

**ACCOUNTABILITY AS A MEASURE FOR EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE.**

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ABSTRACT

Accountability is an integral part in the administration of the school system. Good accountability measures entail effective school administration. Accountability is the answerability and responsibility to higher authority. It is important to explore the need for accountability in the educational system, the flow of accountability in the school system, principles of accountability, what the school administrators should accounted for, characters of schools administrators, concept of secondary school, and constraints to accountability in the school system. The paper concluded that, accountability means the state of being accountable to the stakeholders in education and accountable for the resources used in education. Accountability in the school system helps to protect funds from misused as well as fostering a committed pursuit of educational goals by administrators. Finally, the paper suggested that the appointment of school administrators should be based on merit and trust on individuals in order to avoid misused of school funds, there should be regular supervision and inspection in the school to ensure strict accountability.

**Keywords: Accountability, Effective Administration, School Administrators, Public
Secondary
Schools.**

INTRODUCTION

The goals of education at all levels can only be achieved when there is good accountability in the system. The school administrators ranging from primary to university level are responsible for effective school administration. At the primary school level, the chief administrator is the Head Master (Mistress), at the secondary school level, Principal is the chief administrator of the, while at the tertiary level, Vice Chancellors, Provosts, and Rectors are the chief administrators in both public and private institutions. The school administrators in the public institutions are accountable to the government and the society who invested in them, while those in the private institutions are accountable to their employers. Administration in the education system is all about learning, excelling, accommodating, harnessing, innovating and pursuing. School administrators are leaders that determines the direction, safety and prosperity of the school cultures, and changes through ensuring that excellent policies are made (Asaju, Arome & Mukaila, 2014 in Ololube, 2018a,).

However, the major aim of educational accountability is to determine whether value has been received for the extent to which the educational goals are being achieved and whether alternative methods of operations should be considered. It is therefore, noted that a well-functioning system of education depends on a rigorous public accountability and it must start at the top on the policy makers down to the teachers who are responsible for the teaching of the pupils/ student in the classroom. In secondary education system, the principals are the key personnel responsible for the productivity of the secondary schools organization. With the notion of a school, the principal's duty would be to engineer, organize the educational enterprise, to prepare students to contribute to the development of the society (FGN 2004). Worried by the ineptitude of some schools administrators on the use of schools resources to the detriments of achieving the aims of education has warranted the development of this paper to examined the concept of accountability as a measure for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept of Accountability

The word accountability has not been universally defined; this depends on the position, and situation or organizations that need to define it. Thus the following definitions are hereby describes the word accountability based on the authors' opinions: In a nutshell, accountability mean requirement of answerability to a higher authority for one action or decisions. It also refers to a condition of rendering a good account of how public money was spent by a public servant during a given period. Mbipom (2000) put it that accountability could be seen as the measurement of performance against specific operational plans based on the goals and objectives of the organization. I give a rather definition of accountability as a means of giving a details and actual reports of events of one responsibility to a higher authority. It is the obligation or willingness to accept responsibility. Elechi, (2004:96) says accountability is the fulfillment of institutional objectives and professional obligations which demand being answerable to the community and the nation at large.

Oxford Dictionary of English 7th edition, defined accountability to mean to be responsible for your decision or actions and expected to explain them when you are asked to. Accountability connotes and is synonymous with being answerable to someone for decision and consequential actions. In other words, Enamuo, (2014:56) posited that some principals see accountability to mean taking stock of money, building and materials, while some teachers and inspectors sees it as reporting to duty on time, Enaohwo & Eferakcya (1989:174) opined that it means prudent and efficient utilization of available resources for achieving acceptable level of educational goals.

Accountability could also means the yardstick for measuring the efficiency and degree of responsiveness to societal and students demand in the stewardship of educational institutions. To Mgbekem (2004), accountability is practiced in formal hierarchical organizations daily, and it connotes answerability that is, accounting for what was originally given to somebody to custody or investing for profit making. Accountability in formal organizations such as schools shows that subordinates report to their immediate superior officers in daily routine administrative duties. In educational institution, accountability could best be explained on the premise that: if large sums of money, facilities and staff are made available to the school administrator by the Government, at the stipulated time, he/she should be able to put these materials and personnel to the best use in order to achieve the objectives of that system of education. That is, the principal must make sure that the students are adequately prepared for higher education and useful life in the society within the six years of secondary education.

