

THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISORY AGENCIES AT THE THREE TIERS OF GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is a federal republic with effect from October 1st, 1963. The federating states are controlled by the national government. Following the local government reforms of 1976, local government became very active in administration at the grass roots level. Each tier of government is deeply involved in the control of the education system. The educational agencies at the three levels are a complement of one another. Through the concerted efforts of all the organs, it is possible to continue to have a virile educational system.

Introduction

The responsibility for the management of the Nigerian education system is vested by law in the federal, state and local governments. The first and second levels of government carry out their numerous responsibilities on education through the Ministries of Education. The local government administers the education system, under its jurisdiction, through the Local Government Education Authority.

All the three levels render administrative, professional and supervisory services. Through them, it is possible to administer the nation's educational system.

The Supervisory Role of the Federal Government

The federal government plays a very important administrative role and exercises considerable control on the Nigerian education system. Its role are essentially those of formulation, dissemination, inspection and supervision of broad plans and general policy guidelines; as well as the general conduct of educational practices throughout the country.

The 1963 Republican Constitution placed on the central government the responsibility of the administration and control of the following institutions of learning: University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Yaba College of Technology, the Veterinary School in Vom, the Forestry School, Ibadan, and some secondary schools. Apart from these named institutions, the constitution gave the federal government (as well as the state governments) the legislative right to establish and run “higher education, that is to say, institutions and other bodies offering courses or conducting examinations of a university, technological or of professional character.” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1963)

Right from August 21st, 1972, the federal government assumed full responsibility for higher education throughout the country. It also decided that with the exception of higher education, education should become the concurrent responsibility of both the federal and state governments. (*Daily Times*, 21 August, 1972, p. 17)

A vital agency through which the federal government administers the nation’s educational system is the Federal Ministry of Education. Essentially, the Ministry performs the following functions: determination of a national policy on education; setting and maintaining uniform standards; coordination of the nation’s educational practices; setting up federal inspectorate advisory services to help improve and maintain standards; and planning and research on a nation-wide scale. Other functions of the Ministry are: acquisition, storage and dissemination of national education data; coordination of non-formal education including adult education, vocational improvement centres, correspondence courses, etc.; coordination of educational services; coordination of international co-operation in education; and coordination of national school examinations, testing and evaluation. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004)

The executive head of the Ministry is the Honourable Minister of Education. The Honourable Minister of State for Education is the next personality to him. Usually, the nation’s President appoints the two of them. The responsibility for the general direction and development of national educational policies is placed on them. It is expected of them to initiate policy decisions at federal level and coordinate those initiated at state level. They take final responsibility for all educational matters. They are the accounting officers of the Ministry. They are directly responsible to the President.

Next in the hierarchy is the Permanent Secretary. He too is appointed by the President. He is the Ministers' chief adviser. He is responsible for the administration and control of the Ministry, coordination of its activities, general direction of its policies and other decision-making matters. In other words, he sees to the day-to-day running of the Ministry. While he is directly in charge of all the Directors in all the Departments in the Ministry, he is, at the same time, directly responsible to the Ministers.

Under the Permanent Secretary are Directors for the Departments who are assisted by the Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors who could be Heads of Branches in the Departments. Below the Assistant Directors is an avalanche of civil servants including administrators, professional officers and supporting staff. All the top echelon as well as other officers of the Ministry work together as a team and assist the Ministers in policy- and decision-making and in the general performance of the functions of the Ministry.

The Ministry has three Units. There are: Internal Audit, Legal, and Public Relations. Equally, the Ministry has eight Departments. The Departments are: Educational Support Services, Higher Education, Technology and Science Education, Primary and Secondary Education, Planning, Research and Statistics, Federal Inspectorate Services, Administration and Supplies, and Finance and Accounts.

Two vital advisory bodies are administered by the Federal Ministry of Education. They are: the National Council on Education (N.C.E.) and the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (J.C.C.E.).

N.C.E. is a Council of the Ministers of Education, all the State Commissioners for Education, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Permanent Secretaries of State Ministries who render assistance to their respective Honourable Commissioners for Education and Director of Education of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The Council meets at the federal and the state capitals in rotation to deliberate on emerging trends and issues on primary, secondary, teacher and technical education; audio-visual aids including educational broadcasting, among other things, and make recommendations based on the national objectives on education. In addition, the council ensures standard and quality control in education.

The other body, J.C.C.E., has highly enlarged membership. It is made up of important personalities representing many interests. J.C.C.E. is the highest professional body on Education. It assists the Federal Ministry of Education in carrying out the Ministry's coordinating duty amongst all the thirty-six states of the federation. The recommendations of the two advisory bodies are usually accepted directly or modified as may be necessary so as to suit the respective states.

The Supervisory Role of the State Government

The state government administers the education system under its jurisdiction. Just like the central government, the state government plays prominent role in the administration and control of education.

The state exercises its right on all matters, including Education, that are placed in the concurrent legislative list as contained in the *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. The entire constitutional provisions in general and specific terms for the management of Education by the state government are clearly spelt out in the Education Law of each state.

Usually, the provisions of the Law cover issues relating to: state administration (delegation of functions by Commissioner of Education; power to hold inquiries; establishment of State Advisory Board of Education, and establishment of *ad hoc* committees); the statutory system of Education; and the responsibilities of the local government in the administration and control of the Educational system. Other general provisions include: secular instruction in public institutions, general provision for religious instruction in public schools, curriculum of public schools to include religious worship and instruction, religious instruction in voluntary agency institutions, religious instruction in community schools; pupils excused from attendance at religious worship or instruction, and certain conditions to be required for registration of pupils at institutions of learning.

