

Political Dimension of Policy Implementation in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Doi:10.19044/esj.2020.v16n11p136 [URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2020.v16n11p136](http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2020.v16n11p136)

Abstract

Despite the importance of higher education and the role it plays in national development, higher education is experiencing downward trends in Ondo State, Nigeria. This perhaps explains the proliferation of literature on higher education subsector but there has to date been little systematic evaluation of the consequences of political influence on policy implementation in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo. This article assesses the political context of policy implementation in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo. Using qualitative method, this article finds evidence of political interference in the implementation of recruitment and funding policies of the polytechnic as the major factor responsible for the low performance in the polytechnic. The findings are relevant both for understanding the political context of policy implementation and also for providing the necessary strategies for effective policy implementation in the polytechnic in particular and higher education subsector in Ondo State, Nigeria in general.

Keywords: Higher Education, Policy Implementation, Political Context, Political Influence, Recruitment

Introduction

Education is conceived as the act of learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits (Chimombo, 2005; Sperduti, 2017). According to Sperduti (2017), education can take place in both formal and informal settings. This is why Amadi, et al (2012) conceives education as any experience that affects thinking, feeling and acting. According to Osuji, et al (2006), education covers every stage of human lives from the moment a person is born and to the time of death; making it a “cradle to grave” activity. The process of education is holistic, involving a number of activities on the part of the teacher, the student, parents, the government and every citizen of

the country. It is the act of systematic development or training of the mind, capabilities or character through instruction or study. Taken collectively, education can be defined as a process of socialisation, enculturation and transmission of values and knowledge. It involves a process of developing mental ability and capacity for the purpose of self-improvement and the societal improvement.

Education is an instrument for effecting national development (Yarmoshuk, et al, 2020). This point was emphasised by Okebukola (2005) when he stated that education is one of the basic means of human and cultural self-realization as well as a means of realizing the productive power of a nation. There is therefore a consensus that tertiary education plays a key role in the economic and social development of any nation (Awuzie, 2017; Gornitzka & Stensaker, 2002; Ndimande-Hlongwa, et al 2010; Ogbogu, 2013; World Bank, 2003; Yarmoshuk, et al, 2020). This assertion is particularly becoming truer in today's globalized, information and knowledge-based economy. No country can successfully benefit from the globalized economy without a well-educated workforce (World Bank, 2003). The stakes are high in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) as it parades a seeming lack of capacity to compete on the international plane (Adamolekun, 2007; Ndimande-Hlongwa, et al 2010; World Bank, 2003). Therefore, the need for a well-educated workforce in order to engender sustainable development and reduce poverty in Africa has been stressed (Adetunji, 2015; World Bank, 2000). Despite this realization of a weak higher education in SSA countries, scholars and stakeholders are in agreement that higher institutions are often the major national institutions with the skills, equipment and mandate to generate new knowledge, and to adapt knowledge developed elsewhere to the local context (Awuzie, 2017; World Bank, 2000, 2003).

For over two decades in SSA, there has been marked progression in the awareness of the need for higher education reforms to address the issue of weak capacity of higher institutions. This has led to many courageous changes in higher education policies; management and governance structure (World Bank, 2000, 2003). Effectiveness of these reforms, as noted by World Bank report, is however being hampered by four interrelated factors. These are the production of relatively too many graduates of dubious quality and relevance with little knowledge and direct development support; deteriorated quality of outputs in many SSA countries; exorbitant costs of higher education beyond the reach of the mass of the people; and, inequitable and economically inefficient pattern of higher education financing (Bryan, 2018; Wold Bank, 2003).

In Nigeria, commitment to education has been stressed as an antidote to overcoming illiteracy and ignorance, and as a basis for accelerated national development (FRN & ILO, 2005; FGN, 2004; Moja, 2000; Odukoya, 2009).

This is contained in the 2004 National Policy on Education, which enunciates the philosophy and objectives of education as strategic guidelines for education in Nigeria. The objectives include, education as an instrument for national development and the use of education to foster the worth development of the individual, for each individual's sake and the sake of the general development of the society. Others are the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and, the acquisition of appropriate skills and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (FGN, 2004; FRN & ILO, 2005).

