

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE FUNDING OF PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE: THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS.

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Abstract

The concept of funding primary education involves the process of sourcing, allocating and managing the school revenues in the production of educational services for the attainment of educational objectives. This process is crucial because it helps in the determination of both human and non-human resources required as inputs in the production of education services to improve the quality of primary education. This paper examines the role of stakeholders – government and non-governmental organizations in the funding of primary education. The paper takes a survey of the status of funding primary education. The problems created by inadequate funding of primary education included irregular payment of primary school staff emoluments, lack of accommodation, lack of infrastructure, multiplicity of levies and inadequate teachers among others. Obstacles militating against the funding of primary education were identified as the increasing social demand of education, lack of political will, inconsistency in policy formulation and corruption. The researcher recommends that true commitment on the part of the government, proper accountability and transparency will ensure effective funding of primary education.

Introduction

From time to time, commissions have been set up and seminars organized to determine the issue of funding education in Nigeria. The pertinent question has always been; who should be the sole financial body for education, at what level and what should be the level of commitment. The concept of funding education involves the process of sourcing, allocating and managing the school revenues in the production of educational services for the attainment of educational objectives. This process is very crucial since it helps in the determination of both human and resources required as inputs in the production of educational services. The success of any education depends on the funding which will lead to the desired quality assurance for educational development. But adequate funding of primary education had remained a contentious issue having consequences in the industry.

In the same vein, quality has become an integral feature of the education system all over the world and is considered as the baseline standard in primary education. Maduwesi (2002) sees quality in education as an expression or the means by which a certain set of standards in education can be achieved. Bisong (2000) opined that educational enterprise has to do with establishing and maintaining standards. In relation to primary education rights of the child declared that quality education is a right and that government should adopt the right approach and attitude that could lead to successful implementation of sound projects and programmes of education by adopting adequate funding of primary education.

The Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE) 2004 has clearly articulated the need for collective responsibility in promoting and funding primary education.

Section 13 (120) Education is an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for successful implementation of the education programme.

The policy document states that the local governments shall be responsible for the financing and management of primary education within their local government areas. In specific terms in section 12 (110). Local governments shall through their Local Education Authorities have responsibility for the financing and management of primary education within their Local Government Areas. In particular, the Local Education Authorities shall be responsible for:

- a. The appointments, promotion, discipline and transfer of primary school teachers and non-teaching staff within their areas of jurisdiction.
- b. The payment of primary school teachers' salaries and allowances
- c. The payment of pensions and gratuities
- d. The retraining of teachers
- e. The overall management of their educational plans and
- f. Supervision and quality control in all the primary schools in their area in conjunction with federal and state authorities.

Current status of Funding Primary Education

Primary education in Nigeria is funded primarily by three tiers of government viz: Federal, State and Local Government. The funds from the Federal government are used in the provision of the infrastructural facilities while the funds from the state government are used for instructional resources, overhead costs to Local Government

Education Authorities and State Primary Education Boards (SPEB). The funds from the Local Government areas are used in the payment of Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) staff including teachers. Usually, the deductions - are made at source from the Local Government allocations and remitted to SPEB. The criteria for allocation of funds Federation Account is based on:

- i. the number of teachers
- ii. the number of pupils'. Enrolment per state; and
- iii. the states designated as educationally disadvantaged.

The present arrangement under the democratic dispensation has raised a number of questions and brought into focus a sharp conflict between the State and Local Government Councils. Claims of over deductions are usually made by the Local Government Councils. The consequences of these claims are that, staff salaries and allowances are not promptly settled while the issue of development project cannot be contemplated.

Because of these deductions, the staffing situation in the schools has remained pathetically low. The Teacher-Pupil ratio in most schools has remained high. This is so because Local Government Chairman no longer approves the employment of primary school teachers for fear of more deductions from their allocations.

In addition to the government's efforts in funding primary education partnership in the funding of primary education comes from international organizations such as the World Bank, the Department for International Development (DFID) and United Nations International Children Emergency. Funds from these sources are used for capacity building of teachers, infrastructural and instructional materials.

One world argues and correctly too, that if funds are sourced from all these sources, properly allocated and honestly utilized, one expects on improved and better education for the country than what is witnessed today.

Problems of Inadequate Funding of Primary Education

A number of problems are confronting the funding of primary education in Nigeria today.

Irregular payment of primary school staff emoluments

Since the inception of the commission many personnel audit exercises had taken place to determine the actual requirement for the personal emolument of teaching and non-teaching staff, in the public primary schools in the country. It has become a routine that public primary school teachers are subjected to screening nearly every month before salaries are paid. A number of issues have been identified as inhibiting the smooth payment of personnel emolument to the primary school staff.

