

Agenda Setting and Educational Policy Implementation in Public Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract— The study investigated agenda setting and educational policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. Objectively, two research questions and two hypotheses were generated to guide the study. The population consist all the 2508 academic staff in all the public universities in Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to determine a sample of 344 academic staff. Among this, there were 186 (54%) academic staff from federal universities and 158(46%) respondents from state universities. In order to elicit information from the respondent, the researcher designed a research questionnaire tagged (AEPIQ), with a reliability coefficient of 0.78. Mean scores and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used to analyze hypotheses. The study found out that policymakers' gives out official information regarding the extent of policy implementation, educational policy makers make calculated attempt to provide the desired and much appropriate details on the educational policy that the media believes would meet their criteria for the content considered as a salient issue. The study also concluded that policymakers has the central role in providing a blueprint that gives a general directives to goal attainment and thus recommended that the media should be able to create the level of awareness that would ensure that the members of the public are fully aware of the level of educational policy implementation.

Index Terms— agenda-setting, educational policy, policy, implementation, universities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is what fires up and ignite other sectors of the society to advance at the needed pace. The link between the town and gown cannot be over emphasized because of the massive role it has played across all levels of human civilization. A cursory look at most advanced nations of the world will support a valid conclusion that education is a basic indicator of human capital development. More evidence from advanced economies has shown how what issues occupies the table of discourse on every side of the national news agenda. Arguably, countries may only concentrate on issue that needs urgent concern and it is true that the university education which is supposed to produce a hybrid of technically equipped manpower may not have always been the real matter when choosing which issue occupies the national agenda.

Comparatively, China, Britain, Finland and other advanced countries of the world have made great progress

and foreign earnings by selling her educational services to other countries through educational tourism, compared to Nigeria that is yet to allocate the minimal 26% national allocation to education. Regrettably, scholars have proposed that critical issue needing urgent redress should occupy the central point of national discuss otherwise known as agenda-setting. Agenda setting lays much importance on the topics that are salient in the national agenda. In fact, it can be argued to an extent that most countries of the world makes their needs their major topic of discourse in the media, hence education by virtue of its importance in driving national course should remain the central topic for national discourse on media to create the needed level of awareness that is required to force through policy implementation at different levels, especially in education. Originally, social scientist like Max McComb and Donald Shaw through the American 1968 election believed that there could possibly make attempts of predictions election results by setting the appropriate agenda.

Agenda setting theory has been argued to have a great impact on policy makers, the policy makers through the media are made to know the position of the masses concerning the viability of a policy, although the policy makers are ultimately the ones with the details and technical information about the policy. Most scholars have stated vehemently that the relationship between media and policy is purely symbiotic. Hence, the understanding that exists between policy makers and the media is arguably interdependent. To the media, they set pressing matter to the agenda and ultimately transform it to a salient issue of national concentration. The educational policymakers need a blend of media to set educational agenda on course. Debatably, most policies that are central focus of the government is usually the ones that gets the needed attention. When the attention is given, the masses become fully aware of the policy and through this awareness, the attendant agencies are mobilized to see to their implementation. Evidentially, the issue of education is by observation not the major agenda in the media and national discourse, which is grossly out of place.

Every year, there are seminars, high powered educational conferences on review, modifications, innovation, and general educational programmes that are geared towards policies which involves much funds regularly expended to ascertain the possible policy redress that will fully address the implementation phase; which is most importantly the most difficult stage of policy implementation. It is true that these conferences, seminars, are targeted to the policymakers with recommendations that are directly addressing the educational system.

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Policies in the Nigerian educational system, especially the ones that are very critical to the national development are supposed to be the top priority, though scholars who have shown great interest on policy analyses policy has supported that most policies that are implemented are has its success story when pulled through by a concerted effort by the media. This is done in order to ensure that they act as bridge between the policy makers and the people. In fact, the media are mainly exposed to the detailed policy documents which through agenda building, the policies, especially the educational policy which are developed by the government through her agency to public agenda. Interestingly, is true that there is a degree of reciprocity between the mass media and society in a way that infuse media and public agenda on the gear to influences the public policy. Thus in essence, where there are good educational policies, yet the beneficiaries (public) are not aware to which extent the policy will drive for public good. It may as a matter of fact appear to be as a result that the educational policies are not driven by the media to occupy the central stage of the national agenda.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