The law also covers powers of the Commissioner in relation to the establishment and continuance of institutions and closure of boarding houses; management of government, public and private institutions; establishment of present-day Post-Primary Teaching Service Commission; registration, appointment and dismissal of teachers in public schools; and inspection of public schools; financial provisions including grants-in-aid, loans, expenses and contributions

between Local Education Authorities; and supplementary provisions such as education of pupils requiring special educational treatment; and power to make regulations in respect of ancillary services.

The pattern of management of the Education system in the state is similar to that of the Federal Government. There is a Ministry that administers the system. At the head of the Ministry is a Commissioner for Education. He is chosen by the Governor of a State. Essentially, the Commissioner initiates policies and has the general responsibility for all educational matters. He is directly responsible to the state legislature and the Governor.

Next to the Commissioner is the Permanent Secretary. As it is the case with the Commissioner, the Governor appoints him too. Among other things, he is the chief adviser to the Commissioner as well as the Ministry's chief administrative executive. He is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Ministry. He is directly in charge of the Directors of all the Departments in the Ministry and, in turn, he is responsible to the Commissioner.

Below the Permanent Secretary are Directors of the Departments. Directors are assisted by Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors. Whereas the Directors are Heads of Departments, the Deputy Directors oversee Divisions while Assistant Directors are in charge of Branches or Sections in the Departments. Below the above key officers are many other civil servants saddled with the administrative and professional responsibilities. All the officers work together to accomplish the same goal which is prudent management of the educational system at the state level.

The State Ministry of Education performs the following functions: policy formulation and control of Education at primary, secondary, and higher education levels; planning, research and development of Education at state level; inspectorate services to improve and maintain standards; educational services; coordination of the activities of Schools Boards and/or Local Government Education Authorities, examinations (particularly certification of primary school teachers); testing and evaluation; and ensuring the administration of junior secondary education, adult and non-formal education and nomadic education; and making available suitable Education laws and guaranteeing their enforcement. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004)

As a result of the relative autonomy enjoyed, each of the thirty-six states of the federation has its own pattern of management. While there are similarities, no two states are exactly same. In Ogun State, like in other States, the Ministry has the following eight Departments: Educational Support Services, Science and Technology, Primary, Teacher and Non-Formal Education, Planning, Research and Statistics, Secondary and Higher Education, Inspectorate Services, Curriculum Development and Evaluation; and Finance and Administration. (Oni, 2006)

There are Zonal Education Offices under the Department of Inspectorate Services. The purpose of their establishment is to ensure quality control through their administrative and professional officers' regular inspection and supervision of instruction and educational resources. The officers at the headquarters are responsible to the Permanent Secretary through the Director of Education, Department of Inspectorate Services. The activities of the Zonal Education Office at the headquarters cover the whole state whereas the tentacles of each of other Zonal Education Offices spread to one or more local government areas. The Education Officers at the different zones have regular contact with the headquarters.

The Supervisory Role of the Local Government

The year 1976 marked a major landmark in the history of the development of local government since the country attained independence on October 1st, 1960. During this year, major reforms were carried out. Following the restructuring, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria assigned the local government substantial functions and responsibilities one of which was Education. In the *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, it is indicated that: "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." (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999)

Since January 1st, 1991, the third tier of government has been saddled with almost the full responsibility for the administration of primary education. This was given a legal backing with the promulgation of Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Amendment Decree No. 2 of 1991, to amend sections of the 1979

Constitution, and to provide, *inter alia*, that local government should, from January 1st, 1991, fund and manage primary education. In addition to that, the federal government promulgated Local Government Education Authority Decree No. 3 of 1991. It went into force on January 1st, 1991. Through it, a Local Government Education Authority (L.G.E.A.) was established for each of the then four hundred and fifty three (453) Local Government Council Areas in the country. (*Daily Sketch*, January 1, 1991, p. 5; *Daily Times*, January 3, 1991, p. 20)

Presently, numerous duties are assigned to and carried out by each L.G.E.A. Some of these are: ensuring smooth running of the primary educational institutions; the supervision and quality control in the primary education system in partnership with both the federal and state authorities; the appointment, posting, transfer, promotion and control of teachers and non-teaching staff on grade level 01-06; the retraining of teaching workforce; the general administration of educational plans; the making of suggestions to the State Universal Basic Education Board with respect to the promotion and discipline of teaching and non-teaching staff on grade levels 07 and above; and the submission of monthly returns as well as estimates and accounts once in a year to the board. (Ogun State of Nigeria, 2005)

In Ogun State, the membership of the L.G.E.A. comprises: a part-time chairman who is expected to be a seasoned educationist, a spokesperson of each of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Nigeria Union of Teachers in the local government area; and Parent-Teacher Association in the local government area; a traditional ruler in the local government area; about two representatives of religious groups in the local government area; three important persons who are natives and live in the local government area; and an experienced educationist, whose rank is not below that of Principal Education Officer or its equivalent, as secretary to the authority. (Ogun State of Nigeria, 2005)

Conclusion

There is a strong relationship among the educational supervisory agencies at the three tiers of government in Nigeria. The different educational agencies relate with one another. The membership of the National Council on Education, an important organ of the Federal Ministry of Education, for instance, comprises important personalities

in both the Federal and State Ministries of Education. In like manner, officials of the State Ministry of Education are represented in the Local Government Education Authority, an agency of the local government council.

Each level of government performs its responsibilities on Education as contained in the respective exclusive, concurrent and residual legislative lists. Usually, authority goes down the ladder from the Federal Ministry of Education to the State Ministry of Education and lastly to the Local Government Education Authority.

This kind of relationship among the educational supervisory agencies at the three tiers of government is a welcome development. The mutual link gives room for having uniform and very high academic standard in our educational institutions throughout the country. With close monitoring and supervision, there can be no doubt, whatsoever, that the educational system will continue to wax stronger and stronger.

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