- a. Zero allocation to Local Government councils.
- b. Deregulated salary structure
- c. Non submission of financial returns

(A) **Zero allocation:** The issue of zero allocation has become the hottest news in local Government councils. This is always traced to the primary school teacher emolument. It is believed that after the deduction of primary education fund, the monthly allocation to some local Government Councils record negative or deficit allocation. The following factors have been identified as determinants of zero allocation to LGCS:

- i. High minimum wage approved by some states and increased or enhanced salary structure of primary school teachers.
- ii. Large number of staff due to the number of schools in the LGC especially in educationally advantaged states.
- iii. Inflated figures submitted by SUBEB.
- iv. Non retirement of staff for the fear of lack of proper pension scheme.
- v. Total amount available for distribution at the FAAC meeting.
- vi. Changes in indices for the distribution of the allocations.
- vii. Increased number of staff with high qualification who are on high salary grade levels.

(B) **Deregulated Salary Structure:** The Federal Government in May 2000 deregulated the salary structure whereby states were asked to negotiate with labour leaders. Some states approved the federal Government salary structure to the detriment of the LGCs. Most of the LGC were forced to pay the approved structure leaving them with zero allocation.

(C) **Non-submission of Financial Return:** Most SUBEBs do not render monthly financial returns promptly. Also most LGEAs do not submit the payroll used for the payment of salaries and other monthly returns in good time to enable them forward their returns to UBE Headquarters. Non-submission of returns usually affects the UBE in its effort to render proper accounts to the Government through the F AAC meeting. The

implication is that where there are increases, the changes are not effected and this create problem in payment.

2. Lack of Accommodation

Free and compulsory primary school education in the UBE education innovation resulted in over population of schools. Classrooms are not enough to accommodate the increased number of pupils. It is on record that after many years of the UBE programme in Nigeria, many primary schools do not have a UBE building. These primary schools have increased in pupils enrolment while the classroom blocks have remained the same. Consequently, either two or three streams are merged in a single class, Nwaokolo (1998) described the teaching-learning environment in our primary schools as "ramshackle and Teachers" offices as 'ECOWAS' classrooms.

There are situation where pupils have their lessons under the trees and sheds of tatch, sometimes, on bare and dusty floors of dilapidated buildings. This situation do not favour the accomplishment of the set out objectives of primary education. As asserted by Abudulkadir (1990) that "the issue of quality of education does not stop on setting up minimum academic standards but also on improving the conditions under which pupils both in and outside the classroom are made to learn". Providing free education is one thing but creating a conducive learning environment is another.

3. Lack of Learning Infrastructure

Nwokolo (1998) stated that conducive working environment IS as desirable as a viable working tool. The teaching and learning infrastructure in primary schools are not enough. There are not enough seats, teaching materials, tables, chairs and toilet facilities. Abudulkadir (1990) noted that 6-33-4 system of education could not work as expected due to: (a) shortage of building accommodation for workshops and laboratories (b) shortage of tools and equipment. (c) Inadequate guidance and counseling service and (d) Shortage of teaching staff.

The dearths of infrastructure in our primary school are direct effect of educational innovation without matching it with funding.

4. Multiplicity of Levies

The UBE educational was tagged "Free and compulsory" Education in the primary school. But today there are multiplicities of levies being paid by pupils in various states of the Nation. As stated by Chukwu (2007) in his study it revealed that, "to high extent primary school pupils in Enugu state still pay various kinds of levies under various names and guises. This is a clear negation of Obasunjo declaration in (1999) and FRN (2004). It is pertinent to state that the payment of these levies is approved by the state SUBEB Officials and is a clear indication of under-funding of primary school education under the UBE scheme.

5. Inadequate Teachers

Teachers recruitment is a threat to the implementation of UBE due to under funding (Onoyose and Ajudeonu 2007) In some states in Nigeria, the Teacher-pupil ratio in most schools has remained very high. Teachers are no longer employed because of the zero allocation problems of Local Government Councils.

The employment of primary school teaches is no longer approved for fear of more deduction from their allocations. Today primary school teachers' salaries have been at the centre of al controversies in Local Government Councils and a treat to the quality assurance in primary school education.

Obstacles to Funding of Primary Education in Nigeria

A number of obstacles stand against the adequate funding of primary education in Nigeria. Few will be discussed here.

- i. **Lack of political will and commitment:** This is a more senous problem than the finance as it affects education funding in Nigeria. Lack of political will to purse the achievement of educational goals, change of government and government exigencies may affect funding as government may re-order priorities and education may not be given priority attention. There as been rapid decease in total federal Government expenditures on education. This decreased from 24.7% in 1981 to a low of 1.70/0 in 1998 (Aken (2004) Further more. Aken (2005) reports that Nigeria followed resource poor Somalia as the second nation in the world that spends least on education. While Somalia spent 0.4% of the Gross Domestic Product on education, Nigeria spent about 0.7% on the sector in 2002. The picture clearly showed that between 2000 - 2005, between less than 1 % and 2% was spent on education sector. This is purely against the recommended budgetary allocation to the education sector by UNESCO for developing countries which is 26%.
- ii. **Policy formulation and Implementation:** The disparity between stated policy and implementation bedevil