The goal of education in Nigeria, as elsewhere, is to engender development (FGN, 2004; FRN & ILO, 2005). This task is also conditioned by the nature and types of policies formulated in the education sector. Policy formulation is also not an end in itself (Hudson, Hunter and Peckham (2019)); it is part of a process of policy circle as it is organically linked to policy implementation. It is the manner and nature of implementation that determine the end success of policy. Put differently, actualising national development, using education as a tool, depends on policy implementation in the education sector (Amadi, et al, 2012). Policy implementation in education sector has a relationship with development (UNICEF, 2005). The level and manner of implementation also affect the level of development of a nation (Amadi, et al, 2012; FRN & ILO, 2005; Ogbogu, 2013; Odukoya, 2009). However, in spite of the relationship between education and development, the sector is bedevilled by a plethora of challenges (FGN & ILO, 2005; USAID, 2013). Of particular interest is the higher education subsector imbued with the potential for accelerating opportunities and sustaining development. This sector of education in Nigeria is itself stung with a myriad of challenges, including inadequacy of funding, deficiency in teaching and research, lack of autonomy, infrastructural deficit and a plethora of other challenges inhibiting policy implementation in this subsector (Adamolekun, 2007; Federal Ministry of Education, 2002).

There are four levels of education as clearly spelt out by the national policy on education 2004: the pre-primary education and the basic education, of nine years, including six years in primary school and three years in Junior Secondary School (JSS). The other two are the senior secondary education (three years) and the tertiary education (comprising Universities, Polytechnics/monotechnics and Colleges of Education) (FGN, 2004; FRN & ILO, 2005). Out of these four levels of education, this study dwells on tertiary education in Ondo State with a particular focus on Rufus Giwa Polytechnic. This is because the polytechnic education plays a distinct role in the economy by providing technical manpower requisite for national development (RUGIPO, 1979). RUGIPO was selected because it is the first higher institution in the State; it has a longitudinal record of policy implementations;

and, attracts huge education budget allocations. However, the realisation of its mandate is being hampered *inter alia* by poor infrastructure arising from funding gap and crisis of manpower.

Yet, there is a dearth of studies focussing on the influence of political appointees on the implementation of recruitment and funding policies in the polytechnic as the major important problem area. This is very significant in the sense that the impacts of political interference have a profound relationship with the recruitment and funding policies of the polytechnic, aimed at providing technical manpower for the society. This is one of the problem areas yet to be sufficiently interrogated. This problem area is germane because achieving the objective of polytechnic education depends largely on the political class. In analysing the problems of polytechnic education therefore, emphasis ought to be placed on the political side of policy process. The study will examine the impact of political interference in the implementation of recruitment and funding policies in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo (RUGIPO).

Research objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine policy implementation in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic. However, the specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To examine the implementation of recruitment and funding policies in RUGIPO.
- ii. To explore the various ways by which political appointees influence the implementation of these two policies in RUGIPO.
- iii. To examine the effects of political interference on the implementation of these policies.

A discourse on concepts and context

Conceptual discourse of policy implementation should start from defining what policy itself connotes. Stillman II (2010) defines policy as: “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. Ikelegbe (1994) defines policy as a course of action and a programme of actions which is chosen from among several alternatives by certain actors in response to certain problems. Inferred from these definitions is that policy actors have several alternatives from which they choose. Second, actors can be government, private organisations and individuals. Third, it is aimed at solving a particular problem.

Having defined policy, it is expedient to, in the same token, elucidate policy formulation. According to Wayne (2014), policy formulation is the development of effective and acceptable courses of action for addressing what has been placed on the policy agenda. Deducible from this definition are the two parts of policy formulation inherent in this definition: effective

formulation and acceptable formulation. Effective formulation, according to him, connotes that the proposed policy is regarded as a valid, efficient, and an implementable solution to the issue at hand. Two, acceptable formulation, is conceived by Wayne (2014) as a proposed course of action, which is likely to be authorized by the legitimate decision makers, usually through majority-building (consensus) in a bargaining process. Describing this part as a political phase, Wayne (2014) argues that policy must be politically feasible before it could be fit for presentation. Van Meter and Van Horn (1974) conceive of policy implementation as encompassing those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions. Also, according to Petrus (2005), policy implementation is the accomplishment of policy objectives through the planning and programming of operations and projects so that agreed upon outcomes and desired impacts are achieved. Inferred from the combination of definitions of Van Meter and Van Horn (1974) and Petrus (2005) is that policy formulation is co-joined with implementation before policy process completes; neither of them can stand and achieve a purpose without working in tandem to complete the process. This demonstrates the relationship between politics (elected officials) and administration (bureaucratic officers). Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2019) re-echo political dimension of policy implementation by stressing the enactment process, which is within the political domain. According to CDC, without policy enactment, implementation will be problematic.

What is new in the postulation of policy implementation is the continuous realisation that the dichotomy between policy formulation and implementation (politics and administration) is becoming blurred (Odukoya, Bowale and Okunola, 2019; Sharma, et al, 2012). As observed by Hill and Hupe (2002, pp. 222):

The policy process, ultimately expressed in the continuum between policy and action, implies that in the implementation stage, policy making continues. This empirical observation is contrary to the emphasis in the theory of bureaucracy developed from the classic theoretical contributions of Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson. The possibility that there could be interaction between the different places, as well as between functionaries playing different roles like the ones of decision maker and implementer, was neglected for a long while.

