
PROBLEMS AND ISSUES OF FINANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

¹Ojekudo, Beatrice Emamoke

¹Department of Educational Management,
Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Abstract

In this paper, the writer has examined the problems and issues of financing public education in Nigeria. A review of the history of Nigerian education dates back to 1942, which started with the introduction of Western Education by the Christian Missionaries, was discussed. It was revealed that government funding is the primary source of funds for every level of education in Nigeria. This is not sustainable strategy from long term development of education given the high demand for public funds from other social sectors. The financing of education as an aspect of public finance embraces all aspects of funding of education including the sources of funding and how the money budgeted for education is spent especially for the purchase of goods and the services of men and materials. Finance was revealed as the issue of management of money, especially public money. Education finance is therefore the process by which tax revenues and other resources are drawn from the establishment and operation of educational institutions as well as the process by which these resources are allocated to institutions in different geographical areas. The study has shown the total revenue accruing to the Federal Government and the amount of money allocated to the education at various periods indicating deficits in the funding of the system. The problem of education finance was attributed to inaccurate data, political instability, corruption, diversion of funds meant for education and sole dependent on oil sector. Some strategies as alternatives were subjected as way forward which revenue Supplementation Strategy, central funds, private investment in education, commercial and industrial organizations, grants, loans, foreign aids, school fees, alumni funds, endowments and funds from investment or education establishment. It was suggested that other sources of financing education in Nigeria should include raising bank loans for capital development, introduction of property tax, donations from endowment, donations from parents/teachers associations, education tax, development levy, taxes from lotteries to finance education and donations from alumni associations. Since more and more sectors of the economy continually keep demanding for more and more of the scarce resources from the government, there is need to explore other viable alternative sources of funding in order to rely lesser on the funding from the government.

Keyword: *Public Education, Educational Financing, Educational Financing Limitations*

INTRODUCTION

Education is generally known to be an indispensable tool for nations' economic growth and development. The underlying rationale for public funding of education is to

equip people with the requisite knowledge, skills and capacity to enhance the quality of life, argument productivity and capacity to gain knowledge of new techniques for production, so as to be able to participate evocatively in the development process. Public sector funding of education in Nigeria is anchored on the notion that for society to continue in perpetuity, the new generation must be given the appropriate access to knowledge that previous generation have accumulated. It has been empirically proven and universally acknowledged that unless the citizens of a given country are well educated and appropriately trained, the achievements of rapid economic and social development cannot be guaranteed (Ahmed 2013). The production of knowledge by every education system including universities has always focused on teaching, learning and research, hence, it is believed that university education is a major investment requiring a huge amount of financial resources, thus funds allocated to education are said to be long term investments of immense benefits both to the individual and to the society.

The history of Nigerian education dates back to 1942, it all started with the introduction of Western Education by the Christian Missionaries. The Christian missionaries, rich merchants and emigrants' business men living in Lagos were the earliest financials of education in Nigeria. For instance the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1842 established and financed the first primary school in Badagry and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Grammar School founded by T.B. Marcurley in 1857. Funds for it was mainly donated by Captain JPL Davies an emigrant business man between 1842 and 1882, the colonial government did not consider education to be priority public services given to the nations, hence it failed to take part in financing educational institutions established be it primary or secondary. In essence the private sector kick-started investment in education. Today government has plunge into financing education is a dual responsibility.

According to Jonson & Anyoma in Ebong & Ezekiel-Hart (2006 p. 14) "finance is not only essential in carrying out all economic activities but it is also a necessity" therefore, financing education is the provision and allocation of funds necessary to cater for the running of overhead cost of educational inputs so as to enable an educational system to achieve its set objectives optimally. Finance is a dicey economic factor to manage even from the individual point of view, let alone government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational Systems in Nigeria

Pre-school education

Pre-primary education is for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years or above. It lasts two to three years and attendance is not compulsory.

Primary education

Primary education lasts six years and caters to children aged 6-11. Basic education includes primary and junior secondary education.

Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two three-year cycles: junior secondary culminating in the Junior School Certificate examination; and senior secondary leading to the Senior School Certificate examination. Junior secondary's graduates may enroll in technical colleges offering three-year programmes leading to the award of National Technical/Commercial Certificates.

