

Budgeting Process and its Relevance to the Educational System in Nigeria

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Abstract

Financial resources available to the education sector are increasingly limited and competitive, while the demand for education geometrically rises, leading to an apparent mismatch in the system. Therefore, to ensure prudent management of the scarce educational resources, financial management tools like budgeting is inevitable. The paper reviewed budgeting process and its relevance to the educational system in Nigeria. It explained that in educational institutions, the realization of desired educational goals and objectives depended largely on the efficient planning and management of school funds by the school administrators. It was corroborated by the National Policy on Education (2016) that “the success of any education system is hinged on proper planning, efficient administration and adequate financing” The paper further highlighted the budgeting process required of the heads of educational institutions to adopt, as stipulated in the Financial Guidelines and Regulations (FGR), for efficient and prudent financial management of educational resources and for the attainment of educational goals. The paper concluded that the actualization of educational objectives depended largely on efficient planning and management of school funds which could be significantly achieved through an efficient budgeting system. It suggested that budget preparation, defence and approval should be done at the appropriate time by the designated authorities, and that budgetary allocations to education should be released to the sector on time. The paper further suggested that budgeted allocation to education should be released adequately and not be ‘allocations on papers’.

Keywords: Educational Resources, Budgeting, Educational goals, Budgeting Process.

Introduction

Education is as old as human existence, and it is the cornerstone for the social economic development of any nation. Every country’s education system is a powerful instrument for socio-economic progress without which neither an individual nor a country can achieve social and economic growth (Ololube, 2016). As such, the funds that are made available to the education system are expected to be properly managed. It is apparently clear that, all over the world, education is regarded by every government as a big industry. In the light of this, certain percentage of every nation’s

budget is allocated to education, and Nigeria is not an exception. These funds are needed to pay staff salaries and allowances, maintain and improve facilities for teaching and learning, promote teacher quality and welfare, and improve school safety among other pressing needs of the Nigerian education system.

Moreover, the expenditure on education has continued to rise as a result of the rapid expansion of the education system at all levels. The fact remains that the needs and demands in the education sector are limitless but the funds to satisfy them are limited and therefore, the imperative of budgeting in order to prioritize these needs. Thus, the identification of school goals, allocation of costs and their execution or implementation, hold the key to achieving these goals. This requires planning which is crucial for schools to ensure that resources are used effectively to improve students' achievement. Budget is the product of a collaborative process requiring a clear understanding of the school's goals for improving students' outcomes and its plans for achieving them. According to Ogundiran and Awe (2012), educational budgets are financial plans aimed at translating educational objectives into reality. In the same vein, Ayodele (2014) was of the view that "education budget is a statement which describes how to finance the various educational objectives outlined for the year or a given stated period". To Nwokocha (2015), budget is a statement that is usually expressed in financial terms of the desired performance of an organization in the short term period.

Budgeting is the process of preparing a statement of the anticipated income and the proposed expenditure. It is an act of target setting. Educational institutions design programs and courses of study, and such programmes, according to Akinsolu (2018), can effectively be implemented only with adequacy of funds. This is critical, especially now that the government budget for education falls far below international best practices and therefore are not likely to meet the demands of the education industry. More to this effect, school managers are required to prudently and judiciously account for every fund used. In educational institutions, the attainment of expected educational goals and objectives mainly depends on the efficient planning and management of school funds by the school administrators.

Given the overriding interest and involvement of both the governments at all levels, Parent Teacher Associations, philanthropic organizations, NGOs and public-spirited individuals in funding education in the face of dwindling financial prospects besetting the sector, the need for a control instrument becomes imperative.

Financial management in organizations, firms and institutions had been a sensitive issue over the years. This is because the government and the public are interested in how funds are planned, controlled, and applied for specific assignments to achieve specific objectives. In educational institutions, the realization of desired educational goals and objectives depends largely on the efficient planning and management of school funds by the school administrators. In view of this, Amuseghan (2010) regretted that it was quite unfortunate that the limited resources available were not effectively managed in our schools.