Expressing similar view, Sharma et al, (2012) argue that the concrete patterns of public policy formulation and implementation reveal that politics and administration are not only mutually exclusive or there are no absolute distinctions, but that they are two closely linked aspects of the same process. Similarly, Stillman II, (2010) insists that public policy is a continuous process, the formulation of which is inseparable from its implementation. Stillman II

(2010, pp. 442) further observes that “public policy is being formulated as it is being implemented, and it is likewise being implemented as it is being formulated”. According to him, politics and administration play a continuous role in both formulation and implementation. The only slight difference is, there is more politics in the formulation of policy and more administration in the implementation of it (Stillman II, 2010).

Based on the symbiotic relationship between politics and administration briefly established above, the analysis and understanding of policy implementation in education sector should stem from making incursion into the political contexts within which higher education policies are implemented (Gornitzka, et al, 2005). This is necessary because bureaucratic decisions are taken within the political environment. It is therefore safe to say that higher education operates within a political environment, which has had significant impact on its operations. In most cases, according to Gornitzka, et al (2005), changes in modes of central and institutional government have also affected educational objectives of government, which have also conditioned and served as frameworks for tertiary institutions. These changes, according to them, can be matched by examples across the whole policy spectrum, and have undoubtedly given rise to consideration, by both policy makers and academic policy scientists, of the ways in which policies might be generated and implemented (Gornitzka, et al, 2005).

When examining the nature of policy implementation in Nigeria, Ike (2015) and Odukoya, Bowale and Okunola (2019) observe that the process of governance involves policy formulation and policy implementation. According to Stillman II (2010), service delivery is made possible with the combination of policy formulation and implementation. The two domains of policy: political leadership and public bureaucracy respectively occupy policy formulation (politics) and policy implementation (administration), as observed by Agagu (1999). The political class occupies the policy formulation domain while bureaucracy occupies policy implementation domain (Shafritz, 1988). However, Hill and Hude (2002) believe that administration remains an integral part of political process. A broader perspective of this assertion suggests that administration is a process of translating political decisions to practice, derived independently from other sources. The conventional view of the relationship between politics and administration is that of one between ends and means (Hill and Hude, 2002). While there is a clear definition of the lines of responsibility between the political class in government and the public bureaucracy, it has also been observed that the dichotomy between these two domains is more often than not blurred. Agagu (1999) has noted that greater decisions are made within the bureaucratic structures than in the political domain, and this further suggests that the relationship between administration

and politics is so intertwined and interconnected so much that there is no clear limit to each other's domain of functions.

It is in this context of interdependent relationships between the political class and the bureaucracy that compels the study to look into how these two (i.e. political class and the bureaucracy) collaborate in the implementation of recruitment and funding policies in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts both implementation theory and principal-agency theory as theoretical constructs. As popularized by Davies et al (2003), Eccles et al (2005), Nutley et al (2007), Rycroft-Malone and Bucknall (2010) and Greenhalgh, et al (2005), implementation theory focuses on analysis of policy implementation; various factors shaping and influencing policy implementation as well as context of policy implementation. Implementation theory is a component of mechanism design in policy implementation. It provides an analytical framework for situations, where resources have to be deployed and allocated within a system for the purpose of meeting societal needs but where such responsibility is entrusted to agents who possess informational discretion about the resources available and the knowledge about proper and optimal utilization of the resources. Implementation theory addresses the processes of policy implementation, how resources are deployed and optimally allocated and the factors underpinning such processes (Nilsen, 2015).

Implementation theory embodies determinant framework, which is useful in evaluating and analysing factors influencing policy implementation in organisation. In the recent time, implementation theory has been subsumed under what is called implementation science. Implementation science is defined as the scientific study of methods and processes to promote implementation of policies and the quality and effectiveness of such policies (Kitson, et al, 1998; Eccles, et al, 2005; Greenhalgh et al, 2005; Graham, et al, 2006; Rabin and Brownson, 2012;). Implementation is part of a diffusion-dissemination-implementation continuum: diffusion is the passive, untargeted and unplanned spread of new practices; dissemination is the active spread of new practices to the target audience using planned strategies; and implementation is the process of putting to use or integrating new practices within a setting (Greenhalgh et al, 2005; Rabin and Brownson, 2012).

