

# Factors Affecting Efficient Management of Primary Education in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The efficient utilization of resources at the disposal of any institution/organization goes further to address the challenges of such institution or organization. If the financial and material and human resources are not properly controlled and directed, such institution suffers some obvious setbacks. And when such resources are properly managed, the obvious is that such institution enjoys huge successes. This is so with every business organization and in indeed educational organizations. This paper examines the efficient management of primary education in Nigeria looking at the role of Local Government in Education, the relevant laws establishing Local Government system since 1976, factors affecting efficiency, Source of funding of primary education and recommendations.*

**Keywords:** *efficiency, management, primary education.*

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## Introduction

The 1976 Local Government system was created in Nigeria by the General Olusgun Obasanjo military Government in 1976. After the creation of the Local Government in 1976, following the Old Man commission reports Local Government Education Authorities were established to replace the hitherto Native Authorities. Ukeje (1993) noted that the Local Education Authorities were indeed parastatal of the Ministry of Education. They were charged with the responsibility of managing the primary schools under their jurisdiction. Thus the management of primary education was under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. It is noteworthy to mention too that after creating Local Government Authorities, their finances were separated from the Native Authorities of the previous order. Thus in 1978 the Federal Government has virtually withdrawn itself imposed responsibility to fund all primary education. In 1979, with the introduction of a civilian regimenew revenue came into effect in 1981.

Thus, the federal government was given 55%, state 30%, local government 10% and 5% to oil producing states. The Federal government handed over the management of primary education to the Local Government. Thus paragraph 2 of the fourth schedule of the 1979 constitution states:

...the functions of a Local Government council in the government of a state as respects the following matters namely,

1. The provision and maintenance of primary education.

2. Such other functions as may be conferred on a Local Government council by the House of Assembly

### **What is Local Government?**

Hickey (1966), referred to Local Government as “the management of services and regulatory functions by locally elected councils and officials responsible to them under statutory and inspectoral supervision of central legislature and executive, but with enough financial and other independence to admit of a fair degree of local initiative and policy making” It may be defined as movement at local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific power within defined areas.

### **Efficiency**

According to Mbiti (1974), organizational efficiency depends on the proper combination of two factors: the personnel skill factor and the equipment and supply factor. The term “efficiency” connotes making maximum profit with the least possible expenditure or providing maximum satisfaction of performance. The personnel skill implies that the employee of an organization (Local Government authority for example) must possess the right attitude and appropriate competent skills necessary for the performance of the work assigned to them.

### **Role of Local Government in Education**

In keeping with the provisions of the 1979 constitution which stipulates that Local Government Councils should be charged with the provision and maintenance of primary education and to assist the Federal/State Governments in achieving the national objectives for primary education, Local Education Authorities were charged with the following duties and powers:

- a. To prepare and submit to the commissioner for Education from time to time and within such time as required; an estimate of the needs of its area for securing sufficient primary schools to accommodate all pupils of primary school age within its area.
- b. To maintain such existing public primary schools as well as established and maintain such new public primary schools as the commissioner may direct.
- c. To assist such primary school with grants.
- d. Furnish the commissioner with advice relative to primary education within its area and with such information, returns, accounts and estimates and ensure that the premises of schools conform to good standards (Adesina, 1986).

The Local Government through the Local Education Authority may in addition to the above functions perform other duties relating to education in its area. A Local Education Authority has powers to establish, in accordance with the provisions of the law an education committee and may authorize such education committee to perform on its behalf any of its functions.

However, Decree No3 of 1991 gave each Local Government Area of Nigeria powers to establish Local Government Education Authority which must have Local Education committee which will carry out the functions assigned to it by the authority. Section 2 of the Decree outlines the functions of the Local Government Education Authority as follows:

- a. Recruitment, appointment, promotion and display of teaching and non-teaching staff.
- b. Posting and deployment of teachers including inter Local Government Area transfer.
- c. Disbursement of funds provided to it by the Local Government council sources.
- d. Setting –up of effective and functional supervisory unit.
- e. Supervision of all other units set up under its jurisdiction.
- f. Providing guidelines on the establishment of new schools and new capital projects.
- g. Retirement and re-absorption of teachers.
- h. Responsibility for the approval of schemes for the training and retraining of teaching and non- teaching staff.
- i. Assessment and provision of salaries and allowances of teaching and non teaching staff based on the scheme of service drawn up by the Local Government Area Council.
- j. Ensuring that annual reports are rendered by Head of Schools on teachers appointed to serve under them.
- k. Preparing testimonial and certificates of service of teaching and non – teaching staff whenever necessary.
- l. Dealing with leave matters including annual vacation leave.
- m. Ensuring annual auditing of accounts.
- n. Responsibility for the schools in its area of jurisdiction.
- o. Submission of annual estimates, annual accounts and monthly returns to the authority
- p. Acquisition and distribution of material and equipment to all primary schools in its area of jurisdiction.
- q. Undertaking of capital projects and general maintenance of primary school buildings.
- r. Stimulation, promotion and encouragement of communal participation in the running of primary schools in its area of jurisdiction.
- s. Taking all reasonable steps to ensure full enrolment and attendance in all primary school in its area of jurisdiction.
- t. Payment of any land acquired for educational purposes in it area of jurisdiction.
- u. Performing such other functions as may be assigned to it by the Local Government councils or commissioner for Education.

From the foregoing, all the powers and authorities concerning the management and administration of primary Education in the country were given to the Local Government through the plat form of the Local Education Authority of such Local Government. To boost the revenue base of the Local Government because of their added responsibility of financing primary education, the federal Government raised the Local Governments' share of the federation account from 10 percent to 15 percent in 1991; and from 15percent to 20 percent in 1992 Ogunu (1993).

It has been observed that despite the huge expenditure as could be seen in the increase in federation account of the Local Government Education, Local Government in the country have not be able to carry out efficiently the functions assigned to them

under the 1979 constitution as amended especially in terms of education. Below are some of the factors which have militated against the efficiency of Local Government in the performance of their education duties since 1976.

Factors affecting the efficiency of Local Government in the administration of primary education in the country.

**1. Lack of qualified staff**

Perennial problems which have continued to undermine Local Government efficiency with reference to education was lack of qualified staff to carry out the essential functions of leadership and management. Hence, Ajayi (in Adesiu et al 1983, p.60 ) noted that:

“... most of the councils are devoid of competent, inspiring, active leadership, and qualified manpower who could translate education policies into meaningful reality. In other words, Local Government administration all over the country could be said to have enthroned mediocrity in all facets of their administration, with half-baked personnel (often stark illiterates or semi – illiterates finding themselves in the corridors of power or the guise of elected or nominated) representatives of the peoples.”

The Benue State Government report in 1977 complemented that of the Ajayi of 1983 above. The state government noted.

“Adequate and proper staffing of the local government in the state has been a perennial problem since the advent of local government in this country. Many factors have been mentioned as being the principal cause of the situation. A few of the major ones are: lack of funds to employ trained staff and lack of promotional prospects in the local government service among others.

**2. Inadequate funding**

Perhaps the most severe problem which has plagued local governments in the country since their creation is inadequate funds to execute their programmes. Most of these local governments have very weak financial base, arising from the fact that the people do not pay rates to the local governments. This made local government councils unable to generate adequate internal revenue due mainly to shortage of staff for revenue collections, incompetence, dishonest practices and lack of devotion to duties. This has made local governments to depend largely on the state and federal governments for grants and subventions.

3. Another problem which has bedeviled the activities of local government in the management of primary education is persistence interference by both the State Government and the Federal Government respectively.

Ademolekun (1985) sums up what happened in practice throughout the federation as follows:

“... the actions of state governments... fundamentally contradict the objectives set for local government in the constitution.

These actions include among others, the appointment of caretaker committees solely on partisan basis, proliferation of Local Governments, hijacking of Local Government funds, hijacking the functions of the Local Governments as written in the constitution..... It appears that the concern of partisan advantages accounts for the actions of state governments... thus, the laudable objectives set for Local governments in the constitution have been scarified to the partisan interests of the politician”

The situation is not better with the appointment of sole administrators by some state governments to manage the affairs of the Local Governments. There has been consistent power struggle between the sole administrators and Local Government Secretaries.

