

Readdressing the Budgetary Benchmark: Towards Rebuilding Academic Quality Assurance in Ethics of Primary Education Sector in Umuahia Education Zone

Evans-Obinna, Rosemary. N. (PhD) & Ike, Eucharia. A (PhD)

Department of Educational Management, COED,
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture-Umudike

Abstract

The need for readdressing the budgetary benchmark cannot be overemphasis as quality assurance is related to quality control and accountability which concerns maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of its system and services. Accountability goes beyond responsibility but includes the obligation to improve both professionally and goal attainments. But regrettably, most schools are dilapidated, lack inspections and monitoring, teachers not paid as at when due, training and retraining of teachers, workshops and seminar very scanty, as well as the environments not conducive, facilities are inadequate as well as security. Yet we talk about ethical standards, in the atmosphere were personnel are dissatisfied and striving to find their feet. Moreover, ethics is the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or conduct. Hence, looking at these bad conditions; it does not look like it will work as money provisions are not adequate. This paper therefore demands for readdress of the subvention benchmark to enable the actualization of the necessities required to help maintain sanity which help to build and maintain professional ethics, integrity and trust. This paper concludes that education provides the youths with tools and critical skills to gaining employment as well as raising their productivity and creativity minds which in turn promote entrepreneurship and technological advances. Equally, the teacher's accountability goes beyond responsibility, it includes the obligation to improve professionally. Based on the assertions, suggestions were made that, to create quality assurance and maintain the professional ethics among teachers, the educational benchmark subvention must be increased.

Keywords: Budget, Benchmark, Quality Assurance, Ethics, Primary Education Sector.

Introduction

Education as an instrument for national development should foster the worth and development of the individual whereby every child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities without any inhibitions. Education should be functional through making the school programmes relevant, practical and compressive but this is less true for the Nigerian education system, as the purpose has not being followed. Primary education according to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) is the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. This level is also characterized by Creche, Nursery and Care of children from about three (3) months old to about six years old. The purposes of education as emphasized at this level are many they includes; smooth transition from the home to the school, inculcate social, norms, inculcate in the child the spirit of empery and creativity, development of a sense of cooperation and team-spirit, learn good habits, and so on. In all of these, it shall be the responsibility of the government to provide for the training of qualified school teachers in adequate member. It must be pointed out here that this has being

most difficult. The agencies responsible for this level of education has failed to improve in its activities towards building and improving its quality.

The little done so far; has not gotten us to the level where we can come up to talk about maintenance of academics ethics and integrity and rebuilding of trust as a result of many problem bridging its quality development which include poor funding, poor governance, corruption, lack of Responsibility and Control, politicization of Education, lack of Infrastructure, indiscipline, poor parenting and guidance. According to the findings, filling supported by pro-papers, an education writing firm in United State of America (USA), the education Sector should be paid lots of attention because it gives room for the Country's development. Unfortunately, the quality and standard of education in Nigeria is poor because it has not being given adequate attention as the process that imparts general knowledge, develops the powers of reasoning and judgment and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. Growth and development in the primary sector require adequate funding to maintain both the human and material resources fund provision and its management has being one of the greatest challenges facing education in Nigeria as the sector is inadequately funded, by the federal, state and local government being its managers. In the year 2017, Nigeria education sector was again allocated much lower than the 26 percent of national budget recommended by the United Nations. The global organization recommended the budgetary bench mark to enable nations adequately cater for rising education demands but, in the proposal presented to the National Assembly, 7.04% of the 8.6 trillion of 2018 budget was allocated.