Higher education

Higher education includes colleges of education, universities, polytechnics and colleges of technology. The duration of studies ranges from three to seven depending on the nature of the programme. Colleges of education offer three programmes leading to the award of the National Certificate in Education. Polytechnics and colleges of technology award national certificates and diplomas, namely: the National Diploma, after two years of study following the senior secondary school; and the Higher National Diploma, awarded after a further c of two years' duration. A Professional Diploma requires one additional year of study. At the university level, programmes leading to a first degree (e.g. bachelor's degree) should last not less than four years. The 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria vested the management and funding of public education three tiers of government: federal, state and local. Public institutions are funded almost solely by the government. Students in these institutions pay very low fees and charges, which constitute an insignificant proportion of the finances of the institutions. On the other hand, privately-owned institutions which are mainly at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels are funded with fees paid by students

Though government funding is the primary source of funds for every level of education in Nigerian, this is not sustainable strategy from long term development of education given the high demand for public funds from other social sectors (Ahmed 2013). The development of education in any given society is either hampered or boosted by a variety of factors, some of the factors responsible for the retarded pace of educational development in Nigeria include; poor funding, brain drain among teachers, poor infrastructures, unstable curriculum and subject, unstable staff, politicization of education, just to mention a few (Ahmed & Adepaju 2013). The problem of education financing in Nigeria has to do with lack of commitment on the part of the government to provide quality education to its citizens, this is evident in the last 10 years where the total number of students' enrolment tripled while public resource allocated to the education sector continued to decline from 11.5 percent in 2002 to 8.7 percent of the total government expenditure in 2013 (Ahmed 2013). Since a wide array of other sectors of the system competes for the scarce resources available to government, education sector have often been very poorly funded in Nigeria.

Public finance has been described as the collection and disbursement of funds for public use. It has also been regarded as the financial activities of public authorities in terms of taxing, spending, borrowing and lending and it involves the means of providing for the

expenditure involved in the staffing, equipment and maintenance of educational institutions (Adesua, 1981, Charles, 2002). The financing of education as an aspect of public finance embraces all aspects of funding of education including the sources of funding and how the money earmarked for education is spent especially for the purchase of goods and the services of men and materials.

It was reported that there were years in which the amount received was slightly more than the amount requested for, but this is no longer true today (Okebukola, 2002). Hinchiliffe (2002), highlighted that federal budgetary allocation to education in nominal terms rose from =N6.2 million in 1970 to =N1, 051.2 in 1976. Thereafter, it declined to =N667.1 million in 1979, rose again to N 1,238.5 million in 1980, declined in succeeding years before rising to N3,399.3 million in 1989. It dropped further to =N1, 553.3million in 1991. However, in the year 2000, funding for tertiary institutions, did improve significantly but current funding levels are low and has led to poor remuneration for academic staff. Between 2005 and 2007, the budgetary allocation to education sector stood at 6.3%, 7.8% and 8.7% which did not go close to the percentage required by UNESCO. There was a decline in the funds allocated to education from N390.42billion to the sum of N311.12 billion in 2014, which has contributed to the alarming situation of the educational system.

Education: Meaning and Concept

Education is a fundamental human right and the bedrock of sustainable development: it contributes to all three dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic, and environment - and underpins governance, and security of the individual. Education can be defined as a process of socialization through which an individual is taught on desirable values with which the inherent values needed for survival and continuity of the society are passed on. Agada (2004:15) stated that “education is a means by which society provides for the transmission of its culture to the young ones or a means whereby the culture or the total way of life of the society can be advanced”. He further said that education may be defined as the inculcation of values, knowledge, skills and attitudes by means of institutions that have been created for this purpose.

The National Policy on Education (2004) defined it as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. This instrument is unique because it is multi-directional unlike machine in a firm. It consist both investment and consumption components. Education is also a means through which the society is able to provide for the transmission of its cultural values from the older generation to the younger ones (Ernest, 2011). Ernest (2011) went further to define education as the inculcation of attitudes, skills, values and knowledge by means of intuitions that have been developed for such purpose. The interconnected dividends that result from investments in equitable quality education are immeasurable, generating greater economic returns and growth for individuals and societies, creating a lasting impact on public health, decent work and gender equality, and leading to safer and more resilient and stable societies. Responding to this issue, Bamhardt

and Kawagley (2004) stated that as an enabling factor for the multiple dimensions of societal development, quality education is a key lever for sustainable development.

It plays a crucial role in shaping personal and collective identities, promoting critical social capital and cohesiveness, and responsible citizenship based on principles of respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity.