Early implementation research was empirically driven and did not pay much attention to the theoretical perspectives of implementation. Thus, there was evidence of poor theoretical underpinning, which made it difficult to capture how and why implementation succeeds or fails. However, the last decade of implementation science has seen wider recognition of the need to

establish the theoretical bases of implementation and strategies to facilitate implementation. There is mounting interest in the use of theories, models and frameworks to gain insights into the mechanisms by which implementation is more likely to succeed. Implementation studies now apply theories borrowed from disciplines such as psychology, sociology as well as theories that have emerged within implementation science (Kitson, et al, 1998; Martinez, et al, 2014).

The use of implementation theory is relevant to this study due to the following reasons: it describes and/or guides the process of translating policy into reality; it understands and/or explains what influences implementation outcomes; and, it evaluates implementation within a particular context. Implementation theory offers practical guidance in the planning and execution of implementation strategies. It elucidates important aspects that need to be considered in implementation process and usually prescribes a number of stages or steps that should be followed in the process of implementation.

Understanding factors determining implementation requires evaluation of determinants of implementation itself. This is because implementation takes place within a system, which can only be understood as an integrated whole, composing not only of the sum of its components but also by the relationships among those components (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). However, in some cases, determinants are often assessed individually in implementation studies, implicitly assuming a linear relationship between the determinants and the outcomes and ignoring that individual barriers and enablers may interact in various ways that can be difficult to predict. For instance, there could be symbiotic relationship such that two seemingly minor barriers constitute an important obstacle to successful implementation outcomes if they interact (Bandura, 1977). Another issue inherent in determinant factor of implementation theory is whether all relevant barriers and enablers are examined in implementation studies. Surveying the perceived importance of a finite set of predetermined barriers can yield insights into the relative importance of these particular barriers but may overlook the factors that independently affect implementation outcomes. Furthermore, there is the issue of whether the barriers and enablers are the actual determinants (i.e. whether they have actually been experienced or encountered) and the extent to which they are perceived to exist. The perceived importance of particular factors may not always correspond with the actual importance (Nilsen, 2015).

The context is an integral part of all the determinant factors. The context is generally understood as the conditions or surroundings in which something exists or occurs, typically referring to an analytical unit that is higher than the phenomena directly under investigation. The context is essentially viewed in terms of a physical environment or setting in which the proposed change is to be implemented. Scholars have assumed that the context

is something more active and dynamic, which greatly affects the implementation process and outcomes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott, 1995; Parchman, et al, 2011). Hence, although implementation science researchers agree that the context is a critically important concept for understanding and explaining implementation, there is a lack of consensus regarding how this concept should be interpreted, in what ways the context is manifested and the means by which contextual influences might be captured in research. There is increasing interest among implementation researchers in using theories concerning the organizational level because the context of implementation is becoming more widely acknowledged as an important influence on implementation outcomes. Theories concerning organizational context are becoming more than ever before relevant for understanding and explaining organizational context in implementation processes (Parchman, et al, 2011; Nilsen, 2015).

This is the aspect critical to this study as it examines the environment of policy implementation viz-a-viz its effects on policy outcomes. The concept of context includes the totality of its composition: political, social, economic, cultural and religious settings. The focus of this study is the political environment within which policy implementation in education sector is carried out. The effects of politics on policy implementation, including understanding and analysing policy implementation outcomes in higher education subsector in Ondo State.

Implementation theory is flawed by its very inability or failure to address the complex relationship between the political leadership and public bureaucracy which is the main focus of this study; it only dwells on the context (environment) within which policy implementation takes place but fails to acknowledge actors involved in implementation, who are very critical to the outcomes of policy implementation.

The shortcoming of implementation theory compels the adoption of principal-agency theory as a complementary theoretical framework to comprehensively analyse the influence of political leadership on policy implementation in higher education subsector in Ondo State. The principal-agent problem was espoused in the 1970s by theorists from the fields of economics (Mitnick, 2006; Sapru, 2013). However, its genesis was traceable to Gordon Tullock (1965) and Anthony Downs (1967). It has served as a mechanism for examining the process of policy implementation and the conflict of interest it has generated through aligning the choices and interests of principals (buyers of services) and agents (sellers or providers of services) (Sapru, 2013).

According to Wood and Waterman (1994:23), “agency theory posits a process of interaction between principals and agents that is dynamic, evolving through time. Throughout this process, bureaucracies have distinct

informational and expertise advantages over politicians. They understand the policy and the organisational procedures required to implement it. As a result, they have both the opportunity and incentive to manipulate politicians and processes for political gain". In the process of policy implementation, bureaucracy sometimes resists the control of principals; this is reinforced by the asymmetric information they enjoy over the principals and the use of discretionary powers in policy implementation.

