Local Government Autonomy and Primary School Education Administration in Nigeria: Legislative way forward

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Abstract
It is pertinent to reckon with a usual saying, that when “the Foundation is faulty, what would a righteous do” to a strong and solid building to be arrived at, the foundation matter most, ditto for a man that succeeded in the life race, his/her foundation must be strong and solid. Therefore, Primary education is the bed rock to every other segment of educational institutions. Meaning that, other segments of education depend solely on primary education as the basis for their existence. This paper is a positioning one and it examines the position of Primary education administration in Nigeria in the phase of self governance of local government as the agitation for local government autonomy is on going in the country by the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE). It defines primary education, educational administration and local government. Brief history of government involvement in education was given in the paper. It implores the legislative arm of government to be painstaking, when to and/ or promulgating laws which will have a significant effect on the smooth running of the administration of primary school education in Nigeria. The paper also identified the objectives of primary education as contained in the national policy on education and functional roles of the local government as contained in the 1999 federal republic of Nigeria constitution. Inconclusively recommendations were stated.

Keywords: Local government autonomy, Primary School Education, Administration

Introduction
Primary education is a type of education offers unto the children between the ages of 6 to 11 years plus. It is also a type of educational institution which serves as a foundation for other educational institutions to stand upon before taking up a progressive/progression strive to another level of educational careers. According to National Policy on Education (NPE) 4th edition (FRN 2004) describes Primary school education as the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 years plus that, the rest of the education system built upon. Primary school education is the key to the success or failure of the whole education system. It has 6 years duration of studies. It is basic, compulsory and free for all children within the age limit.
specified above, in as much as these children were enrolled in the public primary schools but fees are charged at the privately owned primary schools. National Policy on Education (NPE) 6th edition (FGN 2013) sees primary education as the education given to the children of ages 6-12 years and with the following objectives-

a). to inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; b). to lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; c). to promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; d). to instill social, moral norms and values in the child; e). to develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and f). to provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child’s capacity.

Awoyele (2005) attributed primary school to be a school which provides a six-year basic course of full time instruction suitable for pupils between the age of six years and twelve years. Adeyemi and Nwosu (2010) presented primary education as one of the forms of basic education, and is the foundation of any educational system; if this foundation is not strong enough, the whole system of education will collapse. They emphasis further that, to achieve strong educational foundation, the Nigerian primary education system needs adequate facilities such as blocks of classrooms, furniture, teachers, instructional materials, libraries and other school relevant equipments/instructional aides.

NPE (FRN 2004) also came up with the outlined of the goals of Primary education to include: to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communication effectively, to lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking, to give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to life of the society, to mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child, to develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment, to give the child opportunities for developing, manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively within the limits of the child’s capacity, and to provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

No wonder, the supervisory Minister of Education, Barr. Wike re-emphasizes that, the primary education is seen as the foundation on which the development of any country can be built and upon which other educational levels and super structure of the education system are dependent. Ijaduola (2009), submitted that to achieve the intended objectives of primary education in Nigeria, attention must be on planning, funding, infrastructural development, support services, personnel management, monitoring and evaluation, implementation of curriculum innovations, non-formal education, and undue politicization of education.

Having dwelt so much on the nature and composition of Primary education, one will note that, it is fundamental to have a good and solid foundation in order to attain brighter future in our nation’s education industry. If the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) agitating for the local government autonomy across the country, this association may be right for a reason best known to them, but then we need to be mindful of what will be, the position of primary education administration in Nigeria, since local governments are collaborators in the funding and supervision of primary schools with that of the state and federal government respectively. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the concepts of local government and primary education administration in this study. Also, we need to be mindful
of the significant effects of the local government autonomy on the primary education administration either positive or negative.

**Local Government and Primary Education Administration**

Local government can be referred to as the government at the grassroots, that is, a type of government and governance that is closer to the people of a community.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1999) defines local government as “Government at local level exercised through councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas”. The 1999 Constitution, fourth schedule, section 7 sub section 1 and 2 clearly states the functions of local government as follows:

(a) the consideration and the making of recommendations to a State commission on economic planning or any similar body on - (i) the economic development of the State, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the council and of the State are affected, and(ii) proposals made by the said commission or body;
(b) collection of rates, radio and television licences;
(c) establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm;
(d) licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts;
(e) establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences;
(f) construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of a State;
(g) naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses;
(h) provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal;
(i) registration of all births, deaths and marriages;

(j) assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State; and

(k). control and regulation of -(i)out-door advertising and hoarding,(ii) movement and keeping of pets of all description,(iii) shops and kiosks,(iv) restaurants, bakeries and other places for sale of food to the public,(v). Laundries, and (vi) licensing, regulation and control of the sale of liquor. Thus, the functions of a local government council shall include participation of such council in the Government of a State as respects the following matters – (a). the provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education; (b) the development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of materials (c) the provision and maintenance of health services; and (d) such other functions as may be conferred on a local government council by the House of Assembly of the State.

The administration of primary school education is not differs from other forms of administration done at other levels of education. According to Olagboye (2004), educational administration is the process of skillfully arranging the human and material resources and programmes available for education and carefully and systematically using them for the achievement of educational objectives.
Looking at one of the functions attributed to local government as stated in the 1999 constitution emphasised that, local government should be in the position of the provision and maintenance of primary education, adult and vocational education in Nigeria. With the recent calls and the agitation for local government autonomy in Nigeria, by the NULGE, what will now be the stand and position of Primary education administration in Nigeria, if local government is approved for the self governance? To answer this question, it calls for legislative caution on the position of primary education administration in Nigeria in the face of local government autonomy by the NULGE.