One thing is to raise fund, but the other is to ensure that the fund raised is well utilized by the school managers. In response to this fact, Ogbonnaya (2010), emphasized that resources were scarce, and optimal utilization of the available resources was expedient. However, to ensure judicious spending of funds and accountability, school administrators are expected to plan and prepare budgets for their schools. Budgeting, according to Olufidipe (2013), is a process of preparing and using budgets to achieve management objectives. Ihedioha (2013) stated that budgeting was a systematic and formalized approach for stating and communicating

the firm's expectations and accomplishing the planning, coordinating and controlling responsibilities of management in such a way as to optimize the use of given resources to achieve maximum results. From the above definitions, budgeting means that plans that should be carried out with the money at hand.

Budgeting has been a very important and useful part of the administrative strategy of organizations such as educational institutions right from time. It has the fundamental importance of controlling the financial behaviour of the administrators in the school system. It prevents wastage or reckless spending of funds provided for various educational services. The reason is that the operators of budgets are compelled to follow the appropriate estimate in spending funds. It has the technical functions of authorizing expenditure and serves as a 'microscope' in the analysis of details. It is an instrument for planning and controlling educational activities because it fosters coordination and communication, and promotes efficiency in operating the business. The budgeting practices in educational institutions follow a systematic procedure which includes: budget planning, budget defence, budget approval, budget implementation and budget evaluation.

A budget process is the strategy used by the school administrators, the board of governors and other governmental agencies in its planning and administration right from its commencement to its completion (Nwokocha, 2015). The preparation stage of a budget is initiated by the executive through the sending of call letters to all government ministries and parastatals. The heads of such ministries who submitted the proposal are called for defence after which the proposals are packaged in a government document and sent to the joint session of the House of Senate and House of Representatives in a Federal budget case. The documents go to the State House of Assembly if it is a state budget and to the Council if it is the local government budget (Adegboye, 2014). The approval stage of the budgeting process is the stage in which the document packaged by the executives undergoes a thorough examination by the house. After being passed into an Act, the Act is forwarded to the chairman, governor or president for assent. After the signing of such a budget, it becomes a law to be presented to the general public.

Budget implementation is the third stage in the budgeting process. The main purpose is to guide and control the operators of such a budget to work within its boundaries and limit to avoid misappropriation of public funds or using funds without approval. Nwokocha (2015) stated that a budget implementation served the purpose of guiding and controlling the operators to work within the limit and boundaries of the budget. Evaluation of a budget is the last stage in the process of budgeting. This involves making value judgment about the failure or success of the budget. The agreement of the estimated income and expenditure with the amount generated and expenditure determine greatly the success or failure of the budget in question. At the school level, the heads are expected to also plan, prepare, present, defend and implement the financial plans of the estimate of expected income and expenditure for a future period, usually one academic session. This would enable educational plans to be turned to financial plans and optimally achieved (Nwokocha, 2015).

Over the years, budget preparation, defence and implementation have been issues of national debate among education stakeholders. Many persons have raised accusations that many people who are critical to the implementation of the National Policy on Education are deliberately excluded from the process, while others are in doubts if budgets are followed in the allocation of educational resources. In support of this, Ayodele (2014) concluded that disparities were apparent between the budgetary allocations on paper and actual allocations being released to the education sector.

According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2016), there are four levels of education. They are: Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education and Tertiary Education. While it has been observed that budget and budgeting processes seem to be effectively adopted at the tertiary education level, stakeholders are doubtful if the heads of the Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Schools make good use of them. In agreement with the assertion, Lasisi (2019) concluded that most principals of secondary schools in the states in South Western Nigeria did not prepare any budget to guide their allocation of resources. This could pose serious ‘danger’ to the allocation of the limited educational resources available because it could lead to misallocation, misappropriation, mismanagement and even embezzlement of educational resources.