An educational policy gives a blueprint of what is expected, through stating which input, the process and the expected output of which can be ascertained through a documented and organized process. Policies are the main map that directs public and private sectors to the attainment of its predetermined goals. This is because policies when well conceived can lead to adjustment to past challenges, remedy of present situation and positive projections to the future possibilities. Notwithstanding, there has been effort by government and other educational institutions to exceed the regular menace of having a policy that ends in paper, to one that is fully implemented. Many scholars have faulted the failure of policy on funding and appropriate mobilization, while others have directed their argument on the ideological underpin of the policy. Deviating from the call and recommendations of scholars that government should not just sponsor conference that ends up making up piled up books called policy recommendation with the actual mobilization of the policy, to advert the long chain of continuous failure of policy implementation. Evidently, the media theory of agenda setting have suggestively argued that for there to be the needed level of awareness of a pressing challenge, it must be made a general subject of discourse. Through agenda setting, there may be high possibility of creating public awareness and interest on important issues by the news media is central to giving a perspective to the masses. Hence, by implication, the major challenge to policy implementation is not just failure to mobilize the most capable human and material resources, but ultimately on making such policies, especially the education policy to be the major and most salient issues by the news media. But regrettably and saddening, the Nigerian universities cannot find itself in the rankings of the best universities in the world, and this is because, the university education has not suffered deficiency in policy implementation, but also suffered neglect is the place of national priorities.

There have been series of agreement between the

government and the various educational institutions and unions, though it is a known experience the various agreement most times appears to be a “fire brigade” approach to address the incidence of strike, funding, and other issues that may disrupt school programmes. Public commentators have noted that when government agrees based on the context of a policy; it is based on political undertone without the intent to implement these policies to the later. In fact, there could be deliberate action by government to suppress certain educational policies to emerge subject of public agenda, to avoid general awareness and pressure for implementation. Another way that policies are defeated are seen in the underfunding of the policy implementation phase, hence leading to counter reactions by various groups by ways of protest and prolonged union strikes within proactive redress, dilapidated university plant. All this and more issues could be that the various stakeholders in the educational sectors are not aware of the various educational policies that should inevitably occupy the centre stage of the national issue which may have provided enough details of the policy through policy analyses by the media and also to ensure that the concerned quarters exerts the needed pressure on the government to ensure policy implementation. Agenda setting in this case, is more appreciated when issues concerning university are made accessible by a continuous or frequent presentation of news concerning education, ranking it as major concern for media discourse. It may as a result of massive awareness of some loopholes in educational policy implementation, drive the needed policy implementers to re-evaluate their effort. More so, the more university educational policies are made the salient and general issues, there could be tendencies that it may affect educational policy implementation, hence the need to investigate agenda setting and educational policy implementation in Universities in Nigeria.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to investigate agenda setting and educational policy implementation in Universities in Rivers State. But specifically, the study intended to find out:

1. The extent agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.
2. The role of policy-makers in agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.
3. Find significant relationship between the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff universities on extent agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.
4. Find out the significant relationship in the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on the role of policy-makers in the agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation

in universities in Rivers State?

2. What are the roles of policy-makers in agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State?

3. What significant relationship between the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff universities on extent agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State?

4. What is the significant relationship in the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on the role of policy-makers in the agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

Ho 1: There is significant relationship between the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff universities on extent agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.

Ho 2: There is significant relationship between the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on the role of policy-makers in the agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Agenda setting

Agenda according to Kingdon (2003) is the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time. More so, an agenda is perceived further by Kingdon (2003) as

collection of problems, understanding of causes, symbols, solutions, and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and other governmental officials. Hence agenda exist at virtually every levels of government. In fact no government has all it takes to exploit all the alternatives to addressing all problems. Because of the numerous problems and issues that are seeking for a redress and further occupy the centre stage of discussion. There is fierce competition by actors of the public and private sector to have their concerns among the numbers of issues sharing the agenda. More vividly, Kingdon (2003) suggested that group competition to set the agenda is fierce because no society or political system has the institutional capacity to address all possible alternatives to all problems that arise at any time. Furthermore, groups must therefore fight to earn their issues' placed among all the other issues sharing the limited space on the agenda or to prepare for the time when a crisis makes their issues' more likely to occupy a more prominent space on the agenda. Hence, agenda setting has been mostly known as a communication or media concept. It span through the entire process that can be observed through presentation of issues that covers issue content in the media house. Generally, one cannot have a careful and desirable approach to the concept if the concept is divorced from the actual practice of the media and how they affect policies. Definitely, agenda setting has been conceived by scholars like Birkland (2007), to be a process where actors, having different interests, compete with each other to earn their issues a place on the agenda. In essence, competition arises because there are lot of policy issues that called for due modifications and within a political system whose entire process is limited by time.

