

Possible Opportunities for Educational System Efficiency and Effective Governance in Cameroon

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Abstract: *The paper examined the possible opportunities available for efficient or quality educational system in Cameroon. These possible opportunities constitute the means available to evolve effective or facilitate management of the educational system in the country. The paper recommends that Government formulate policies on education which should not be white elephant (in white paper without effective implantation) so that possible opportunities such as infrastructure, libraries, laboratories, instructional materials and conducive teaching and learning environment, as well as motivation of academic staff in term of regular payment, promotions when due and also in service training to enhance efficiency and effective educational system nation wide.*

Keywords: *possible opportunities, efficiency, effective and governance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

There are several possible opportunities on which educational system thieves. They may be tangible on intangible. The tangible include infrastructure, instructional materials, libraries, laboratories and conducive teaching and learning environment to mention but a few, while intangible include manpower and Government policies for effective governance. The back bone of any organization is money derived from Government and from other agencies as spelt – out in the Cameroon National Education Forum, (1998), money therefore facilitates or influences the procurement of tangible and intangible items for efficiency of the system.

What is the concept of Efficiency of Education? Efficiency refers to the relationship between the inputs into a system and the outputs from that system. A system or an activity is said to be efficient if it can produce maximum output with a given quality of inputs or a given quantity of output with the minimum quantity of inputs. According to Rogers and Ruchlin (1971), efficiency is closely related to productively, or it is through maximized productivity that maximum efficiency is achieved. They observed that there are two aspects of maximization of productivity; first, any given set of inputs should be utilized so as to produce the largest value output, second, for a specified output and quality level, inputs should be chosen and utilized so as to minimize production. Sheehan (1973) refers to efficiency as the degree of waste or resources (or its absence) within a given technique. An organization is efficient if it produces the required benefits and minimizes or avoids wastages in its entirety. According to Akangbou (1987), efficient is the ratio between output of an organization, establishments or department and the inputs used in producing the output. From these definitions of efficiency, it could be inferred that efficiency means minimization of inputs to achieve a given level of output or maximization of output with a given level of inputs.

2. WHAT IS EFFICIENCY OF EDUCATION?

Efficiency of education is the relationship between the outputs of the education system and the inputs used in producing such outputs (Akangbou, 1987). An educational system is efficient if maximum output is obtained from a given input or if a given output is obtained from a given input or if a given output is obtained with minimum possible input. In the words of Ojedele (1998) efficiency is seen as a situation in which the educational administrator is able to satisfy the needs

of the human elements within the system, (the learners, the staff, the community and other agencies that are involved in the business of education), and achieve maximum output with input or effort. Oluchukwu (1999) refers to efficiency of the school system as the relationship between the inputs, (teachers, students, materials) from the school system. In this regard, if a school (education) produces maximum output with minimum possible opportunity of input, the system is said to be efficient. From the various definitions considered, the point of consensus is that efficiency of education is the all about minimizing educational output or maximizing education outputs, using a given level of educational inputs. In other words, it is necessary to make best use of the large resources (human and material) for possible opportunities devoted to education in order to achieve the pre – determined objectives of education. This calls for efficiency in the use of such resources. However, inefficient use of resources in education will result in wastage, low productively and low quality output.

3. TYPES OF EDUCATIONAL EFFICIENCY

These are two types of educational efficiency, namely, internal and external efficiency

- (1) Internal Efficiency of Education: This refers to the relationship between learning achievements (outputs) and the corresponding inputs used to create them (Ebhoimen, 1987). According to Longe and Durosaro (1998), internal efficiency is the extent of the educational system's ability to minimize cost and reduce wastage resulting from repetition, drop – out and failures.

What are necessary Processes for measuring the internal Efficiency of Education?

Before internal efficiency of education can be measured:

- (a) The outputs and the inputs of the educational system must be measured. The ratio of the inputs to the outputs of educational system determines the internal efficiency.
- (b) The output of a given cycle is the graduates, while educational inputs comprise the buildings, teachers, and books, instructional or teaching materials and so on, which may be aggregated in terms of expenditures per student year. However, the student's year is the basic unit of measurement of input in education.
- (c) The internal efficiency of education can be measured by using cohort analysis of the educational system. The cohort analysis may be the students' flow patterns though the promotion rate, repetition rate and drop – out rate. For example, if it takes 6 years to complete the secondary school level of education, under conditions of maximum efficiency, successful completer needs six – student years to complete the level.

