

CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF FISCAL RESOURCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Resources are critical in the survival of any organization especially the school. Resources are asset that are available at the disposal of an organization for use in the process of achieving organizational goals. All educational resources require finance in the purchase, maintenance and implementation of different objectives in the school system. This paper is focused on challenges of effective utilization of fiscal resource in secondary school management. These challenges are transparency and accountability, educational wastages, change and innovation, over and under investment, equality and equity among others. This paper discussed fund utilisation in schools, fiscal policies in school management and strategies for the management of school finance and fund was also discussed. It was suggested that insufficient funds received by secondary school schools which are as a result of low budgetary allocations from the three tiers of government on education has necessitated the school heads or principals to ensure that available funds are efficiently and effectively managed and utilized.

Keywords: *Fiscal Management, School Finance, Funds Utilization, Fiscal Policies.*

1. Introduction

Resources are paramount for the existence of any organization. Without resources in an organization, there will not be anything to work on in the process of actualizing the organizational goals and objectives. Therefore, resources are critical in the survival of any organization especially the school. Resources are all assets that are available to an organization for use in the process of trying to achieve organization's

goals. They are all the inputs into an organization in order to achieve goals.

Educational resources are the totality of all assets that are expedient in the pursuit of attaining the goals and objectives of any educational programme or institution. They are all the useful material and non-material resources needed in the pursuit of attaining the goals and objectives of any educational programme. It can also be seen as the inputs made into the educational system in order to achieve goals. Ezeanya (2016) sees educational resources as the sum total of everything that goes into the educational system. Educational resources comprise of human, material, time and fiscal resources. Human resources in educational sector comprise of all teaching and non-teaching personnel that are involved in the delivery of education services. Material resources are all educational instructional and infrastructural facilities that are available in schools. Time resources is the layout or plan of school activities that explains the programme, curriculum, scheme etc. of the school within a specified period of time aimed at achieving specified educational goals. While fiscal resources refer to all the monetary resources that are required in the management of schools.

All educational resources require finance in the purchase, maintenance and implementation of their different objectives in the school system. There is therefore a strong synergy between finance and the achievement of any desired goal (Onuoha, John and Ohaka, 2018). Fiscal resources are the bedrock of the education system and this is ascertained in the National Policy on Education which clearly states that the success or failure of the education system is anchored on adequate financing (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). This follows that no educational policy can successfully implemented in any school without adequate funding, as funding is the bedrock for the implementation of all policies, educational and non-educational within the school environment.

Secondary education is a very important aspect of educational development as it is the gap that bridges all the other levels of education. Its major purpose is to impart knowledge, train students in a certain profession way (arts, sciences, social sciences, etc.) and prepare them for higher education. It helps to create manpower at a level that is higher than school leavers from primary school. Hence, it is important, that quality, undisrupted and uncompromised education is offered at the secondary school level. Secondary education equips students and in the process reshapes the society for individual development and to generate opportunities and benefits for social and economic development. But this is only possible where fiscal resources are made available, where fiscal resources are not readily available or sufficient then, there has to be proper management of the available one. In that vein it is very relevant that resources are efficiently managed to enhance a smooth transition to the next level of education.

It is important to clearly state that fiscal resources available in schools are not sufficient to implement all its goals and objectives. There is need for proper management of the available finance to bring about productivity. This is a huge challenge as Federal government budgetary allocation to education keeps fluctuating as a result of the government not able to meet the UNESCO bench mark for 26% of the national budget to education. Mbayuav (2012) and Ike (2017) admit to the fact that the financial resources available to public schools are never sufficient for the needs of the school due to many reasons which may include the consistent increase in school enrolment. Onuoha, John and Ohaka (2018) states that there is need for the management of financial resources so that the school will be a good production

ground where quality outputs are produced. Asserting to that Emunemu and Isulu (2008) explained that the results available for fiscal resources is measured by the quality or standard of education delivery and the quality of outputs produced in education. The available fiscal resources in the school needs to be planned for, managed and accounted for accurately for the smooth running of the schools in the achievement of educational goals. For the purpose of this paper, the term fiscal and financial will be used interchangeably.