Therefore, it is against this background that this paper examined the budgeting process and its relevance to the education system in Nigeria, under the following sub-heads:

- Theoretical Framework
- Relevance of Walker’s Theory to Schools’ Budgeting Process
- Concept of Education Budget
- Concept of Budgeting in Education
- Budgeting Process
- Types of Budgeting
- Relevance of Budget to the Education System
- Budget Performance in the Nigerian Education System
- Implication of on Effective Budgeting System of Educational Planning
- Conclusion
- Suggestions.

Theoretical Framework

A budgeting process and its relevance to the education system in Nigeria, were explicitly explained by Walker’s Marginal Utility Theory of Budgeting. Walker asserted that systematic and theoretically based knowledge was needed for budget decisions. She found the ideas in Economics, particularly the Budget Theory in the Public Sector Marginal Utility Theory. She based her work on the economic-scientific approach. She was interested in the problem of proportion and allocation of scarce resources through pre-determined plan and blue-print. In Walker’s words, ‘...the amount of social income that should be taken over by the government, the purposes to which it should be devoted, and the proportion of revenue which each function should receive should be well planned and put in blue-print’. Walker’s marginal utility theory of budgeting of public finance, however, concerns particularly the determination of the total amount of revenue and the manner in which it should be levied. She noted that guidance in allocation decisions needed measurable criteria.

Relevance of Walker’s Theory to Schools’ Budgeting Process

Walker’s marginal utility theory of budgeting finds its relevance in the budgeting process and the educational system because in modern day schools’ resource management, since educational resources are scarce and competitive, heads of educational institutions should adopt suitable types of budgeting and follow the budgeting process in determining the proportion of the school’s scarce resources to be

allocated to each function within the school administration to achieve maximum results for the actualisation of educational objectives.

Concept of Education Budget

An education budget may be described as the statement of anticipated revenue and the proposed expenditure over a period of time, usually an academic session, of programmes to be pursued within the academic session of an academic institution. Obi (2014) adopted the definition of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants (ICMA) that a budget is....

.... a financial and or quantitative statement prepared and approved prior to a defined period of time, of the policy to be pursued during that period for the purpose of attaining given objective. It may include income, expenditure and the employment of capital.

Okunamiri in Akinsolu (2018) described school budgets as plans outlined for financing the education/ school system for a given period, aimed at translating objectives into reality. The implication is that a budget is a plan, although, not all plans are budgets because a budget is a special type of a plan that bears credence on money (Akinsolu, 2018). Morphet, Johns & Reller (2010) viewed a school budget as an aggregate of educational plans with an estimate of the receipts and expenditure necessary to finance the services and facilities required to provide the desired educational programmes. Educational budgeting entails planning conscientiously on how to handle monetary plan or the effective implementation of all educational activities/programmes (Akinsolu 2018). Education budget is the product of a collaborative process requiring a clear understanding of the school's goals for improving student outcomes and its plans for achieving them. It is subject to ongoing change throughout the year in order to stay in alignment with school needs and staffing changes. Therefore, in school finance management a budget stands to mean the fiscal interpretation of educational programmes, involving how much the school plans to spend and how the expenditure is to be paid for. It is a blue print that guides the judicious management of the scarce financial resources of the school.

Management of a school's finances is one of the most important areas of school management. Hence, procedures of financial control should be established by the school to ensure that transactions are recorded accurately, and that its financial position is correctly presented at appropriate intervals. If financial control mechanisms are properly designed, they would enable the role players to discover just where deviations from a specific budget occur and thus facilitate an investigation. The school budget is the translation of educational needs into a financial plan which is interpreted to the public in such a way that when formally adopted, it expresses the kind of educational programmes the community is willing to support, both financially and morally. Translating those needs into a budget can follow the pattern of identifying needs, establishing goals, organizing objectives, building a program in meeting those objectives, and providing a budget to fund those programmes.

