) defined education as the process through the society develops in a child or young adult the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are considered to be of positive value to the society. Adesemowo and Sotonade (1999) in their own view defined education as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties are trained and different skills are developed. These authors further differentiated education from schooling by stating that schooling is just one of the ways in which education is provided. The authors also emphasized that education teach positive behaviour rather than negative one. For Verma, Doharey, and Verma (2023), education is the process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through various forms of learning. The authors also emphasised that education is not limited to formal institutions such as schools and universities but can also be gained through informal means such as self-learning, work experience, and interaction with the environment. In other words, education can occur anywhere. One common thing in all the definitions of education is that education brings some changes in an individual through imparting of knowledge, skills and values for the good of the individual and that of the general society. However, the nature education which people of a particular society receive is not unaffected by the government of that particular society. This where education and politics come inter interaction. The interaction between politics and education has resulted to a term known as politics of education

Politics of education refers to the ways in which various stakeholders in education (of which the major is government) influence educational systems, institutions, and practices. It examines how government, policymakers, interest groups, parents/guardians, teachers/lecturers, the students, school administrators, teacher unions, communities, NGOs, religious groups, and other stakeholders shape education through laws and policies, funding, curricula, and administration, among others. Alimba (2017) defined the politics of education as various ways through which people, whether individually or collectively, try to influence the educational process by influencing government policies. The people here, refer to various interest groups, government agencies such as arms of the government (legislature, executive, and judiciary), ministry of education, or the general public. While many stakeholders in education can influence education in various ways, the focus of this paper is on government influences on education. Government influences on education is evident because government policies regulate almost everything that happens in education.

In the context of this study, government is a body or group of people who governs a state/country. It means the leaders of a country. According to Hague et al. (2016), a government consists of institutions or organizations responsible for making and implementing collective decisions for society. The institutions or organizations in this definition refer to groups of people. Furthermore, according the authors (Hague et al.), the groups of people that make up the government are not limited to only the politically appointed or elected members of the executive, legislature, or judiciary but also include public servants such as the police, the military, workers in different government ministries and departments, workers in other institutions of government such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Independent Corrupt

Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), etc. even though such people are not usually appointed by political methods such as election. In the same line of thought with Hague et al., Hubert (2020), defined government as the collection of institutions and people who occupy them that is recognized as the legitimate authority to make decisions regarding the whole public in a defined geographic territory. Hubert further defined an institution as an established organization, custom, or practice formed for a specific public purpose. From the above definitions, government can be summarily defined as a group of people set up to govern an organized group of people, usually a state, and entrusted with the power to make, enforce, and interpret laws and policies for the good of the people they are governing. Government makes, enforces, and interprets laws to regulate both themselves and the people they are governing in order to maintain peace and order in the society. In addition to that, government also makes and implements policies through which they address societal problems by providing the society some essential goods and services of which one is education.

Nigeria's government intention to provide the people of Nigeria education as one of the essential social services received expression in the Constitution where it is stated that "government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels" (FRN, 1999, section 18(1)). As the government is providing the education as much as they could, the government has also through the National Policy on Education (NPE) outlined the objectives of education in Nigeria and how each level of education should strive to realise them. Furthermore, aside from government regulatory power on education which is expressed through the guidelines in the National Policy on Education document, politics which is the process of making decisions, gaining power, and influencing government actions; and education have a kind of symbiotic relationship and thus cannot be separated. The two fields interact in a way that is mutually beneficial to each other and in a way that makes one incapable of realizing its full objectives without the other. Because of the symbiotic relationship between politics and education, many things, if not all, in education are influenced by the government, starting from the establishment of the educational institutions, and curriculum design, to classroom instruction and evaluation to know whether the objectives of education as outlined in the curriculum are being achieved. The objectives of this paper are two: to determine (i) ways in which politics and government influence the structure and delivery of education in Nigeria and (ii) the implications of influence of politics and government on Nigerian educational system.