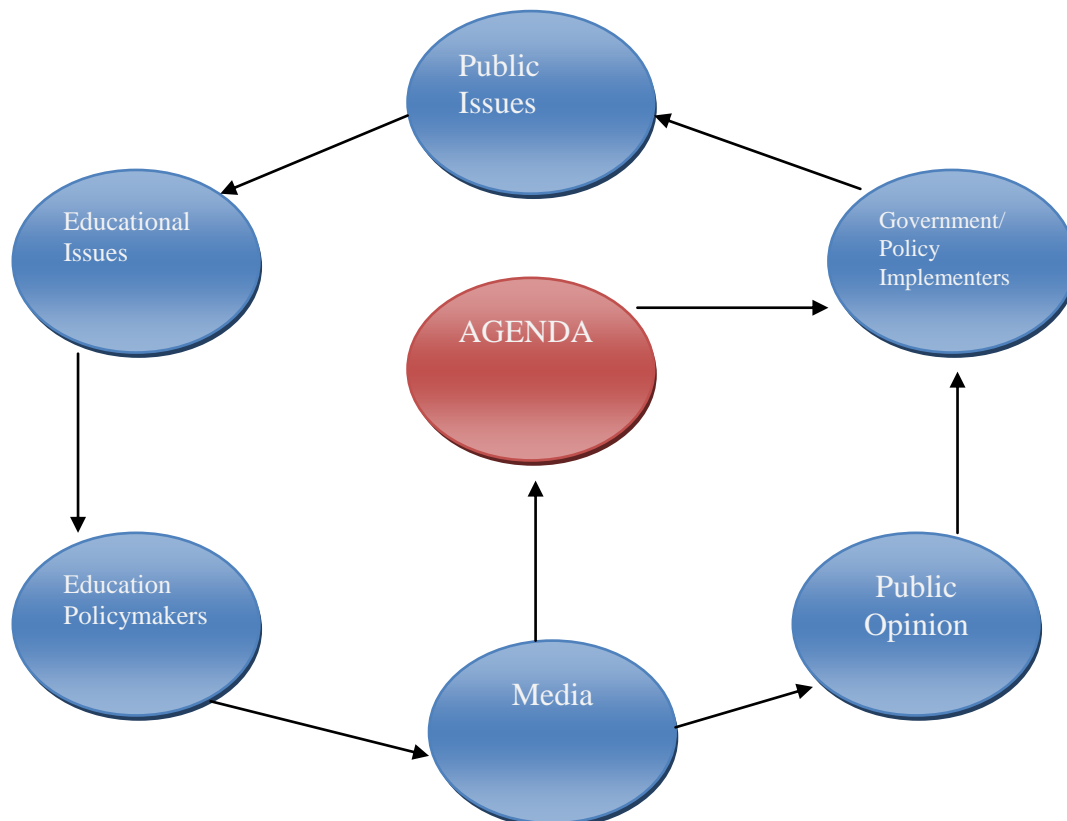


Fig 2: Agenda setting process for educational policy implementationPublic issues

The public issues are those fundamental issues that affect the general population. Public issue attracts public concern. Though even when the public issues are issues that has direct impact on the economic, socio-cultural and political life of the people, it strength is based on what sense of urgency is created by the media.

Educational issues

The educational system is a tool for social reconstruction and re-strategizing. The public tries to address its problems through looking back at the educational system. Such problems can be submerged into government funding of education, school safety, disciplinary policy, quality assurance and control etc. it is at this point that the educational policy makers makes policies that are able to address the problems through the educational system.

Educational policy makers

The educational policymakers are concerned with making policies based on the various problems confronting the society which has been channeled to the educational system. The policy makers will take into cognizance, the various educational issues on the table to make policies that are targeted to addressing such issues through the educational system.

Media

The media, who has the right channel to determine which issue becomes very salient in the national discourse will get appropriate information from the policy makers and also in exchange provide the policy makers with the platform to set the appropriate agenda. This symbiotic relationship is very important in the agenda building process. The media is able to set the educational issues with the help of the information they have been able to access via the policymakers. The issues which are heavily projected by the media would provide the public with a view of what tops the list of issues in public policy (educational policy in this case).

Public opinion

The educational policy which has been set as the agenda will be held by the members of the public as the agenda and the most urgent issue in the national policy.

Government/Policy Implementers

The government believes that the agenda represents the position or the view of the masses or public concerning an issue. The government who are responsible for making sure the policy is adequately implemented by the implementers. Since there are many competing issues that needs to occupy the salient point for national discourse. The government at this point will still will place what is on agenda to public issue and immediately handle the based on how urgent it appears or it has been projected by the media.