Concept of Financing

Finance is an important factor in the success of any organization as it lubricates the activities of the entire organization or institution. Finance is seen as an act of providing the means to payment. Hornby (1974), cited in Ogbonnaya (2012, p.17), defined finance as the issue of management of money especially public money. Management of funds in this regard involves planning for the procurement and effective utilization of funds made available for the implementation of programmes or projects. In connection, funding of education is the money that is available to be spent in educational sector. E.g. to provide money for a project, Ojekudo (2020) stated that the challenges of school administrators face in effective fund management is that some lack experience to administer school fund as it should be.

Financing Education

The establishment, administration and maintenance of set standards in any organization are greatly dependent on the finance available to it. It is concerned with how people allocate their assets over time under conditions of certainty and uncertainty. Education finance is therefore the process by which tax revenues and other resources are drawn from the establishment and operation of educational institutions as well as the process by which these resources are allocated to institutions in different geographical areas. Nevertheless, financing education is therefore the responsibility of the government, communities, private organizations and individuals. Furthermore, the major challenge about financing education is the question of who should be responsible to finance education.

According to Durosaro, (2000) the argument about who is to finance education has always been whether the cost of education should be borne by government or by individuals receiving education. Meanwhile the debate can be crudely reduced to three groups. The first group is made up of those who argue that cost of education should be borne essentially by parents with government providing the enabling environment. They are of the view that education should be subjected to free market discipline; this group posits "that families and individuals ought to pay fees in order to access nominally available public services, otherwise these services would not be available or their quality would become unacceptably low. The problem with the position of this group is that those who are poor will not be able to pay and they will be denied access.

The second group argues that education is a right, which must be funded by government. They argue that there are enough resources in the world to fund at least basic

education for all children. They posit that the problem is that of corruption, misplaced priority, inequality and poor policy choices. They are of the view that government should bear all the costs because even if the direct costs of education are borne by government, the indirect costs (such as uniform, transport and school meals) may be beyond the capacity of the family while the opportunity cost may be impossible to bear.

The third group while coming from the rights based approach like the second group posited that education is a right and government must not only endeavor to remove all the barriers to education but must also take steps to utilize to the maximum of its available resources to achieve progressively the full realization of the right to education and other social and economic rights. Education funding comes from different sources. The major one for all levels of government is public revenue from taxation and proceeds from crude oil. Education funds are reported to be distributed among primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels in the proportion of 30%, 30% and 40% respectively.

Ojekudo (2020) stated that whether schools are funded by government or combination of private individuals, for the educational sector to function effectively, principles must be acquainted and imbibe effective administration of these schools with clear mind of being responsible and accountable in all ramification.

PROBLEMS OF IN FINANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Addressing the problems of education, Ndukwe (2008) affirmed that “Government alone cannot fund education, hence the slogan “Education for all is the business of all.” she further recommends for education endowment funds, foundations, formation of school cooperatives, loan scheme, community efforts, PTA contributions, property and sales, consultancies, agricultural proceeds, crafts, home Economics, dramatic display, and indeed any money yielding venture or business that school can encourage internally. Enaohwo (2000:21) in an inaugural lecture identified three problems associated with finance education which are:

1. Non availability of funds
2. Mismanagement of fund
3. Non utilization of funds.

Ogbonnaya, (2012) maintained that financing has been a topical issue of interest among educational administrators, policy makers and planners. This is because the realization that no educational programme can be effectively implemented without adequate funding, education sector competes with others in allocation of funds and the circumstantial experimental fact that most executes embezzled funds entrusted to their care. He categorized the problems militating against adequate funding as follows-

1. **Inaccurate Statistical Data:** The issue of inaccurate statistics is one that faces every sector of the Nigerian economy. Wrong information and figures make it difficult for the government to plan education effectively much less provide funds for education.

According to him, in the statistics division of our ministries of education, they find out inaccurate information. For instance, in some local governments where they may be about 160 English language teachers, they find 110 recorded in the files. Some head of schools or institutions are also in the habit of supplying wrong data to the ministry. Some give wrong information on the number of academic and administrative staff.