## **Methodology**

The research design adopted in this study was a qualitative document analysis. Qualitative document analysis is a research design that involves systematic review or evaluation of documents including both print and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) materials to gain deeper insight on information contained therein for purpose of decision-making (Bowen, 2009; Leavy, 2017). Based on data from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and newspapers, the meaning of the concepts of politics, education, and politics of education and as well as different ways government influence education and its implications were examined and evaluated.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the Political Economy of Education Theory which was developed by Martin Carnoy in 1970s and expanded on by Michael Apple (Carnoy, 1974, 1985; Apple, 1979/2004, 2019). This theory provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how political power, economic interests, and educational systems interact and how politics influence the educational system. The theory posits that

educational system of a state cannot be separated from the broader political and economic context in which it operates. According to the theory, the educational policies, structures, and practices are shaped not only by pedagogical goals but also by the interests of political actors, economic elites, and governing institutions (Carnoy, 1974, 1985). This theory emphasizes that educational systems are both shaped by and help reproduce the existing distribution of power and resources in society. In the context of Nigeria, where political dynamics significantly influence policy decisions and implementation, this theory is particularly relevant. It provides a lens to examine how policies regarding educational funding, curriculum development and implementation, and teacher recruitment among others are influenced by political agendas and how such influence shape Nigeria's educational structure, content and delivery.

### **GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

Influence is power to control someone or something. Therefore, government influence refers to amount of control which the government exerts on people or issues. As regards education, government influence on education refers to the amount of control which government has on education sector or the power which the government has to control what is happening in education sector. It has to do with the extent to which government controls what happens in education sector. Education sector is actually a big industry which requires big funding for its survival. Because of its capital-intensive nature, government has been the major funder of education as a social service in Nigeria (FRN, 2013). Corollary to that, government has also become the major stakeholder that determines what happens in education sector. The majority of things that are done in education are controlled by politics or the government. Government's influences on education started from the colonial period and became even more evident after the independence (Kwaghbo et al., 2021). Government's first intervention in education sector in Nigeria in terms of making laws or policies that will regulate the education system was in 1882 when the colonial government promulgated its first education ordinance (Fafunwa, 1974/2018). Then, Lagos was jointly administered with the Gold Coast colony. The 1882 education ordinance established the first general board of education for the West Africa. The board was in charge of opening government schools and regulating them including determining how grant-in-aid would be given to various schools. Following the 1882 ordinance was the 1887 ordinance which was enacted purely for Nigeria which in 1886 had been separated from the Gold Coast and became the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos. Since the colonial period, government influence in the education sector in Nigeria has been evident. Here are some of the ways in which the Nigeria's government influences education and its implications:

#### **Funding and Resource Allocation**

Owing to the strategic position which education occupies in the national development as essential social service, government has been the major funder of education in Nigeria. As rightly observed by Abubakar (2020), in most of the countries of the world, education at all levels is funded by the government. So, Nigeria is not an exception. Even though it is stated in section 154 of the National Policy on Education that financing of education is a joint responsibility of the Federal, States/FCT and Local Governments and the private sector (FRN, 2013, p. 46), government is the major funder of education. It is government that establishes and funds public schools (Lawal, 2021). The private sectors' participation in funding of education has been minimal compared to that of government. The government also determines how the funds allocated to education sector will be used. Government does not only provide the funds for the establishment of school, they also provide educational resources or materials and also bear the responsibilities of paying the salaries of the teachers and other workers in public schools.

The funding of education by the government preceded the independence of Nigeria. Despite the fact that the establishment of educational institutions in Nigeria was pioneered by the missionaries, the government at some time began to assist the missionaries in funding the schools and later took up the major financial burden. According to Muyiwa (2015), by 1800, the colonial government had seen education as a potent political tool and joined in the establishment of school and in 1872, the colonial government disbursed £30 to each of the three missionaries (the CMS, the Wesleyan Methodist and the Catholic) to support their educational activities. Since the colonial period, government not only give financial assistance to educational activities but has become the major funder of educational activities.

