



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION-MAKING, HUMAN RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND MONITORING AS DETERMINANTS OF FREE EDUCATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined administrative decision-making, human resource allocation, and monitoring as determinants of the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by the persistent gap between policy objectives such as increased access, equity, and quality and the realities of implementation across schools. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 258 principals across six education zones, from which a sample of 158 principals was selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that human resource allocation significantly influences policy implementation to a high extent, while monitoring practices also exert a strong influence. Results highlight the importance of sufficient staffing, fair distribution of personnel, regular supervision, and effective feedback in achieving policy objectives.” The study concludes that effective administrative decision-making is critical to the successful implementation of free education policies. It recommends strengthening staffing policies and institutionalizing robust monitoring systems to enhance accountability, equity, and sustainability in public secondary education.

Keywords: Human resource, administrative decision, free education, public schools, shifting policy.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental instrument for national development, social transformation, and economic advancement. Globally, governments invest in education to promote equity, reduce poverty, and enhance human capital development. In Nigeria, education is recognized as a strategic tool for achieving national objectives, as reflected in the National Policy on Education, which describes education as an instrument par excellence for national development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021). In line with this framework, various states, including Anambra State, have implemented free education policies to eliminate financial barriers and expand access to secondary education. However, the effectiveness of such policies largely depends on sound administrative decision-making, particularly in the areas of human resource allocation and monitoring.

Decision-making in education encompasses planning, organizing, directing, staffing, and evaluating school operations to ensure that policy objectives are achieved. Scholars emphasize that policy success is not determined solely by formulation but by the quality of decisions guiding implementation (World Bank, 2020). In the context of free education, decision makers must ensure that adequate human and material resources are available to meet increased enrollment and expanded access. Without effective administrative decisions, policy objectives may remain theoretical rather than practical realities.

Human resource allocation is a critical determinant of successful policy implementation. Teachers, principals, and support staff constitute the backbone of the school system, and their availability, competence, and equitable distribution significantly influence educational outcomes. Effective human resource allocation enhances instructional quality, school effectiveness, and policy compliance (Nnorom, Okafor, & Ossai, 2023). Conversely, inadequate staffing, uneven teacher deployment between urban and rural schools, and limited professional development opportunities hinder policy implementation and compromise educational standards (Adegbesan, 2021). In public secondary schools, where free education policies often lead to increased enrollment, insufficient human resource planning may result in overcrowded classrooms, teacher burnout, and reduced instructional quality.

Human resource allocation refers to the systematic process of assigning and distributing available personnel, including teachers, administrators, and support staff, to different departments, units, or schools based on institutional needs, qualifications, and workload requirements to achieve organizational goals effectively. In education, this involves ensuring that the right number and quality of teachers and staff are deployed to the right schools and positions to facilitate effective teaching, learning, and policy implementation (Adeogun, 2019; Adeganmi et al., 2016; Patrick, 2020; Ohuche, 2023). In the context of free education in Anambra State, human resource allocation refers to how teachers, principals, and support staff are distributed, managed, and motivated to ensure effective and equitable teaching and learning, supporting the success of the policy.

In practice, some education zones and local government areas in Anambra State are better staffed than others, while student populations vary. Human resources must, therefore, be equitably distributed to achieve policy objectives. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), effective implementation requires adequate funding and proper utilization of available resources.



Yet, budgetary allocations to the education sector in Nigeria often fall below UNESCO's recommended 15–20% of the national or state annual budget.

The introduction of free education for junior and senior secondary schools in Anambra State (Vanguard, 2024) is a progressive step. However, reports from local education boards and school principals indicate that both human and material resources are often insufficient to meet the surge in enrollment. Some schools experience understaffing, delayed fund disbursement, inadequate maintenance grants, and insufficient instructional materials, which collectively hinder full policy implementation. These challenges are compounded by rising costs of education delivery, inflation, and competing state priorities in areas such as health and infrastructure.

Monitoring also plays a central role in translating policy decisions into measurable outcomes. It refers to systematic supervision, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms designed to ensure compliance with policy guidelines and attainment of educational objectives. Effective monitoring enables education authorities to assess whether resources are properly utilized, instructional standards are maintained, and students benefit from the intended provisions of the free education policy (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). Inadequate monitoring, however, significantly undermines policy implementation in Anambra State. Without systematic tracking and assessment, it is impossible to determine whether objectives such as universal access, equity, and quality are being achieved.

