

PLANE | Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria

## REFORMING FROM WITHIN

# A How-To Guide on Policy Development for Education Reforms in Nigeria's State Systems

*Education reforms in Nigeria often fail not due to a lack of policy, but because policies are drafted without proper diagnosis, developed without stakeholder ownership, and lack sufficient budgets allocation for implementation.*

Strengthening the policy development capacity of Nigerian federal and state education systems stands as a central objective of UK-funded Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) education programme. The programme supports federal and state institutions to develop the technical tools, structured processes and institutional confidence needed to formulate policies that are not only well-written but genuinely implementable, grounded in evidence, accommodating the interests of relevant parties, owned by the institutions responsible for delivering them, and connected to the fiscal and governance structures that determine whether reform commitments become real outcomes

Over the course of the programme, PLANE worked with officials inside Nigeria's federal and state education systems, in close collaboration with Ministries of Education, State Universal Basic Education Boards

(SUBEBs) and other education ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), to conduct structured policy gap analyses, support the formulation and validation of state education policies, and translate policy commitments into the fiscal documents that govern how and what states actually spend in the education sector, including Annual Operational Plans (AOPs), Annual Education Sector Performance Reports (AESPRs) and Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSS).

This guide sets out how to develop education reform policies that work, anchored in the experience of doing exactly that in Kano State. The revision and implementation of the Kano State Teacher Development Policy serve throughout as a concrete reference, illustrating each stage of the process as it unfolded inside a real Nigerian state system. The approach documented here is transferable across states and sectors.

## What is a Policy?

**A policy is a formal statement of, principles or rules that guide actions, operations, or activities within an organization or government.** It defines what should be done, why it should be done, and provides a framework for how it will be achieved. In the context of public sector reform, a policy translates government goals into actionable direction, promotes standardized decision-making, clarifies responsibilities among stakeholders, and provides a foundation for monitoring and evaluation.

**A policy is not** a procedure, a strategy, a plan, a programme or a law. A policy tells you what needs to be done and why. Guidelines, strategies and operational plans explain how to do it.

## Attributes of an Effective Policy

**1 Clear and forward-looking**  
Written clearly and precisely with clear objectives and realistic approaches based on a long-term trends and informed predictions.

**2 Consistent**  
Aligned with existing laws, regulations and other policies, ensuring the new policy complements rather than conflicts with the wider legal and institutional framework.

**3 Evidence-based**  
Grounded in research, data and stakeholder input. Relies on facts and analysis rather than assumptions, making decisions more robust and credible.

**4 Issue-focused**  
Concentrates on addressing a specific, clearly identified problem or challenge rather than covering broad or general governance concerns.

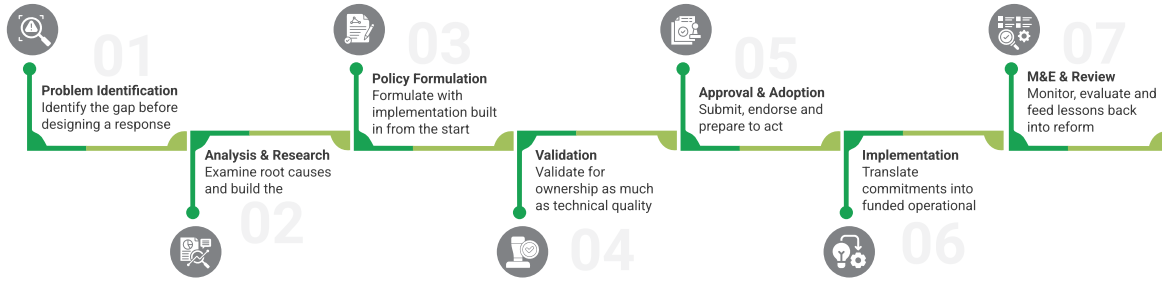
**5 Practical**  
Sets objectives achievable with the resources, capacities and time available. Realistic to implement in the context of the organization or sector it addresses

**6 Inclusive and equitable**  
Takes gender, equity, disability and other inclusivity factors into account. Ensures the needs of all affected groups are considered and benefits distributed fairly.

**7 Accountable**  
Clearly specifies who is responsible for each action and how progress will be reported. Ensures transparency and makes it easier to monitor implementation and outcomes.

**8 Flexible**  
Allows for adjustments where necessary as circumstances and priorities change, while maintaining the overall objectives and guiding principles of the policy.

