

Assessment of Political Influence on Management of Public Secondary Schools in Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed political influence on management of public secondary schools in Benue State. To achieve the purpose of the study, two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study is 4228 comprising 304 principals and 3924 teachers from 304 public secondary schools in Benue State. The sample size of 423 out of 4228 principals and teachers in public secondary schools in Benue State representing 10% of the total population. A self-developed structured 24-item questionnaire titled “Political Influence and Management of Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire” (PIMPSSQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.90. Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation were used to answer the four research questions. Meanwhile, the chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness was used in testing the research hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that politics has high influence on funding of public secondary schools in Benue State. The finding also revealed politics high influence on provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that funds meant for the smooth running of public secondary schools should be made available and should be well monitored to prevent it from being diverted or embezzled. This can be achieved by putting machinery in place to monitor judicious use/utilization and distribution of funds devoid of politics in order that advantages to end users are expanded. Also, relevant and adequate facilities such as school buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, teaching and learning materials should be provided and equitably distributed to the various schools at the right time for the achievement of high productivity in educational outcome in schools irrespective of their political connections and recognitions.

Keys: Assessment, Political Influence, Management of Public Secondary Schools, Funding and Infrastructural Facilities

INTRODUCTION

The education sector has been recognized as a vital tool for social and economic development of the world. This is because education is regarded as the bedrock of any developed, underdeveloped or developing nation (Nigeria inclusive). The greatest legacy that any nation can give to its citizens is a sound and worthwhile education that is meaningful and relevant to the socio-cultural perspectives of that nation. It is maintained that education is the vehicle for rapid national development as it raises the young ones who will effectively manage the economy. It is essential then that the ideal education for any community must be broad-based and free from political influence for the purpose of making it possible for individuals to develop their potentials. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) sees education as an instrument for national development that is geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, respect for the views and

feelings of others, respect for the dignity of labour and to live as good citizens in the modern age of science and technology.

The extent to which the objectives of education are achieved depends on the nature of politics in place. This is because politics is one of the unavoidable phenomena that is experienced in every society and educational institution especially secondary schools. It is often said that everybody is a political animal (Ogbonnaya, 2016). This is because there is politics in everything. There is politics in the decisions making at home, in government, in educational system and even in religion. It is therefore important to understand the meaning of politics.

Politics encompasses the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society. It includes matters concerned with getting or using power within a particular group or organization (Ezeuwa, 2010). In the same manner, Alumode (2015) opines that politics is about power that is rooted in human relationship that facilitates the control of an individual over another person. Politics describes a system of political affairs. Politics is therefore an act whereby someone uses power or authority to influence the decision of others to one's advantage. Authority in this context means the power or right a person has to give orders to people. Influence on the other hand is the power that somebody has to make people behave the way he/she wants them to behave. Politics is a kind of game played that involves activities which people enter into to pursue groups, personal or selfish interest(s). In education for instance, politics is played in the area of funding, promotion, school mapping, and recruitment even in the distribution of facilities in various schools.

Politics in education is a process of management, control, decision making, implementation, governance and a method by which resources are allocated to different ethnic groups to achieve their aims. This is because politics is all about the formulation of visions and finding ways to achieve them (Okeke, 2017). It entails setting goals and mobilizing the resources it takes to attain them. It is a device intended for finding solutions to social, economic, political and educational problems by political means. Politics in education on the other hand is a process of controlling, taking decisions, using powers and implementing policies that will lead to the realization of educational goals and objectives.

The effect of political system on education is of concern because the potential impact of the school on politics is significant. In other words, the relationship between the two is a reciprocal one and the extent to which political development takes place depends on the compatibility between the two systems. The type of political system is important in determining the nature of its impact on the schooling process. In many ways, the differences in education between capitalist and socialist regimes, developed and less developed countries and rural and urban societies are due to the effects of the political system in practice.

Furthermore, at the secondary school level, the principal is the manager and the management of schools therefore cannot be separated from politics. Supporting this assertion, Okeke (2017) opines that politics plays an important role in decision making, control and governance of secondary school. In the same vein, Ogbonnaya (2016) observes that politics influences policies, funding, employment, staff promotion, staff recruitment, provision of basic infrastructure, school mapping, community relations and school location. When the political influence is favourable to the management and the development of education, it is regarded as positive but when the interference of government is inimical to the rules and regulations of the school management, it is negative because the objectives of secondary education will not be achieved, therefore, teaching and learning will not be effective and efficient.