Accountability in education also involves responsibility, answerability, control, productivity, performance, responsiveness evaluation and special goals. In other words, Udo and his associate (1990) define accountability in education as a system of management which assigns certain responsibilities to line and staff personnel and in turn holds them responsible or accountable for the achievement of pre-determined objectives within the area of responsibility.

Accountability also means making correct returns for something given. It involves an audit to ascertain whether resources have been used for specified purposes accounting to specified practices or requirements. Udo (2002) pointed out that accountability is the fulfillment of institutional objectives and professional obligations. In short, accountability demands that the public institution and those who manage them should be answerable to the community and the nation at large. At this juncture, accountability is the process which occurs in a relationship between those entrusted with the responsibility for accomplishment of specific tasks.

Onuka (2009) argues that the term educational accountability implies that those who and given responsibility are held answerable for educational outcomes of the students. This explains that those in positions of authority are aware of the duty to give account of stewardship to those who gave the responsibility in terms of productivity and the quality of the product of every school. Also the concept of accountability in education stresses the need for practitioners in education and stakeholders to accept and acknowledge the right of the public and other interested persons and other stakeholders such as parents, education authorities, and

communities, to know what goes on in education sector of the economy not only how judiciously the money allocated to the sector is spent; but much more about how much learning is taking place and how efficient and effectively it is.

What the schools Administrators should Accounted for

Wali. (2007) posited that schools administrators at all levels should be accountable for the following:

1. **Accountability for School Finance and Business:** this include preparation of school budget, accounting for all the petty funds generated within the school itself e. g. fees, sales of school farms proceeds, accounting for funds of students organization, clubs and society, accounting for supplies of materials for instruction and maintenance or upkeep of the school e.g. grants, subsidies, donations from old students associations, PTA, board of governors, philanthropists, social clubs etc.
2. **Accountability for Instructional and Curriculum Development:** this involves how he/she formulate curriculum objectives, determining of curriculum contents and organization, and how he relates it to time, human and materials resources available in the school and supervision of instruction.
3. **Accountability for Staff and Students Personnel:** this how the school administrators maintain the accounting system and attendance of students and staff, interpersonal relationship with the students, provision of guidance and counseling and care services and establishment of means of dealing with indiscipline of students in the school.
4. **Accountability for Staff Personnel (Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff)** this involves recruitment, selection, promotion, orientation, transfer evaluation, training and supervision of staff through conferences, workshop, seminar in-service etc. for professional growth and development of staff.
5. **Accountability for School Plants:** school plant refers to all the infrastructural facilities that are used for teaching and learning for the purpose of achieving school goals. The school administrators are responsible for accounting for all these. This could be summarized as follows:
 - Providing a favorable environment (right physical environment) for learning.
 - Defining clearly the responsibility for various personnel in the school for plant management.
 - Making all school staff to recognize that physical conditions of the school plants is the symbols of the total curriculum for both parents and general public.
 - Defining clearly the supervisory responsibilities and delineating relationship between school heads and other supervisors in the maintenance of and management of school plant.
6. **Accountability for School-Community Relation:** the school administrators assist the community to identify its potentials with the use of school resources in determining educational services and rendering services to the school. This is done through PTA, old students association, clubs and other community agencies.

Principles of Accountability

The major principles guiding the accountability of schools administrators according to Ukeje, et al (1992:19) are the principle of single accountability and that of unity of command.