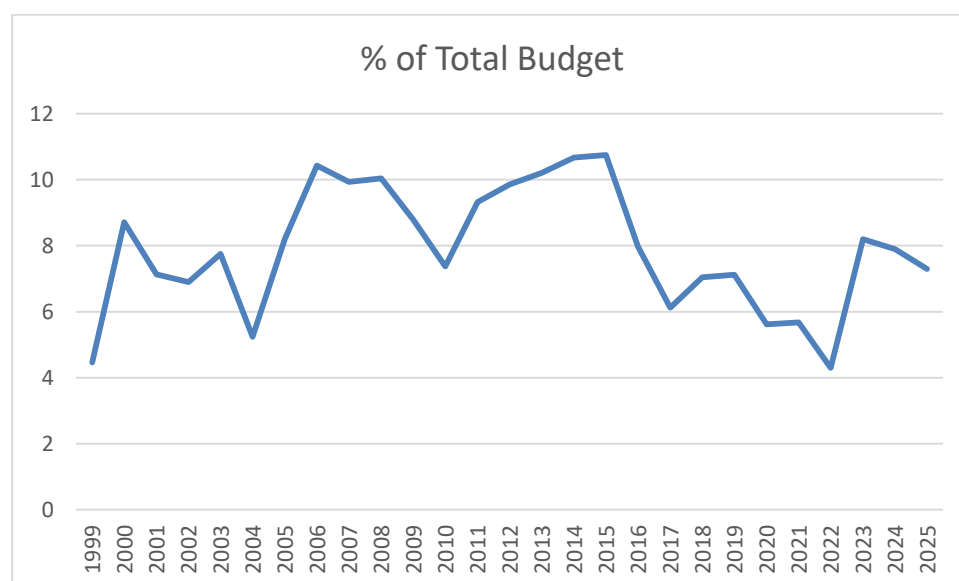
Provision of funds and resources to school by the government impacts the society in some ways both positively and negatively. Firstly, the funding of education by the government has helped in subsidizing the cost of education. If education were to be left in the hands of private sectors or the missionaries who first brought it in Nigeria, it would not have been affordable to some persons today. However, one thing is to fund education and the other is to fund it very well. Even though government has been the major funder of education in Nigeria, what is seen in the educational system today do not show that education is adequately funded by the government. If education is adequately funded, it will help to improve the standard of education. On the other hands, if education is not adequately funded, it will lower the standard of education. However, as it is in Nigeria today, education is not well funded by the government as its budgetary allocation to education is still below the widely acclaimed 26 percent budgetary allocation to education recommended by UNESCO (Odigwe & Owan, 2019; Ohaegbulem & Chijioke, 2023). Even though, Mr Adamu Adamu, former minister of Education under Mohammadu Buhari's government and Prof. Peter Okebukola, the former executive secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC) on different occasions have disputed the claim that UNESCO recommended that countries should allocate a minimum of 26% of their annual budget to education (Adediigba, 2017; Adesulu, 2018), the 26% is still being used by people as a benchmark for evaluating Nigerian government's budgetary allocation to education sector. Furthermore, whether UNESCO ever recommended the 26% or not, the said UNESCO's 26% recommendation still reflects in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE) as a benchmark for budgetary allocation to education Nigeria. It is provided in NPE "that at least 26% (UNESCO minimum standard recommendation) of the Federal, States and Local Governments budget should be dedicated to funding of education at all levels" (FRN, 2013, Section 10, paragraph 155[a]).

It is also important to note that apart from the disputed UNESCO's 26% recommendation, Nigeria has not met other undisputed recommendation by the same UNESCO in 2015. In the World Education Forum which was organized by UNESCO in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 19 – 22 May 2015, UNESCO proposed two benchmarks for funding education. The UNESCO encouraged countries to allocate at least 4% to 6% of GDP to education, and/or allocate at least 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education (UNESCO, 2015, 2016). Analysis of Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education since independence showed that it was only once, in 1997, that the percentage of Nigerian government budgetary allocation to education was above 15%. That year, Nigeria allocated 17.59% of her budget to education (Ohaegbulem & Chijioke, 2023). Since then, Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education has never reached 15% again talk less of being above it. Tables 1 and 2 show the trend of Nigeria budgetary allocation to education in comparison with some other African countries.