2. Review of Related Literature

There are different studies that have been carried out by educational scholars to explain the challenges of effective utilization of fiscal resources in secondary school management and how it affects the economy. Adeleke, (2011) carried out a research on taxation, revenue allocation and fiscal federalism in Nigeria: issues, challenges and policy options. Taxation is one of the most important and easy sources of revenue to any government, as the government possesses inherent power to impose taxes and levies. Nigeria tax system has been weak due largely to inadequate data of the tax base and heavy reliance on oil revenue. With the volatility in oil prices and excruciating impacts of the recent global financial crisis, taxation deserves more attention now than ever before in Nigeria. One issue that is critical to domestic resource mobilization and utilization is the issue of fiscal federalism. Nigeria operates three tiers of government; Federal, State and Local Governments with separate revenue, expenditure, and assigned responsibilities each. However, all decisions including resources are controlled from the centre and the vertical revenue allocations tilt more towards the direction of federal government, contrary to the tenets of federalism the country is practicing. Both vertical and horizontal revenue in Nigeria is engulfed in controversy. The paper presents key issues, trend and challenges of taxation and fiscal federalism in Nigeria. In addition, the paper highlights a number of suggestions that would stimulate increase in tax revenue and guarantee fiscal assignment acceptable to the federal and sub-national government.

Amadi (2021) wrote on funding of the education sector: panacea for effective secondary school education in Rivers State. The paper examined funding as panacea for the growth of secondary education in Rivers state. It is a position paper. Education is regarded as a human industry with sophisticated nature, hence adequate funding of the sector is a necessity for both human and social development. Unfortunately, one of the problems facing education in Nigeria, and Rivers State in particular is the issue of underfunding. The paper focused on the following key areas; concept of education funding (ii) sources of secondary education funding (iii) effects of secondary education funding in Rivers State and factors Militating against proper funding. These concepts, especially sources of education funding in secondary schools in the state has witnessed a gradual degradation of infrastructures, in man power development, instructional materials and access to quality education. Presently, the government spending on education is below the 26% recommendation of the UNESCO in spite of the strategic role of secondary education. Drawing on the outcomes of the discussions, the paper suggests that 26% annual budget of the government should be allocated to the education sector, government should give approval to school managers to explore other alternative sources of financing secondary education with the aim of achieving educational goals, Government should develop a realistic secondary education data-bank as this will help in adequate planning, and funding of this level of education. Also all stakeholders must become involved in the financing of education especially

secondary education, parents and guardians, the society in general, private sectors and non-governmental organizations.

School financing is aimed as answering the question of who, what and how funds will be allocated in the school system. It deals with the method in which funds are being sourced, allocated and utilized in the school in order to achieve school objectives. The financing of the school also focuses on how all educational stakeholders including public and private individuals contribute to the management and administration of the school by providing the day-day administration of the school for achieving the short, medium and long term goals and objectives of the school at any level or type of education. The survival of the school system depends greatly on the amount of resources at its disposal.

Fiscal Management in Education

Several literatures abound on the concept and usage of the term “management”. There are people who see management as a process demanding the performance of a specific function. To them management is a profession. To some others, management is a group or team of persons in an organization; Students of business management, industrial management, hospital management, educational management etc. (Ogbonnaya, 2004). Whatever conceptual meanings given by such individuals, management ends in getting things done through others. Put differently, management is the coordination of all the resources of an organization in order to achieve organizational objectives. Wali (2020) defined management as the art or science of achieving goals through people. Wali (2020) asserts that since managers also supervise, management can be interpreted to mean “looking over” that is, making sure people do what they are expected to do. Management can be defined as an economic term that requires skills in decision making, resource planning, and coordination of activities of an organization at central levels as well as skills in effective communication. The primary role of management is to ensure that the central goals of the organization are achieved within the resource mix available to the organization. Management, as a human resource function, can therefore be described as the act of directing the use of human and material resources in an organization towards the achievement of the goals of the organization in the most effective manner. Similarly, fiscal management in education refers to the planning, coordinating and consciously directing all financial activities in the education sector towards the effective realization of the goals of government expenditure on education (Agabi, 2019).