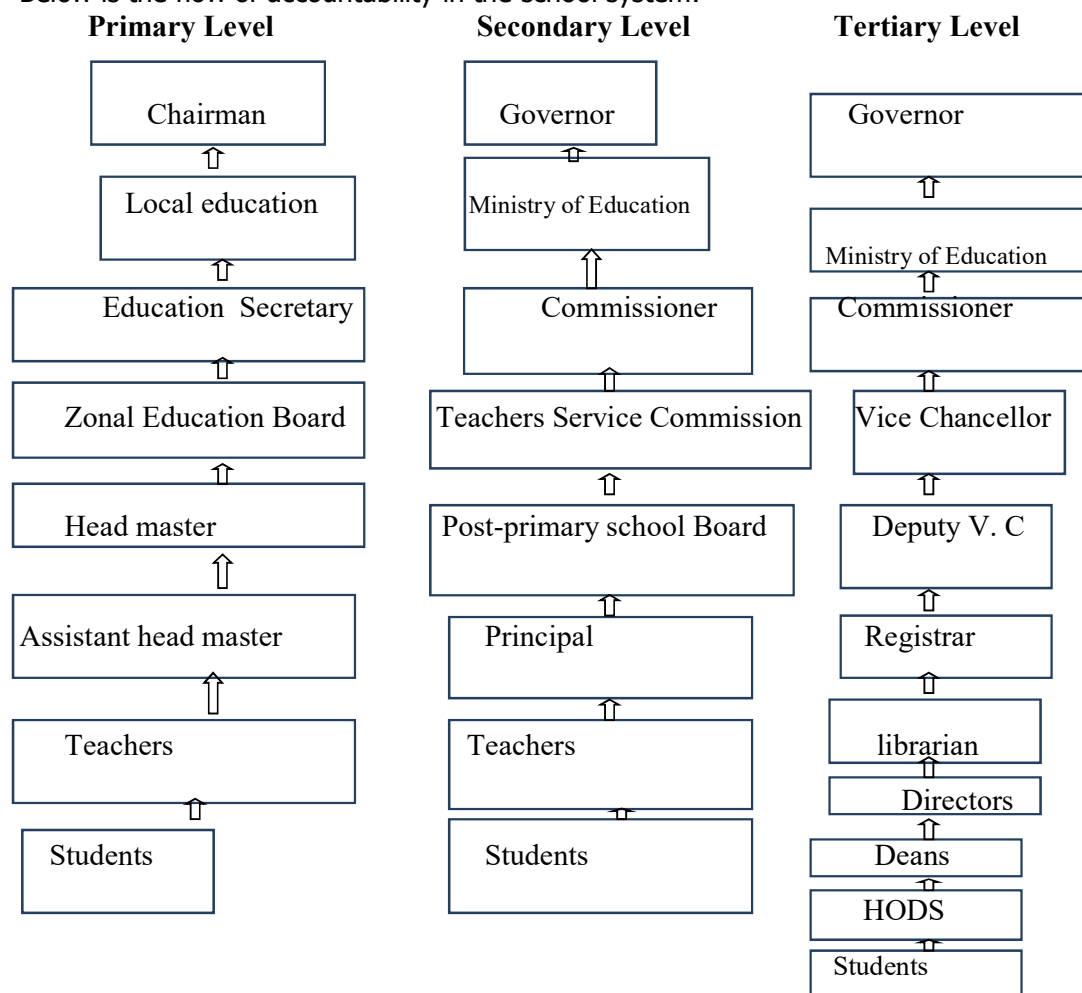
- **Principle of single accountability:** this states that each person or employee should be accountable to only one superior. In the educational system (school system), means that a school administrator should be accountable to only his school or particular school he/she is heading or managing.
- **Principle of unity of command:** this is based of Henry Fayol beliefs that an employee should receive order from and instruction from one single person (Super ordinate). This is to avoid

poor coordination and misplaced emphasis. This principle in the school system implies that a school administrator should be accountable to only his education board or area of jurisdiction.

Flow of accountability in the management of schools

Accountability in the school flows from the bottom to the top (management) by the members of the school community. This is explained as follows: students are accountable to teachers, teachers are accountable to principals, principals are accountable to zonal school boards (heading by director or deputy director) the zonal directors are accountable to post-primary school board or teaching service commission (TSC) (headed by chairman who is accountable to ministry of education (headed by commissioner for education and permanent secretaries) who then are accountable to the Governor. This is why the former American president Richard M. Nixon, in a special message to the American congress (parliament on 3rd March, 1970 declared that school administrators and school teachers alike are responsible for their performance and it is in the interest of their pupils that they be held accountable. This means that accountability at the school level is focused on principals, teachers and students.