When the theory is applied to public sector, then the theory changes to a double principal-agent interaction (Frederickson, et al 2012; Lane, 2013; Sapru, 2013), where the electorate/population is the principal and the agents include the elected/appointed politicians (political agents) and the public bureaucrats (administrative agents). In policy implementation within the public service, the theory posits that political agent (politician/government) becomes the principal and assumes the responsibility of choosing (employing) a set of administrative agents who will handle the provision of services (implementation of policies) with different policy preferences presumably for the benefits of the first principal (electorate) (Lane, 2013; Sapru, 2013). The principal selects and demands from agents (the politicians) to come up with a list of policies that the principals prefer. The employment of the administrative agents becomes germane as the political agents do not have time or expertise to put these policies into practice (implementation), which is why they (political agents), now as principals, rely upon a set of agents to deliver public goods (Lane, 2013). The resort to a principal-agent theory in public service is a paradigm towards ensuring effective policy implementation (Sapru, 2013).

In the policy process, there is the typical attempt of the citizens as the principal to monitor the output of policies (implementation) and the efforts of the politicians and bureaux as the agents towards adhering to the terms of the contract agreed (More, 1984; Tullock, 2005; Gailmard, 2006; Lane, 2013). However, the problem arises where the two parties have conflicting interests and asymmetric information (the agent having more information than the principal), such that the principal cannot directly ensure that the agent is always acting in his/her (the principal's) best interest, particularly when activities that are useful to the principal are costly to the agent, and where elements of what the agent does are costly for the principal to observe (Gailmard, 2006; Mitnick, 2006). Moral hazard also arises in a principal-agent theory, where an agent acts on behalf of the principal. The agent usually has more information about his or her actions or intentions than the principal does, because the principal usually cannot completely monitor the agent (Mitnick, 2006). The agent may have an incentive to act inappropriately (from the viewpoint of the principal) if the interests of the agent and the principal are not aligned (More, 1984; Tullock, 2005; Gailmard, 2006; Lane, 2013).

The major issue here is that of accountability; how to ensure that the agents are held accountable by the principals. Accountability is the critical issue in policy implementation. This is true to the extent that the more accountable the agents are to the principals, the more the likelihood that the agents will stick to and act within the terms of contractual agreement, and the more the agents act in consonance with the agreement, the more effective the implementation of the agreement in form of policy. The demands of the population/electorate (principal) during the campaigns and the promise of fulfilment on the part of the agents (politicians) prior to formation of government form part of the contractual agreement (Sapru, 2013).

The rent-seeking ambitions of political agents, which lead them to engage in illegal activities, could derail effective implementation of policies. These activities include: patronage; embezzlement; corruption; tax evasion; kickbacks and commissions on public contracts (Lane, 2013; Sapru, 2013). The nature of political regime, including its basic structure of public law, affects how policies are implemented in favour of the principal. Lane (2013) identified two broad regimes: competitive regime and non-competitive regime. Competitive regimes are typical of open economies with strong democratic institutions that drive governance (Lane, 2013). Countries in this category include the Western European countries and America. Non-competitive regimes are those regimes characteristic of closed economies with authoritative or traditional tendencies (Lane, 2013). Such countries include Saudi Arabia, North Korea, e.t.c. Corruption and rent-seeking behaviours prevent the delivery of services for the benefit of the principals. Non-competitive regimes are more likely to record poor policy implementation performance than competitive regimes (Gailmard, 2006; Mitnick, 2006).

This theory is relevant to policy implementation in tertiary institutions in Ondo state in the sense that the principal here represents the people of Ondo State in general and the students and other major stakeholders in particular. The agent on the other hand is the politicians in government (Governor, Commissioners, House of Assembly members and so on). Again, in a double principal-agent relationship, where the earlier agents (government/politicians) assume the principal and the career public servants represent the agent. The contractual agreement is the funding; merit-driven recruitment process and welfare. In the double principal-agent relationship, the agents (otherwise known as administrative agents) include the Vice Chancellors and the principal officers of these institutions.

Policy implementation in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, (RUGIPO) Ondo State, could be analysed from the point of view of the relationship between the principal (political agents in the double principal-agent relationship) and the administrative agents. The relationship has significant influence on the administrative agents in their responsibility of implementing

education policies in the State. The critical aspect of this theory is accountability; how to make agent accountable to the principal. The theory dwells on the difficulty in ensuring accountability especially in an environment where democratic values are not entrenched. This makes it impossible for the population to demand accountability from the government, and it increases the chances of connivance between the politicians and the public bureaucrats at the helms of RUGIPO). This is directly related to the gap this study intends to fill, which is to investigate political influence on policy implementation in RUGIPO as well as examining the relationship between political office holders and the management of this institution in the implementation of identified policies.