**Table 1.** Total Budget, Educational Budget and Percentage of the Total Budget Allocated to Education Sector from 1999-2025

Year	Total Budget (₦)	Education Allocation (₦)	% of Total Budget
1999	60,549,835,647	2,700,000,000	4.46
2000	470,009,971,781	40,940,663,330	8.71
2001	894,214,805,186	63,783,776,990	7.13
2002	1,064,801,253,520	73,435,499,300	6.90
2003	976,254,543,375	75,707,827,520	7.75
2004	1,790,848,344,588	93,767,886,839	5.24
2005	1,799,938,242,138	147,835,527,799	8.21
2006	1,876,302,363,351	195,693,672,666	10.43
2007	2,226,394,423,477	221,071,774,929	9.93
2008	2,492,076,718,937	250,144,818,579	10.04
2009	2,870,510,042,679	252,204,813,495	8.79
2010	4,608,616,278,213	339,634,791,000	7.37
2011	4,226,191,559,259	393,810,171,775	9.32
2012	4,749,100,821,170	468,385,490,528	9.86
2013	4,987,220,425,601	509,039,713,761	10.21
2014	4,642,960,000,000	495,283,130,268	10.67
2015	4,493,363,957,158	483,183,784,654	10.75
2016	6,060,677,358,227	483,666,376,895	7.98
2017	7298,000,000,000	455,410,000,000	6.12
2018	9,200,000,000,000	605,800,000,000	7.04
2019	892,000,000,000	620,000,000,000	7.12
2020	10,590,000,000,000	57,503,1000,000	5.62
2021	13,580,000,000,000	771,460,000,000	5.68
2022	16,390,000,000,000	705,270,000,000	4.30
2023	21,830,000,000,000	1,790,000,000,000	8.20
2024	27,500,000,000,000	2,180,000,000,000	7.90
2025	54,990,165,355,396	3,520,000,000,000	7.30

Source: Originally compiled by Bello et al. (2017) and updated by the author

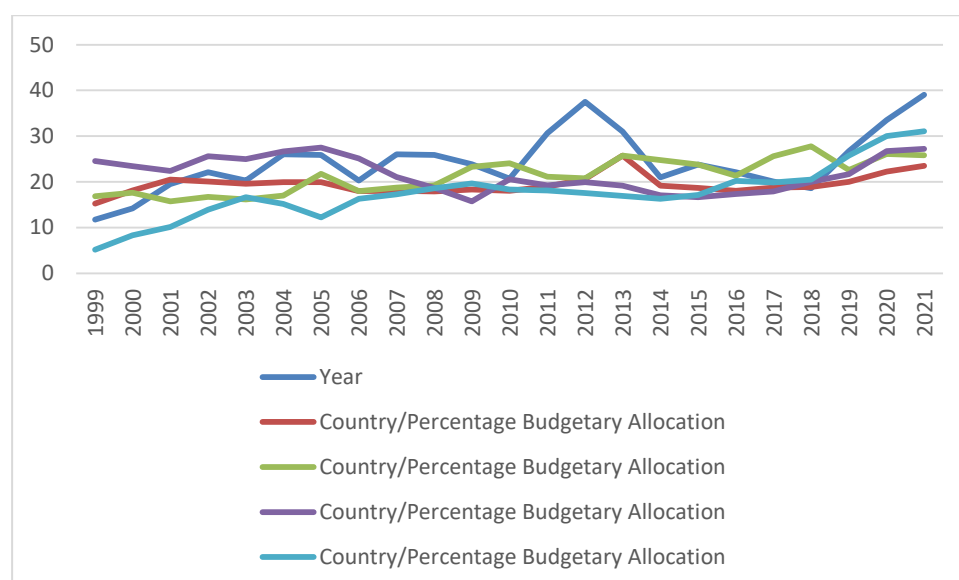


**Figure 1.** Trends in Nigeria's Education Budget Allocation Relative to National Budget (1999–2025)

**Table 2.** The Percentage Budgetary Allocations to the Education Sectors by the Governments of Some Other African Countries (1999-2021)

Year	Country/Percentage Budgetary Allocation				
	Ghana	South Africa	Senegal	Kenya	Morocco
1999	11.73	15.24	16.82	24.55	5.14
2000	14.20	18.09	17.62	23.40	8.28
2001	19.54	20.47	15.73	22.41	10.11
2002	22.07	20.10	16.72	25.63	13.91
2003	20.30	19.59	16.12	24.98	16.67
2004	26.02	19.93	16.96	26.67	15.16
2005	25.85	19.92	21.77	27.47	12.22
2006	20.30	18.00	17.95	25.08	16.31
2007	26.00	18.03	18.73	21.03	17.27
2008	25.85	17.91	19.23	18.64	18.61
2009	23.87	18.31	23.30	15.72	19.65
2010	20.70	18.04	24.05	20.56	18.29
2011	30.63	18.96	21.09	19.25	18.10
2012	37.53	20.64	20.80	19.92	17.58
2013	31.00	25.76	25.74	19.14	16.93
2014	20.99	19.14	24.76	17.08	16.31
2015	23.81	18.70	23.76	16.66	17.14
2016	22.09	18.05	21.34	17.34	20.18
2017	20.10	18.72	25.60	17.88	19.89
2018	18.61	18.87	27.80	20.02	20.46
2019	26.72	20.00	22.61	21.70	25.77
2020	33.54	22.21	26.08	26.70	30.02
2021	39.02	23.50	25.81	27.20	31.06