2. **Political instability:** Many developing nations of the world including Nigeria are faced with problems of political instability. There are frequent changes in government as a result of corrupt politicians or the selfishness of some military personnel who always refuse to relinquish power. Each government that comes into power initiates its own programmes. Nigeria for instance, has had a several political history since independence. At one time it is a civilian government and at the other, it is a military government. More often than not emphasis of those who come to power is never on education but on prestigious projects, which drain the economy of the nation.
3. **Lack of Stable Policies in Education:** A stable policy is a firmly established course of action adopted by an individual, a group, an organization or nation to accomplish set objectives. On the other hand, an unstable policy is one that changes frequently. One can state without fear of contradiction that there are lack of stable policies in education in Nigeria. Some specific examples here will surface; in 1976, the Universal Primary Education Scheme was in vogue. Today the emphasis is on more on science and technical education. This is because the government that comes into power chooses its own policies projects or programmes and funds such to the detriment of other ones enunciated by its predecessors.
4. **Sole Dependence of the Federal Government on Oil Revenue:** Crude oil appears to be the main stay of Nigerian economy. It is no secret that government makes her budgets annually based on revenue from oil. There is therefore the implication that, where there is fall in revenue, then the funding of education will be seriously affected. In 1997 and 1998 there was a dwindling in oil revenue. This affected the funding of many education programmes in Nigeria.
5. **Population Explosion:** Nigeria has an estimated population of hundred million people during the last census. It is believed that there are almost one hundred fifty million people today. The increase in population will definitely led to increase in student enrolment and number of facilities and equipment. The financial implication of the astronomical increase in enrolments is one of the most dreaded consequences of the social demand approach to education in all levels.

This is because everybody entitled to education may come forward to seize the opportunity, without considering the individual financial capacity to do so; the onus for payment, provision, maintenance and sustenance is passed to society or government, due to such inherent fiscal responsibility that must be borne by society in order to achieve the objectives of the social demand approach for education. In the light of this,

different governments have had to employ various strategies either to cope with the welfare demand of education or to do away with the approach to some extent.

6. **Indiscipline and Corrupt Leadership:** Indiscipline and corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian society. In fact, indiscipline and corruption are today found in the industrial sector, health institutions, in government agencies and parastatals and even in educational institutions that were once known for order and decorum. Some administrators in some universities, secondary schools and primary schools are known to embezzle funds provided for some projects, where such incidents are recorded, will amount to problems in funding of education programmes.
7. **Diversion of Funds meant for Education to other Sectors:** Some authorities divert funds meant for education to other sector of the economy. Ogbonnaya (2005) stated that during Obasanjo regime, funds meant for education were diverted to the Ajaokuta steel company, for the development of basic infrastructures to the detriment of education section. Recently, it was alleged that some states Primary Education Board (SPEB) officials divert funds earmarked for the management of primary education for personal purposes. During the military regimes, funds meant for the payment of teachers' salaries and allowances in most states were used for prestigious projects by some military administrators.
8. **Inadequate Allocation of Funds to the Education Sector:** There are many programmes and services in education. There are Mathematics and Science programmes, Language programmes, Art programmes, programmes in music and computer science. There are also in-service training programmes, workshops, seminars and allowances, provision of science equipment and stationary. All these require adequate funding. In view of the rising costs of education (school fees, enrolment fees, cost of books and other materials) students and even their parents will not ordinarily want to be held back by any form of deficit or failure in any of the required subjects hence will go to any length to ensure success.
9. In some cases, some teachers at the secondary school level are involved by way of encouraging students to contribute money (cooperation fees) in order to secure the needed assistance during such examinations because they, the teachers are left with no other alternative considering the fact that they are aware of the inadequate preparation of their students as well as the lack of facilities to get them properly prepared before examination.

Ojekudo (2020) in agreement with Ogbunaye (2012) added that funding is very indispensable in education for qualitative output and effective administration. In one of her recommendation, she said principals/administrators must muster up courage to explore every available source of fund to adequately provide services to the school environment.

Alternative Strategies as a way forward to Funding education in Nigeria

It is clear from the analysis presented above the physically challenged children are also given the right to education like their counterparts. This however holds cost implications owing to the fact that more special schools will have to be built to accommodate all the physically challenged pupils and more teachers have to be employed to meet with this situation, all these culminate into educational costs.

But notwithstanding any strategy employ however should not compromise the equity and quality standard of the education. Based on the above therefore, the following strategies were suggested;

Cost-sharing strategy

From the social demand point of view, since education benefits not only the society in general but also the individuals specifically, then there are rationale from shifting the financial burden partly to the individual domain from the social domain which is happening worldwide (Salmi 2006; Pillay 2004). Cost sharing is the diversification of revenue sources from heavy dependence on the government to being shared with parents and students, which is much associated with payment of fees. Cost sharing strategy has been considered recently as one of the most convenient and a good method of financing university education worldwide (Obasi&Eboh 2002; Simbowale 2003). Since the government in Nigeria cannot bear the full burden of funding education (Ahmed 2013), it should allow the individuals to contribute towards funding the system.

