

A Qualitative Study on Administration and Financing of Secondary Schools in Niger State

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Abstract

On administration and financing of secondary schools in Niger state, the study has the following objectives; to explore the pattern of Administration in Niger State Secondary Schools, to describe the nature of Funding Secondary Education in Niger State, and to explain measures to be taken in handling the issues of Administration and funding of Secondary Schools in the State. A qualitative methodology was used so as to get an in-depth response from the participants on the phenomenon. A total of 4 participants were selected for this study. Two principals and two teachers, all the participants have been in the teaching profession for the past 15 years. The findings revealed that, government is not providing the required services in the administration of secondary schools in the state, and there is also serious inadequate funding which is hindering the success of school administration as well. The participants recommend that, government should provide the required funding, facilities and avenues that will facilitate effective and efficient administration at secondary school level in the state.

Keywords: Secondary School, Financing, Government, Principal

JEL Classification: I22

1. Introduction

Secondary school education occupies a very important position in the educational system of Nigeria. It is the level that determines the academic and professional career of students. At this level the student determines what career he/she wants to choose and what to become in the future. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004:4) has defined secondary education as “the type of education students receives after the primary education and before the tertiary education”. The strategic importance of secondary education is no longer in doubt, it is the bridge between the primary and tertiary education. Ajayi et al. (2009) added that, the aim of secondary education is to provide opportunity for quality education for primary school leavers, cater for the differences in talents of the pupils, develop Nigeria cultural heritage, produce a generation of people who respect the dignity of labour, foster Nigerian unity and to inspire its students with the desire for achievement and self- improvement both at school and in later life.

Before the Nigerian independence, the administration of secondary schools lies within the jurisdiction of the colonial government, but after independence in 1960 the Nigerian government took over the schools from the Colonialist Usman, (2008). In Nigeria there are two kinds of secondary schools, the Federal Government owned secondary schools and the state-owned secondary schools. Two Federal Government secondary schools

are located in each of the state of the Federation. The financing and the administration of the schools is solely shouldered by the Federal government, all issues regarding recruitment of staff and their salaries, provision of learning facilities in the schools and whatever the school may require are provided by the Federal government.

On the other hand, each and every state has its own secondary schools. In Niger state for examples, there are over 200 secondary schools spread among the three educational zones of Kontagora, Minna and Bida. (Niger State Secondary Education Board, (NSSEB) 2021). The administration of these schools is run by the State Government. Teachers are recruited by the State Secondary Education Board. Qualified applicants are shortlisted for an interview before their employment as teachers. The minimum qualification of teaching in secondary schools is Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE), although the board also recruited those without teaching qualification, like holders of B.Sc and B.A degrees in other fields due to shortage of teaching staff with the teaching qualifications.

As the States controlled the affairs of secondary schools in the area of administration they are also in charge of the area of finance, despite the fact that each State relied on the monthly subvention from the Federal government added to the internally generated revenue to enable them pay the salary of workers (teachers inclusive). The States also are to provide all the necessary facilities to their established secondary schools. Keith (2002) added that, payment of Teachers' Salary, provision of Instructional Materials, building of classrooms in the state-owned Secondary schools is the responsibility of the State.

In Niger state the case is the same, all the state established secondary schools are financed by the state. Teacher salaries, construction and maintenance of classrooms and other facilities in the schools are shouldered by the state government. Though there is clear evidence that the Government of Niger state is not living up to expectation in the area of financing education, the budgetary allocation to allocation to education is always insignificant Niger State Budget and Planning office (2021). The study is on administration and financing secondary education in Niger State. The issue of proper funding is considered to be a problem in our education sector, the extent to which this problem is affecting the performance of our teachers, students and the standard education is disturbing, hence there is the need to make a study so as to point measures to tackle this problem. This study therefore explore the pattern of Administration and nature of financing Secondary Education in Niger State. Also, to explain measures to be taken in handling the issues of Administration and financing of Secondary Schools in the State.

2. Material and Method

The nature of any research mostly determines the appropriate procedure and method to be adopted in conducting it for the purpose of attaining the intended goal. This research intends to investigate the nature and pattern of administration and financing of secondary schools in Niger State. The nature of the study will demand eliciting detailed information from the respondents about their understanding in the research objectives.

