



SCHOOL FUNDING POLICY AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR ENSURING EQUITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to determine if school funding policy is an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 266 public secondary school principals in Anambra State. The entire population was used without sampling because it was manageable. A self-developed validated questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. A pilot study involving 20 public secondary school principals in Enugu State was used to establish the reliability of the instrument with coefficient values of 0.81 and 0.70 were obtained for clusters B1 and B2 respectively with an overall reliability coefficient value of 0.76. Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The finding of the study revealed that school fund allocation policy and school fund monitoring policies are effective tools for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended among others that Government at all levels should ensure that the existing school funding and monitoring policies are consistently and effectively implemented in all secondary schools.

Keywords: School, Funding, Policy, Equity, Secondary Education

Introduction

There are four levels of education in Nigeria. They are pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary. Secondary education, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), is the education that students get after finishing nine years of primary school. It is the level of education that comes after primary school but before higher education. Secondary education serves as a link between primary and higher education. It is a tool for preparing people for productive lives in society. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the aims of secondary education in Nigeria are to prepare students for meaningful social participation and higher education. Adinna and Onyekwelu (2021) stated that given the significance of secondary education in modern societies, it is not surprising that all societies tend to always strive to optimize educational service delivery for the attainment of the goals of education at all levels. However, achieving the aims of secondary education in Nigeria has proven to be difficult due to a lack of educational equity.

The importance of recognizing the role of equality in education cannot be overstated. In education, equity relates to the idea of justice (Anumenechi, 2015). Inequities emerge when biased or unjust policies, programs, practices, or conditions lead to unequal educational performance, results, and outcomes (Uzoka & Igwe, 2015). Equity and equality are sometimes used interchangeably with the associated notions of excellence. Uzoka and Igwe (2015) further



described equity in education as a wide range of educational models, programs, and techniques that are fair but not necessarily equal. Skrla et al. (2017) argued that educational equity involved transforming educational systems to eliminate disparities in achievement and access, ensuring all students could thrive in their learning environments. Mestry (2016) described educational equity as a commitment to providing all students with the resources they needed to succeed, which might require an unequal distribution of resources to address existing disparities. Schools that lack quality teachers and leaders, adequate infrastructure and educational materials will have more difficulties to provide a high quality learning experience. Even school systems with comparatively high levels of funding may face resource challenges, which often affect disadvantaged areas or schools, thus raising serious equity concerns. Thus school funding policies is seen as a measure for ensuring equity in education.

School funding policies are essential frameworks that govern how resources are allocated to educational institutions, impacting the quality and equity of education provided to students (Garba, 2018). Odden and Picus (2014) defined school funding policies as the collection of rules and procedures that govern the distribution of state and local funds to school districts and schools. They emphasize the importance of aligning funding with educational goals and strategies. Mestry (2018) defined school funding policies as a state finance system that ensures equal educational opportunity by providing a sufficient level of funding distributed to districts within the state to account for additional needs generated by student poverty. These policies have evolved significantly, particularly in response to changing educational needs and governance structures. Traditionally, funding for secondary education primarily came from local governments, with states playing a minor role (Dalrymple, 2016). However, over time, states have assumed a more significant responsibility in funding education, leading to a more centralized approach in many regions. In the context of this study, school funding policies is defined as the mechanisms by which financial resources are generated, allocated, and used to achieve educational objectives. They emphasize the role of funding in promoting equity and adequacy in education.

Fund allocation refers to the process of distributing financial resources for specific purposes or projects. It involves determining how much money will be designated for various activities, programs, or departments within an organization or project. Fund allocation is the selection of types of projects or services to be funded and the anticipated amount of funding available for those initiatives. This process helps ensure that resources are utilized effectively to meet organizational goals or project objectives (Garba, 2018). School fund allocation refers to the process of distributing financial resources to individual schools within a district or education system. Using objective criteria and a universally applied rule to determine the amount of resources each school is entitled to, based on factors like student enrollment, grade levels, and special needs (OECD, 2021). The goal of school fund allocation is to ensure that resources are distributed equitably and efficiently to support student learning outcomes. Effective allocation requires collaboration between stakeholders and a combination of formula funding and administrative discretion (OECD, 2021). Once funds are allocated, the next crucial step is to monitor their use.