Graduate Tax Strategy

Graduate taxes have also been considered to be another source of financing university education in the developed Asian countries. According to Tilak (2008) a graduate tax is an educational specific tax to be levied from those who use educated manpower. Manpower produced by the education system is used by all sectors in the economic activities. He further stated that these sectors do not directly contribute to financing education although they are the direct beneficiaries in terms of productivity gain on account of their employment of graduates. Therefore those employers of labor should be asked to share the cost of producing the graduates that are working for them to achieve their target objectives.

Revenue Supplementation Strategy

According to Ogbogu (2011) revenue supplement strategy is a preferred route to financial viability of universities. It includes university entrepreneurship such as renting of university facilities as well as commercial marketing of research discoveries, universities/industry collaboration, sale of faculty services, consultancy, introduction of specialized and marketable teaching and scholarship, establishment of guest houses, bookshops, petrol stations etc. Universities in Nigeria are not doing well in terms of

generating enough revenue outside the government sources to supplement what the government is providing.

According to Okebukola (2006), government alone cannot fund university education because of the increasing cost of delivery in university education brought about by a combination of high enrolment pressures, resistance of institutions to adapt more efficient and productive financial management styles. The National Universities Commission (the regulatory authority for Nigerian universities) in 2004 gave directives to all Federal government-owned universities in Nigeria to generate at least 10% of their total annual expenditure. As a result, many of these universities were forced to embark on income generating activities in order to get alternative sources of generating income. Some of such means include the introduction of user charges, and several other charges and programs meant to generate income. Yet, many of these universities were not able to meet this target.

Central funds

The central government accumulates revenue through the agencies and in various forms of taxes from industries and organizations. These include customs and exercise duties, export taxes, educational development levies, industrial and commercial taxes, registration of vehicle and equipment, property tax, registration of companies and personal income taxes. Through statutory allocations of grants, loans, and scholarships, a proportion of the accumulated revenue is allocated to public education.

Private investment in education

These include tuition fees, boarding fees, fees paid for examinations, libraries, laboratory etc. incidental cost on the part of individuals which include opportunity cost, procurement of uniforms, purchase of books and stationary items constitute source of investment in public education. Wealthy individuals donate in cash and kind to educational institutions in the form of scholarships to diligent and deserving students' gifts of vehicles, buildings, construction of water boreholes etc.

Commercial and industrial organizations

Some companies and industrial establishments devote some of their annual profits to funding of education. They have known to have contributed classroom blocks, library and science laboratories for schools, they also fund research projects and special academic awards in universities. In short, they pay 2% of their net profits to funding education (Tax Decree No. 7 of 1993).

Agabi (2000) identified the basic components at school finance to include grants, loans, foreign aids, school fees, alumni funds, endowments and funds from investment or education establishment. Omukoro (2008) also noted that funds for school management are both externally and internally generated, most of which comes from government allocation in the form of grants. Others apart from foreign grants in aids are internally

sourced from within school as school fees (where applicable), P.T.A, alumni, NGOS, trust funds, endowment, school shops and extracurricular activities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The weak production base has been identified as a major obstacle to industrial development in the country (Daniel, 2004). The high rate of expansion of the Nigerian educational system implies that something urgent must be done to adequately fund the system. The explosion in enrolment as a result of the influx of students into primary, secondary and higher institutions calls for immediate government attention in employing other sources of funding education. The high rate of schools' enrolment has rendered short-term educational forecasts unreliable. The explosion in enrolment has led to the creation of afternoon classes in many States especially in Lagos State.

Since more and more sectors of the economy continually keep demanding for more and more of the scarce resources from the government, government owned institutions may continue to be underfunded. As indicated in this paper, government owned institutions have relied too much on their proprietors for funding, the attendant effect being the observed lower unit cost of graduate production, in itself an indirect indicator of production of "low quality graduates" There is thus the need for government owned universities and other levels of education in Nigeria to explore other viable alternative sources of funding in order to rely lesser on the funding from the government which will never be adequate and will possibly be declining if these institutions are to produce high quality graduates.

RECOMMENDATION

Considering the foregoing, it is pertinent to suggest other source financing education in Nigeria. Such suggestions include the raising bank loan capital development, introduction of property tax, donations from endow donations from parents/teachers associations, education tax, development taxes from lotteries to finance education and donations from alumni association Government should act in accordance to UNESCO specification of 26% country's annual budget for education. Since the educational system needs financed, the private and public sector assistance or contribution should be encouraged thereby external assistance in form external loans or gran: meaningful and profitable capital projects in schools could be sought.

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