Although the Anambra State Ministry of Education conducts periodic inspections, monitoring activities are often irregular, underfunded, and poorly coordinated. Inspectors face challenges such as inadequate logistics, lack of modern data collection tools, insufficient training, and limited inter-agency collaboration. Consequently, while free education has increased enrollment, it has also led to overcrowding, strained resources, and uneven quality of education (Vanguard, 2024). Empirical evidence indicates that weak monitoring structures contribute to implementation gaps in Nigerian public secondary schools. Consistent supervision and monitoring significantly improve policy compliance and school performance (Ikegbusi & Eziamaka, 2024; Ossai & Okokoyo, 2023; World Bank, 2020).

In Anambra State, free education has expanded access to secondary education, yet concerns remain regarding staffing adequacy and supervisory effectiveness. Variations in teacher distribution, limited monitoring visits, and inconsistent evaluation practices raise questions about the sustainability and effectiveness of policy outcomes. Decision-making processes shape how resources are allocated and performance monitored, making it necessary to examine the extent to which these factors influence policy implementation.

Specifically, this study focuses on the extent of human resource allocation on the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State. It also elucidates the extent of monitoring on the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State. By investigating these dimensions, the study provides empirical evidence to inform policy refinement, strengthen administrative practices, and enhance the overall effectiveness of free education initiatives. The findings are expected to benefit government agencies, educational administrators, teachers, stakeholders, researchers, and the general public by improving decision-making processes, accountability, and the quality of education delivery in public secondary schools.



The study's scope covers human resource allocation on the implementation of free education policy, and monitoring practices on the implementation of free education policy. The geographical focus is limited to selected public secondary schools in Anambra State, providing a representative view of policy implementation across the state.

1.1. Research Questions

The two research questions that are formulated to guide this study are:

1. To what extent does human resource allocation affect the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. To what extent do monitoring practices affect the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

2.0. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on systems theory and policy implementation theory, which provide a conceptual basis for understanding how administrative decision-making influences the implementation of education policies.

2.1. Systems Theory

Systems theory conceptualizes an organization as a set of interrelated and interdependent components working together to achieve common goals. Within the educational context, the school system is viewed as a dynamic structure in which inputs such as human resources, administrative decisions, and monitoring mechanisms interact to produce outputs, including effective teaching, improved learning outcomes, and successful policy implementation. In this study, human resource allocation and monitoring practices represent critical system inputs, while the implementation of the free education policy constitutes the system's output. When these inputs are efficiently managed, the education system functions optimally, facilitating the achievement of policy objectives such as access, equity, and quality education.

2.2. Policy Implementation Theory

The policy implementation theory in this context emphasizes that the success of any public policy depends not only on its formulation but also on its execution. The theory highlights the importance of administrative processes, resource allocation, and monitoring mechanisms in determining whether policy goals are achieved. In the context of this study, administrative decision-making particularly regarding human resource allocation and monitoring plays a central role in shaping the effectiveness of the free education policy in public secondary schools.

By integrating these two theoretical perspectives, this study posits that effective policy implementation is a function of both efficient system management and strategic administrative decision-making. The degree to which human resource allocation and monitoring practices are effectively executed determines the success or failure of the free education policy in Anambra State.

These theories underpin the study's variables by explaining how administrative decision-making influences human resource allocation and monitoring practices, which in turn affect the implementation and outcomes of the free education policy.



3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for collecting information on the perceptions, practices, and experiences of school administrators regarding the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools. This design was deemed suitable because it allows the researcher to examine and describe the impact of human resource allocation and monitoring practices on policy implementation without manipulating any variables. Additionally, the survey approach facilitates systematic data collection from a defined population, providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of decision-making processes in educational administration.

The study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria, focusing on public secondary schools implementing the free education policy. The population comprised 258 principals across the six education zones: Awka (61), Aguata (47), Nnewi (50), Ogidi (40), Onitsha (32), and Otuocha (28). A sample of 158 principals from three education zones - Awka (61), Aguata (47), and Nnewi (50) was selected using simple random sampling, ensuring that each principal had an equal chance of inclusion.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Administrative Decision-Making, Human Resource Allocation, and Monitoring as Determinants of Free Education Policy Implementation in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State (DMHRAMDFEPI). The questionnaire employed a four-point Likert scale ranging from Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), to Very Low Extent (1). It was organized into two sections corresponding to the research questions: human resource allocation and monitoring practices in relation to free education policy implementation.