- primary education funding in Nigeria. Inconsistency in policy formulation has usually presented obstacle to funding of education especially the primary education.
- iii. **Corruption:** The level of corruption in a country can negatively affect the funding of education. The misappropriation and misapplication of funds by government and persons involved has led to devastating effect on primary education funding. Most times where money voted for development projects are diverted to other uses, will definitely lead to the collapse of the education sector.
 - iv. **Economy of the country:** The economic situation in the country is a major determinant of its capacity to financing education. The poor economy of the country influence budgetary allocation to education.
 - v. **Data:** For primary education to be adequately funded, current and adequate data is required. All funding based on proposals of projection leads to inadequate provision of funds. The non availability of reliable and current statistical figure of primary schools in Nigeria is a great obstacle to funding for primary school education.

The role of stakeholders in the funding of primary education

The government and non-government bodies are the two main stakeholders in the funding of primary education in Nigeria. On the part of the government the stakeholders are the three tiers of government – Federal, State and Local Governments. The non-governmental bodies include the international collaborating agencies, and NGOs organizations, communities and parents. (Aule 2000).

Government.

Federal Role as Stakeholder

- Establishing the enabling law to give a legal backing to the source and application of funds.
- Embark on massive construction of school structures and other facilities
- Release funds for the provision of furniture and equipment for the schools.
- Ensure prompt release of funds to enhance the performance in primary education at all times
- Regular verification of funds disbursed to States and Local Government Education Authority for proper and effective utilization.
- Reduce the burden of Local Government Councils on payment of salaries and allowances by amending the sharing formula in favour of Local Government Councils.

State Role as Stakeholder

- To enact at the state level to give legal backing to primary education fund.
- To assist in the payment of salaries and allowances of primary schools to reduce the burden of Local Government Council.
- To assist in the payment of overhead costs to Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs)
- To provide instructional materials to all the schools both public and private.

Local Government: Role as Stakeholder

- Funding the payment of salaries and allowances with sharing formula from Federal and State Governments.
- Encourage the NGOs participation in funding primary education
- Provide instructional materials
- Effective supervision to ensure value for the fund disbursed.

Non-Governmental organizations NGOs/International Collaborating Agencies

- Assist in sensitizing and mobilizing activities geared towards the success of primary education campaigns.
- Provision of buildings and furniture
- Renovation and minor repairs.
- Establishment and management of schools
- Donations to schools

Community: Role as a Stakeholder

- Membership of the school committee e.g Parents Teachers Association (PTA)
- Provision of additional furniture and building.
- Renovation and repairs in the schools
- Donations to schools in different forms – books, boreholes, computers and so on.
- Provision of houses to teachers, cultivation of farms for teachers.

Parents Role as Stakeholder

- Provision of children's basic needs such as uniforms, exercise books, transportation.
 - As P.T.A though donation of buses, vehicles, classroom, offices, other equipment, First Aid Boxes etc.
- The old students association could be a stakeholder by coming back to contribute to the improvement of their alma mater by providing structures, furniture, books and equipment.

Recommendations

In view of improving funding of primary education, the following recommendations are made:

1. True commitment to primary Education funding: what is required of Nigeria is the demonstration of commitment to the provision of fund to basic education which must go beyond the mere rhetoric to positive action. A more permanent funding strategy or source of the best relief the primary education will enjoy and only then that the onus of its achievement or failure can be traced to the responsible organization.
2. Disbursement of funds to primary school education should be the sole responsibility of the federal government and her agencies. This is necessary to making implementation specifically to the primary school sector significant.
3. Funds disbursed should be monitored to avoid incidents of diversion of funds to other government projects by state governments.
4. Monitoring committees should be set up at all levels of government to ensure that money voted for development of education is used for the purpose for which it was meant.
5. Special tribunals should be set up to try whoever embezzles funds meant for funding primary education just as it is done in other sectors.
6. The disbursement of funds to various states, local governments or institutions should be made public all times through publications.
7. Concrete steps should be taken to enforce the 2% education tax by all companies operating in Nigeria to improve education funding.
8. The need for proper accountability and transparency cannot be over emphasized at the Local Education Authorities levels. Proper and timely financial returns will guide on how to assess the performance and as well provide more funds for primary education.
9. There should be continuity in the implementation of the programme and of policy formulation irrespective of whichever party or government is in power.
10. Parents Individual, Communities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS) should be encouraged to contribute to funding of primary education. This could be in provision, and maintenance of instructional and infrastructural facilities for primary schools.

Co..clusion

The success of primary education hangs on adequate funding. Therefore it is importance that primary education" should be funded to achieve the desired objectives in the educational system. Since there is no amount of money is too much to be invested in education when the long term benefits are considered. Collective responsibility for funding primary education has become necessary as a strategy for promoting effective funding of primary education for quality assurance.

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