# The Policy Development Cycle



The policy process is iterative, not linear. Teams may revisit earlier stages based on new evidence, changing priorities or stakeholder feedback. The key is addressing each stage, not necessarily completing them in a strict sequence.

## What Does a Standard Policy Document Contain?



## Policy Development in Practice: Kano State's Case Study

Each stage mirrors the cycle overview above. The standard for that stage is set out first, followed by a PLANE box showing how it was applied during the revision and implementation of the Kano State Teacher Development Policy.

### 01. Problem Identification

The first stage involves clearly defining the problem or issue that requires government or institutional action. This means gathering evidence through research, data analysis and stakeholder feedback, and assessing whether addressing the issue aligns with broader reform or development priorities. Policy needs may arise from gaps in existing reforms, audit findings or emerging programme requirements. Drafting should not begin until the problem is clearly evidenced and framed.

**PLANE's Approach:** In Kano, PLANE built on earlier foundational work carried out by a previous UK programme, PERL, to understand the teacher policy landscape. Through a combination of desk reviews of existing policy documents and consultations with key stakeholders across government, civil society and the education system, PLANE established a clear picture of what had already been done, what gaps remained and where a policy response was most needed. This prior work ensured the problem was clearly

#### Checklist

- ✓ Problem or gap clearly identified
- ✓ Evidence gathered from data, audits and field findings
- ✓ Issue assessed against state education reform priorities
- ✓ Initial stakeholder consultations conducted
- ✓ Decision confirmed that a policy response is required

### 02. Analysis & Research

This stage builds a strong evidence base for decision-making. It involves examining the root causes of the problem, exploring possible interventions, reviewing existing policies and legislative frameworks, and benchmarking good practice from comparable contexts. Stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, must be engaged at this stage to ensure the analysis is comprehensive and grounded in practical realities. Political Economy Analysis, where possible, adds an important layer of contextual understanding that shapes both the design and feasibility of the policy response.

**PLANE's Approach:** In collaboration with the Kano State Ministry of Education, PLANE conducted a Diagnostic Baseline Assessment in 2022 to identify specific gaps in teacher provision and policy implementation. The assessment examined teacher supply imbalances, deployment inequities, gender disparities, safeguarding weaknesses and the absence of a functioning M&E framework in the existing policy. Findings were presented to 34 key stakeholders in a meeting chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, providing the evidence base that drove the policy revision process.

#### Checklist

- ✓ Root causes examined, not just visible symptoms
- ✓ Existing policies and legal frameworks reviewed
- ✓ Good practices from comparable contexts considered
- ✓ Gender, disability and equity dimensions analyzed
- ✓ Political Economy Analysis conducted where possible

### 03. Policy Formulation

During formulation, clear goals, objectives and principles are developed. Policy options are identified and preferred strategies selected. The drafting process translates these into a coherent document using a standard format that promotes clarity, inclusiveness and gender sensitivity. Critically, an implementation framework must be developed alongside the policy at this stage, not after approval, so that actors can commit to a feasible plan at the point of validation. A policy without an implementation framework is a destination without a route.

**PLANE's Approach:** *The Kano State Teacher Development Policy was revised by a Technical Committee with direct support from PLANE. The revised policy embedded an implementation framework within the document itself, specifying clear roles, defined targets, timelines and monitoring responsibilities. This meant the transition from policy approval to action was more direct than in the original version, which had lacked implementation architecture. PLANE worked with the drafting team to ensure that policy commitments were framed in measurable, actionable terms rather than broad aspirational statements.*

#### Checklist

- ✓ Policy structured with all core recommended components
- ✓ Goals, objectives and guiding principles clearly defined
- ✓ Implementation framework drafted alongside the policy
- ✓ Language plain, accessible and free of jargon
- ✓ Gender, disability and inclusion embedded throughout

### 04. Validation

Stakeholder engagement is central to this stage. Government MDAs, partner organizations, civil society groups and beneficiaries are consulted to test ideas, provide feedback and build consensus. Workshops, focus groups and formal consultations help refine the draft policy, ensuring broad ownership and legitimacy. Stakeholder mapping should begin at the start of the process and be updated throughout, to ensure all relevant actors, beyond the usual institutional players, are identified and involved. The implementation framework (including an M&E framework) should be validated at this stage alongside the policy content.