Policy

Policy is generally a blueprint documented for guide towards organizational goals attainment. Policy according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008), is an overall

guide and direction on which organisational decisions are based. This means that policy gives the organisation the ability to determine which way it can follow to arrive at objectives. As suggested by Nwankwoala (2018), policy has to do with principles, government policies and the collection of laws and rules that governs the conduct of any educational system. Policy as described by him, is taken fundamentally as the having to do with the guiding rules and regulations which in most instances must be objectively driven (Anietie, Uba, & Odou, 2019). More emphatically, Dimock (1980) in Emmanuel (2018) noted that policy is a consciously acknowledged rule of conduct that guides the administrative decision. By implication, policy must be accepted by members of the organization to be operational. In essence, the members of the organization or the government agencies which the main trust of the policy is directed to, must be willing to adopt and appreciate the policy as a tool for general guide that outlines how to determine who gets what, where and when and also how one gets to actualize a goal. More specifically, Weihrich and Koontz (2004) submitted that policy is a general statement or understanding that guides managers in taking decisions. They ensure that decisions remains within the organisational context. Operationally, Wali (2018) conceptualized policy as a set of interrelated decision is taken by a political actors or group of actors I, concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation, where those decisions are within the power of the actors to achieve significantly defines the direction in which decisions are to be made and provide a basis for all official actions (Isi, 2018). This is an indication that policy are made based on the considerations of the organisational advancement which are done by taking guided steps to the achievement of organizational aims and objectives. The above is true, as Haddad (1995) in Isi (2018) described policy as implicitly and explicitly set out directions for guiding future decisions towards the satisfaction of the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The definition given by Haddad looked at policy in the educational context. However, policy is a systematic and objectives based a statement that gives direction towards the achievement of organisational goals and what defines the organization.

Educational policy

Education like every other organization does not operate without policy that serves as a blueprint for informed decisions and operations. Hence, education policy is a set of guideline that is made to give a general guide to the actions and operations of the difference levels of education and other related issues. But according to Nwankwoala (2018) in Emmanuel (2018), educational policy is that which has to do with principles, government policies and collection of laws and rules that governs the conduct of any educational systems. To further buttress the point, Fabunmi (2004) noted that educational policy is the framework within which education is administered in a given place and within specific period. Educational policies are made to bring about harmony in the quality in the practice of education. To Nwangwu (2003), policy entails the official statement by the government on the chosen course of action and the procedures for achieving it.

The conception of educational policy as placed by Nwangwu is centred on the official nature of policy. But nevertheless, House and Miskel (1991), defined educational policy as a statement of those objectives that guide the action of a substantial portion of the educational organisation. But noticeably, there have been questions raised about if education should be focused more on quality or standard. Explicitly, educational policy is mainly drafting a standard of operation in the entire educational system, while the quality of education is measured in the applicability of the standard.

The National Policy on Education is what gives the education of the country a common front and direction that guides to the achievement of national policy.

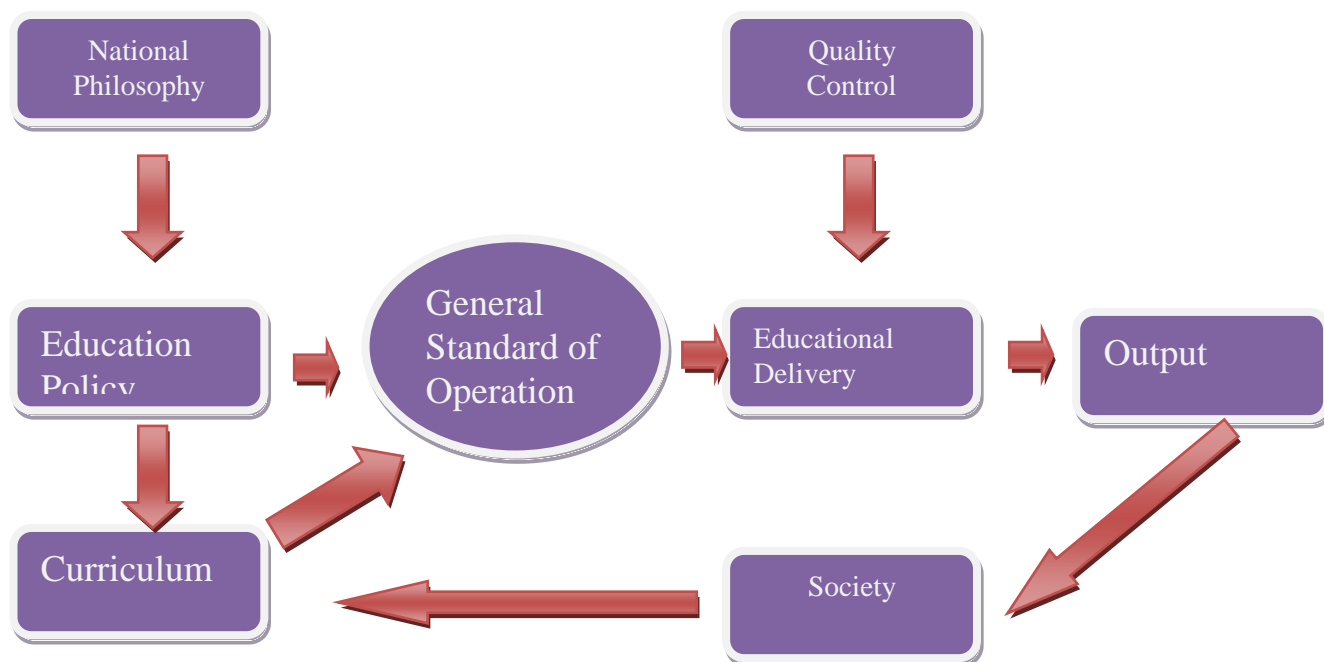


Figure 2: Education Policy Operational Flow (E-POF)