The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, to ensure content and face validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method and Cronbach's Alpha. The cluster coefficients were 0.70 and 0.70, indicating excellent internal consistency. The overall Cronbach's Alpha for all items was .97, confirming high reliability.

Data collection was conducted by the researcher with the assistance of five trained research assistants. Of the 158 questionnaires administered, 138 were properly completed and retrieved, representing an 87% response rate.

Data analysis was performed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. For interpretation, a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered indicative of "High Extent," while a mean score of 2.49 and below indicated "Low Extent." This analytical approach enabled a clear assessment of the extent to which human resource allocation and monitoring practices influence the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

4.0. Presentation of Results and Discussion

4.1. Presentation of Results

The results are presented in Tables accordance with the research questions.



Research Question 1: To what extent does human resource allocation affect the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Principals on Human Resource Allocation

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	There are enough qualified teachers to implement the free education policy effectively.	3.20	0.68	HE
2	The number of non-teaching staff in my school is adequate to support free education programs.	2.85	0.71	HE
3	Shortage of teachers affects the smooth implementation of free education.	2.87	0.72	HE
4	Overworked teachers reduce the quality of free education delivery.	2.89	0.70	HE
5	The state government recruits sufficient personnel to meet the needs of free education implementation.	3.61	0.65	HE
6	Effective human resource management promotes successful implementation of free education.	3.38	0.67	HE
7	Adequate human resource allocation improves the quality of teaching and learning.	2.94	0.73	HE
8	The involvement of well-trained teachers ensures sustainability of free education policy	2.92	0.71	HE
9	Poor human resource planning hinders the achievement of free education goals.	3.08	0.69	HE
10	Proper allocation of human resources enhances equity and access to free secondary education.	3.04	0.70	HE
Mean of Means		3.08	0.70	HE

Source: Authors' Analysis (2026).

All mean scores are above the benchmark of 2.50, indicating that principals perceive human resource allocation as influencing the implementation of the free education policy to a **high extent**. The cluster mean of 3.08 further supports this conclusion. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.65 to 0.73, indicate low variability in responses, suggesting a high level of agreement among principals.

Research Question 2: To what extent do monitoring practices influence the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

The mean ratings for all items exceed 2.50, indicating that monitoring practices influence the implementation of the free education policy to a **high extent**. The cluster mean of 3.28 reinforces this finding. The standard deviation values (0.65–0.72) show low dispersion, indicating consistency in respondents' opinions.

Based on data analysis, it was found out that;

- Human resource allocation affects the implementation of free education in public secondary schools in Anambra State **to a high extent**.
- Monitoring practices influence the implementation of free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State **to a high extent**.

**Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Principals on Monitoring Practices**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The Ministry of Education conducts regular monitoring visits to public secondary schools.	3.16	0.69	HE
2	Monitoring officers provide feedback after each supervision exercise.	3.12	0.70	HE
3	Frequent monitoring helps identify challenges in implementing free education.	3.09	0.71	HE
4	Monitoring visits are effectively scheduled and coordinated by education authorities.	3.03	0.72	HE
5	Irregular monitoring contributes to poor policy implementation outcomes.	3.00	0.70	HE
6	Standard monitoring tools are used to evaluate the progress of free education implementation.	3.06	0.71	HE
7	Clear monitoring guidelines are provided to ensure consistency in supervision.	3.60	0.68	HE
8	The use of technology (e.g., data collection apps) improves monitoring efficiency.	3.2	0.69	HE
9	Monitoring procedures are transparent and objective.	3.57	0.67	HE
10	Inadequate monitoring tools affect the reliability of information gathered from schools.	3.96	0.65	HE
	Mean of Means	3.28	0.70	HE

Source: Authors' Analysis (2026).

4.2. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that human resource allocation and monitoring practices significantly influence the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State. These results are consistent with the assumptions of Systems Theory, which posits that educational institutions operate as interconnected and interdependent systems. Within this framework, inputs such as personnel, administrative decisions, and monitoring mechanisms interact to produce outputs in the form of effective teaching, learning outcomes, and successful policy implementation (Mwangeka, 2020). In the context of this study, human resource allocation and monitoring represent critical system inputs, while the implementation of the free education policy represents the output. When these inputs are adequately managed, the education system functions efficiently, leading to improved policy outcomes, including enhanced access, equity, and quality of education.

