

Stakeholders Perception of Transparency and Accountability in Higher Education Financing In Lagos State

Ahunanya, Stella, Okpara Enyinna and Muraina Abdullahi

Nigerian Army School of Finance and Administration,

Apapa, Lagos Nigeria

E-Mail: Stanya3@Yahoo.Com

University of Lagos

Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria

E-Mail: Enyiokpara@Yahoo.Com

Nigerian Army School Of Finance

And Administration,

Apapa Lagos Nigerian

E-Mail: Abdumur@Yahoo.Com

ABSTRACT

The study examined how the stakeholders of higher education in Lagos State of Nigeria perceive the level of transparency and accountability of higher education financing in the state. Bearing in mind the funding state of the Nigerian education system, with the lowest budgetary allocation in Africa according the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), stakeholders are questioning the efficiency used in administering the monies allocated to education with the recent reforms introduced in the sector. Recently, the community accountability and transparency initiative (CATI) for universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and the states (in respect of primary schools) was introduced by the government for two reasons: first, to ginger the general public to ask questions about how the various funds meant for education and sent by the federal government to various arms are being spent. Second: to provoke the interest of the public in the sorry state of public schools and ask legitimate questions about specifics which the various funds were meant for. The issue of transparency and accountability in education in Nigeria has taken the front burner in recent times as the goals of education at all levels are not being achieved. The products of the Nigerian education system are falling short of the expectations by the society. Consequently, the different stakeholders want to know who should be held responsible for this downward trend in the fortune of the Nigerian education system. The main concern of the stakeholders is the problem of who to hold accountable for fund disbursement and execution of educational programs. The second concern is the degree of transparency in financial dealings with a view to check irregularity and ultimately enhances efficiency. Using the 'Perception Survey' method, subjective data was collected from stakeholders through the administration of Stakeholders Perception Questionnaire (SPQ) and the data collected was analysed using the Chi-square statistical tool. Most

Evaluation of the Sustainability of the Community Directed Treatment

stakeholders felt that there was no transparency and accountability in the financing of higher education and therefore nobody could be held responsible for any inefficiency within the system.

It was recommended that fund tracking techniques based on transparent transaction from the state government level to institutional levels be introduced such that from budget proposals, appropriation and releases, stakeholders can actually track the movement of the financial dealings as most of them has lost confidence in audited reports that can be manipulated.

INTRODUCTION

The democratization of the Nigerian nation in 1999 led to reforms in almost sectors of the economy and a consciousness by the leadership to deal with corruption which is a major problem in Nigeria as the nation has been rated by Transparency International (TI) as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Obasanjo (2004) made it clear that ‘it will not be business as usual’ a common parlance to describe corrupt practices in Nigeria hence his administration instituted a lot of reforms that resulted in governing in a more transparent manner while cutting down corruption and enhancing efficiency. Ezekwesili (2006) was convinced that there is need to insist on accountability, transparency and high moral integrity at all levels of education. She designed the community accountability and transparency initiative (CATI) for universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and the states (in respect of primary schools). She did this for two reasons: first, she wanted the general public to ask questions about how the various funds meant for education and sent by the federal government to various arms are being spent. Second: to provoke the interest of the public in the sorry state of public schools and ask legitimate questions about specifics which the various funds were meant for and she asked universities to hold congregation and account for generation and utilization of internally generated revenue. Stakeholders according to Johnson and Sholes (1999) are individuals or groups who depend on the organization to fulfill their own goals and on whom, in turn, the organization depends on to fulfill its on goals.

As noted by Muraina (2005), the low level of transparency in our public and private institutions in Nigeria has contributed to the erosion of national values as its absence encourages the misallocation, misapplication, misappropriation and wastage of financial resources, resulting in low growth rate and increased poverty.

Transparency in education according to Hallak and Poisson (2007) is the extent to which stakeholders (school principals, school councils, parents, pupils and local community) can understand the basis on which educational resources (financial, materials and human recourses) are allocated to individual schools and how they are used in achieving the schools goals. In order words, transparency in education can be appraised on the basis of how visible, predictable and understandable the flows of resources are within the educational system so it requires clear information that is easy to understand

and simple to access by stakeholders. But the official secret laws of most developing countries make it impossible for the citizenry to access governmental information but with the ICT revolution governments are being tasked to display information.