Source: Ohaegbulem and Chijioke (2023).



**Figure 2.** Trends in Education Budget Allocation (% of National Budget of five African countries), 1999–2021.

Tables 1 and 2 show the percentage of Nigeria's total budget to education in comparison with other African countries. The Tables show that the percentage of Nigeria's total budget that is allocated to



the education sector has not been high enough to meet up with any of the internationally recommended benchmarks for budgetary allocation to education. Furthermore, when compared with other African countries, Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education is poor and does not measure up to what other African countries have been allocating to education sector.

The line graphs in Figures 1 and 2 illustrate trends in education budget allocation within Nigeria (Figure 1) and across five African countries - Ghana, South Africa, Senegal, Kenya, and Morocco (Figure 2) - from 1999 to 2025 (for Nigeria) and 1999 to 2021 (for other countries). The graph in Figure 1 shows that while Nigeria's total national budget has slightly increased over the years, the percentage allocated to education has fluctuated, with periods of modest increases peaking at 10.75% in 2015 before declining to as low as 4.3% in 2022. In contrast, the graph in Figure 2 shows that some African countries have consistently allocated higher proportions of their national budgets to education compared to Nigeria. Notably, Ghana budgetary allocation to education has frequently been higher than the 20% of her national budget and even exceeded 30% in some years, aligning more closely with international recommendations such as the UNESCO benchmark of allocating 15–20% of the national budget. Kenya and Senegal also show relatively strong and stable commitments in her budgetary allocation to education. Collectively, these graphs in Figures 1 and 2 indicate that Nigeria lags behind its regional counterpart in prioritizing education funding relative to overall budget growth.

Even though onetime former Permanent Secretary in Federal Ministry of Education, under Mohammadu Buhari's administration, Andrew David Adejo, once argued that Federal Government budget to education is above the UNESCO's 26% budgetary recommendation for education, many Nigerians never subscribed to his view. Adejo's argument and justification for his assertion above is that education is on the concurrent list with responsibility for basic education largely in the hands of State Governments, while the Federal Government provides intervention through Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) among others. Then, since the spending by States and intervention at the Federal level are not reflected in the national budget, Adejo asserted that federal government expenditure in education is more than 26% of her budget (Idoko, 2022). Apart from Adejo and may be few persons in the corridors of powers who think in the same line with him, empirical studies (Ohaegbulem, 2023; Ohaegbulem & Chijioke, 2023) have shown that education sector is not well funded by the government of Nigeria. Poor funding of education affects the implementation of the education policies negatively and the overall quality of education (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020).

### **Policy Formulation and Implementation in education**

Policy formulation and implementation in education refers to how different decisions about education system are made and carried out in Nigeria. Policy is a set of principles that guides decisions and helps an individual or organisation to achieve some set objectives (Edwards, 2017). Educational policy of Nigeria is a general statement which contains the objectives of education, principles and rules which guide educational activities in order to realise the objectives. Most of the policies that shape how the educational system is operated in Nigeria are made by the government. Most of these government policies that regulate educational system in Nigeria are documented in National Policy on Education while others are in various educational laws enacted by the National Assembly. According to Tambawal (2019), education is one of the social services which government provide for the society and therefore, whatever happens in education reflects political ideologies. Therefore, the formulation and implementation of education policies are influenced by political agendas. The character of the government and their interest in education contribute in shaping the policies that will regulate the education sector.