Concept of Budgeting in Education

According to Griffin (2009), school budgeting is the preparation of school a budget (financial plan) which indicates the total of all expenditures and the sources from which all the intended expenditures are expected to be financed in the course of the year. Undie (2013) opined that school budgeting implied a process that involved a

Careful determination of annual school needs in terms of programmes or project; a financial quantification of such educational needs, a projection of the sources of generating revenues and a realization of the projected revenue resources among the planned educational programmes or projects to satisfy the already determined educational needs most efficiently. This implies that school budgeting is a system of translating the needs, programmes and projects of the school into money and its effective utilization with the aim of achieving the desired objectives of the school within a stipulated time frame.

The Budgeting Process

The budgeting process demands that educational managers and planners should adopt a structural model for effective planning and control since budgeting in schools is part of the structured school's model of planning and control (Akinsolu, 2018). The budgeting process requires a detailed and systematic analysis of all estimated revenue and expenditure within a specified period. Both the expenditure and revenue should be presented item by item and in expected sections. Ogbonanya (2012) acknowledged that it involved in a way the determination of the revenue that would be available to execute the educational programmes and allocating it in such a manner as to minimize friction, duplication, waste and reduced complaints. He summarized a school budgeting process as follows:

Budget planning; budget defence, budget approval, budget implementation and budget evaluation

Budget preparation serves as an instrument for planning because it specifies financial procedures through which the goals and objectives of the school system can be achieved. Programmes and policies designed to achieve the objectives of the school system are implemented through the operation of a school budget. It serves as an instrument for control because it is an established standard against which the performance of the school system is evaluated. Adeogun (2011) opined that through the preparation and implementation of a school budget, the aims and objectives of introducing various programmes would be realized. The worrisome nature of Nigeria's educational sector is showcased in the poor funding, poor budgeting and its preparation, and management of funds. In view of this, Oboegbulam (2013) and Ogonnaya (2010) regretted that little funds and lack of workable strategies had contributed to the poor management of the educational institutions. However, to ensure judicious spending of funds and accountability, school administrators should be involved in the budget process of their schools (Oboegbulam, 2013).

Types of Budgeting

There are, most times, a variety of budgets that can be prepared, depending on the type, nature and objectives of each organization and their programmes plan. Meanwhile, the most vital types of a budget identified in the education sector are; Line item budgeting; Program linked budgeting; Performance budgeting; Zero-base budgeting; Planning, Programming and Budgeting System; and Incremental budgeting.

Line Item Budgeting

The term 'line-item' refers to the line items: teachers' sports, books, repairs, consumables and the likes, of which a particular amount of money is allocated. Specific items of revenue and expenditure are listed on a line-by-line basis. It distinguishes requirements and funds by balancing item one against the other. Line

item budget is prepared with reference to the previous year's budget where possible sources of income and heads of expenditure remain the same. It is backward looking in preparation and therefore, does not deviate from the budget of the previous year. It follows the tradition. In most secondary schools, except for a few progressive ones, it is the line item or traditional budgeting that is predominant (Olufidipe 2016).

Program Linked Budgeting

This type of budget is prepared by a school for specific purposes and specific programmes. There is a linkage with government educational policies, goals and targets in the budget.

Performance Budgeting

Performance budgeting is the type that concentrates more on outputs or outcomes of services through the measurement of the achievement of each programmes or activity or any aspect of a given project such as the construction of a school building. This implies that allocation of funds and resources are based on their potential results. Performance budgeting is the practice of developing budgets based on the relationship between programme funding levels and expected results from that programme. The process is a tool that programme administrators can use to manage more cost-efficient and effective budgeting outlays.