School fund monitoring policies play a vital role in ensuring effective financial management within schools. Istaryatiningtias (2021) describes school fund monitoring as the process of overseeing and controlling the income and expenditure of a school's financial resources. This process integrates both pedagogical and financial aspects of school operations,



assessing how the use of resources influences the achievement of strategic goals and the quality of teaching and learning. Budget transparency, which involves the timely and systematic disclosure of relevant fiscal information, is essential for ensuring accountability and encouraging participation throughout the budgeting process (Ndou&Menlah, 2015). According to Istaryatiningtias (2021), effective school fund monitoring is critical for ensuring transparency, accountability, and the equitable use of resources, all of which contribute to improving teaching and learning outcomes. However, the extents to which these assertions are true have not been empirically proven in secondary schools in Anambra State. It is against this background that the researcher investigated school funding policy as an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

UNESCO reports that education expenditure has remained relatively stable since 1999, with the world median average of education spending being 13.7% in 2012. Despite a growth in education spending as a share of national GDP between 2002 and 2012, the share of education in total domestic public expenditure has declined in many developing countries, including Nigeria. In Anambra State, inadequate financial resources seem to have led to substandard educational facilities. This seems to have resulted in high dropout rates among disadvantaged students which indicate lack of equity in education. Students from underprivileged backgrounds are disproportionately affected, as they cannot access the same educational opportunities as their peers in better-funded areas. This inequity not only hinders individual academic achievement but also poses a threat to the community's socio-economic development. The implications of this issue are far-reaching, potentially impacting the human capital development index in the area. The researcher investigated perceived influence of school funding policies in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate school funding policy as an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. Specifically, the study ascertained:

1. The effectiveness of school fund allocation policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State.
2. The effectiveness of school fund monitoring policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How effective is school fund allocation policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State?
2. How effective is school fund monitoring policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State?

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised all 266 public secondary school principals in Anambra State. The instrument for data collection was a four-point rating scale



questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Influence of School Funding Policies in Ensuring Equity in Education (QISFPEEE)”. The instrument contains 16 items in two sections of A and B. Section A contains information relating the gender of the respondents. Section B was broken down into two clusters; B1 and B2. Cluster B1 contains 10 items on the influence of school fund sourcing policies in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. Section B2 contains 6 items on the influence of school fund sourcing policies in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. The instrument was structured on a 4- point rating scale of Very Effective (VE), Effective (E), Ineffective (IE) and Very Ineffective (VIE). The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. A pilot study involving 20 public secondary school principals in Enugu State was used to establish the reliability of the instrument with coefficient values of 0.81 and 0.70 were obtained for clusters B1 and B2 respectively with an overall reliability coefficient value of 0.76.

The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents’ through on-the-spot completion and retrieval method was used by personal visits to the respondents on appointment. Out of the 266 copies of questionnaire administered, 243 copies (representing 91%) were retrieved and used for analysis with an attrition rate of only 9%. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions to determine the level of homogeneity among the respondents' ratings. Decision on the research questions was based on the item and cluster mean score in relation to the cut off mean score of 2.50. Thus, an item or cluster with mean score of 2.50 or higher is effective while any item or cluster below 2.50 is ineffective.

Results

Research Question 1

How effective is school fund allocation policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Effectiveness of School Fund Allocation Policy in Ensuring Equity in Secondary Education (N=243)

S/No.	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Increased funding allows schools to invest in better infrastructure, including modern classrooms	3.67	0.85	Effective
2.	School fund allocation policy that prioritize funding for schools in high-need areas can help address educational disparities	3.43	0.85	Effective
3.	Allocating funds for professional development for teachers in disadvantaged schools can improve the enhance equity	3.79	0.93	Effective
4.	Allocate additional resources to schools serving high percentages of low-income students to help bridge the resource gap	3.71	0.89	Effective
5.	Develop funding formulas that consider the specific needs of different student populations	3.66	0.78	Effective