4. Political Instability at the Federal and state levels has affected the stability of the Local Government leadership and policies on primary education as local government changes. The principle of consistency and continuity which are vital for the realization of local government goals are thereby lost. In addition there is also the conflict between the politically appointed chairman and a bureaucratic, the secretary. The chairman is often not favourably disposed to the technical and expert advice of the Director of Administration; the Head of Personnel Management and even the other senior officials of the Local government such as treasurers, director of work etc. In most cases, the ruling party determines to a large extent the role of the local governments should play either by supplying it with funds or starve it of funds.

**5. Lack of Accurate Census Figures**

Another discernable constraint on efficiency was the absence of accurate census figures. This made it very difficult for example to project the number of pupils eligible for admission into primary one every year. Also the inability to obtain adequate and reliable data on taxable adults greatly reduced the inflow of revenues from this particular source. So projections and planning were based on faulty data and inputs. This does not augur well for meaningful planning and result-oriented educational programmes at the Local government levels. Even where these data were available, there was the problem of record keeping and preservation. All these engendered crisis in management of primary education

**6. Corruption**

Corruption is a social malaise which did not spare local government councils. Some local government personnel were engaged in various dubious and criminal acts such as impersonation, illegal collection of taxes, kick-backs, ticket racketeering, inflation of invoices, collusion to dupe the local authority, diversion of government property to private use and siphoning of public funds into private pockets.

This has led to the dissolution of local governments in some state on grounds of official corruption by their various state governments. Some certain

investigations has revealed large-scale corrupt practices by officials of these local governments. In some cases, the local political leaders and the local government administrator shared the loot with the former having a slight edge over the latter.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the universe of problems, short comings and inadequacies of local governance of education described above, the following recommendation are made for more efficient and effective local governance of primary education in the country.

1. Local governments should be given greater autonomy to carry out their educational duties. State interferences should be minimized. State actions should stop at policy decisions and monitoring. State governments should stop taking local government funds and function. However, there should be in place a central guidance, monitoring and support mechanisms that can help strengthen local government management of primary education
2. Highly qualified and experienced and efficient staff should be attracted into local government service by offering them attractive remunerations and conditions of service. In service trainings such as seminars and workshops geared towards effective administration of local government should be made available to those in the system
3. The local governments should strive to generate more funds locally to supplement whatever they get from the federation account and state governments respectively. Local governments should not be dependent on the federation account only. They should invest in some other viable projects to generate revenue for their needs. Such areas as agriculture, commerce and industry should be invested by local governments.
4. Federal and state governments should ensure adequate and regular funding of local governments to save the councils from debts and enable them serve the people especially at the primary education levels. The federal governments and state governments should monitor closely how its monies remitted at being spent.
5. To counter the negative effects of corruption: fraudulence and similar offences which characterize the official fabric of local governments, federal and state governments should evolve befitting disciplinary measures against offenders. This will serve as deterrents to others and save much funds for primary education which councils are losing through corruption and misappropriation by few privilege local government officials
6. The absence of democratically elected officials contributed significantly to the low level of performance by local governments. It is strongly recommended that all local governments should be run by elected chairman and councilors. These are the representatives of the people at the grass root levels.
7. A comprehensive programme of enlightenment should be developed to educate the suppliers and collectors of educational data on the need to have an accurate data at all times. Data should not be falsified for cheap political points.
8. Persons appointed as chairman and secretaries of local governments authorities should be men and women of articulation, probity and proven integrity. The

principle of “Career open to talent” should be adopted. Preferably, retired educationists, magistrates and civil servants as well as successful business man should be appointed as chairman and secretaries respectively.

### Conclusion

Effective governance of primary education depends on the efficiency of the local government machinery set up to implement government policy on education at the local level. This paper defined the concepts of local government and efficiency and described the educational objectives and roles of local government councils in the governance of primary education. It critically examined the major factors which have militated against efficiency in local administration of education since 1976 and made several recommendations for efficient management of primary education by local governments in subsequent years.

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