Policy Implementation

From figure 2, the national philosophy comes in a broader terms, in this context, the national philosophy are a rational thinking, ideology, principles, terms, that is conceived within the context of the national culture. This national philosophy is then transferred with educational fine-tuning, tailored to the goals the educational system must collectively at all level achieve through administration, management, and implementation of education at all tiers of government. The educational policy on education shows government expectations, aspirations, goals, requirement and standard for quality education delivery. The general standard is made a benchmark of operation for educational delivery in various tiers of education with specifics to their objectives. In essence, educational delivery must be done within the general standard specified through the education policy as broken down in the curriculum. The educational delivery, which involves the actual teaching learning process, is a critical point where there must be quality control before a desirable output can be expected. More so, the output from the educational delivery that has been quality checked by means of supervision and inspection will be sent to the society for feedback and immediate adjustment in the curriculum which is infused into the general standard of operation.

Educational policies in it cannot be implemented without a concerted effort by the administrators and all the stakeholders in the education system to transform the policy from paper statements to actual implementation. These professionals and other stakeholders constitute the implementers of the educational policies. More clearly, Emmanuel (2018) has opined that implementers of the educational policies are those experts charged with the responsibilities of putting into practice or bringing into reality the prescriptions of the national education policy. Nwankwoala (2018), expressly opined that since those who formulate policies are not most times the same people who are meant to implement this policies, it entails that there should be staff training to carry the educational Policy implementers along so as to enable them participate with the said educational Policy implementation. Precisely, the school personnel at all levels are to be rightly made to intimate themselves with the policies and have them integrate and interpret the policies at their various levels of education. As put by Okoroma (2000) in Emmanuel (2018), the implementation process would mean to put the appropriately the men and materials in cohesive organisational unit and motivate them in such a way as to carry out organisational stated objective. Policy implementation is those activities and procedures followed systematically with rational mobilization of needed resources to ensure an effective public service delivery.

Objectives of Higher Education Institution (HEI)

The educational system is conceived with the view to ensure that the objectives of the educational system are achieved. Therefore, the educational system cannot not actualize its objectives if there are no harmony in the objectives of the entire educational system practices at all levels. Hence, the various levels of education are very related and interdependent in the achievement of its aim, but they are not designed to meet the same objectives. But generally, the Nigerian educational system as put by the National Policy on Education (2004) stated that:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of individuals and the Nigerian society.
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his society.

Even as the above is the bigger picture of what the Nigeria educational system stands to achieve, more specifically, the higher education, with the university inclusive. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004) made it clear that the Nigerian higher education is expected to provide professional that transcends to the national needs. Hence, this has been the central reason why the educational system, especially the university system is supposed to bridge the gap between the university and the needs of the National economy. To achieve this, the objective of the Higher Education Institution as outlined by the NPE (2004), section 8 no. 59(a-g) within a seven context as to:

- Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- Forge and cement national unity; and ,
- Promote National and International understanding and Interaction.

Theoretical backing

Agenda-setting theory

This study is anchored on Agenda-Setting theory which was propounded by Maxwell MaxCombs Shaw along with G. Ray Funkerhouser in 1968. The theory emerged as a result of the study conducted in the North Carolina election done in 1968 Presidential election. The main of the theory in the word of McCombs and Shaw (1968) is that the impact of the mass media is the ability to effect cognitive change among

individuals, and be able to restructure their thinking. Here they suggest likes the most important effect of the mass communication, it's ability to mentally order and organize our world for. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.

The main point portrayed is that agenda setting is the influence the mass media is able to exert on determining the salience of issues with news. This process involves cognitive procedures that gradually work on the mental programming of the masses on public issues. This process is called accessibility. Furthermore, the media can and does have strong effect on what the masses thinks. They do this by intentionally flashing news content on certain issues and thereby creating a sense of urgency which sometimes is not that urgent in the real sense. The main events that are unfolding in the world are regards the economy, society, politics and science are to an extent given selective attention by the media. They by interest, gives certain news contents then prominence. While the criteria for which events are made prominent not very clear, the selection is greatly dependent on the media ideological makeup. By highlighting certain events, the masses or audience will buy into the reality of the media which is not the actual reality but the mediated reality. This is deliberately done by the media to set an intended agenda which will call the attention of the public policy makers. Agenda setting is an important part of the public policy process. Sudden, rare, and harmful events, known as focusing events, can be important influences on the policy process (Thomas & Kathryn, 2019). Educationally, such events can reveal the current state of the educational system, by highlighting the potential harm of failure to implement education policy, hence mobilizing the masses to mount pressure on people and group responsible in ensuring that the policy is implemented. This is done, when educational policy implementation issues are given the open window for intensive policy discussion and potential policy change and way to re-evaluate the extent the policy is being implemented.