Government control of policy formulation and implementation in education has a lot of implication on the quality of education in Nigeria. The nature of the policies and how they are



implemented determine the quality of education in the country. Even when good policies are made by the government and they are not properly implemented, it will not lead to quality education. As rightly observed by Olibie et al. (2017) and Odukoya et al. (2018), the problem with education in Nigeria concerning policy formulation and implementation is not necessarily on policy formulation but on policy implementation. Nigerian government have articulated a number of good policies in the National Policy on Education document but have not done enough to ensure its adequate implementation. This observation was corroborated by Joel et al. (2019) who asserted that for more than 30 years, Nigeria has not been able to successfully implement her National Policy on Education. Odukoya et al. cited many educational policies in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004) which were not well implemented. Among them were the following: First, the Nigeria's philosophy of education in section 1 subsection 5(a) is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen whereas Nigeria still has many illiterate and poor citizens who cannot pay tax and according Odukoya et al, a citizen that cannot pay tax cannot be described as effective citizen. Second, language policy in section 1 subsection 10(b) provides that for smooth interaction with our neighbours it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French and that French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and also compulsory in school whereas many public schools do not have French teachers. Third, policy on pre-primary education, in section 2 subsection 12, provides that government shall promote the training of qualified pre-primary school teachers in adequate number whereas many teacher training institutions such as universities and colleges of education are yet to begin the programme for pre-primary school teachers. This policy implementation failure is also observable in the present 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the National Policy on Education. None of the editions of the National Policy on Education has ever been adequately implemented (Joel, Ogi, & Ikpe, 2019)

Apart from the government's failure to implement some of the policies in the National Policy on Education, the government have also failed to implement some of the education laws they enacted. For example, Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 states that every parent shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes primary and junior secondary education and failure to do that, the parent shall be liable-

(a) on first conviction, to be reprimanded; (b) on second conviction, to a fine of N 2,000:00 or imprisonment for a term of 1 month or to both; and (c) on subsequent conviction, to a fine of N.5,000:00 or imprisonment for a term of 2 months or to both. (section 2(4))

Enforcement of these penalties stipulated for parents who failed to comply with the above act is yet to be realised in many of the states in Nigeria. Only few states such as Borno, Delta, Lago, Bayelsa, and Osun states ever made attempt to enforce the act by arresting parent who fail to send their children to schools (Lawal, 2023). Even the recent call on the judiciary of the 36 of the federation by the Senate, On March 20, 2024, to establish mobile courts for the prosecution of parents who fail to comply with Act is yet to be effective (Omogbolagun, 2024; Onogu, 2024).

In addition to poor implementation, another aspect of policy formulation and implementation that has profound implication on the quality of education is frequent change of education policies as a result of change in government. Frequent change of policy can lead to instability and inconsistency in the education system, making it difficult to implement long-term educational reforms. This change in policy affect the implementation of the National Policy on Education (Odukoya et al., 2018).

### **Appointment of Educational Leaders**

Government has enormous influence on appointments/recruitment of key education officials, such as ministers of education, vice-chancellors of universities, rectors of polytechnics, provost of colleges of education, heads of educational boards, secondary school principals, and even primary school head

teachers. While the appointment of the ministers is the responsibility of the President, the appointment of the heads of different levels of education such as vice chancellors, rectors, provosts, principals and head teachers are either caused or influenced by ministry, commission or board in charge of that level of education (Ikegbusi et al., 2016). Members of the ministry, commission, and boards of which some or most are politicians are also involved in the appointment and recruitment of staff of different levels of education (Ikechukwu et al., 2019).

The problem is not the involvement of government in the appointment of educational leaders but the nature of the appointment and the motive behind the appointment. Sometimes, these appointments are not based on merits or qualification but on political patronage and other politically motivated reasons. It is evident in section 147(2) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, that it is the statutory duty of the President to appoint federal ministers including the minister of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 1999). However, the constitutional provision for appointment of ministers in Nigeria sometimes bring about putting a square peg in a round hole in the sense that some persons appointed to head some ministries including ministry of education may not be professionally fit to head those particular ministries. Occasions have risen in which some persons were appointed as ministers in ministries they are not professionally qualified to serve as ministers and as rectors of polytechnic when they are not qualified (Marcus, 2024; Tolu-Kolawole, 2023).