At the ministerial level, the minister for Education is accountable to government for the use of public funds directed at education. The minister works with other commissions and boards responsible for managing various levels of education such as NUC, NBTE, NCCE, UBEC, UBEB, SSSB etc. At institutional levels, the administrator of an educational institution is responsible for managing the financial resources of the institution. At this level, the school administrator is accountable to the education agency that is responsible for disbursing funds to schools at the particular level of education that the administrator is operating. At each of these managerial levels, policies are developed to guide financial towards the central purpose of financing education. Such policies are usually within the financial framework of government financial structure for education. These policies provide focal points for the accounting officer. Financial policies vary between schools and between levels of education. The deciding factors may include the scope of the education programme, the category of learners, and size of the school and the nature

of mandatory education facilities (Agabi, 2019).

Concept in Schools Finance and Fund Management

The understanding of the concept of school financing cannot be detailed without knowing what it means to finance. This is because school financing itself is a branch of the overall financing system of a nation, organization or individual. Finance is generally attributed to the concept of money vis-à-vis providing money for a task at hand. Ogbonnaya (2012:4) opined that finance is seen as “money matters and its management”. It can therefore be deduced that school finance deals with issues surrounding the generation, spending and management of school funds.

School finance is a key issue in the administration and management of the school system since finance is a live-wire in its organizational management at all levels and in all types. Rice, Monk and Zhank (2010) posited that school finance revolves around raising of revenue, allocating resources and using resources aimed at providing educational opportunities and producing educational outcomes. School finance incorporates the issue of generation and spending of money to meet the goals and objectives of the school. According to Asodike (2017) “school finance refers to the process by which tax revenues and other resources are derived for the formation and operation of elementary and secondary schools as well as the process by which those resources are allocated to schools in different geographical areas and to types and levels of education (p.183). School finance is therefore centred on the raising, distribution and management of financial resources provided for the school.

There are various ways through which financial assistance is provided for the education sector. The governments as well as other educational stakeholders are involved in the financing of the education system. Financing involves the provision of financial assistance by an organization which must be repaid after an agreed duration with an interest while funding involves the providing of financial aid as a form of responsibility to the education sector. This emphasizes the reason why UNESCO suggested that every nation should allocate 26% of its annual budget to the education sector (Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007) as a funding strategy. Similarly, it is important that the education system should be funded by all educational stakeholders and not financed since the education sector is a non-profit making sector of the national economy.

Finance Utilization: The utilization of finance deals with the usage of available funds in the school. The utilization of funds is important for the goals and objectives of the school to be optimally achieved. There are various needs that are expected to be met in the daily running of the school. Similarly, these various needs have certain amount of financial resources that have been set aside to offset them. It is therefore, important that the allocated financial resources should be used for the purpose intended. Finance utilization therefore deals with the optimum usage of allocated funds for the purpose intended in the most advantageous manner.

Revenue

This usually refers to all the cash inflow available in an organization from all its business activities.

Payment

This refers to an actual amount of money particularly cash that has been released for the procurement of goods and services.

Expenditure

This is the amount that is allocated to be spent for the period in review.

Recurrent Expenditure

This is the expenditure that is incurred on personnel, consumable, supplies and repairs during one fiscal year. They form the life-wire of the school, are permanent issues and are taken care of first in the budgets.

Capital Expenditure

This expenditure includes those for new buildings, school sites, equipment and machinery, minus the cost of their repair and maintenance.