The political party that controls the government in power no doubt exerts considerable influence on the education system. In many countries of the world, especially developing ones, the provision of education is used as a vote catching device to cajole the uneducated and poverty stricken electorates. This is why education policy making process in the final analysis is heavily politicized. Setting the objectives of

education, the provision of infrastructural facilities, funding and management are tied to politics. Politicians make or influence educational policies on behalf of the people with the belief that they know the needs of the people. In those countries, need assessment are rarely done unlike in the developed countries such as Germany, Japan, Canada, England, United States of American among others. It is for this purpose the ever widening gap between education and the economy exists in less developed countries and Nigeria in particular (Kelly, 2014).

Studies have also shown that politics is capable of having some influence on the management and policies that guide secondary education in Nigeria and Benue State in Particular. Politics may influence policies on funding, employment, promotion, staff-personnel administration, provision of basic infrastructure\equipment, school location, decision making, and school-community relation (Ogbonnaya, 2016). Out of the aforementioned influence of politics on the management of secondary schools, funding, and provision of infrastructural facilities would be the focus of this study. The achievements of educational goals depend on adequate financial support of the government, organizations, individual and even communities, because adequate financial supply and maintenance makes the school reach its glory and ensure adequate personnel to work in an organization (Akpeghughu, 2015).

Funding is concerned with procuring, expending, accounting and maintaining the financial resources of an educational institution to efficiently achieve educational objectives. The funding of education for the actualization of educational goals is of paramount importance. The efficient and effective allocation of funds to drive educational policies and programmes is more or less a product of political calculations and persuasion. Funding of public schools is mostly based on budgetary allocations for the education sub-section of the economy. As part of the annual appropriation for the various sectors of the economy, allocations to education is considered by the house of legislators from the submission by the executive arms of government for the sole purpose of procuring infrastructural facilities (Akpeghughu, 2015).

More so, another aspect of political influence on the management of public secondary school is provision of school facilities or equipment. Hence, the term school facilities/equipment refers to the school site, buildings, play grounds, equipment and other material resources provided in the school for effective teaching and learning operations (Mgbodile, 2013). The activities of the schools are evaluated and expressed through the quality of facilities in the school such as the quality of teachers, building, play-ground, computers and so on. This is done because education is necessary condition for progress, eradication of ignorance, superstition and poverty in the community and society at large. Often more than not, infrastructural facilities in public secondary schools are being influenced by politics which in turn could influence the management of secondary schools.

Management is the act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively. In this regard, Mishra (2013) opines that management is an act or technique of getting things done, through a process of planning, staffing, directing and controlling towards the attainment of set goals or objectives. Management to Akpakwu (2012) is an organizational process that aids in the creation of services or products from available raw materials. In the same manner, Nwankwo (2014) sees management as the performance of executive duties, the carrying out of polices or decisions to fulfil a purpose, and the control of the day running of an organization or institution.

Management in education is a specified type of work which comprises regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specified field or area of regulation to allow formative education to take place (Jim, 2015). Therefore, management of secondary school is a rational objective and practical approach to the issues affecting secondary schools as observed by Lenshine (2013). Good management skills of school head without political influence will foster smooth running of secondary education that will create conducive atmosphere that will improve teaching and learning.

Secondary education occupies a strategic position in the national education system. It bridges the gap between the primary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. It absorbs the primary level and prepares them for the tertiary which is the manpower based of the nation. The secondary school is an institution or a human industry established for refining human beings in terms of skills, behavior and all round excellence. To achieve objectives, an efficient and effective administrator must head such an institution (Mark, 2014). Secondary education system in Nigeria is charged with setting standards of knowledge and skills to be attained by teachers and reviewing the standards from time to time. It ensures the application of the curriculum at school through supervision and inspection exercises. In addition to that, it prescribes methods of testing the students at the end of their training so as to ensure quality products. It also initiates and promotes researches. It formulates policies for secondary education and practice in the country (Ngozika, 2015).

Furthermore, the politicization of education has become a major problem of educational development in Nigeria as well as Benue today. This is because educational system in this country does not have freedom from the clutches of domestic politics. The system of education has been completely politicized since the establishment of education from the time that the Whiteman arrived. Every decision taken in education has been under the dictation of political kings. However, education and politics are inextricably related (Chapman, 2016). The political bigwigs in the society normally extend their claws on school affairs sometimes for good and times for bad. Okeke (2017) observes that government, voluntary agencies, groups and individuals within and outside the school environment have their ways of influencing the management of public education.