In most cases, the perfect efficiency is never achieved in any educational system result in any country as a result of wastage in the school system in terms of repetition of classes and drop – out students from the school.

- (2) External Efficiency of Education: External efficiency in education refers to the extent, to which education takes care of the broad, social, economic and political goals of the society or community (Akangbou, 1987). This is not easy to quantify and measure. Adepoju (2000), also defines external efficiency of an educational system as the ability of the system's output to meet the needs and aspirations of the society or particular community: Oluchukwu (200), defines external efficiency of the school system as the “fit” between education and the needs of the society, especially in the labor market.

Inference to the different definitions above, it means that an educational system should be externally efficient if its outputs meet the needs of the society. On the other hand, if the society feels that outputs of the educational system does not meet its needs, it calls for re – examination of the educational system with a view to taking appropriate measures to make the system more responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the society. Such measures may include curriculum review, improved funding, motivation, training and development of teachers, inspection and supervision of schools, public/private partnership in establishment and management of quality control and quality assurance, among others. For instance, the present educational reforms in Cameroon became necessary as a result of perceived failure of the educational outputs (graduates) to meet the needs of the country. This stemmed from the primary education settings in the past but

could not succeed due to inefficiency on the part of governance hence there were few infrastructure, lack of instructional materials, inadequate academic staff and inadequate fund and also unreliable statistic (Besong, Tabotadip and fan, 2009). The State Education Forum (1998) made education a joint venture. That is, a policy of deregulating education has been enforced (S.E.F). The essence of this government policy is to make education system to be both internally and externally efficient. That is, education should be a joint responsibility of all stake holders as education cannot be funded by government alone.

What are Indicators of Educational Efficiency or what are the opportunities for Educational Efficiency? The role of education in the development of a nation cannot over – emphasized. For education to be a veritable tool for national development, various measures have to be put in place to maintain and improve the prescribed standard of education. In Cameroon apart from the policy made in State Education Forum (1998) for maintenance of standards at all levels of education, the Law 98/004 of 14th April 1998 known as the National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions (NNMSEI) addressed the issue of Maintenance of Minimum Standards at the different levels of education. These governance agencies include both State Regional Ministries of Education Inspectorate Units. Their functions include monitoring and quality control so as to maintain minimum standards in schools.

According to Fadipe (2000) efficiency indicators are the parameters which guide the inspectors to ensure that high standards are maintained and the schools are run in accordance with the laid down regulations. In other words, measures aimed at controlling the quality of education are regarded as efficiency indicators of governance. Studies such as Thomas (1971), Yoloeye (1976), Nwagwu (1983) and Fadipe (2000) have identified a number of quality control measures in education. These measures are also indicators or tools for governance of educational efficiency. For example, Thomas (1971) identified space, equipment, books, materials, teachers, and administrative personnel as inputs of education or educational efficiency.

According to Yoloeye (1976), there are six indicators of educational efficiency which are regarded as important in the assessment of educational system. These include, the quality of teachers, the quality of facilities, the quality of instruction, the quality of evaluation procedures, the quality of morale and the quality of administration and management (i.e. governance), Nwagwu (1983) also list four indicators necessary for assessing the quality of output the education system. They included the quality and number of students involved, the quality of dedication and number of teachers available, the quality and quantity of the available infrastructure and the quality and the quality and number of managerial personnel such as school administrators, inspectors and supervisors. While Fadipe (2000), on the other hand, mentioned six efficiency indicators for quality control in African school system. These includes, teaching resources, financial resources; the teachers or academic staff, the learners (students), textbooks, and infrastructural facilities. In other words, it is the degree of quality of the educational system. It means providing possible opportunities for educational system efficiency. It implies efficiency and effective governance where things are equal.