Factor Costs

These are the prices paid for various resources factors under the separate headings of teachers, supplies, equipment and buildings.

Unit Cost per Student

This is estimated by dividing the total expenditure of the system or sub-system in a given period by the number of students in it. The unit cost per students is a useful measure in cost analysis in which one can compute and compare the unit of various systems and sub-systems, forecast recurrent and capital expenditure, or determine the cost of an educational plan but applying to the projected enrolment and of cost not neglecting the inflationary rate (Asodike & Leigha, 2017).

Budgeting

This is a financial statement showing income and expenditure of an organization for a defined period of time. Schools prepare budget to help indicate if the revenue that will be generated will be more or less than the expected expenditure (Asodike, 2014).

Audit

This is an activity carried out by an independent body to investigate the accuracy and authenticity of the financial transactions of a formal organization for a period under consideration.

Fund Utilization in Schools

The school manager who happens to be the principal needs fund to carry out the enormous tasks of managing the activities in the school. Bamisaye in Aodike (2017) summarized these varied activities thus:

To integrate properly the human, physical and material resources in the school towards accomplishing the goals of the school.

To provide and administer properly adequate welfare services for the students. These include guidance and counselling services, health services, students' mail service, food and catering, hostel accommodation, electricity, water, clothing and laundry, school transport and kiosk service. If these welfare services are inadequately provided or poorly administered, demonstration, upheavals, riots and all forms of uncontrollable boisterousness among student become inevitable.

With the astronomical increases in students' enrolments, sufficient money is required to expand the existing physical structures; put up additional buildings; maintain the entire planta and improve aesthetic value.

As a result of highly diversified school curriculum, the need to up-date the teachers professionally to meet the challenges of the new subjects becomes inevitably.

Money is required to sponsor teachers for in-service education programme, workshops, seminars and conferences.

There is no gainsaying the fact that effective teaching and learning depends on availability and adequacy of instructional materials such as tape recorders, instructional television. Filmstrips, overhead projectors and graphic materials like charts, maps, graphs, cartoons, posters, globes, diagrams and drawings of materials. The procurement of these essential materials depends on the amount of money available at the disposal of the school.

Money is undoubtedly required for smooth administration of the school to keep the services going (p.184).

The aforementioned activities need money to execute. It is glaring that of all the numerous problems confronting the school manager none is as persistent and agonizing as the one relating to the provision of sufficient funds for effective management of the school. The critical nature of this problem has given rise to its discussion in public debates, education conferences and periodic meetings of stakeholders in education. Recently, the issue of internally generated revenue (IGR) has become the focal point of most educational institutions as an avenue to raise funds to help in effective administration of the system (Asodike, 2017).

Fiscal Policies in School Management

These refer to the internal financial policies developed by the administrator of a school to guide the generation and management of funds by the school. It is usually directed at supporting the financial well-being of the school and to facilitate financial accountability within the school. Financial policies in public schools are guided by the fiscal policies of the particular tier of government responsible for managing the particular level of education or the particular education institution (Agabi, 2019). As it has been mentioned earlier, government's fiscal policy guides financial policies in schools. By implication, a public school administrator's exploration of various sources of fund available to the school is controlled by government policy to a significant extent. For instance, the exploration of such sources of fund as school fees, levies and various business activities, that constitute sources of internally generated revenue, is controlled by government's fiscal policy. Whatever may be a school's fiscal policy, the school administrator is accountable for the financial activities of the school.

The school administrator therefore needs to work in close synergy with the school bursar and the heads of the various units or departments responsible for fund generation or expenditure (or both). To this end, every unit or department that gets regular impress from school management should be accountable to the school administrator and is expected to submit regular financial report on a predetermined schedule which may be weekly, monthly or quarterly depending on the nature of the financial activities and the calendar of the school. This enables the school administrator to effectively account for fund utilization to the tier of government or education management organ provided the fund (if it is a public school); and all the major financiers of the school such as PTA, NGOs or private companies, as the case may be. Effective accountability that shows efficient use of funds often attracts more financial support for the school (Agabi, 2019).