In some countries like the United States of America for example, the President must submit the names of nominees along with the assigned portfolios to the legislature to enable the legislators determine the suitability of such persons into positions assigned to them (Hassan, 2020). However, this is not the case in Nigeria. The President is free to assign or re-assign portfolios after the confirmation by the Senate. (Portfolio is a particular job or area of responsibility assigned to a member of a government.). Therefore, the concern here is how qualified the person who is to manage the education sector is. For example, the current minister of Education and the former Minister of State for Health, Dr. Morufu Olatunji Alausa, is a medical practitioner with no background in education but is yet considered to head the ministry of education. Studies by Ikechukwu et al. (2019) and Munkaila et al. (2024) revealed that staff recruitment in tertiary institutions and establishment of tertiary institution in Nigeria is influenced by politicians in power. In other words, recruitment is neither done on merit nor establishment done on need but to satisfy the political wills of the politicians in power. The public is also becoming concerned about the influence of politics on the appointment of university vice chancellors and members of the governing board (Elujekwute et al., 2021). Politics also influence the appointment of secondary school principal, recruitment and transfer of teachers (Adzongo et al., 2022). Some of the principals are no longer appointed principals of schools because they merit. The implication is that they will serve the interest of those who appointed rather than doing their duties well.

These key appointments which are supposed to be filled by appointments based on merit but are often used by the political office holders to compensate their friends and cronies brings inefficiency in different educational institutions. When incompetent persons are appointed as educational leaders they will never be able to do the work well it supposed to be done. Secondly, nature of the appointment often makes them to be struggling to satisfy the interest of their master rather the public interest which supposed to come first in their service. Politically influenced appointments lead to inefficiency and corruption within the educational sector. When the leaders prioritize political loyalty over educational expertise, will adversely affect the administration and quality of education.

### **Curriculum development and implementation**

Government is the principal agent that oversees the development and implementation of the curriculum for different levels of education in Nigeria. The government through its agencies and

regulatory bodies and in collaboration of the other stakeholders in education decide what should be taught in schools, who should teach it and how it should be taught. Curriculum development in Nigeria is overseen by different bodies for different levels of education in Nigeria. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) are jointly in charge of development of curriculum for Early childhood education. The NERDC alone is in charge of curriculum development for primary and secondary schools (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council Act, 1988). Others are the National Universities Commission (NUC) for universities, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for polytechnics, and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for colleges of education (Adeoti, 2015; National Universities Commission, 1974; Okoroma, 2007).

The process through which the above bodies develop the curriculum for their respective levels of education involve multiple stages. It usually begins with need assessment during which the opinions or views of different stakeholders in education such as teachers, employers, students, parents, and universities will be sought in order to identify the gap in the existing curriculum or the need for new contents (Opara et al., 2021; Veena, 2016). This is followed by setting up expert panel consisting of educators, curriculum specialists, university academics, and subject teachers to draft a new curriculum or revise the existing curriculum based on the need assessment. The next step is to embark on stakeholders' consultations during which the drafted curriculum will be shared to various stakeholders such as teachers, parents, state education officials, examination bodies, parent association, religious bodies, etc. Feedbacks from this consultation will be used to revise the curriculum (Awofala, 2012). After that, the revised curriculum will be reviewed by the NERDC and endorsed by the National Council on Education and then distributed to schools for implementation.

All the stages involved in the curriculum development process are supervised by the government. While the need assessment is usually conducted in curriculum development process, government may advocate for the inclusion or exclusion of certain subject based on its political objective. For example, the recent reintroduction of Civic Education as compulsory subject was based on federal government hope that it will help to promote positive values in the students and thus minimize corruption in Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2018). It is also the government that determines who will implement the curriculum and the minimum qualification which the person must possess. For example, Nigerian government stipulated in the national policy on education that the minimum qualification for teaching in Nigerian school should be Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2013, p. 28).

The control of curriculum development and implementation by the government has both positive and negative impact to the society. Government control of the curriculum development and implementation enables the government to direct educational policies towards realisation of the national goals of Nigeria. A good example is the introduction of Civic Education as a compulsory subject in senior secondary schools. It also helps to ensure that whole country operate a uniform educational system. However, sometimes, government control of the control of curriculum development and implementation comes with negative implications. Government control of the curriculum development and implementation is most often guided by character and interest of the leaders in government. Sometimes, the government will develop curriculum with subjects that reflects or suggests religious bias. A good example was the revision of the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum in 2012 which led to the merging of Christian Religious Studies (CRS), Islamic Studies (IS), Civic Education, Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education under the Religion and National Values (RNV) Curriculum, the agitation that followed the merging and the subsequent separation of the Religious Studies (CRS), Islamic Studies (IS), from the Religion and National Values Curriculum to be separate subjects (Nigerian Educational Research and