**PLANE's Approach:** *PLANE organised a validation workshop for both the revised Teacher Development Policy document and its implementation framework. Both documents were reviewed and validated by a broad range of relevant stakeholders, including government officials from education MDAs, civil society organizations and community members. The workshop subjected indicators to scrutiny, clarified data sources, defined reporting timelines and confirmed institutional responsibilities. Validation was treated as a technical process, not a ceremony, ensuring that both documents were institutionally owned before formal submission for approval.*

#### Checklist

- ✓ Stakeholder map prepared and updated throughout
- ✓ Draft circulated for review prior to validation workshops
- ✓ Feedback documented, tracked and incorporated
- ✓ M&E framework validated alongside policy content
- ✓ Broad ownership confirmed across responsible MDAs

### 05. Approval & Adoption

Once validated, the policy is submitted to the appropriate approving authority, such as a State or Federal Executive Council, Board or relevant government agency. Official endorsement formalizes the policy, giving it authority and signaling institutional commitment to implementation. The correct approving authority should be identified at the start of the process, and supporting documentation prepared in advance. Endorsement is not the finish line. It is the starting gun for implementation.

**PLANE's Approach:** *The revised Kano State Teacher Development Policy was formally adopted in April 2025. PLANE's support in the lead-up to adoption focused on ensuring that the policy was not simply approved but actively championed by senior government officials, with dissemination plans in place from the point of endorsement. The experience in Kano reinforced that building political sponsorship before approval, rather than after, is critical to sustaining momentum through the transition from adoption to implementation.*

#### Checklist

- ✓ Correct approving authority identified early
- ✓ Policy submitted with full supporting documentation
- ✓ Formal endorsement secured and officially recorded
- ✓ Policy disseminated to all implementing institutions
- ✓ Approval date, version and review schedule documented

### 06. Implementation

Implementation translates policy into action. This involves developing an operational action plan that defines roles, responsibilities, timelines and budgets. Resources from government and development partners are mobilized, and tools such as implementation guidelines and monitoring frameworks support delivery. Critically, implementation must be connected to government fiscal documents, including Annual Operational Plans (AOPs), Annual Education Sector Performance Reports (AESPRs), Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSS) and Education Sector Analyses (ESAs), to ensure that reform commitments are funded and not merely stated

**PLANE's Approach:** *PLANE supported government agencies in Kano to identify a limited number of feasible, high-impact actions that could realistically be implemented within existing budget frameworks and institutional capacity. Rather than attempting comprehensive reform simultaneously, priority actions were selected based on traceability to approved budgets and technical feasibility. PLANE also supported the introduction of digital data collection tools through School Support Officers, enabling supervision reports to feed into dashboards accessible to SUBEB officials, shifting monitoring from retrospective reporting to near real-time oversight*

#### Checklist

- ✓ Operational action plan with clear responsibilities prepared
- ✓ Budget aligned to the fiscal cycle: AOP, MTSS
- ✓ Policy commitments reflected in AESPR reporting
- ✓ Capacity gaps identified and addressed before rollout
- ✓ Priority actions identified for early visible progress

## 07. Monitoring, Evaluation & Review

This stage ensures that policies are effectively monitored, evaluated and updated. Progress is tracked using defined indicators, and periodic reviews assess whether the policy has achieved its intended outcomes. Evaluation may be administrative, judicial, political or performance-focused. Feedback from assessments informs policy improvement, adaptation or, where necessary, reformulation. The policy process is not only cyclical but iterative: this stage feeds directly back into problem identification and analysis, completing and restarting the reform cycle.

**PLANE's Approach:** In Kano, PLANE worked to align the M&E framework with existing education management information system (EMIS) structures and administrative reporting systems, ensuring that monitoring obligations could realistically be met through existing data flows rather than requiring parallel systems. Progress reviews tracked recruitment advances, persistent staffing gaps and political sustainability risks. The Open Data Kit (ODK)-enabled dashboard system gave SUBEB officials real-time visibility of school support activities, making monitoring a governance tool rather than a donor-reporting requirement. Lessons from the Kano experience have since informed PLANE's approach to M&E design in other supported states.

### Checklist

- ✓ Indicators defined, measurable and responsibility-assigned
- ✓ Data sources linked to existing systems such as EMIS
- ✓ Reporting timelines and responsibilities confirmed
- ✓ Review schedule built into the policy document itself
- ✓ Lessons feed back into policy revision and the next cycle

**Policy development is both a technical and political process.** The stages in this guide provide coherence and structure, but sustainably effective policy development, implementation and monitoring depends on institutions that own the process, budgets that fund the commitments and governance systems that hold the gains. PLANE's work at the Federal level and in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states show that when policy development is backed by solid evidence, accountability, appropriate budgets and strong institutional will, it transforms education reform from theory into tangible practice.

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