Agenda setting, public awareness and education policy implementation

Agenda setting affects all sector, this is because of the role played by the media and the policymakers to establish which issue must be infused into the list of salient issues for immediate national consideration. The media generally has been believed to have an impact on public policy awareness, because they serve as a channel through which the masses are fed with the various events that call for public interest. The media has also been argued to have selective intent about what they want to the public to consider salient and what they ought not to. In essence this is possible because the media though without very clear criteria for selecting which policy demands central place in the scheme of the most pressing national issue, also operate and make their selection within the ideology of media. Mass mediation over the years has presented a set pattern of understanding regarding agenda setting through a traditional perspective. According to Pal (2006), within the context of public policy and government decision-making, agenda setting is considered a process of

defining issues or problems as falling within the domain which policy makers can be depended on to make a positive move towards addressing a problem by providing a credible and feasible response. In essence, the pressing educational policy issues in the university system must be pushed by the media to the quarters of the policymakers to attend to those educational policies and by this action cut the bad side of policy failure, through appropriate implementation. Since the educational system is however a complex one, Pal (2006) succinctly stated that issues of policy needing urgent attention must be laid through a policy window. This is because the government would ordinarily act within the purview of scheduled and unscheduled shift in the political climate. More so, the way which government may act on issues regarding educational policy implementation is based on the signal of urgency decided through the media. In fact, the various educational stakeholders ranging from the school personnel, administrators, and government must have to be aware of their various roles in agenda building. Though often public are unaware of the educational policy and the level of urgency that is needed to ensure the implementation of the policy (Dearing & Evarett, 1996). While the funding of the policy and mobilization of the needed resource are pivotal to the implementation of the policy, the public light not be aware of how much the educational policy has been implemented. Even if they are aware of the content of the policy and what it stands to benefit the general public though building the right type of educational system, the media is the channel to which the masses will always be aware of the policy to the level to which the media is revealing to them (Meredith & Catherine, 1999). Though accordingly, making the educational policy and other policy salient or central in public discourse is considerably done through contacting the various stakeholders in the educational system. However, the stakeholders according to Meredith & Catherine (1999) are those with a direct interest in the issue. The stakeholders can be summed into:

- Those directly affected or involved in policy implementation process. Those directly involved or affected by the policy in the university educational policy includes the students, staff (teaching and non-teaching).
- Those that are not directly affected or those that are not directly involved: this people consist of the members of public that do not have direct benefits of the educational policy implementation. However, when they are aware of the policy, they will be able to construct or link how the policy when implemented can benefit them.

At all levels, education is considered to be very important to national development and in a long run, it will be capable of transforming the entirety of the people. In other for the public to be aware of policy, the media would according to Beal (2019) be able to bring to the awareness of the masses through a function of information system that provides the members of the public an accessible, views of the policies associated with their information resources. When educational policies are put to motion, it dies off due to poor implementation. Hence, the media has been argued to be able

to create the needed level of awareness in the mind of the policy makers and masses about the urgency policy implementation and also the negative impact of failure to implement the policy. Hence, the media creates the level of awareness based on their ideology and other media programmes to reinforce signals to the government and policy implementers regarding the need for policy implementation compliance with stated rules, and enables accountability when rules are intentionally or accidentally broken (Beal, 2019).

Roles of policy-makers in agenda setting process and education policy implementation

In agenda setting, most groups tires to make concerted pressure and reinforce their interest in the agenda setting process (Soroka, 2002). Though some groups have the higher ease to access to agenda setting than other groups. This is why all the issues cannot appear on the agenda at the same time, but selectively placed based on their ability to manipulate and understand the needs of the media (Cobb & Elder, 1971 in Soroka, 2002). Policy makers has been observed to have a greater impact and influence on the agenda-setting because they also meet the need of the journalist and also provide them with information that is predictable within the context of their news worthiness. In essence, the educational policy makers makes calculated attempt to provide just the desired and much appropriate details on the educational policy that the media believes would meet their criteria for the content as a salient issue. Though according to Cobb and Elder (1971) in Soroka (2002), decisions makers with the educational decisions inclusive must seek the support of the major stakeholders because of their active role as the guardian of the formal agenda. Apart from that, some personalities in the media can always project educational policy issues and set a new pace through media coverage mainly for educational policy issues. However, government-affiliated news sources have higher success rates in becoming media agenda and have been found by a number of scholarship to be the news contents they floods the media and takes place of agenda in all the media in local, state, and federal level (Berkowitz, 1992).