Development Council, NERDC, 2018; Adedeji & Rahman, 2019). The merging of the religious studies was also argued to have contravened Section 38 (2) of the Constitution of Nigeria which states that "No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction ...if such instruction ...relates to a religion other than his own, or a religion not approved by his parent or guardian." (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 1999)

### **Admission Policies and Quota system**

Nigerian government has some policies which regulate admission process in federal educational institutions such as unity schools and tertiary institutions. This has made admission process into government owned educational institutions to be somewhat political. Among the policies is the stipulation of the ratio of 60:40 for giving admission into science and arts into universities. According the guideline in the National Policy on Education, not less than 60% of places shall be allocated to science and science-oriented courses in the conventional universities and not less than 80% in the universities of technology and agriculture. For the Polytechnics, not less than 70% of admissions shall be in technology-based courses (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2013, p. 28; Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, 2023).

Others government policies on admission process are catchment area policy, backwardness factor policy, quota system policy, and discriminatory fees policy. Catchment area policy stipulated that certain percentage of the admission should be reserved for the people indigenous to where universities are located. Backwardness factor policy stipulated that certain percentage of admission should be reserved for the state identified as educationally disadvantaged state. Quota system policy stipulated that certain percentage of admission should be based on population and ethnic consideration of the state of origin. Discriminatory fee policy provided the indigenes of the places where universities are located the privilege to pay lower fees (Okoroma, 2008; Omeje, Egwa, & Adikwu, 2016; Adetunji & Ogunleye, 2015).

While the intention of these various admission policies is to promote inclusiveness and equity, these policies can sometimes lead to tensions and perceptions of unfairness in the admission process. They may also result in the admission of students based on regional representation rather than merit, potentially lowering academic standards. Various studies have shown how these policies undermine the quality of admission processes and the entire quality of education. For example, Joshua et al. (2014) noted that the application of quota system in admission to federal unity school is a barrier to learning. The authors argued that since the introduction of quota system in the admission process as a means of giving all Nigerian children both those from educationally advantaged states and educationally less advantaged state, the quota system is yet to bridge the educational gap between the two groups of states. Joseph, and Emmanuel (2023) also observed that while quota system may appear to be achieving the targeted equality of access to education, it also creating another inequality not giving the intelligent students from educationally advantaged state equal opportunity of admission with their counterparts in the educationally less advantaged states. According to Joseph, and Emmanuel, while quota system admission policy stipulated that 40 percent of admission slot into federal universities should be based on merit and is to be filled by candidates from both educationally advantaged and educationally disadvantaged states who meet up with the required entry score mark, the quota system also reserved 20 percent admission slot to be filled by only the applicants from educationally disadvantaged states. So, this system gave students from educationally advantaged state only one chance of being admitted into federal universities and students from educationally disadvantaged states double chances of either being admitted through 40 percent slot or 20 percent slot. This is another inequality of access to education for two groups of Nigerian students that needs to be reconsidered. Generally, the admission policies seem not have been

fair in promoting quality education. It has promoted mediocrity at the expense of meritocracy (Nweneazizi et al., 2018)

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Political influence on education has profound implication on the quality of education in Nigeria. The character of the leaders in government and their interest in education have been the determinant of how much attention the education sector will receive from the government. This article has shown that government has been influencing the education sector in various ways especially through funding, policy formulation and implementation, appointment of educational leaders, curriculum development and implementation, and admission policies, among others. This government influence has various implications for the education system. The influence can make or mar the education system depending on the nature and character of the government. Therefore, addressing the above political influences on education is necessary because all the stakeholders in education and the general public need to understand the relationship between the government and education. The knowledge will enable the stakeholders to support the government in making policies that will promote quality education.

It is recommended that all the stakeholders in education should be conscious about government activities in education system and keep themselves abreast of government policies on education. This will enable them to know how they can cooperate with the government in order to promote quality education in Nigeria. It is the duty of the governed (i.e. the citizens) to draw the attention of the government to negative implications of some of their actions on education system.

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