Despite the relevance of the principal-agency theory, it is observed that the theory is silent on the causal links between actions and outcomes, and the actual state of the environment of public policy (Lane, 2013; Sapru, 2013). But these shortcomings are addressed by implementation theory, which also fails to address the influence of political leadership on policy implementation which principal-agency theory addresses. Therefore, the combination of the two theories strengthens the weaknesses of each other and helps in analysing the major focus of the current study which includes, *inter alia*: politics associated with, and influence of politics on, policy implementation in RUGIPO.

Study area and methodology

This study was carried out between September 2018 and August 2019 in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, (RUGIPO). The study used primary source of data collection. Method of data collection was qualitative technique, using in-depth interview. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interview and were analysed thematically. In-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme, or situation (Foddy, 1994). An in-depth interview is an open-ended, discovery-oriented method to obtain detailed information about a topic from a stakeholder (Gillham, 2008). In-depth interviews are a qualitative research method; their goal is to explore a respondent's point of view, experiences, feelings, and perspectives in deeper manner (Osiki, 2006). The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. They also may provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

In-depth interviews were conducted with RUGIPO Rector; Registrar; Bursar; Polytechnic Librarian; Chairman and two members of RUGIPO Governing Board; two union leaders each of Academic Staff Union of

Polytechnics (ASUP), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Polytechnics (SSANIP) and National Association of Staff Unions (NASU); and, two student union leaders. In all, fifteen (15) participants were selected for the interview.

The participants were purposively selected. Purposive sampling, otherwise known as judgmental sampling, is a type of sampling that allows researcher to choose the sample based on who he/she thinks would be appropriate for the study and have knowledge of the issue under investigation (Marshall, 1996). The purposive selection is appropriate because it ensures precision. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable the researcher to answer his/her research questions (Small, 2009). There are different types of purposive sampling. These include criterion sampling; stakeholder sampling; theory-guided sampling; the negative case sampling; maximum variation sampling; the homogeneous sampling; and the critical case sampling, which is frequently used in explorative, qualitative research in order to assess whether the phenomenon of interest even exists (Lucas, 2014; Steinke, 2004; Yin, 2014). Out of all the types of purposive sampling, this study adopted stakeholder sampling to select the respondents as they constitute major stakeholders in the institution under investigation. Stakeholder sampling is particularly useful in the context of evaluation research and policy analysis. This strategy involves identifying who the major stakeholders are and who are involved in designing, giving, receiving, or administering the programme or service being evaluated, and who might otherwise be affected by it.

Secondary sources

Desk research was also used to review the existing literature on policy implementation in RUGIPO. To this effect, the study sourced strategic policy documents from National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) being the institution providing policy guidelines for polytechnics in Nigeria. The study also sourced relevant documents on various policies implemented in RUGIPO from the polytechnic and ministry of education.

Presentation and analysis of data

Data presented and analysed in this section were generated from in-depth interviews conducted with the selected RUGIPO Board Members, Management Members and Staff and Students' Unions Leaders (hereinafter referred to as "participants"). As explained earlier, the participants were purposively selected. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, some questions were raised through the aid of question guide but in harmony with

the objectives of this study. Some of the responses are presented and analyzed below:

On how recruitment and funding policies were being implemented in RUGIPO, participants from Board and Management explained that recruitment process was merit-driven. The management participants itemised the process through which senior staff, including academic staff, was recruited. The process, according to them, was in two folds: the first fold was collating vacant and urgent positions from the concerned departments and units, advertising the vacancies in the national dailies, short listing those who met the criteria stated for the interviews. There were two stages of interviews; the first one was written interview and the second one was oral interview. Those who were successful in the first would be invited for the second one, and the best candidates would be picked. Asked if there was no exception to this process, they said the process was sacrosanct. The second fold was those who submitted unsolicited applications, such applications would be sent to the concerned departments and units for evaluation, and if the department or unit required such applicant, it would signify in the response to the memo from the Rector. According to them, such process was not frequently used.

However, comments of participants from staff and students' unions differed significantly from those of the management participants. Participants from staff and students' unions rated the recruitment policy of the polytechnic as very poor. They emphasised that recruitment was not driven by merit and competence. According to them, the immediate-past acting Registrar was removed without any offence and was replaced by another officer from Owo. They described a situation, where both the Bursar and Librarian were from Owo as height of ethnicism. This, according to them, was attributed to the influence of some of the close aides of the Governor, himself from Owo. They maintained that the recruitment process was largely based on subjective criteria bordering on ethnicity, favouritism and nepotism, political patronage and reward for subservient purposes. One of the participants gave an instance of a third class graduate, who was appointed lecturer in the Urban and Regional Planning Department in the School of Environmental Studies during the period under review. Also, they gave another instance of political influence in RUGIPO, where three children of a Senior Political Appointee were appointed at the same time in the polytechnic, one as a lecturer and two other in the bursary and registry. They insisted that so many lopsided appointments were made reflecting the ethnic origin of the immediate-past Rector.