Challenges or Obstacles to Efficiency of Educative Governance: There are various factors militating against the efficiency and effective governance of education in Cameroon. Some of them are discussed below:

1. **Inadequate Funding:** The educational system in Cameroon is not adequately funded; this is evident in the poor state of infrastructures in the schools, while it is the feeling of educators that education is grossly under – funded, government usually proclaims that education is given priority attention in its annual budget. According to Ajayi (2006), between 1999 – 2006, the average budgetary allocation to education in all African countries is less than (10%) ten percent. This is far below the UNESCO recommendation that not less than (26%) twenty – six percent of the annual budget should be devoted to education. From the aforementioned poor funding of education it cannot guarantee high level of efficiency or quality. Over the years, the issue of inadequate funding of education has been a bone of contention between the University lecturers and the State Government of Cameroon. While university lecturers are agitating for budgetary allocation of not less than 26% to education, the

State Government appears not to be favorably disposed to the agitation. This is evident of in – effective governance of educational system.

2. **Unstable Educational Policies:** Educational Policies in Cameroon are not stable. There is a frequent change in educational policies as a result of political instability. The educational policy in Cameroon has undergone some changes since its inception after independence. The State law on education empowered the State Government to fund education at all levels. This led to the explosion of students' enrolment without adequate infrastructural facilities and teachers. The State endorsed a deregulation policy in the system. According to Babalola, Akpa, Ayeni and Adepeji (2007) and Omoregie (2004) economic recession raised its ugly head due to depression world – wide. This paved way for the inclusion of all spirited individuals, non – governmental organizations (NGOS) and agencies such as stakeholders in establishing and managing of schools (Besong Edu, Fan and Adelikwu 2010). The incessant change in State law on education is evident that the governance is ineffective as such may lack the potentiality in providing possible opportunities for educational system efficiency. In other words, this has been an impediment to meaningful education planning in Cameroon. According to my survey, within a period of 62 years (1972 – 2014) Cameroon had not less than six ministers of education and one successive government, each with its own educational laws most of which lacked pre – planned goals. In some cases, educational plans were jettisoned or haphazardly implemented as a result of change in government. This has adversely affected the quality of outputs from school system.
3. **Shortage of Physical Facilities:** Physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, workshops, and furniture and fittings which are required for effective teaching and learning are in short supply in the school. My recent survey indicates that approximately 4, 9% of Cameroonian schools have no building. The survey equally shows that there is a shortfall of 62.4% in pupils' furniture and 62.5% in teachers Furniture State – wide. Adeogun (2001) and Akumah and Gana (2005) reported that there are inadequate physical facilities in Nigerian like in Cameroonian schools. Ajayi (2006) also maintains that infrastructures such as laboratories, libraries, classrooms, furniture and fittings are still inadequate in Nigerian Primary and Secondary Schools, six years after the commencement of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. Thus, the shortage of physical facilities can not make the school environment conducive enough for teaching and learning. There are reported cases of even crowded classrooms and pupils learning under shade trees and as a result of insufficient classrooms. This is exactly the state of UBE, Primary and Secondary education in Cameroon.
4. **Shortage of Qualified and Motivated Teachers:** No educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Effective instructional delivery to a large extent depends on the availability of qualified and motivated teachers, Teachers of Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEP) (2000, Igwe (2000) and Obaja (2006), have identified inadequate number of qualified teachers, irregular payment of teachers' salaries, and teachers' dissatisfaction as obstacles or challenges to effective implementation of the UBE programme in Cameroon, giving reasons for shortage of teachers, Adepoju (2002), reports that the current trend in the African educational scene is that of dwindling enrolment of students in teacher preparation institution and the exodus of teachers from teaching profession while most of the colleges of Education in the continent have remained underutilized as a result of poor intake. It must be stressed that the educational system will be less efficient where there is shortage of qualified and motivated teachers.
5. **Inadequate Instructional Materials:** The importance of instructional materials in teaching and learning process cannot be over – emphasized. For learning to take place, there is the need for the teacher to sensitize pupils' senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching through the use of instructional materials (Ajayi, 2004). It is pathetic to note that the instructional materials required for effective