Challenges of School Finance for Effective Management

The need for financing of schools is an issue that cannot be overemphasized. The inability of parents and any single institution in Nigeria to finance the various

types and levels of education in the country is an issue of concern to different educational stakeholders. However, there are various problems surrounding the financing of schools which has affected the effective and efficient management of the school system. These issues include:

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability is one of the major problems confronting the education sector financing in this 21st century. Oboegbulem (2013:66) stated that “management of funds in educational organization like secondary schools has been a very sensitive and controversial issue”. Cases of financial embezzlement cut across the various types and levels of education in the country. This has resulted into high cases of unaccounted funds. Embezzlement and lack of accountability are problems in school financing because these are cases that can hardly be avoided in the education sector except with the conscious collaboration of educational stakeholders. The problems of unremitted funds, unaccounted funds, misallocation and misappropriation of funds stand as threat to school financing as they reduce the impact of financial commitment made by the government and private individuals into the education system. the problem of financial irregularities from the government, school administrators, parents, teachers and even students is an issue that requires proper attention for successful financing of the school system.

Educational Wastages

One of the major issues confronting school financing at the various levels and types of education in the country is high level of educational resource wastage. The level of investment in educational inputs does not provide an equal level of educational output due to high level of educational wastage. Financial investment in the educational sector therefore does not transcend to improved educational output. There are various leakages through which financial investment in the educational sector are wasted. These include the cases of repetition, drop out and unemployed graduates. Financial investment from the various stakeholders has therefore failed to achieve complete relevance by providing an equal or improved level of educational output in the long run.

Change and Innovation

There are various changes, innovations and reforms taking place in the educational sector which have rendered initial investments in the educational sector less impactful. Changes and innovations such as the use of digital teaching and learning devices, magnetic maker boards, distance learning programmes and so on have rendered some investment in the educational sector less beneficial. This is because huge financial investments previously made in the education system have generated very little returns. It is therefore important to note that financial investments in the education sector should be based on projects and programmes that have a long term turnover rate. This will ensure that the expenditure made is justifiable in the long run. Change and innovations in the education sector must be put into consideration when making financial plans for the school system in order to avoid waste of financial resources in the short or long term (Asodike, 2017).

Over and Under Investment

The problem of over and under investment is one of the major problems encountered in the financing of schools in the country. Becker (2011) noted that over

investment is an unnecessary duplication of investment. Stein (2001) also pointed out that under-investment is a situation where a single interest is considered above general interest in educational investment. This implies that there is over investment when there is excess allocation of funds to an educational project or programme while under-investment refers to the shortage of funds. Over and under investment are both critical issues in school finance as they both indicate financial misappropriation. The problem of over and under investment makes it difficult for optimal financing of education to be achieved in schools around the country. These problems can only be corrected when various financiers of the education sector take into consideration the question of who should fund the different levels of education in the country and at what cost. This will help to enforce optimality in the financing of the school at all levels and avoid the problem of financial mismanagement.

Equality and Equity

One of the major problems surrounding the issue of school finance is the problem of equity and equality. The school is surrounded by different quantity and quality of human and material resources. The funds allocated to these resources also differ from school to school. Similarly, enrolment level differs from school to school across the various states and geo-political zones of the country. These differences in the social and geographical attributes of these schools therefore make it almost impossible for the funds allocated to these schools to be equal. The problem of equity in the funding of these schools is also an issue of concern because the financial allocation from the federal government to state governments is also a major concern in the process of school financing.