Transparency according to U4 in Hallak and Poisson (2007) requires clearness, honesty and openness. It is the principle that those affected by administrative decisions should be informed and the duty of civil servants, managers and trustees to act visibly, predictably and understandably. Transparency encompasses and describes the increased flow of timely and reliably economic, social and political information. It enables institutions and the public to make informed political decisions as it improves the accountability of public officials to the citizens thereby reduces the rate of corrupt practices. As illustrated by Reinnikka (2005), in order to remedy the problem of lack of transparency that led to fund leakages, the Ugandan central government began publishing the monthly intergovernmental transfers of some financial transaction in the press and asked primary schools to post information on in-flows of funds for all to see. With a relatively inexpensive policy action-provision of mass in-flows information through the press- Uganda succeeded in dramatically reducing leakage in of public funds allocated to primary education. With the press, the flow of funds was traced leading to accountability.

According to Afamikhe (2002), accountability is the obligation of the public officials who are empowered to commit and disburse public funds to account for each transaction.

Accountability is a multi-dimensional concept and often a key enabler of success.

It entails control over actions and assets, answerability to a chain of command, responsiveness to changing demands and organizational environment.

Adesina in Nte (2006) defined accountability as the process that involves the school and the society in assessing its performance and achievement.

It involves efficient utilization of resources made available to any educational unit. Simply put accountability is asking what is being done with all the resources (human, material and financial) bestowed on any organization. In education the question is whether the money is utilized efficiently and effectively to serve the needs and interest of the students, institutions and the society at large?

According to Schofield (1991), most HE institutions are already accountable in some way: usually through normal legal framework to contractors, professional bodies and associations, to ethical standards, to accrediting bodies and to users of the service provided. Davies 1998 in Schofield (1991) suggested that accountability is built on seven concepts: (i) clear stated objectives for service; (ii) identification of inputs (iii) assessment of outputs (iv) clarity of management responsibility (v) a comparison of results achieved with those of other providers (vi) seeking the opinion of

Evaluation of the Sustainability of the Community Directed Treatment

clients on the performance provided (vii) the existence of a final: the dismissal of individuals for poor performance. Four Accountability Models are proposed by Anderson in Hallak and Poisson (2007) First, a bureaucratic model- it is the compliance with statutes and regulations. It can ask the districts and the schools to display the amount of the funds that they have received on their door for all to see.

Second, a professional model which entails adherence to professional norms and ethics. It may favor the elaboration and proper enforcement of professional standards by teacher organisations. Third, a performance model defined in terms of student learning. It may administer students’ testing to measure the quality of education and publish the results for general public. Fourth, is a market model regulating quality control through the job skill and knowledge demands. It may require all schools public and private to provide reliable information on their main characteristics and results to the employing public asking.

On the other side of transparency are corrupt practices that are covered up in order that the crime will not be detected. Klitgaard in Hallak and Poisson (2007) gave a formula for corruption as

$$C = m + d - a$$

Where

- C = Corruption
- m = monopoly of power
- d = discretion.
- a. = accountability

Table 1: Overview of key features of Educational Accountability.

Models of Accountability	Who is to be held Responsibility	To whom are they held accountable	For what are they held responsible	What are the consequences of failing to meet the goals
Bureaucratic Accountability	School /District Teachers	State	Compliance with rules and regulations	Sanctions such as loss of accreditation, firing of principals/teachers
Professional Accountability	Teachers	Professional Peers/Organizations	Following recognized professional practices	Professional sanctions, loss of certification
Performance Accountability	School/District	State/Federal Government	Raising students proficiency	Increasing severe sanctions-student transfer, budget cuts
Market Accountability	School	Parents/Organized Private Sector	Academic standards, philosophical and religious norms, student discipline	Loss of students leading to loss of revenue, economic failure

Source: Kirby and Stecher,(2004) in Hallak et al (2007)

A workable, defensible accounting system requires the involvement of different stakeholders and a clear specification of who is accountable, to whom, for what and with what consequences.