Zero-Base Budgeting (ZBB)

ZBB is a system of budgeting that requires management to take a fresh look at all programmes and activities each year rather than merely build on previous year's budget (Judith in Akinsolu, 2008). That is to say that it does not consider the previous year's budget but assumes that the programme is starting a fresh and should be treated as such, regardless of whether the budget is higher or lower than the previous one. ZBB helps in identifying areas of wasteful expenditure and, if desired, can also be used for suggesting alternative courses of action.

Zero-based budgeting enables the school administrator to prioritize projects/programmes and commit resources in that line. However, this type of budget is more time consuming, and justifying every line item can be more problematic. It is equally expensive and can lead to over exaggeration of benefits of projects and a resultant waste of resources (Olufidipe, 2016).

Planning, Programming and Budgeting system (PPBS)

The PPBS is a formal systematic structure for making decisions on a policy, or strategy and the development of forces and capabilities to accomplish anticipated missions (Mohammed, 2013). It is one of the most modern and innovative planning and management tools to provide a better analytical basis for decision making and for putting such decisions into operation.

An effective PPBS system depends greatly on already agreed upon goals and objectives for the institution and the unit. The achievement of goals is directly related to funding. It should be pointed out that PPBS tends to be too sophisticated for developing nations like Nigeria which are characterized by lack of reliable and timely data and shortage of experts. It is more theoretical than practical oriented and thus, very difficult to implement and manage.

Incremental Budgeting

Incremental budgeting makes use of the information in the budget of the preceding year. In other words, it is a budget prepared using previous period's budget or actual performance as a basis with incremental amounts added for the new budget period. In this instance, management does not intend to spend a great deal of time formulating budgets or may not perceive any great need to conduct a thorough re-evaluation of school needs. It is however, an easy, quick and cheap method of preparing budgets-and ensures that departments are operated in a consistent manner for a long period of time. Nonetheless, incremental budgeting fosters conservative maintenance of the status quo and does not encourage risk taking. Olufidipe (2016) concluded that a greater percentage of principals of secondary schools in Nigeria adopted incremental budgeting as their budgeting system because of its simplicity in preparation and in compliance with the budget guideline from the government.

Relevance of Budget to Education System

The Nigerian educational system is characterized by declining resources, rising costs and greater awareness of public accountability. These conditions make the management of the available human and material resources a social imperative. Hence, it demands a periodic preparation of the school budget. Through the use of budget as a standard, the school ensures that programmes are implemented according to set plans and objectives. The actual performance is measured against budgeted performance. A budget facilitates proper administration of financial revenues and other school resources. It is the basis for accounting for funds spent to achieve educational objectives. Budgeting also inspires confidence in the parents, education officials and the school community about the school's leadership and general management.

In specific terms, the following are the relevance of budgeting in the financial management of schools:

Forecasting: This entails making calculated attempts at knowing what the future holds (Pandey 2009). Budgeting, being a tool for the future period, aims at providing school heads with the ability to be abreast of future challenges. Forecasting is a complex exercise that requires the school heads to consider many variables in the light of government policies, economic outlook, students' enrolment, change in curriculum, among others. Efficient budgeting system and process would guide the school heads in coping with the task of effective forecasting.

Planning: Budgeting is a financial plan. It depends on forecasts that have been made in the past to make decisions about the future. The estimated data of enrolment, subventions, inventory of school facilities, among others, would go a long way in helping the school heads in financial management.

Communication: According to Akinsulire (2015) budgeting in an organization acts as a communication tool in gathering and disseminating financial information. During a budget planning phase, necessary financial data are collected and during abudget defence, approval, implementation and evaluation, and necessary financial information are disseminated for efficient management of educational resources.

Motivation: Budgeting is a tool that motivates the staff of any organization to strive to achieve organizational goals (Pandey, 2009). In the school system, if every stakeholder within the system is carried along during budget planning, there is the tendency that majority of them would have a sense of belonging which would

guaranty efficient management of educational resources and attainment of organizational goals.