The total sum allocated to the sector is N605.8billion, with N435.1 billion for recurrent expenditure, N61.73 billion fir capital expenditure and N109.06 billion for the Universal Basic Education Commission. (Info Guide Nigeria) government at all levels are more concerned about issues that are not as important as education which is crippling the sector, school funds meant for salaries, maintenance and so on are being directed for personal use and mismanagement to with these short falls; professionals in the sector may not be happy as their needs are not adequately meant because of many lacks that affects them as individuals, family, association where do we go from here? Yet we talk about rebuilding trust. It has a connotation with ethics and integrity as Ethics deals with moral obligation, act attitude or behavior that is in tune with practices commonly applauded, within a given society, organizations or environment (Obunadike, 2016). Ethics is the moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity with the bad conditions and situation in the sector; this paper tends to ask the question; can the managers, being different people with different orientation of both in knowledge, understanding, and trust?

Primary Education Sector and its Present State

The ultimate aim of educational administration is the realization of educational purposes at every Sector. It expected to be just and democratic. But unfortunately, it is bisected with myriads of problems ranging from poor funding, poor educational infrastructures, inadequate classrooms, teaching aids paucity of quality teachers to poor/polluted learning environmental. In addition to these inadequacies, our school system is plagued with numerous social vices such as Examination malpractices, Cultism, hooliganism and corruption. According to Odia and

Omofonwan (2007), the essence of adequate funding as priority in the primary Educational Sector is to set a pace for meaningful growth and development to take place, for this reason the need to readdress its financial benchmark is inevitable. The funding which would help in the extension of Education to all and Sunday. There are no technological approach and no innovation/adaptation centers as they cannot exist except with the help of enough funds.

Government and the organized private sector must as well fund research programmes, investment and mass production of Invented products. The current monolithic approach to knowledge acquisition must be changed. Primary Education as the foundation of educating pursuits lack strength to stand the test of time, as may have collapsed. The negative state has affected the children's lifelong education pursuit. Parent no longer believe in Public School. Akinsolu (2010) in his paper supported that educational curriculum cannot be sound and well operated with poor and poorly managed school facilities which include classroom, laboratories, workshops, libraries equipment, consumables, electricity, water, visual and audio visual aids, tables, desks, chairs playground, storage pace, and toilets. All these stand perfectly on the bases of the extent of fund provided. Schools are dilapidated, lack inspections and monitoring, as money allocated are too small. Teachers are not paid as at when due, training and retraining of teachers, workshops and seminars are lacking. The environments of teachers, head teachers and pupils are not conducive, sometimes the pupils sit on the floor, and schools lack security Apparatus. All these boils down on the basis of fund provided.

Concept of Ethics

Ethics is often regarded as certain terms like, obligation, conflict of interest, right, wrong, responsibility fairness, measured or qualified (Ikotun, 2004) it also mean moral Code of Conduct, (Vital 2007), it deals with moral obligation, act, attitude or behavior that is in time with practices commonly applauded within a given society, organization or environment. It varies from one society or environment to another. According to Obunadike, (2014) who stated that conceptualized Unethical practices in the public service (teaching) should exist whenever public servants, individually or collectively use position (or give appearances of doing so) in a way which compromises public confidence and trust because of conflict of loyalties or values, or as a result or attempts to achieve some form of privates gain at the expense of public welfare or common, good.

This assertion presupposes the use of public office to covertly or overtly act contrary to expected public good. Obunadike also pointed out that unethical conduct does not only relate with selfish interest of office holder or his pecuniary interest but also certain actions using his position to satisfy his god- father(s) cronies, kins and kith, race, religious affiliations etcetera against public good, puts it that unethical conduct can only be determined in relation to an act, attitude or good behavior adjusted contrary to the practices commonly advocated by a certain state at a given time in the field of academic morality.

Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality standards are defined as documents that provide requirements, specifications, guidelines, or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose. It provides a framework for a business to manage

its processes and activities. According to Wikipedia (2020) quality assurance is seen as a way of preventing mistakes or defects and avoiding problems when delivering solutions or services. The need for quality assurance in Nigerian Schools cannot be overemphasized in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning among academics or in the Educational System of Nigeria.

Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) see quality as the total of the features of a process, product or service on its performance in clients' perception of that performance. Quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and effectively of the system/services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their stated objectives (Ajayi and Adegbesan, 2007). Quality assurance includes all policies, measures, planned processes and actions through which the quality of Education is maintained and developed. Quality in education is seen as the degree to which it is able to meet the needs and demands of its client. Yoloeye (2005) agrees that quality must characterized education at every stage as well as the need for quality assurance in our Education system cannot be over emphasized.

Budget Benchmark

The success of operation of any maintenance Programme depends to a large extent on the availability of adequate fund. The United nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO's benchmark for funding of education is 26 percent of the national budget and 6 percent of the Gross Domestic Products (GDP), Nigeria has being allocating 6 percent of the national budget to the funding of its education. Echono (2020) made this disclosure at the opening ceremony of 78th plenary meeting of joint consultative committee on education with theme 'funding of education for the achievement of education 2030 agenda at the Justice Idris Legbo Kutiga International Conference Centre, Minna, Niger State. He also observed that the burden on education had become overwhelming, resulting in more than 100 pupils for one teacher as against the UNESCO benchmark of 35 students per teacher culminating in students learning under trees for lack of classrooms.

According to Ede (2014) education is considered an essential sector of every economy where the country's manpower needs are produced. And must be given adequate attention. For the achievement of its aims, objectives and goals as stated. Ede further states that even with the involvement of prominent individuals and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in the establishment and funding of primary education in Nigeria, it hasn't gotten to where it should be. Therefore, the Budget Benchmark need to be readdressed considering many factors as mentioned in this work. Money allocated to Education Sector is expended for various purposes as well as the Budget Bench mark is too small for the Sector. There is need to ensure that adequate funds that will be used in putting in place those services are required.

Importance of School Budgeting

The importance of school budget cannot be over-emphasized. It does the following according to Ede (2014);

1. Serves as an instrument for controlling and evaluating financial performance of the School.
2. Helps in eliminating school financial wastages and inefficiencies.

3. Reveals areas that require attentions and actions
4. Allow school management to discover areas of over-spending or under-spending of funds within the school.
5. Aids school heads in avoiding untimely exhausting of school funds, and aids Utilization.

Implication for the Parents

Benchmarks is the act of creating measurable standards set for learning on which students can be measured. Benchmark helps to keep parents on track for success, or towards success according to (FGN,2013) educational funding and Budget needs to be readdressed for the benefit of the child, school, parents etc. it will create a model for excellence and achievement as the future of any country lies in the quality of its education. It is easy to say that parents and guides care about their child education, but they have got to show it, as most of the attitudes and requirement of schools does not help both the pupils and the school managers. A lot of reforms to do in schools will be perfected only if it starts at home by making sure that the child is actively involved, stay on top of homework, assignments and participating in class parents should support. School reform groups, speak up, provide a stable home life, take part in progress, researchers has shown that parents engagement has a positive impacts on many indicators of student achievement such as higher grades and test scores, lower drop-out rates, better social skills, improved behavior, a strong believe in the importance of education etc.

Implication for the Teacher

The implication on lack of observation of education benchmark mostly in the area of salary payment has caused teachers to ignore the educational ethics. Environmental conditions in Nigeria institution of learning are bad as stated in (Ikotun, 2004, as cited in Obunadike, 2016) The present situation of education system in Nigeria is nothing to write home about therefore when the benchmark of the allocation or subvention of Education system is increased; it will tend to extend to teacher or the administrators of curriculum. Salaries will be paid, conditions of learning will improve as well as happiness will abound and ethics and laws guiding the profession will be observed and respected strictly. When fund is adequately supplied into the system; the system of education, human and material resources will take positive change as all will have a change of looks which will affect all around cases.

Justification for Readdressing the Benchmark

The need for readdressing the budgetary benchmark cannot be overemphasized as quality assurance is related to quality control, but its functions in a rather proactive manner in the sense that quality control service as series of operational techniques and activities used to fulfill that requirement are met. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argue that quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their stated objectives.