Such interference in the running of secondary school education comes from the political godfathers, commissioners, house of assembly members, special assistants, political stakeholders, board members, P.T.A. among others. It has been observed that some political office holders in a bid to impress their people tend to commit blunder through the implementation or non-implementation of some educational policies that have either positive or negative effects on the school activities. Supporting this view, Bolarimwa (2018) contends that “many people speak against this policy but their voice makes no difference, it must be eventually implemented. The fact remains that for the school system to thrive, the government in power must support the activities of the school system.

Thus, these anomalies sometimes affect school rules, regulations and policy implementation, either positively or negatively. More so, government interferes in school management in different ways. Eze (2012) observes that in the areas of funding, staff personnel management, location of schools, employment within education sector and in the distribution/provision of infrastructural facilities to schools, the issue of politics is also paramount. The issue of politics in the transfer of teachers and principals is alarming to the extent that one is made to stay in an urban area if he/she has godfather in the government. Considering the influence of politics on educational management and enormous power, it is therefore pertinent to assess the political influence on the management of public secondary schools in Benue State.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to assess political influence on the management of public secondary schools in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. assessing influence of politics of funding on management of public secondary schools in Benue State.
2. assess influence of politics of provision of infrastructural facilities on management of public secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How does politics influence funding of public secondary schools in Benue State?
2. How does politics influence the provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Politics has no significant influence on funding of public secondary schools in Benue State.
2. Politics has no significant influence on provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The design for this study was survey research design which is aimed at collecting and analyzing data from a sample considered to be good representation of the entire population. The area of the study is Benue State in Nigeria. The population of this study is 4228 comprising 304 principals and 3924 teachers from 304 public secondary schools in Benue State. The sample size for this study is 423 out of 4228 principals and teachers in public secondary schools in Benue State representing 10% of the total population. The study adopted multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument that was used for data collection is a self-developed structured 24-item questionnaire titled “Political Influence and Management of Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire” (PIMPSSQ). The responses were weighted and scored as follows: VHI=Very High Influence (4), H=High Influence (3), L=Low Influence (2) and NI=No Influence. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher presented the questionnaire for face and content validation to one expert in Measurement and Evaluation and two experts from Educational Administration and Planning in the department of educational foundations and General Studies, all from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha Statistic. Internal consistency overall reliability estimate obtained was 0.90. The descriptive statistics of Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions. Chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness was used in testing the research hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1. How does politics influence funding of public secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 1. Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the Influence of Politics of Funding on Management of Public Secondary Schools in Benue State

S/N	Items	N	VHI	HI	LI	NI		SD	Remark
1	Funding of education is subjected to politicking which adversely affects the management of public secondary schools.	410	244	137	13	16	3.48	0.74	HI
2	Misappropriation of funds by principals influences management	410	155	235	20		3.33	0.56	HI

3	Favouritism in the allocation and disbursement of funds by the government in power negatively affects the management of public secondary schools	410	216	163	31		3.45	0.63	HI
4	Funds meant for the payment of staff salaries and allowances often misappropriated influences the management of public secondary schools	410	147	251	12		3.33	0.53	HI
5	Principals who are not in good book of politicians receive small subvention thereby affecting smooth management of such schools	410	180	131	95	4	3.19	0.82	HI
6	Schools who have Godfathers in power their account seems not to be audited regularly leading to poor management of public secondary schools.	410	208	151	51		3.38	0.70	HI
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation	410					3.36	0.66	HI

Note: N= Total Number, VHI=Very High Influence, HI= High Influence, LI= Low Influence, NI= No Influence, \bar{X} = Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Table 1 showed the mean scores and standard deviations on the influence of politics of funding on management of public secondary schools in Benue State. Data showed that item 1-6 had mean scores of 3.48, 3.33, 3.45, 3.33, 3.19 and 3.38 with corresponding standard deviation of 0.74, 0.56, 0.63, 0.53, 0.82 and 0.70 respectively. Based on the boundary criterion for decision making, it means that 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 mean scores are rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.36 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. To know if politics of funding has high influence on the management of public secondary schools in Benue State the corresponding hypothesis is therefore tested.