This study is on administration and financing of secondary schools, so a qualitative method was used for the study. Creswell (2007) stated that qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participants' points of view through interviews and observations.

The intention of the researcher is to listen to the voice of participants or observe them in their natural environments. (Field & Morse,1992).

The essence of participants in any research is to help in solving the problem under investigation. Selection of participants in this research was based on the potential of each participant's ability to contribute to researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose of small sample in qualitative research according to Merriam (2001) is not to achieve statistical generalisation, but rather to gain the perspective of the participants. Merriam also added that the small size will enable the researcher to have an in depth understanding of the research phenomenon.

Based on the above argument a total of 4 participants were selected for this study. Two principals and two teachers, all the participants have been in the teaching profession for the past 15 years.

The most common form of data collection in qualitative research is interview. The researcher used an in-depth interview as means of data collection. Natasha et.al (2005) commented that in-depth interview. Semi- structured interview guided the researcher in soliciting for information from the participants. According to Social Science Research Centre (SSRC) (2011) highlighted that Semi-structured interviewing follows all the principles of unstructured interviewing, except that the informants are not expected to move too far beyond the scope defined by the interview guide. The researcher recorded every bit of the participant's response using tape record and manual writing. This is in line with Mason (1996) who suggested that, the researcher has to listen, remember what has been said, observe and pick up verbal and non-verbal cues and use note taking and tape recorder. Ary et. al (2006) emphasised that the most efficient way to collect data is by using audio tape recorder as it is much less distracting than taking notes and it also provides a verbatim record of the response.

Data collection and data analysis is an on-going process and can extend indefinitely Merriam (2001). The researcher coded the result which was later transcribed and analysed. According to wilhelmina & Rhonda (2001) who viewed that coding will enable the researcher to manage data by labelling, storing, and retrieving it according to the codes, they added that the codes created depend on the study, setting, participants, and research questions, because the codes are the researcher's way of beginning to get at the meaning of the data. For confidentiality, the researcher renamed the participants as Tanko, Ndeji, Garba and Manko.

3. Findings

After reaching saturation, and considering all the qualitative protocol, data were generated and findings were discussed below:

Issues on Administration in Niger State Secondary Schools.

When asked about administration of secondary schools, Tanko, commented on his perception about the questions, he highlighted that, administration can be seen in two perspectives, One, on the side of government and two, on the sides of the principals. If I am to look at administration on the side of government, I will confidently say that government is not trying because, the quality of supervision we are experiencing now is far below the one experienced in the last 10 years, government have failed in the provision of adequate learning facilities, and even selecting those to become Principals has now been politicised. On the side of the Principal, I most commend my principal who is actively doing his best in terms of assisting teachers by providing the proper

mentorship. The view of Tanko is similar with that of Ndeji, who commended his principal and added that he used to assist them when they have issue regarding their work. But he commented on governments' inability to provide the materials that will aid their teaching for better understanding to the students.

Garba, hammered on lack of qualified teachers in most secondary schools in the state, particularly teachers in science subjects he said "In Niger State there is serious shortage of teachers in science subjects such as; physics, chemistry and mathematics. In some schools, you convert maths teacher to take physics because of the shortage" he also commented on the lack of teaching materials and lack of facilities such as laboratories for science practical. Manko has a different view with other participants, he sees corruption as the major issue confronting the success of secondary schools' administration in the state. He added that, some government officials bestowed with the responsibilities of handling the affairs of secondary schools are corrupt, facilities meant for schools are diverted and sold, unqualified teachers are recruited based on sentiment or ethnicity, money earmarked for monitoring of schools are diverted, this are few and so many instances of corruption in the administration of the secondary sector.

Looking at the above narrations by the participants, it can be added that, government are not positively doing their own part as far as the administration secondary education is concerned, this is inline with the findings of Udoh (2015) who itemised corruption, lack of facilities and infrastructures as factors necessitating to problems of administration of our secondary schools. It has also been observed that some principals are trying their best in assisting teachers by way mentoring them. Mentoring has many advantages to the mentee or learners, the mentor and the organization. To the mentee, it helps to know the culture and political set up of their organization, develop skills, have access to resources and have increase clarity of goals and lower the attrition rates of new teachers. The advantages that accrue to the mentor include getting assistance in tasks to be done, increased satisfaction, increased motivation as well as assisting personal development. The institution also benefits, as there is increase productivity, more effective management and faster induction of new colleagues, (Sweeny, 2001; and Salis, 2004).