Below is the flow of accountability in the school system.



Source: research idea, 2024.

The Needs for Accountability in the school system

Tabotndip and Idaka (2011) outlined the following as the need for accountability in any educational system in Nigeria:

- Accountability remains the major strategy to determine the income and expenditure processes in school system.
- Accountability invokes responsibility of those entrusted with the assignment of running the system.
- Accountability programme has a tremendous impact on improving students' performance.
- Through accountability teachers and other staff become more work-conscious and aware of the contractual obligation between themselves and their employer.
- Determination of results being achieved through accountability, e.g. this implies that education outcome should justify public expenditure on education. - Accountability led to discovery of causes of students' poor performance in examination.
- Accountability rekindles public interest and concern in education. Nowadays, the people are more interested in students' results to justify their investment in education.
- Accountability prevent decline in educational standards and quality control.
- Accountability results in improve teaching-learning activities.
- Accountability encouraged the teachers to work harder to produce better results.
- Accountability helps to actualize how judiciously and prudently the funds are used to achieve cost benefit.
- Provision of a systematic way to relate expenditure to the attainment of educational objectives through the presentation of a budget and other related reports and process
- Meeting the legal requirement for reporting basic information to relevant authorities
- Providing adequate information about the school fiscal and academic activities to the public.
- Forming a sound basis for improving administrative decisions for budget and other finances of the school.
- Providing the historical records of all the business within the school to the zonal education board.
- Accountability moderates and regulates indiscipline in school system, which invariably aggregates schools effectiveness.
- Accountability build the school administrators' willingness in consistent, and committed in what they say, what they do, and who they are (Muroe, 2014).

Constraints to Accountability in the School System:

Former minister of Education Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili, has said that the problem with Nigerian education system is not more funding, but accountability and transparency. (Abayomi, 2013). She said that the fundamental challenge of education in Nigeria is the decades of poor sector governance and dysfunction with no in built mechanism for accountability on performance. These constraints are:

- (i) Lack of commitment by the teachers and students remain the fundamental problem which is responsible for lack of accountability in the educational enterprise. This problem as observed by Udo (2002) Tabotndy & Idaka (2011) grow worse every day as a result of negative attitude of some principal, inspectors of Education and other officials who are found wanting in their professional responsibility. However, the elongation of this problems witnessed teachers and other relevant records not regularly checked to maintain quality and standard. Also, indiscipline, absenteeism and other forms of professional misconduct do seriously jeopardize school work. The poor morale of principals, teachers and students may result from lack of promotion with financial benefit, late payment of salaries allowances and other incentives. By this position teachers refuse to be accountable.
- (ii) Lack of secondary school principals' control over input (students admitted into their schools) made them not to be held responsible for the poor quality of the output of our secondary, schools. Also on the recruitment of teachers, the principals are not involved: Teachers are usually recruited and sent to the schools by external bodies; the principals are not party to

any decision concerning the quality and experience of the recruitment, how then will the principals be held responsible for teachers who cannot perform their duties creditably.

- (iii) Many schools are poorly staffed i.e. there are still many government owned schools with very few teachers. As a result of the mentioned scenario, many subjects do not have qualified staff to handle them. Therefore, when principals are made to operate without qualified teachers, how can the principals be held for the resulting performance of the students?
- (iv) The schools are poorly financed by Government and individuals who are involved in the business of school when funds are not made available in time for principals to use for improvement of teaching / learning processes; poor performance of teachers/ student result. In Nigeria, it is common news that teachers salaries are owed for months (Ekpoh, 2006). The end point of this is strike action by the teachers, therefore no teaching takes place. At this juncture, who can hold the principals for, poor performance of their students at NECO, WAEC and JAMB?

Walson, Malik, & Amadi (2004) summarized the following, issues as constraints to accountability in Nigeria's educational system.