On funding policy, management participants claimed that the Polytechnic used to be well funded in the past, especially between 2010 and 2014. According to them, the period witnessed massive projects and they attested this to robust budget provision. On the reason for inadequate funding being witnessed between 2014 and now, they explained that the State budget

dwindled and this affected the polytechnic. They however added that Government was looking into how the situation would be improved upon. Board members also spoke in the same direction. They said Government was trying and that the polytechnic would be given attention in the next year budget. According to management participants, uncompleted projects springing up everywhere were a product of robust funding in the past. They said despite the present financial predicament facing the polytechnic, the management and the board were taking frantic steps to ameliorate the situation. According to them, the state government had given approval to generate money internally to compliment whatever the state was giving the polytechnic. They enumerated the strategies for IGR to include: consultancy services; OSPO (formerly, Ondo State Polytechnic, Owo) Consult; bread making industry; block making industry; water producing company, part time programmes both at the level of ND and HND; short term courses in business administration particularly for officials from the ministries, and so on.

However, unions' participants gave a differing opinion and utterly condemned the funding policy of the polytechnic. According to them, the State Government had stopped capital vote to the polytechnic since 2014, and the monthly subvention, through which salary was being paid, had been slashed from two hundred and thirteen million (N213,000,000.00) to one hundred and forty nine million naira (N149,000,000.00).

Another question was asked on the ways by which political appointees influenced the implementation of recruitment and funding policies. Participants from the Board said they had never influenced the day-to-day administration of the polytechnic. They explained that they knew the implication of political interference; therefore they allowed the process run its due course. According to them, the policy of government was to have quality manpower in the polytechnic in order to deliver on the policy thrust of the institution. They denied ever influencing the process. The management participants said that the political appointees did not interfere in the recruitment process of the polytechnic. According to them, all policies, including recruitment policy, have been well implemented without external pressure influencing their decisions. They however said that little pressures from politicians in government could not be totally brushed aside, but such was too insignificant to impair its operations.

But the unions' participants insisted that one of the ways through which policy implementation was being politically influenced was insatiable appointment requests through letters from political appointees as a major criterion for lecturing appointment in the polytechnic. The second way was the stoppage of capital votes to the polytechnic by the immediate past Governor on the pretext of paucity of funds but for political reasons. According to them, the steps taken by the unions during the electioneering

campaigns for gubernatorial elections ostensibly in support of one candidate against the then Governor's preferred candidate informed the stoppage of capital votes and the slash of subvention. According to them, state government had stopped giving capital votes (money meant for infrastructure) the polytechnic since 2014 and that its monthly subvention meant for the payment and running of the polytechnic was gashed by 40%.

The third way was the allegation raised by the unions' participants that the State Government, during the 2016 gubernatorial election, collected money from the polytechnic as part of its contributions to funding the elections. This, according to them, affected the polytechnic in meeting statutory financial obligations. The fourth way, according to them, was the new policy introduced by the state government to rake in revenues from agencies and parastatals of government. The staff unions' participants alleged that revenues accruing to the polytechnic are collected by the State Government through *remitas* (a revenue collection platform). This, according to them, had affected the earnings of the polytechnic.

On the effect of political interference in the implementation of recruitment policy, both the Board and Management participants said there was no political interference, let alone discussing its effects, but they agreed that little interference was desirable, even though such interference must be "legitimate" before it could be accommodated. However, unions' participants differed and insisted that one of the effects of political interference was the inability of the polytechnic to pay staff salaries. This, according to unions' participants, was attributed to the incessant employment requests from the political appointees. They said that staff strength of the polytechnic had increased geometrically without corresponding increase in the funding. Another effect, according to them, was that, the polytechnic, at a point, could not promote its staff as it could no longer pay the backlogs of promotion arrears. They said that members of junior staff that were promoted were asked to forfeit the promotion arrears as their promotion took only nominal effect. Student union participants attributed the effects of political interference to the pathetic condition under which they learnt, describing it as dehumanised. They said classes were crowded as students sat and hung on windows and doors, even on the bare floor in order to receive lectures. According to the student leaders, the library was not properly equipped, as it did not have modern books. There was no e-library as students did not have access to e-copies of international journals and books. The students lamented the condition of their hostels, as part of evidences of poor funding. They said State Government was not committed to the funding of the polytechnic to achieve the policy thrust of the polytechnic. Still on the effects of political interference, one of the students' participants said that students in Mass Communication Department

complained of a set of new lecturers who could not speak correct English language.