Research Question 2. How does politics influence the provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools?

Table 2. Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the influence of politics of provision of infrastructural facilities on management of public secondary schools

S/N	Items	N	VHI	HI	LI	NI		SD	Remark
7	Politics has a tendency of causing uneven distribution of facilities to schools	410	283	109	12	6	3.63	0.62	VHI
8	Politicians influence the allocation of science equipment to schools sited in their communities to the detriment of other schools	410	189	177	44	—	3.35	0.67	HI
9	Some facilities are diverted to personal use by prominent politicians which has adverse effect on the management of public secondary schools	410	181	188	41	—	3.34	0.65	HI
10	Contractors sometimes supply low quality facilities because they are protected by the power that be and this discourages staff from putting in their best	410	221	179	10	—	3.51	0.55	VHI
11	Classrooms are refurbished in schools where members of the community are in government and this enhances learning and management	410	166	200	27	17	3.26	0.76	HI

12	Quota system in the provision of school facilities denies some schools such facilities leading to poor management of such schools	410	198	116	89	7	3.23	0.85	HI
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		410					3.39	0.58	HI

Note: N= Total Number, VHI=Very High Influence, HI= High Influence, LI= Low Influence, NI= No Influence, \bar{x} = Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows that the mean scores and standard deviations of items 7-12 are 3.63, 3.35, 3.34, 3.51, 3.26 and 3.23 with the corresponding standard deviation of 0.62, 0.67, 0.65, 0.55, 0.76 and 0.85 respectively. Based on the boundary criterion for decision making, it means that 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 mean scores are rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.39 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. To know if politics of provision of infrastructural facilities has high influence on management of public secondary schools the corresponding hypothesis is tested.

Hypotheses Testing

Data from respondents are computed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using Chi-square test. The results are presented in Table 2-4. **Hypothesis One:**

Politics has no significant influence on funding of public secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Political influence of funding on public secondary schools in Benue State

Responses	VHI	HI	LI	NI	Total	df	X ² cal	P-value	Remark
Observed	192	178	37	3	410	3	272.21	.000	Sign.
Expected	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5					

$P = 0.00 < 0.05$; $df = 3$ and x^2 calculated = 272.21

0 cells (.0%0 have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 102.5

Table 3 showed that x^2 calculated=272.21 at $df = 3$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. This showed that the null hypothesis which stated that Politics has no significant influence on funding of public secondary schools in Benue State was therefore rejected. This implied that Politics has significant influence on funding of public secondary schools in Benue State.

Hypothesis Two:

Politics has no significant influence on provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Political influence of provision of infrastructural facilities on public secondary schools

Responses	VHI	HI	LI	NI	Total	df	X ² cal	P-value	Remark
Observed	206	162	37	5	410	3	273.65	.000	Sign.
Expected	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5					

$P = 0.00 < 0.05$; $df = 3$ and x^2 calculated = 273.65

0 cells (.0%0 have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 102.5

Table 4 revealed that χ^2 calculated= 273.65 at $df = 3$; $p= 0.00 < 0.05$. This implied that the null hypothesis which stated that politics has no significant influence on provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools was therefore rejected. This result clearly shows that politics has significant influence on provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools in Benue State.

Summary of Findings of the Study

The following findings emanated from the study based on the research questions and hypotheses tested.

1. Politics has high influence on funding of public secondary schools in Benue State.
2. Politics has high influence on provision of infrastructural facilities of public secondary schools in Benue State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed as follows:

The first finding of revealed that politics has high influence on funding of public secondary schools in Benue State. This finding agrees with Osuji (2011) who reported that politics influenced the funding of schools that there is favoritism in the disbursement of funds to schools. In addition, Maduagwu (2013) discovered that the rate of politicking in administration of public secondary schools when he summarized that most of the contract works on school buildings and facilities are in the hands of politicians who are enriching themselves with the money meant to be invested in the scheme. Some areas officials who were given money to ensure that principals and head teachers execute the projects gave them money far below the cost of the job. Similarly, Wey-Amaewhule and Amadi (2015) found that in many part of the world, funding of education has been subjected to politicking, because government in power will come up with programmes and policies that will be favourable to them without considering the entire nation. In the same manner, Akpeghughu (2015) found that politics influenced the allocation of funds to secondary schools Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District supervision and government in power significantly influences management of secondary schools as regards funding. Okorie (2010) observed that governments that are favourably disposed to education could allocate more money to the educational sector which in turn has positive influence on the running of schools. The researcher discovered during the field work that Principals who are not in good book of politicians receive small subvention thereby affecting smooth management of such schools. Okoro (2010) opined that politics of funding education in Nigeria has expanded to including debates on issues about education tax on some designated items and areas of economy and how to procure fund for maintenance and development of education. Furthermore, Onyenye (2016) found that quality education must be accompanied with adequate funding to enable quality societal educational attainment, but in contrast public secondary education has not been given adequate attention and funding as a result of political interference. Therefore, for the attainment of equality of education, every police created by the system to direct social behavior should be given equal attention and funding. Mohammed and Gbenu (2017) observed that inadequate funding in education has been a major challenge in the realization of most policies and programmes in education, that there is a correlation between under funding and national development. Adewale (2011) found that politics in funding education in Nigeria is who gets what and who is responsible for funds in educational development, parent teacher association of some schools usually discuss how much levy students will pay and in the process of doing so introduce politics of education. Therefore the influence of politics in the funding of public secondary schools cannot be underrated.

The second finding revealed that politics has high influence on provision of infrastructural facilities of

public secondary schools. This finding is consistent with Tabotrdip (2010) who found that the provision of physical facilities and equipment in the school were affected because of political interference. This finding corroborates Ayogu (2012) who discovered that politics affects the provision of physical facilities and equipment in public secondary schools. In the same manner, Adeyemi (2016) reported that the degree and diversification of political interests account for the failure and success of the system. He further revealed that a lot of political bottle necks are dominating the politics in education, especially as it concerns provision and allocation of facilities in public secondary schools. Though, politics has already been seen as an activity by which deferring interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in proportion to their importance, welfare and survival of the whole community. In addition, Okeke (2017) remarked that politics of education connotes a way of looking at the public school system and its management; the processes of control, governance and decision; method by which social values and resources are allocated for different people to achieve the welfare of people. Nzequeme (2011) found that within a given school system or school building a micro political system exists that determines the distribution of education (teachers, curricular) to students and the struggle to gain influence with regards to these allocative decisions is constant. Politics makes administrators of secondary schools mere robust in the dispensing of their job, since there will be synergy between the government and the school administrators this is achieved by employing qualified teachers. Okoro (2010) found that politics of school facilities provision is that, government provides more facilities to schools in urban areas and little or none in rural areas thus, making many schools in the rural areas to be performing poorly in examinations. Most of the school facilities in the rural areas are being provided by rural people and the Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Moreso, Adaja and Osagie (2015) found that there is disparity in provision of facility from one school to another and in some situation the educational institutions situated in rural areas are neglected. Furthermore, Ossat (2015) found that political bottle-neck in the system are directly related to the poor state of facilities in schools, vis-a-vis low quality of education delivery. The degree and diversification of political interests account for the failure and success of the system. Similarly, Nwakpa (2015) discovered that the available school facilities in the state public secondary schools are politically shared to favour some schools at the expense of others; thus, there is no even distribution of school facilities among public secondary schools in Benue State. The politics in provision of school facilities in Benue State has left many schools especially, the public ones in rural areas in acute shortage. The story is not even better in private owned secondary schools in the State. The only difference in private schools is that the few they have are adequately utilized.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that politics in the areas of funding, provision of physical infrastructural facilities, recruitment and location of school have high influence on the management of public secondary schools in Benue State. Though, education and school have been seen as webs of politics which cannot function without politics. Yet there is need for true politics, which is geared towards ensuring the welfare of the people. Dirty politics which is characterized by inconsistency, lack of principles and established rules in education cannot give room to quality and effective teaching and learning in schools. If education is the business of all, then all interest groups in the educational polity should be protected as far as funding, provision of facilities, recruitments of teachers and location of schools are concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Funds meant for the smooth running of public secondary schools should be made available and should be well monitored to prevent it from being diverted or embezzled. This can be achieved by putting machinery in place to monitor judicious use/utilization and distribution of funds devoid of politics in order that advantages to end users are expanded.

2. Relevant and adequate facilities such as school buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, teaching and learning materials should be provided and equitably distributed to the various schools at the right time for the achievement of high productivity in educational outcome in schools irrespective of their political connections and recognitions. Government and other stakeholder should set aside substantial amount of money for provision of such facilities.

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