The following are the major justifications for the need to readdress educational budget benchmark according to Adegbesan (2010);

1. To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education
2. To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels.

3. To ensure monitoring and supervision of education.
4. To ensure the quality of the teacher input and,
5. To ensure the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control/assurance education and
6. It will ensure and determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control.
7. It will ensure how the financial resource available could be.

Justification for Ethics in the Profession

The heart of Nigeria education system is the teacher, who is the major educator as well as the major determination of the quality of education. Teachers are accountable for defining student levels, performances and also includes the obligation to improve themselves professionally to support the goals of the Institution they serve, under every circumstance. In numerous spheres of activity in modern society professionalism has become a powerful force in the economy (Okeke, 2010). There should be a deliberate policy of Emancipation regarding all cadres to make teaching lucrative. The present eloping of teaching personnel at all levels of our Educational System to greener pastures, especially, to private sector and politics is a clear indication of the growing dissatisfaction that plagues the teaching profession. To stem the tide, Ethics should through their different bodies posit to enhance its status, if not, there should be a deliberate policy of emancipation regarding all cadres to make the profession lucrative like any other job within the public sector. This would not only attract personnel to the profession but sustainability is highly assured. Teacher accountability goes beyond responsibility for defined student performance but includes the obligation to improve professionalism to support the goal of the institution.

Implications of Ethic and Trust

Ethics help to guide the action and conduct of the members formulated by professional for their up-liftman. The implications of Ethics basically involves questions of morality which are primary concerned with what is right or wrong and also concerned with the question of profession self-regulation and self-control. Building trust is part of what is required to maintain good ethics. Ethical and choice help build trust which high trust environments encourage better Ethics and when is lost people are less likely to uphold the organization's Ethics.

Implications for the Educational Managers

When Ethics is absent, trust is elusive. Ethics and trust are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. If educational supervisors, head of schools and their employers can improve trust, which will also begin to improve Ethics. Ethics and trust can be strengthened through intentional daily practice. What does all at this mean to us as leaders and mangers; it means that ethics and trust are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing.

Implications for the counsellor

The primary obligation of the educational sector in Nigeria is to guide children, youths, adults in the pursuit of knowledge and skill, to develop healthy attitudes that enable them live in harmony with all other Nigerians and to help them become happy, useful and responsible citizens. The counsellor can help achieve this whole goals by ensuring that pupils utilize their

times very well through individual and group counselling, orientation programmes, seminars for teachers etc. hence the overall disciplinary tone of the school, but can all these assistants and attentions be given when the counsellors lack the necessary facilities meant to be used in the discharge of duties. As a professional trained human relation's personnel and capable of preventing, ameliorating and solving students' problems.

Yet in the bid to carry out his/her roles/ functions is confronted with numerous and peculiar problems which deter the progress of his work most especially, lack of sufficient funding for guidance activities for example; appraisal tools, poor physical facilities etc. there are usually no radios, cassettes, tapes, batteries for use during counselling. The ultimate strength of the nation lies in the social responsibility, economic competence and moral strength of the individual: yet educational financing, which should be the heart of educational foundation to success has continued to attract less attention and has limited research attention on how to make it more effective and efficient. It is vital that education managers not only act in a legal and Ethical manner, but should channel funds and efforts by means of implementation of appropriate bills and statement. Education is important for young people because it provides youth with tools and critical skills to gain employment and provide for themselves and their families in the future. Youths has a very important role for the society they are young, full of energy and educated with rationality as their ultimate, belief and moral habits.

A good and well-funded Educational system will make an individual develop personally socially as well as economically, Education raises the student productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advanced. Increasing the budgetary subventions will provide significant and robust education to overcome issues of poverty. There is a range of ways in which greater spending is likely to positivity affect student achievement. Poor school condition, for instance, may have negative effects on student learning.