Strategies for the Management of School Finance and Fund

There are various strategies that are considered in the process of managing school finance and fund for meeting the goals and objectives of education. These strategies include:

Budget Preparation

The preparation of a feasible budget is one important step in the management of school finance at any level of education. The budget has been described as a statement of income and expenditure for the organization for a defined period of time (Asodike, 2014). The budget is important in any school as it helps the school to prioritize its needs and allocation financial resources to these needs on a scale of preference. The budget plays a significant role in school financing as it helps the school manager and administrator to avoid unnecessary expenditure. Similarly, it helps the school explore revenue avenues by exposing sources of cash inflow for the period under consideration. Budget preparation enables the school to derive utility from the allocation of financial resources. It is important to also know that the budget in some organization is usually subjected to rigorous debate before being implemented. This exercise is aimed at ensuring that scarce financial resources are put into the most profitable use. The budget therefore helps the school to derive maximum satisfaction from the meagre financial resources allocated to the school for the period.

Public Private Partnership

The government at various levels has re-iterated the fact that the government alone cannot independently meet the financial needs of the school system without

external assistance. The private sector has a major role to play in financial availability and utilisation in the school. There are various school projects and programmes that are being financed across the country by private institutions. Similarly, the government can provide financial assistance to schools to support the contributions provided by the private institutions. Private institutions such as banks and insurance companies also have a role to play in educating school staff and students on financial management techniques. Private institutions that specialize in information and communication technologies (ICTs) also need to provide software and hardware that will improve financial management in schools. It is therefore, a matter of importance, the government should partner with the private sector to improve on financial management by schools at all level of education (Asodike, 2017).

Financial Record Keeping

Financial record keeping is one secret that has kept many financial institutions standing for years, decades and even centuries. This is because record keeping helps an organization to recognize their areas of financial strength and weakness upon which they can plan for the future. Record keeping is important for planning and the school cannot isolate itself from this principle. The record kept by the school serves as a document for gaining financial assistance from various national and international organizations. The financial records kept by the school are collaterals required by other organizations to provide financial help for the school. This is because provides a basis for further financial aid. Schools at various levels need to develop the culture of financial record keeping. The school manager and administrator must ensure that all other school personnel down to the least staff in the school are involved in the preparation of accurate and simplified financial records that will help the school to make accurate and prudent financial projections for the future.

Centralized Financing

One of the measures that have proved relevant in the management of school finance is the creation of a centralized school financing unit. The existence of multiple finance units in the school is largely responsible for the duplication of school expenditure. This issue can however be corrected when there is a single authority responsible for the authorization of school expenditure. The approval of school expenditure should be left in the hands of the school manager the school (Vice Chancellor, Principal and Headmaster/Headmistress) or in some cases the finance administrator or school bursar be saddled with this responsibility. This policy makes it easy for the authority approving with expenditure to monitor cases of duplication of expenses. Similarly, he/she will be in a better position to determine the financial strength of the school and ensure profitable use of available school funds. In addition, it is important that the sources of finance of the school should come from a central purse. This means that financial inflow accruing to the school should be organized into single treasury from where allocation can be made for different school projects and programmes demanding attention (Asodike, 2017).

3. Conclusion

The management and administration of the school system at all levels of education especially the secondary level depends on the availability of funds for the achievement of its educational goals and objectives. Funds are needed for the accessibility and use of other educational resources irrespective of the quantity and quality. It is therefore obvious that schools cannot achieve much of their educational

objectives without adequate funding. In addition to this, the school business managers and administrators must learn to properly utilize allocated funds to the school. This will help in the prompt and full achievement of educational goals and objectives of the school.

4. Suggestions

The school should have in its custody a detailed financial guideline approved by the federal and state ministry of education on the management of finance in secondary school. This document will be a form of a guide for the school to follow.

Regular monitoring and supervision is very important as it helps the management to look into entries and financial documents in order to check whether instructions and procedures have been accurately adhered to.

Funds should be made available in the secondary schools, to enable principals effectively run the school system adequately.

Fiscal policies should not be changed in between an academic session, even where there are changes, schools should be asked to implement them at the beginning of a new session as the changes can affect the plans, budget and all fiscal activities of the school.

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