Problem

How do stakeholders of higher education perceive the degree of transparency and accountability of financial transactions made to higher education institutions from the government and how transparent are the financial transaction within these institutions?

Hypotheses

Ho1 -There is no transparency in the financing of higher education in Lagos State.

Ho 2-There is no accountability in the financing of higher education in Lagos State.

METHODOLOGY

The Stakeholders Perception questionnaire was constructed to elicit information on how transparent is the financial transactions of higher education from the Ministry of Education to the institutions and within the institutions and how accountable are the public officials to any inquiry by the stakeholders on any financial matter.

A purposive sampling method was used to select the population of the study made up of 200 parents, 200students and 200 employees of higher education institutions within Lagos State.

The chi-square statistical tool was used to analyze the data collected.

Data Collection

Questions

1. Does the school have an inclusive management committee?
Yes/No
2. Is the school's annual statement of account made publicly accessible?
Yes/No
3. Is school annual budget proposal made accessible to the public?
Yes/No
4. Is the government annual subvention to the school made public?
Yes/No

5. Is there a way stakeholders can find out how the government subvention is disbursed by the school authorities?
Yes/No
6. Do stakeholders examine the auditors reports of the schools?
Yes/No

Evaluation of the Sustainability of the Community Directed Treatment

- 7. Do stakeholders have confidence in auditors report of the schools financial transaction?
Yes/No
- 8. If there is financial misappropriation, are the officials likely to be caught?
Yes/No
- 9. If there is financial misappropriation, is there any negative consequences for the perpetrators?
Yes/No
- 10. Have you as a stakeholder made inquiries about financial transactions of the school?
Yes/No
- 11. If yes, did you get a reply?
Yes/ No

Test of Hypotheses

Ho 1- There is no transparency in higher education financing in Lagos State

Table 2: Chi-square analysis of Ho1.

	Chi-square calculated	(c-1) (r-1)	Pro.	Chi-square critical	Decision
Transparency in the financing of higher education	23.1	36	0.05	234.8	Not significant

Table 2 above shows that the calculated chi-square value of 23.195 is less than the critical value of 234.8 given 36 as the degree of freedom and 0.05 as the level of significance. The result upholds that there is no transparency in the financing of higher education in Lagos State.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis of Ho 2.

	Chi-square calculated	(c-1) (r-1)	Pro.	Chi-square critical	Decision
Accountability in the financing of higher education	199.6	55	0.05	234.8	Not significant

Table 3 above shows that the calculated chi-square value of 199.6 is less than the critical value of 234.8 given 55 as the degree of freedom and 0.05 as the level of significance. The result upholds that there is no accountability in the financing of higher education in Lagos State.

Discussion

According to Enaohwo (2000), planning without accountability is counterproductive hence it should be ensured that anybody engaged in planning, implementation, evaluation, and indeed students themselves are in a position to defend their actions in the actualization process. Where there is a defect in

feedback or accountability mechanism, then appropriate sanctions should be applied to correct any misgiving or oversight.

Lingenfelter (2005) is of the opinion that the pressure on accountability in higher education is not because of its failure but because the bar has been raised as drastic changes are going on in the world of knowledge. Better accountability is required, not to fix blame but to help improve performance and build public confidence in and support for higher education.

Hallak and Poisson (2007) said that the most effective strategies for improving governance, transparency and accountability in education are based on the same principles in rich and poor countries alike- improving regulatory system, strengthening managerial capacities and building social control over the use of resources. The social control should be by stakeholders as the most rigorous of laws and regulations and effectively-run institutions will not be enough to prevent corruption unless they actively demand transparency and accountability from public institutions.

Transparency implies that financial transaction should be open and perceptible. This is amplified by Aristotle's statement that 'public money should be spent publicly'. Strict adherence to the above parameters in public expenditure management reduces corruption, waste and frauds while enhancing productivity, produces good governance and raises moral of all stakeholders. The Global University Network for Innovation (2006) noted that in the framework of accountability procedures, universities now publish an annual report that includes comparative data to show present and past results and budgets and they are circulated not only to government departments but to all stakeholders.

