Pressure Groups and Governance of Secondary Education in Functional Democracy in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining the influence of pressure groups on the governance of secondary education in functional democracy in Cross River State. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of four hundred teachers selected from Calabar metropolis. Questionnaire Titled Pressure Group and Governance of Secondary Education (PGGSEQ) was used for data collection. The t -test was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that there is a significant influence of Parent Teacher Association and teachers union on the governance of secondary education. It was recommended that teachers through professional unions should be allowed to formulate policies and programmes guiding the development of education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Governance, Democracy, Interest Groups, Parent Teacher Association.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

As Nigeria transited from decades of military dictatorship into a democratic dispensation, several institutions and structure begin to experience increasing participation in governance, not only at the strictly political sphere, but also in school administration. The governments (Federal, State and Local Institutions) parents, teachers, children and other stakeholders have their respective interests and functions in the governance of education which of course are not congruent (Okeke 1997).

In view of the democratization of institutions in Nigeria, politics is unavoidable in public education setting. As Olutola (1983) rightly remarked "you can take education out of politics but you cannot take politics out of education". This is because politics and democracy create opportunities for political participation and sharing in the educational process. Ideally, in democratic educational management in particular, supervisory personnel should practice effective democratic methods.

Democratic education is nurtured and sustained where the aspirations of the people are attained and/or attended to. Of course, it should be democratic in control and management of education. Non-democratic governments in their execution of education are not organized for politics and therefore try to suppress politics of education.

Nigeria is a nation with many linguistic groups, diverse religious beliefs and culture. The socio-cultural setting of the Nigerian secondary schools consists of interacting and overlapping social groups and institutions. The secondary school management and administration are susceptible to the influence from groups and element such as the government, family, social class, peer and

religious groups, administrative settings, politics, social prestige and barriers (Okeke 2007).

Today, education in Nigeria is essentially both a local operation, an intermediate unit source, a state responsibility, and a national concern. In effect, there are vested interests in education. These pursue their interests and thereby mount pressure on the school system. They constitute pressure groups. Attempts to balance various interests, amidst divergent needs, interests and value preferences of the individuals exposes the educational system to criticisms, conflicts and struggle.

A pressure group is an interest group which exerts pressure on the government or the decision-makers for the fulfillment of their interest. Interest groups may exist without even exerting influence on the government or the decision makers. But unless a group exerts such pressure to influence or pressurize the authorities in order to achieve the desired objectives, it may not be a pressure group.

Pressure groups are organizations that seek to exert influence on government from outside. They do not therefore put candidates up for election or seek in other ways to win government power. In that sense they are part of civil society. According to Sadie (1998), the techniques commonly employed by pressure groups to achieve their aims include campaigns, demonstration or marches and strikes. Specifically in Nigeria, pressure groups like the Nigerian labour congress (NLC), Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) as well as National Association of Nigeria students (NANS) have made themselves relevant not only in terms of what they have been able to achieve for their members but also for the society.

Another group that exerts influence on government is the trade unions. These are organizations established to influence policies in favour of their members. They are very active in influencing economic and less of political policies. However, this strength has not deepened democratic practices from 1999 to date. Some of

these organizations are beginning to collaborate with pro-democracy organizations on governance and human rights issues but such collaborations have been less effective Okeke (2014).

Pressure groups or interest groups have become part of the Nigerian Education Scene. They are made-up of some national association and local groups. Characteristically, they are not militant. The membership is essentially based and drawn from the middle class. They are noted for proposing reforms, pressing one particular point of view or the other, providing services for the members, demanding for representation and consultation, presenting evidence and gathering and spreading information (Okeke 2007).

The first function of many of these groups is to put pressure on the state and local government or other bodies such as members of the legislature and principals of schools to further their particular views on certain issues. In the process they seek and present arguments to the individuals and offices most concerned, and have less direct gathering of public support. The pressures could be put directly and through newspapers, television and radio. Moreover, an individual may belong to one or more pressure groups (Amucheazi 1987). According to the Johnson (2005),

Many interest groups at least occasionally engage in some form of lobbying or other political activities with respect to issues that touch directly on the common interests that are the organization's reason for being -- for example, the PTA may organize support for a bond issue election to pay for erecting a new school building.

A very crucial interest group in the secondary school governance is the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). This is made up of parents and teachers who team up to seek the welfare of staff and students and to monitor and ensure academic standards in the secondary schools. They often influence policy by using their members in the political class to lobby for favourable educational policies (Mutinda, 2015). PTAs have been known

to provide buses and school facilities in secondary schools. Because they tend to complement government effort in school management, school managements find them useful partners in the educational enterprise. Thus, unlike the teachers' union, their activities are often considered pro-management. Since they have vested interests in the smooth running of schools, their opinions are often respected in matters relating to educational governance. The PTA is often represented in the board of governors of many secondary schools.

In recognition of the important role of the PTA, Singh, Sweta and Thakur (2014) have recommended that the PTA as a representative of the community should be involved in the curricular and noncurricular programme planning. The authors add that "Opinions of the citizens of the community should be given due consideration while doing the evaluation and adaption of the educational programs."(p. 87).