- Quota system policy on admission.
- Political instability (god father in admission, requirement transfer, discipline).
- Lack of planning
- Incomplete implementation of education policy
- Unqualified school administrators(principals)
- Indiscipline of students
- Corruption in the side of school administrators
- Lack of discipline among school personnel.
- Poor/lack of teaching facilities and irregular transfer/ promotion of school personnel.
- Lack of motivation of Teachers
- Loss of esteem/job satisfaction of teachers.

Characteristics of School Administrators

School Administrators should possess the following characters:

1. School Administrators supposed to direct the safety and prosperity of the institutional culture and changes (Ololube, 2017a)
2. School Administrators supposed to inculcate the right type of values, attitudes, training of the minds and the understanding of world.
3. School Administrators supposed to generate ideas and values that will bring about desired educational development. For this to happen there must be values, moral, discipline in the characters etc.
4. School Administrators should be characterized to what they considered to be the value system of a given society.
5. School Administrators should be such that motivates, stimulate and draws largely on our traditional values, such as respects, morals and religious values and their progressive update to meet the modern development.

Concept of Secondary School

National policy on education (NPE) 2004, defined secondary education as an education children received after primary education and before tertiary education. It is an intermediate between elementary school and college or university usually offering general, technical, vocational, or college preparatory courses (Merriam Webster 1828). Maclean (2018) gave a rather definition secondary that is the educational system learners received after primary school and before tertiary education. Wali (2007) mentioned that secondary education is given in two stages called the junior and senior secondary school stage. Matthew (2012) opined that secondary education is essential to the education of a child being the link between the primary and tertiary

education. He further mentioned that it provide opportunity for a child to gain additional knowledge, skills attitudes, and traits beyond the primary education.

Objectives of Secondary School (Education) in Nigeria.

National policy on education (NPE, 2004) spelled out the objectives of secondary education to:

- Provide all primary school leavers the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, age, religious, social status, ethnic background.
- Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the difference in talents, opportunities and future roles.
- Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades
- Develop and promote Nigerian languages arts, culture in the context of world cultural heritage.
- Foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
- Raised the generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, and respect the dignity of labour.

Problems/factors hindering the effective administration of senior secondary education in Nigeria.

- Shortage of science and technical equipment for the vocational courses.
- Lack of maintenance of building and the limited equipment available.
- Shortage of teachers of technical education subjects.
- Lack of guidance and counseling personnel in the school. One of the most important elements of national policy on education is the child guidance and counseling. The idea is that as the child progress from junior to senior secondary school, his or her attitude is to be monitored scientifically through the instrument of good guidance and counseling programme. It is at this level that the child show early traces as to whether he/she is technically or academically inclined because it is more rewarding for a child to go into a career where he has developed an attitude.
- Shortage of funds: It is noted that Nigeria allocated less 12% of its annual budget to education. This has become a problem in the administration of senior secondary schools especially in the rural area where students are learning under the trees.

Concept of Effective Administration

Effective administration refers to the process of producing effective results without wastage. It is the ability to present, maintain and preserve thoughts, resources, and legal paper in a perfect flow. It also means the process of implementing and facilitating the programmes of and management of the school resources for the achievement of its objectives, while Administration on the other hand, means the combine efforts of human and materials resources to achieve objectives. On the other hands, The Nigerian Union of Teachers and United Kingdom (NUT/UK) (2008) document on work-life issues stated that a better balance between work and private life has been proven to reduce stress and sick leave, leading to financial savings on employees and improve their performance. It is important therefore to established overall working time that takes account the multiple functions of employees.

CONCLUSION

Accountability in the school system helps to protect funds from misused as well as fostering a committed pursuit of educational goals by administrators. School administration as a process should enhance the practice of accountability in the school system in order to achieve efficient and effective utilization of educational resources to attain the stated goals.

Suggestions

Based on the above discussion, the following suggestions were made as follows:

1. Government should not appoint school principals based on political influence rather it should be done base on integrity, competence and merit on individuals in order to avoid misappropriation of school funds.
2. Government should ensure regular supervision and inspection in the school system to ensure strict accountability.
3. Government should conduct regular audit in the schools which should cover all the school facilities.
4. There should be effective communication in the school from school administrators to staff and students personnel.
5. The flow of accountability should be in hierarchical order to ensure its effectiveness.

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