Conclusion

Financing education in Nigeria today is a crucial national problem. The political, social and economic factors, which currently have significant impact on the world's economy, have necessitated the need to readdress the Educational Budget Benchmark. The fact remains that Education in Nigeria has experienced loss of facilities, deterioration of equipment and plants and uncompleted projects as a result of financial crisis facing the system. In the last three decades, Education in Nigeria has witnessed, a significant growth in terms of experience of access through increase in enrolment and establishment of additional institutions. However, it is sad to note that many of the indices that can guarantee qualitative education are not taken into consideration in the country's quest to meet quantitative target. It has being found that political factors are the main motives behind many of the expansion polices especially, in the primary educational system and capital projects to meet the expanding programme could not take off and where they did take off they had to be abandoned due to lack of funds and the results of its engagement are obvious, less increase in efficiency and productivity and diminished quality and output; such as teaching, scholarship and services, diminished working and living condition for professors, staff and students are alike.

Suggestions

It is quite clear from the foregoing that for primary education in Nigeria to achieve its stated objectives, the crucial is of funding must be squarely addressed by educational managers in Umuahia North, Abia State of Nigeria. To sustain education in that area following suggestions are hereby made:

1. Government should see to budget benchmark increase to meet with the demand of the sector to enable global competition at any time.
2. There is also need for and entirely need approach to financial management, responsibility and accountability.
3. All stakeholders which include government, school heads, parents, guardians, society, the private sectors and Non-Government Agencies must be involved.
4. Given the state of the country's budget benchmark to education, the Government financing trend might not be sustained in the near future so must be revisited to pave way for future progress.
5. The allocations have to be increased to meet the rising costs or else education will suffer a lot of setbacks.

References

- Adegbesan, S. (2010). Establishing quality assurance in Nigeria education system: *Implication for educational managers Journal* 5.
- Ajayi, T. & Adegbesan, S. (2007). March 14-16). Quality Assurance in the teaching profession: *A paper presented at a forum on emerging issues in teaching professionalism In Nigeria. National institute for educational planning and administration (NIEPA), Akure, Ondo State.*
- Akinsolu, A. (2010). Teachers and students academic performance in Nigeria secondary schools: implication for family: *Florida journal of educational administration and planning*. 3(2) 86-103.
- Echono, S. (2020, April 10). The Free Encyclopedia.
- Ede, M. (2014). Financing Education in Nigeria: *In Educational management the Nigerian perspective*; published in Nigeria by SCOA Heritage Nigeria Ltd, Awka Anambra.
- Eya, L. (2014). *Principles of Educational Management and Administration in Educational management the Nigerian perspective* published in Nigeria by SCOA Heritage Nigeria Ltd, Awka Anambra State.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2013). National Policy on Education, Lagos NERDC.
- Ikotun, U.I (2004). *Ethics in educational administration and management in Educational Management: The Nigeria Perspective*, SCOA HERITAGE NIGERIA LTD, Anambra State, Nigeria.

- Obunadike, J. (2016). Ethics in educational administration and management in Educational Management: The Nigeria Perspective, SCOA HERITAGE NIGERIA LTD, Anambra State, Nigeria.
- Odia, L. & Omofonwan, S. (2007). *Educational system in Nigeria problems and prospects. Research gate*. Journal of social sciences, 14 (1): 81-86.
- Okeke, O. (2010, September, 17-19). Strategies for ensuring quality standard in degree chemistry education presented to academic forum (TAF) in ESCET in affiliation to Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. Anambra State.
- Vital, M. (2007). *Ethics in educational administration and management in Educational Management: The Nigeria Perspective*, SCOA Heritage Nigeria LTD, Anambra State, Nigeria.
- Yoloye, E. (2005). The relevance of universal basic education in the development of primary education system in Nigeria. *In Quality Assurance issues in the teaching and learning of physics in secondary schools. Journal of research and method in education*. (JRME) ISSN: 2320-7374. 4, (2)20-24