6.	Increase funding for special education programs to ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate resources	3.65	0.87	Effective
7.	Provide funding for ongoing training in culturally responsive teaching	3.63	0.74	Effective
8.	Investing in the physical infrastructure and resources of schools in underserved areas can create a more conducive learning environment	3.61	0.83	Effective
9.	Encourage schools to form partnerships with community organizations that can provide additional resources and support.	3.55	0.82	Effective
10.	Implement funding models that allow schools to use resources flexibly to address their unique challenges	3.09	0.71	Effective
11.	Ensure that schools are held accountable for how they use funds to promote equity	3.22	0.76	Effective
Cluster Mean		3.55		Effective

Data in Table 1 show that the mean scores for the effectiveness of school fund allocation policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State are above the cut-off mean score of 2.50. The standard deviation scores ranging between 0.71 and 0.93 showed that the respondents' opinions were related. The cluster mean score of 3.55 indicates that school fund allocation policy is an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. The standard deviation scores ranging between 0.71 and 0.93 showed that the respondents' opinions were related.

Research Question 2

How effective is school fund monitoring policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Effectiveness of School Fund Monitoring Policy in Ensuring Equity in Secondary Education (N=243)

S/No.	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Fund monitoring policies help ensure that resources are distributed based on the needs of the schools.	3.41	0.70	Effective
2.	Effective fund monitoring policies increase accountability by requiring detailed reporting on how funds are used	3.55	0.92	Effective
3.	Monitoring policies can help identify specific areas where additional resources are needed	3.38	0.74	Effective
4.	Monitoring of school funds can lead to significant improvements in higher school enrollment	3.61	0.88	Effective



5. Involving local communities in the monitoring process can enhance education equity by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards local schools	3.77	0.82	Effective
6. Ensuring budget transparency will foster inclusion of all groups in the budget process	3.65	0.86	Effective
7. Using digital technologies in fund monitoring can improve the efficiency of the school fund management process	3.44	0.87	Effective
Cluster Mean	3.54		Effective

Data in Table 2 show that the mean scores for the effectiveness of school fund monitoring policy in ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State are above the cut-off mean score of 2.50. The standard deviation scores ranging between 0.70 and 0.92 showed that the respondents' opinions were related. The cluster mean score of 3.53 indicates that school fund monitoring policy is an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that school fund allocation policy is an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. Furthermore, findings of the study revealed that allocating funds for professional development for teachers in disadvantaged schools can improve the enhance equity, increased funding allows schools to invest in better infrastructure and allocating additional resources to schools serving high percentages of low-income students to help bridge the resource gap. This is in line with Dalrymple (2016) reported that funding of secondary education through parent teachers' association and community contribution significantly influence secondary education effectiveness. In the same vein, Garba (2018) reported that there is significant impact in the leadership performance of principals, teachers and ministry of education officials based on the qualified personnel allocation, funding allocation, material resource allocation as well as time resource allocation. Dalrymple (2016) stated that to ensure equity in fund allocation, communities should give maximum financial support to secondary education because investment in education is building the future economy of the nation as well as ensuring better output.

Furthermore, findings of the study revealed that school fund monitoring policy is an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. The findings of the study further showed that fund monitoring policies help ensure that resources are distributed based on the needs of the schools, involving local communities in the monitoring process can enhance education equity by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards local schools and monitoring of school funds can lead to significant improvements in higher school enrollment among others. This finding is in agreement with Istaryatiningtias (2021) who stated that effective school fund monitoring is critical for ensuring transparency, accountability and the equitable use of resources, all of which contribute to improving teaching and learning outcomes. Similarly, Ndou and Menlah (2015) noted that budget transparency is essential for ensuring accountability and encouraging participation throughout the budgeting process.



Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that school funding policy is an effective tool for ensuring equity in secondary education in Anambra State. From the findings of the study it is clear that school fund allocation policy and school fund monitoring policy are effective tools for ensuring equity in education. It is therefore, pertinent that efforts are made to put in place measures for improvement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Government at all levels should ensure that the existing school funding and monitoring policies are consistently and effectively implemented in all secondary schools. This can be achieved by providing regular training and capacity-building programmes for school administrators and finance officers on best practices in fund allocation and monitoring.
2. Principals of public secondary schools should increase transparency in the allocation of school funds by establishing clear guidelines and reporting mechanisms.
3. Principals of public secondary schools should encourage greater involvement of local communities, parents, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process related to school funding and resource allocation.
4. The Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC) should develop a mechanism for the regular review and update of school funds to reflect changing educational needs and socio-economic conditions.

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