Financing Secondary Education in Niger state.

As earlier pointed out in the background of this study that, the funding of Secondary schools is the responsibility of the State government. All issues that have to do with teachers' salaries, maintenance of school structure, procurement of scientific equipment and lot of others are to be shouldered by the government of the state. But the case is different in Niger State, as indicated by the participants.

Inadequate funding is a major challenge in the administration of secondary schools in Niger state, all the participants testified to the fact that the state govern don't allocate fund for the administration of their schools. Garba who has been a principal for the past 15 years, commented that, few years ago, certain amount of money is allocated to his school at the end of every month but for the past 8 years, his school has not received even a single kobo, they always depend on the stipend collected from students in form of PTA levy, and little fund that is coming from the food vendors, to run the administration of the school.

Manko, stated that, working as a principal in the state is so difficult because you don't have fund to fix numerous problems confronting the school, he cited an example with a dilapidated structure in his school, adding that, he complained to the secondary

education board severally but nothing is done and the school has no money to fix the structure, the only option according to him, is to keep watching the structure as it collapses.

Tanko and Ndeji gave similar narrations on school funding. Tanko commented on the situation in his school, adding that, in some classes students are sitting on the floor, while are hanging in widows to receive lesson. Ndeji commented on teacher salaries and other incentives. He said that, for number of years, their promotion has not been implemented, a teacher can spend seven years in one level without promotion and for those that are opportune to be promoted, the financial benefit will hardly reflect in their salaries.

Reasonable number of literatures supports that funding schools is the responsibility of government. Aghenta (1991) added that the success of any secondary school depends upon the resources made available to it. So, this is a clear indication that fund is very important in this regard because, all other vital things in the school can be obtained and maintained, such as the school building, purchase of equipment, payment of teachers' salaries and allowances and running expenses. In Niger State, so many secondary school principals are finding it difficult to run the affairs of their schools because of inadequate funds. Some schools levied the students to enable them raise funds to run the administration of their school (Fati, 2010).

Measures to Improve Administration and Financing of Secondary Schools in Niger State.

For better administration and funding of secondary schools in Niger state, the participants have the following submissions;

Tanko, advised government to enact good monitoring policy, have good monitoring team that will be visiting schools periodically, the team should comprise of people with experience so that they can be able to render assistance to the teachers' facing difficulties in their teaching career. There should also be adequate teaching and learning materials in schools so as to make teaching and learning effective. On the issue of funding, Tanko suggested that, government should always earmark certain amount of money to schools on monthly basis.

Manko, suggested that government should increase its yearly budgetary allocation to education and advised principals to have entrepreneurial mind, so that they can create more revenue to school, than relying on government to allocate funds for their daily administrations. He added that, there should be a means to having the total number of enrolments in other words, there should be accurate data on number of teachers and total students' enrolment, this according to him, will help government in planning for education and for easy administration.

Ndeji has the same opinion with Tanko, he said that, he knows funding schools is the responsibility of government, but there are so many responsibilities that government has to shoulder, it will be wise if schools will think of ways of generating their income so as to compliment the government efforts in the area of funding. The scenario is the same in the eyes of Garba, who wants government to take education as its priority by allocating the required funds and adequate attention for the development of the state.

Arikewuyo, (2006), suggested more ways to improve the administration and funding of schools among these are; quality supervision, adequate funding, improved salary

package, other welfare packages for teachers and there should be good learning environment, which will make teaching and learning friendly.

4. Conclusion

Good academic performance and sustainable development in the educational system depends on effective and efficient administration and funding of secondary education which serve as a bridge between the primary and tertiary institution, which is also the preparatory ground for the students to think of what to become in future for the benefit of the society and the nation at large. The government, principals, teachers and community must be proactive in making sure that things improve at the secondary school level in order to safeguard the future of our younger ones.

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