Modibbo Ahmed (2007) noted that every Nigerian, especially the youths whose future is being mortgaged, should take positions of responsibility by keeping track records of how funds for the education sector are utilized. They should be able to ask their leaders what they did with the money allocated to education.

He noted that no nation could survive with the huge amount of negative indices from the country's educational sector. None of the civilized countries in the world today has reached where it is without a vibrant and responsive education sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There could be accountability if the allocation method used is simple, known to all stakeholders as well as the information collected from the schools is accurate and if the administration of funds in each school follows clear rules and regulations and is subject to regular internal and/or external audits.

The CATI should be made accessible to every stakeholder in education as the whole essence of CATI is to get various individuals, institutions and civil society groups involved in the following: To hold the Federal and State Ministries of Education accountable. To take ownership and responsibility for the falling standards in our schools. To get involved in the management

Evaluation of the Sustainability of the Community Directed Treatment

and maintenance of minimum standards in schools. To be instrumental to the upward climb of Academic Achievement in our schools according to Ezekwesili (2006).

The positive experience suggests that corruption can be effectively tackled when the reform of the political process and the restructuring of the regulatory systems are complemented by systematic effort to inform citizens of their entitlements and increase their ability to monitor and challenge abuses within the system.

Improving transparency in education entails a massive need for training at all levels in the education system especially in the production, analysis, dissemination and understanding of information.

REFERENCES

- Anderson J. A. (2005) Accountability in education. UNESCO: IIEP and IAE.
- Schofield A. (1991) 'Improving the effectiveness of the management of innovation and change in higher education'. Issues and methodologies in educational development. An IIEP series for orientation and training. IIEP: UNESCO
- Hallak J and Poisson M (2007) Corrupt schools, corrupt universities: what can be done. UNESCO: Paris
- Hallak J and Poisson M (2005) 'Ethics and transparency: challenges for school systems'. IIEP Newsletter Vol. XXIII, No.4 Pages 3.
- Reinnika R (2005) 'Tracking surveys: the power of information.' IIEP Newsletter Vol. XXIII, No.4 Pages 4.
- Dedze I (2005) 'Transparency in education in former communist countries.' IIEP Newsletter Vol. XXIII, No.4 Pages 5.
- Global University Network for Innovation (2006) Higher Education in the World: Financing of Universities. GUNI: Palgrave Macmillan
- Johnson G and Scholes K. (1999) Exploring Corporate Strategy London: Financial Times Prentice Hall
- Khandelwal B.P. and Biswal K (2005) 'Accountability in Indian schools: teacher codes of practice.' IIEP Newsletter Vol. XXIII, No.4
- Lingenfelter P.E. (2005) Overview of the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education Report. American Council on Education
- Meir B. (2005) 'Preventing corruption in the education sector' IIEP Newsletter Vol. XXIII, No.4 Pages 7.
- Enaohwo J.O. (2000) 'Education Futurology- praxis, problems and the way forward.' National Universities Commission : Nigerian Universities Inaugural Lecture Series
- Ezekwesili (2006) Quality of academic staff of tertiary institutions. Vanguard 31st August Page 33.
- Obasanjo O. (2004) 'Transparency, accountability and good governance via e-government.' This Day 3rd March, Page 39.

Ahunanya, Stella, Okpara Enyinna and Muraina Abdullahi

- Muraina A.I. (2005). Financial planning and implementation in the military: 1994-2004.
Kuru: National Institute for Policy and Strategies Studies.
- Nte A.R. (2006) 'Funding initiatives and accountability of higher education institutions in Rivers State'. A paper delivered at the 30th Annual Conference of the National Association of Educational Administration and Planning.
- Afamikhe S.O.(2002) Budget implementation and value for money: the due process experience. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Modibbo Ahmed (2007) 'FG laments state of education.' Vanguard Thursday 15th, Page 51.