News sources can also give a definition to issues and by this way giving a direction to future discussion and framing problems. By this approach, the media can liaise with policymakers to project educational policies as the agenda for discussion, thereby creating the desired level of awareness of such policies in the mind of the public. Hence, the policymakers and the media, though an informal rules can establish the basic reality of the educational system and strike a point of discussion between the *defacto* policy provision and *dejure*. In essence, policies that are not implemented or hindered through government processes, funding issues, and consulting educational experts or analyst to discuss policy implementation in most of the national, state and local media maybe able to awaken the level of public awareness of the policy and the extent of implementation. When there are media emphases on the salient educational policy implementation problems, it would lead to creating or setting a desirable agenda in motion. In the Nigeria context, the media sometimes may contradict the actual policy idea with

perceived assumptions of what the policy ought to represent. Hence, the policymakers must be able to guide a guideline to the media concerning which way the educational policy issues can be framed to arrive at a consensual and authoritative version of reality (Berkowitz, 1992). Consequently advancing competition between sources of information for definition of an educational policy issue can strongly be relied upon based on how powerful the source of the policy discourse can be, and hence a modality for setting the policy issues on agenda for media attention (Gans, 1979 in Soroka, 2002).

The media and the core players in the educational policy and other policy makers appear to be symbiotic. This relationship is based on some level of rules that are not officially driven. These rules must come to play as both the policy makers and media are interdependent in their level of operations. To the media, the educational policymakers must be able to provide them with official information regarding level of policy implementation, while the policymakers will also be in need of the media to provide them with the platform for policy media coverage. But as posited by Berkowitz (1992), that it often appears that there is a consensual relationship between the media and the policymakers, there is also a line of deviation between them due to different orientation in time as power sources are at their best in routine situation and react more slowly when crises occur. Hence most successful policy makers are those who are well informed and knowledgeable about the rules of engagement and understand their limits with regards to rules of the above culture of knowing when to react to issues. When policymakers are able to understand the rules, they will be able to set their agendas and issues (Berkowitz, 1992, & Soroka, 2002). When the issues in educational policy is set as agenda, the government takes this issues seriously and as a direct expression of the public interest in the issues bothering the policy in terms of implementation and other technicalities.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design, this is because the researcher intends to describe variable as they exist without manipulation (Anietie & Zipamoh, 2017). The

Table 1: mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on the extent agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.

Questionnaire Items		Federal			State		
		X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec
1	The public depends on the media for information on extent of policy education policy implementation.	3.40	.72	A	3.30	.80	A
2	The public rely on set agenda to discuss and pressurize policy implementers.	3.41	.72	A	3.41	.72	A
3	The media creates some sense of urgency which reflects the extent education policy needs attention.	3.11	.67	A	3.33	.81	A
4	The extent to which policies are evaluated depends on media persuasion and public opinion.	3.30	.80	A	3.98	.17	A
5	The public are aware of the educational policy implementation only to the extent reveal by the	3.37	.76	A	3.40	.72	A

population of the study consists of all the 2558 academic staff in all the public universities in Rivers State. among this population, the following were the individual population of the various institutions namely; University of Port Harcourt, 1379 (53%), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education; 429 (16%) and Rivers State University of Science and Technology; 796 (31%). More so, the population was further stratified to federal (1379) and state (1177) which is 54% and 46% respectively. The information was gotten from the brochures of the various departments. A stratified random sampling technique was used to determine a sample of 344 academic staff using Taro Yamen formulae. Also, among there were 186 (54%) academic staff from federal universities and 158(46%) respondents from state universities. In other to elicit information from the respondent, the researcher designed a research questionnaire tagged “Agenda-setting and Education Policy Implementation Questionnaire (AEPIQ). For the validity of the instrument, the research questionnaire was accessed by experts in test and measurement and department of educational management to ensure that the instrument was face and content validated. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a Pearson moment correlation coefficient was used to determine a coefficient of 0.78, hence the instrument was highly reliable. In analyzes, mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research question from the instrument designed in the Likert Modified 4-Point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strong Disagree on the ratings of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Also, z-test was used to analyze the hypotheses.

Data presentation and discussion of findings

Research question 1: To what extent does agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State?

media through agenda setting	3.31	.73	3.48	.64
Total				

Grand mean: 3.39

Criterion mean: X = 2.50 and above, then Accept (A)
2.50 < X, then Reject (R)

From the above table, it shows mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on the extent agenda setting creates public awareness that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State. as shown on the table, the mean of all the items were above the mean criterion of 2.50, hence it shows that the public depends on the media for information on the extent of policy education policy implementation, The public rely on set agenda to discuss and pressurize policy implementers, the media creates some sense of urgency which reflects the extent education policy needs attention, the extent to which policies are evaluated depends on media persuasion and public opinion, and the public are aware of the educational policy implementation only to the extent reveal by the media through agenda setting. Gans, (1979) in Soroka, (2002), in

support of the second item on table two stated consequently that advancing competition between sources of information for definition of an educational policy issue can strongly be relied upon based on how powerful the source of the policy discourse can be, and hence a modality for setting the policy issues on agenda for media attention. Also, Berkowitz (1992), also opined that the educational policymakers must be able to provide them with official information regarding level of policy implementation, while the policymakers will also be in need of the media to provide them with the platform for policy media coverage.