Sometimes, however, the PTA is seen as interfering in school governance. Mutinda (2013) investigated the role of the PTA in the management of public secondary schools in Gatundu North, Kiambu County, Kenya. The researcher administered a survey to randomly selected 13 schools, nine coeducational, two girls schools and two boys schools. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies The study identified the challenges facing PTA in the governance of public secondary schools to include: "shortage of staff personnel; inadequate school finances; misappropriations of funds, insufficient physical facilities; poor performance in national examinations; lack of support from the local community; and interference in the running of school by the local communities."

Ugwulashi (2012) believes that the PTA is now takes responsible for policy formulation and implementation, development of the school and thereby assisting the principal in school governance. The author, however, believes that the PTA in private schools can be exploitative.

Influential parents may hijack the PTA and use it to impose exorbitant levies on the parents.

Teachers Union

Another influential group in the governance of education is the teachers organization, which are the pushers in the education service. According to Ukeje (2008), teachers' interest groups are concerned with the advancement of the teaching profession and the welfare of the members and children. They have the ability to influence the making of policy in Nigeria. They believe that what is good for the teacher is good for education. Teachers associations such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), etc. are recognized interest groups with clear trade roles in education.

The NUT is a party to most important decisions on education in Nigeria. She possesses strong capacity to influence events within the educational system and is normally consulted on matters affecting the interests of members and the operations of educations of educational system. In general, the teachers union constitutes a formidable force to reckon with in creating opinion about the style, organization and content of education.

1.2   Statement of problem

There have been complaints by groups and individuals against the governance and administration of secondary schools in Nigeria. Parents usually demand for more and better education for their children. Various groups have mounted pressure for a particular point to represent the interest of the members in policy generally and education in particular. The situation calls attention to the fundamental topical managerial issues concerning those who should control and manage our public schools.

1.3   Purpose of the study

1. The purpose of this study is to determine
2. The influence of the Parent Teacher Association on the governance of secondary education.
3. The influence of teachers union on governance of secondary education.

1.4   Research question

1. How does interest group influence the governance of secondary education?
2. To what extent does teachers union influence governance of education?

1.5   Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of interest group on the governance of secondary education.
2. There is no significant influence of teachers union on the governance of secondary education.

1.6   Methodology

The survey design was adopted. The sample of this study consists of 200 teachers selected from the study area. The questionnaire titled a Pressure Groups and Secondary Education Governance Questionnaire (PGSEQ) was used for data collection. An eighteen item questionnaire was designed for the variable. The Likert 4-point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree was used in the questionnaire. A reliability estimate of 0.68 and 0.71 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha estimate. Pearson product moment correlation statistics was used for data analysis.

1.7   Data analysis Hypothesis one

There is no significant influence of Parent Teacher Association on governance of secondary education.

Table 1:   T- test analysis of the influence of Parent Teacher Associations on
          governance of secondary education

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Cal. t	P. Value
Parent Teacher Association	200	18.27	4.6		
				8.6	0.000
Education governance	200	14.61	3.8		

N = 200; t=8.6, p<0.05, critical t=1.966

The result of this analysis revealed that N = 200; t=8.6, p<0.05, and critical t=1.966, the p. value is less than alpha. Therefore, the null hypothesis that postulated no significant influence of Parent Teacher Associations on secondary school governance is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is retained. In other words, there is a significant influence of Parent Teacher Association on the governance of secondary education.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of teachers union on governance of secondary education.

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Cal. t	P. Value
Teachers union	200	17.41	3.38		
				9.024	0.0000
Secondary education governance	200	14.16	3.81		

N = 200; t=9.024, p<0.05, critical t=1.966

The result of this analysis revealed that n = (200), t = 9.024 p<0.05, and critical t=1.966, the p. value is less than alpha. Therefore, the null hypothesis that postulated no significant influence of teachers

union on secondary school governance is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is retained. In other words, there is a significant influence of teachers union on the governance of secondary education.

1.8   Discussion

The results of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant influence of interest groups on the governance of secondary education. The result of this finding is in line with the findings of Okeke (2007) who posit that pressure groups have become part of the Nigerian Education Scene. He added that they are noted for proposing reforms, pressing one particular point of view or the other. They put pressure on the state and local governments as well as union members in the legislature and school principals to further their particular views on certain issues.

Interest or pressure groups have come to be the principal originators of policy, while legislative groups along with administrative and private groups are the major shapers of public policy. In line with Sadie (1998), the techniques commonly employed by pressure groups to achieve their aims include campaign, demonstration, marches or strike.

Hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant influence of teachers union on the governance of secondary education. The finding is in consonance with the findings of Ukeje (2008) who posits that teachers' interest groups are concerned with the advancement of the teaching profession and the welfare of the members and their children. They have the ability to influence the making of policy in Nigeria. In support of this findings, Okeke (2014) posits that these are organizations established to influence policies in favour of their members. They are very active in influencing economic and less of political policies. However, this strength has not-been effectively utilized to deepen democratic practices from 1999 to date.

1.9   Conclusion/recommendation

It is always possible to find pressure groups who through their resourceful campaigns have influenced significantly policy decisions at the various levels of education. It was therefore recommended that:

Pressure groups and interest groups, especially the PTA should be allowed to participate in decision making concerning education at all levels of governance.

Teachers through professional union should be allowed to formulate policies guiding the development of education in Nigeria.

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