teaching and learning in African Schools are grossly inadequate. A Situation and Policy Analysis (ASPA) study conducted in 1992 for Primary Schools showed that 77% of pupils had no textbooks at all, while 36% had no writing materials. As many 30% of the schools had no chalk, while equipment for science, agricultural science, home economies, arts and craft were lacking in the majority of schools this situation is not different in Cameroon. Abduckareem (2002) also observed that instructional materials in our public primary schools are grossly inadequate in spite of the immense benefits of such materials to users. UBEP (2002) and Salami (2004) reported that instructional materials such as a curriculum module, textbooks, continuous assessment booklets and introductory technology materials are inadequate in school. According to Ajayi (2006), it is a common knowledge that instructional materials such as radio and television sets and computers are rarely available in most schools. Where instructional materials are inadequate, teachers will be less efficient in instructional delivery and this will affect the quality of outputs from the school system. Therefore, there is the need to ensure adequate supply of instructional materials to schools in Cameroon.

6. **Curriculum Deficiency:** The curriculum in Cameroon is not responsive enough to the needs and aspirations of the people. According to Adepaju (200), the relevance of the school system to the students and society at large is always questionable bearing in mind the geo – political structure and characteristics of Cameroon environment. It is pathetic in that the teachers who are the executors of the curriculum are not usually involved in its design. This usually results in disparity between the contents of the curriculum and what is actually taught. The efficiency of the educational system will continue to be at stake if the quality of the output from the school system continues to fall below the societal exportations.
7. **Lack of Effective Supervision and Monitoring:** Effective Supervision and Monitoring of Schools is a quality control measure. Where schools are not effectively supervised and monitored, the quality of educational outputs is at stake. In recent times, schools in Cameroon are not regularly supervised and monitored (Adepaju, 2000). As a result of this, most of the problems facing the system are not ascertained for urgent solutions. The ineffective supervision and monitoring of schools by inspectorate divine of the various ministries of education in Cameroon has been attributed to many factors. In the words of Ogunnu (2002) these factors include, shortage of manpower, lack of fund and transport, value lessness of inspection reports, administrative burden and autocratic style inspecting schools.

4. RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations should be adhere to:

- ❖ Government should provide both tangible and intangible as strategies to address the challenges for possible opportunities for educational system efficiency.
- ❖ Government should adequately fund education at all levels. In order to achieve maximum input and output (i.e. efficiency), the annual budgetary allocation for education should not be less than 20%.
- ❖ This should be backed by government policy for effective governance hence no organization can function without money. Therefore, all government and non – governmental organization should be involved in financing education.
- ❖ There is need for good governance, when a stabled government produces a stabled educational policy, although with minor changes because educational programmes are not static.
- ❖ Government should address the issue of acute shortage of physical facilities in our schools for efficiency, which means effective input for maximum output. NGOS and other agencies should be encouraged in renovating schools.

- ❖ Government should motivate the serving teachers in terms of regular payment of their entitlements and promotions when due. This will induce more qualified teachers in the profession.
- ❖ Government should provide funds for procurement of instructional materials needed for effective teaching and learning.
- ❖ Government should set up a committee of educationists to review the current curricular in school or education curricular at all levels especially at this time of science and technology.
- ❖ Above all these, government should set up an efficient and effective supervision and monitoring team from the three ministries of Education (Higher, Secondary and Basic Education) appraisal of work done and teacher's classroom activities.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion therefore includes:

- ❖ That to achieve possible opportunities for educational efficiency and effective governance is for the government to support the relevant inputs for maximum output.
- ❖ These inputs are manpower, materials and financial resources.
- ❖ That philanthropist, organizations such as PTA, communities, private sector, international bodies, World Bank and Stakeholders in education should be involved. NGOS and companies/industries in the renovating, building schools and providing infrastructures in schools.
- ❖ That government should motivate teachers in terms of regular payment, promotion and in – service training.
- ❖ That government should intensify supervisors and monitoring team by motivating them not only by payment and promotions but by providing them with necessary tools.

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