The legislative caution on the Primary Education Administration in Nigeria

According to Ado (2014) local government is the third tier of government, which is closest to the people. If federalism from the perception of mutual agreement by levels of government to share power of the state in form of constitutional or legalized arrangements, then governments would have understood why they need to make the local governments run properly. He further emphasis that without respect for the powers of the local governments, the separateness and independence that their operations entail, democracy will not make much progress.

Edun (2013) stated that it is clearly stated in the 1999 constitution that a local government council is not a tier of government. It is only to advise the state on economic matters, collect rates and perform other duties that are conferred on it by the House of Assembly of the state. It is also very clear that with respect primary education, the constitution clearly states that the local government council is providing and maintaining it as a participant in the government of the state.

Adeyemi and Nwosu (2010) attribute the under listed as the roles and responsibilities of local government in the fulfillment of the Universal Basic Education; hence primary education is a sub-part of UBE:

- Initiate and execute specific projects for the attainment of the objectives of the UBE scheme;
- Coordinate, supervise and monitor the implementation of the UBE scheme at the local government level;
- Assist in providing the infrastructural and other requirements for the UBE scheme;
- Supervise, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the UBE scheme in the local government;
- Sensitize and mobilize the largest groups, parents and other stakeholders for their effective involvement and participation;
- Fulfill its financial obligations and support needed for the effective implementation of the scheme;
- Evaluate and submit periodical progress reports on the UBE scheme to the state government;
- Ensure probity, transparency and accountability for all monies allocated for the UBE scheme.

Going through the memory line of western education in Nigeria, the genesis of western education can be dated backed to Saturday 24, 1842 when the missionaries to be précised Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society landed at Badagry, and put a Church building and
that same church building was also used as a school under the leadership of Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman. However, the school started its operations in 1843 and it was named the Nursery of the Infant Church. It is interesting to know that, this said school was put on ground by Mr. and Mrs. William de Graft, after the exit of Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman to Ghana (Gold Coast) and the school enrolment was just only fifty (50) pupils (Oni, 2006, and Ajayi, 2004).

The position of legislation cannot be over emphasized as fact as the position of primary education administration is paramount. To have a vibrant primary education administration, there is need for a coordinating ministry which will have to see to the affairs of primary education administration in the country peradventures that local government autonomy is granted.

Obviously, it could be observed that between 1842 to 1882, that was forty good years of the existence of elementary education, there were no education ordinances or laws, which governed the activities of the first generation of elementary schools in the country known as Nigeria today since 1914 to date, but then the Missionaries were the one running the schools as they deem-it-fits. The Nigeria education industry began to receive the government involvement right away from 1882 till date. This marks the era of pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial era, with the various rules and regulations been put in place, in order to give attention to education by the various governments at different point in time.

It is significant to note that the legislative arm of government is vested with the power of making laws after necessary processes had been met, which will be applicable to the various sectors of the nation’s governance and which of course education cannot be excluded.

Conclusion
One of the major events among other, which warranted for the call of local government autonomous, can be attributed to financial allocation from the federation account which is usually subjected to redistribution by the State Governors. To back up the above observation, the former National President of Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) Felix Akhabue asserted that; “A situation where allocation already made available to local governments by the federation account allocation committee (FAAC) is subjected to redistribution by the State Governments is a clear breach of the constitution (Ado, 2014). The concern of this paper is on the Primary Education Administration in Nigeria as the local government autonomy is ongoing: Legislative Point of view.

Recommendations
Therefore, the under listed recommendations can be of significant assistant in the act of parliamentary and adjudicating policy for primary education. These include:
- The legislative chambers that is both the upper house (Senate) and lower chamber (House of Representatives) in the country should come up with a law in the constitution which will recognizes Local government education authority (LGEAs) throughout the federation as a Parastatals with a few of having its coordinating Ministry or Parastatal at the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.
- Let there be a direct financial allocation to fund Primary Education to be managed by the various Local Government Education Authority (LGEAs) throughout the federation without the involvement of the state governments or governors but the LGEAs can only be accountable to the National that is government at the centre.
- There should be very strong monitoring and evaluation team, these can be constituted by the Federal government, State government and the Local government representatives. They are to monitor all the activities of the LGEAs.
- The legislators should under studied the various past regulations on primary education and thereafter come up with a better rules and regulations that will ensure that solid foundation is being coined out for the nation’s education industry as it is applicable to primary education being the foundation for other educational institutions.
- The legislators should be able to fashion out laws which will detach primary education from both the State and Local Government resources control that is financial resource control except playing the supervisory roles in order to ensure that the schools are operating in accordance with the nation’s National Policy on education.
- The Chief Executive Officers of Primary Schools that is the Head teachers should be empowered to prepare their various schools budget and defend such at the floor of the legislative house as the case may be, hence they shall be held responsible for the resources allocated to their schools rather than someone sitting down somewhere disbursing imprest which cannot care for the expenses of the individual schools within few days of a term in a session.

In conclusion, the national assembly should stage a referendum for the stakeholders of the primary schools especially the teachers and their heads, in order to know their actual demand, through assigning delegates who will present their interest hence all of them cannot be gathered together at a goal in order to avoid rowdiness.

References

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