Results and Discussion

The current study looked at the implementation of recruitment and funding policies in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo (RUGIPO). The study adopted qualitative method in the analysis of data, using in-depth interview as a method of data gathering. It interviewed selected members of Governing Board, Management Team, Staff and Student Unions. They were interviewed on the nature and manner of implementation of recruitment and funding policies in RUGIPO, the ways by which political appointees influenced implementation of those two policies and the effects of such interference on the implementation of the policies. The study found out that recruitment policy was significantly being influenced and gave practical instances of how the selection process of the members of the current management team was politically influenced, including cases of naked political influence on the appointment of staff, including academic staff who were appointed without due consideration for merit and competence. The study discovered that there were political influences and interferences in the appointment process as letters from political appointees were a major criterion for lecturing appointment. The implication of this is that, the policy thrust of the polytechnic, which is the provision of middle-level technical manpower to address the technology deficiency of the state will not be achieved, and this will affect policy implementation in the polytechnic.

On funding policy, it was discovered that the polytechnic was poorly funded. In fact, it had stopped receiving capital votes (money meant for infrastructure) since 2014 and that its monthly subvention meant for the payment and running of the polytechnic was slashed by 40%. This was the main reason for inability of the polytechnic to meet its salary commitment to staff. Furthermore, it was also revealed that the political influence on funding had also affected the implementation of other concomitant programmes such as welfare, quality of programmes, academic culture, and classroom environment. The study revealed that financial predicament facing the polytechnic was also attributed to the political interference in two ways: one, the politicians in government sent appointment lists of their wards, family members and their friends for appointment consideration. The staff strength of the polytechnic increased geometrically without corresponding increase in the funding. At a point, the polytechnic was very reluctant in promoting its staff as it could no longer pay the backlogs of promotion arrears. It was further revealed that members of junior staff, who were promoted, were asked to forfeit the promotion arrears as their promotion took only nominal effect. The study found that the haphazard appointments without merit, competence and

due process drastically affected the staff wage bill of the polytechnic. All these affected effective policy implementation of the polytechnic.

Furthermore, finding showed that the State Government during the 2016 gubernatorial election collected money from the polytechnic as part of its contributions to funding the elections. In addition, it was revealed that revenues accruing to the polytechnic were being collected by the State Government through remitas (a revenue collection platform). This has affected the earnings of the polytechnic.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, it could be concluded that the manner and nature of implementation of both recruitment and funding policies reflected political partisanship. This has addressed the objective one on the critical examination of the implementation of recruitment and funding policies. It was further established that political appointees significantly influenced the implementation of recruitment and funding policies of the polytechnic. The foregoing discussions of findings have provided answers to research questions one and two thereby fulfilling the objectives one and two in the process. The current study had not only shown, very unambiguously, the nature and manner of implementation of recruitment and funding policies in RUGIPO, it had also demonstrated the way by which political appointees influenced the implementation of these policies. Objective three is on the effects of political interference in the implementation of these two policies. The study had clearly shown how political interference had impaired the operations of the polytechnic. In fact, it revealed how the polytechnic had been unable to pay staff salaries owing to insatiable appointment requests of political appointees. It revealed how political interference in the appointment caused astronomical increase in the staff wage bill of the polytechnic. It also demonstrated how the polytechnic was rendered incapable of meeting its statutory obligations such as promotion and welfare of staff.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that appointment of staff, especially academic staff, should be based on merit. Government, for the sake of the future of the polytechnic education, should ensure that it does not interfere in the recruitment process in the polytechnic. Political influence in the implementation of policies in the polytechnic was enormous. It is therefore recommended that the polytechnic should be insulated from political influence. This can be achieved in two ways: one, a bill should be sent to the House of Assembly on the need to enplace merit in the operations and running of the polytechnic. Two, reorganisation of the governing board is desirable. The board should comprise retired academics, with cutting-edge experiences in academics and scholarship. Appointing retired academics will ensure some form of sanity in the board. Presently, membership of the board reflects

political partisanship as majority of the members are politicians. In addition, the polytechnic should be well funded. Man or woman of proven integrity and character should be appointed as Rector of the polytechnic. This can be achieved through merit-based process. The polytechnic should design mechanisms towards improving its IGR. There should be reorganisation of the polytechnic by creating more departments and units to take care of the excess staff, which was a result appointment requests from the political appointees. This is to properly utilise the staff and at the same time getting additional revenue for the polytechnic through admission of students into the newly created departments.

All said, it would seem impossible to completely insulate the polytechnic from political influence, being a state-owned institution, but the level of political influence can be reduced. Standards should further be set for appointment/recruitment into the polytechnic through a legislation to save the polytechnic of the impending doom. The present nature of political influence is worrisome, urgent steps need to be taken to reverse the trend. It is the belief of this study that appropriate legislation to that effect will significantly minimise this orgy.

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