Research question 2: What are the roles of policy-makers in agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on the roles of policy-makers in agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in universities in Rivers State.

Questionnaire Items	State			Federal		
	X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec
1 Policymakers gives out official information regarding the extent of policy implementation.	3.41	.72	A	3.98	.17	A
2 Policy makers make calculated attempt to provide just the desired and much appropriate details on the educational policy that the media believes would meet their criteria for the content as a salient issue	3.31	.80	A	3.35	.51	A
3 The policymakers can liaise with the media to project educational policies as the salient issue on agenda.	2.66	.82	A	2.90	.07	A
4 Policymakers, who are able to understand the media rules, will get the media to set agendas on educational policy issues.	3.30	.80	A	3.98	.17	A
5 Decisions makers with the educational decisions inclusive must seek the support of the major stakeholders because of their active role as the guardian of the formal agenda.	3.37	.76	A	3.40	.72	A
Total	3.21	.77		3.52	.32	

Grand mean: 3.36

Criterion mean: X = 2.50 and above, then Accept (A)
2.50 < X, then Reject (R)

All the respondents accepted that policymakers gives out official information regarding the extent of policy implementation, policy makers make calculated attempt to provide just the desired and much appropriate details on the educational policy that the media believes would meet their criteria for the content as a salient issue (Berkowitz, 1992, Meredith & Catherine, 1999), the policymakers can liaise with the media to project educational policies as the salient issue on agenda, policymakers, who are able to understand

the media rules, will get the media to set agendas on educational policy issues, and decisions makers with the educational decisions inclusive must seek the support of the major stakeholders because of their active role as the guardian of the formal agenda. This is based on the mean ratings of various items which are above the mean criterion of 2.50. The above items are in consonance with the opinion of Soroka (2002), Cobb & Elder (1971) in Soroka (2002).

Hypotheses

Table 3: Mean score, standard deviation and z-test of difference in mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on stress and academic staff productivity in public universities in Rivers State.

Group	N	X	SD	D of F	Sig. L	z-Cal	z-Crit.	Decision
Federal	186	3.31	.73	342	0.05	-2.8	1.96	Accept
State	158	3.48	.64					

Table 3 shows the z-test analyses of the difference in the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on stress and academic staff productivity in public universities in Rivers State. The result shows a z-calculated value of -2.8 which is less than the z-critical of 1.96 at the 342 degree of freedom and at alpha significant level of 0.05. Hence, the null

hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of federal and state academic staff on stress and academic staff productivity in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: Mean score, standard deviation and z-test of difference in mean federal and state academic staff on the role of policy-makers in the agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

Group	N	X	SD	D of F	Sig. L	z-Cal	z-Crit.	Decision
Federal	186	3.21	.77	342	0.05	-5.1	1.96	Accept
State	158	3.51	.33					

Table 4 shows the z-test analyses of the mean ratings of difference in mean federal and state academic staff on the role of policy-makers in the agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. With the degree of freedom standing at 342 and with a z-calculated at -5.1 at 0.05 significant level, it safe to conclude that the z-test is accepted as the z-calculated is less than the z-critical and hence the null hypothesis is therefore accepted that there is no significant difference in mean federal and state academic staff on the role of policy-makers in the agenda setting process that will ensure education policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

2. The government should always provide the media with the accurate and timely information regarding policy and policy implementation.
3. The educational policymakers and the media should harness on their symbiotic relationship and also find middle ground that would ensure policy implementation.
4. The media and policymakers should place and update educational policies among the salient policies that deserve central place in the agenda to ensure educational policy implementation.
5. Government should provide the needed the resources to policy implementers to ensure immediate and timely implementation of educational policies.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study covered agenda setting and educational policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. The role of policy in guiding the operation of an institution cannot be over emphasized. This is because of its central role in the providing a blueprint that gives a general directives to goal attainment. The study expressed diverse opinion and perspectives concerning agenda setting, media, and policy makers. These opinions were done my looking critical at the level of awareness of agenda-setting and role of policymakers on agenda setting. The study had however noted that the policy implementation is the most important aspect of policy implementation and therefore the setting educational policy agenda is critical to the implementation of the educational policy.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusion, the following were recommended:

1. The media should be able to create the level of awareness that would ensure that the members of the public are fully aware of the level of educational policy implementation.

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