The finding that human resource allocation influences policy implementation to a high extent underscores the importance of adequate staffing, equitable distribution, and effective personnel management in achieving educational objectives. Systems Theory suggests that deficiencies in any system component can disrupt overall performance, which aligns with the observation that inadequate staffing, uneven teacher deployment, and insufficient support staff negatively affect free education policy outcomes. Recent studies further corroborate this, indicating that effective human resource allocation enhances instructional quality, school effectiveness, and policy compliance (Nnorom, Okafor, & Ossai, 2023; Adegbesan, 2021).



Regarding monitoring practices, the study revealed that systematic supervision, feedback, and use of monitoring tools substantially impact the successful implementation of the free education policy. This aligns with the Policy Implementation Theory, which emphasizes that policy success is determined not solely by formulation but by the quality of execution, including administrative processes, resource availability, and accountability mechanisms (Honig, 2022). The high influence of monitoring in this study indicates that regular supervision, timely feedback, and data-driven oversight ensure that policy objectives are achieved, gaps are identified, and corrective actions are implemented. Studies have shown that robust monitoring improves policy compliance, organizational effectiveness, and alignment with government directives (Ikegbusi & Eziamaka, 2024; Ossai & Okokoyo, 2023; World Bank, 2020).

By integrating Systems Theory and Policy Implementation Theory, this study demonstrates that the successful implementation of the free education policy depends on both the management of educational systems and the effectiveness of administrative decision-making. Human resource allocation and monitoring practices function as core components within the system, determining whether the policy achieves its intended goals. In essence, policy objectives such as improved access, equity, and quality are realized only when staffing decisions are strategic, resources are adequately deployed, and monitoring mechanisms are rigorous and consistent.

The findings further highlight the interdependence of administrative decisions, human resources, and monitoring processes. Effective policy implementation is therefore not a linear process but a dynamic interaction between system inputs and outputs, where continuous supervision and data-driven decision-making reinforce positive educational outcomes. Consequently, policymakers and school administrators must prioritize human resource planning, equitable distribution, and systematic monitoring to ensure sustainable success of free education initiatives in public secondary schools.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

Conclusion Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that administrative decision-making, particularly in the areas of human resource allocation and monitoring practices, significantly influences the implementation of the free education policy in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Principals reported that adequate staffing of qualified teachers and support personnel, coupled with effective human resource management, enhances instructional quality, promotes equity, and ensures the sustainability of free education programs. Similarly, robust monitoring practices including regular supervisory visits, feedback mechanisms, standardized evaluation tools, and the use of technology play a critical role in ensuring accountability, identifying implementation gaps, and aligning school activities with policy objectives. The study demonstrates that when human resources are strategically allocated and monitoring is systematic, the goals of free education, such as increased enrollment, access, and quality learning, are more likely to be achieved.

In essence, the successful implementation of the free education policy depends not only on the availability of financial and material resources but also on effective administrative decision-making. Strengthening human resource planning and institutionalizing comprehensive monitoring mechanisms are therefore essential strategies for enhancing the effectiveness, sustainability, and overall impact of free education initiatives in public secondary schools.



5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Strengthen Human Resource Allocation:** The state government and school administrators should ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and support staff across all education zones to reduce disparities between schools. Recruitment policies should prioritize qualified personnel and address shortages in schools experiencing high enrollment.
- **Enhance Monitoring and Supervision:** Education authorities should institutionalize regular and systematic monitoring of schools, including the use of standardized tools, feedback mechanisms, and technology-based data collection systems. Supervisory visits should be well-coordinated, adequately funded, and supported by training programs for monitoring officers.
- **Capacity Building for Administrators:** Principals and school managers should receive training in evidence-based decision-making, human resource management, and policy monitoring to improve the execution of educational policies.
- **Policy Review and Accountability Mechanisms:** Periodic policy evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of human resource allocation and monitoring practices in achieving free education objectives. Clear accountability frameworks should be implemented to ensure that resources are utilized efficiently and that policy goals are met.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Teachers, parents, and community stakeholders should be actively engaged in monitoring and supporting policy implementation, fostering shared responsibility and promoting sustainability of free education programs. Implementing these recommendations will enhance the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of the free education policy in Anambra State, ensuring that all students benefit from quality secondary education.

Competing Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.

Declaration

Authors declare that AI-assisted tools were used during the preparation of the manuscript mainly for language refinement, editing support, and structuring of some sections of the paper. However, key aspects of the study, including the research design, area of study, population of the study, validation process, data collection, interpretation of findings, and final review of the manuscript were personally carried out by the authors.



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