Evaluation: The budget represents target performance which would be compared with actual performance. The evaluation role of budgeting in schools ensures that actual performance is compared with the standard set by the school management (Akinsolu, 2018). A proper evaluation aims at putting in place corrective measures in areas of lapses and also minimizes wastage and duplication in the allocation and utilization of limited education resources.

Coordination: This role of budgeting is very important for schools to achieve their goals and grow. According to Akinsulire (2015), coordination in schools simply means ensuring that different parts of the school as a system work in congruence. Budgeting ensures that different tasks within the school system are harmonised for the purpose of achieving the goals of the school.

Authorization: Budgeting helps to minimize misappropriation and embezzlement of educational resources because it authorizes and limits expenditure. In agreement with this, Pandey (2009) concluded that managers were made more accountable for their spending when an efficient budgeting system was put in place.

Budget Performance in the Nigerian Education System

The evaluation stage of the budgeting process reveals the status of budget performance in educational institutions in Nigeria. A lot of factors determine the performance status of any budget. According to Hakeem (2013), budget performance in education depends mainly on factors like prompt release of budgeted funds, full release of budgeted funds, prompt approval of the education budget, budgeting system adopted and budget implementation, among others. In the Nigerian education system, it has been observed by various stakeholders in education that budget performance is poor. Apart from the fact that education budgets are approved and released late, they are usually fractionally released (Hakeem, 2013). For example, in 2017, the total budgeted amount for the sector in Ondo State was thirty billion, three hundred and seventy three million, two hundred and thirty five thousand, five hundred and twenty naira and one kobo only (₦30, 373,235.520.01) but only one billion, nine hundred and twelve million, nine hundred and twenty six thousand, five hundred and forty nine naira and ninety seven kobo only (N1, 912,926,549.97), representing 6.30%, was released (Ondo State Education Sector Medium Term Strategy. 2016-2020: pp.38-39). The wide disparity between the budgeted amount and actual amount released always constitutes a major hindrance to budget implementation. Also, it has been observed by education stakeholders that budgetary allocations to education are usually released late due to late approval of budgets and avoidable logistics.

Budget preparation, presentation, defence, approval, implementation and evaluation at the tertiary sector of the education system in Nigeria seem to be standardized because of the financial regulation and requirements put in place by the Ministry of Education through its agency such as The National Universities Commission (N.U.C), The National Board for Technical Education (N.B.T.E) and The National Commission for Colleges of Education (N.C.C.E), among others (Odigwe (2020). However, the case may be different with other level of education system in Nigeria (Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary levels). Ikudehinbum, (2018) affirmed that despite the stipulation by the Financial Guidelines and Regulations, principals of public secondary schools in the South-Western States in Nigeria trivialize the budgeting process either for personal selfish interest or for lack of knowledge of it. The governments at all levels are also to be blamed for not

enforcing strict adherence to the Financial Guidelines and Regulations by the school head at these levels.

Implication of on Effective Budgeting System for Educational Planning

An effective budgeting system in educational institutions ensures the optimal utilization of scarce educational resources for the attainment of educational goals. Olufidipe (2016), in support of this view asserted that; ‘...for any educational institution to achieve its goals optimally, effective budgeting system must be deployed’. Because of the importance of budgeting in controlling the financial responsibility of school heads, it becomes imperative that an appropriate budgets system be deployed in the process of budget planning, budget defence, budget approval, budget implementation and budget evaluation.

Conclusion

The ever-growing need for proper accountability for the use of public fund in the face of low fund allocation to education makes budgeting in schools inevitable. Budgeting in schools means the fiscal interpretation of education programmes involving how much the school plans to spend and how the expenditure is to be incurred. For any budgeting to be meaningful, it should undergo a process. In the process, the revenue needed to actualize the school programme and how to allocate it to minimize friction, duplication and waste would be determined.

The actualization of educational objectives depends highly on efficient planning and management of school funds. For a budget to be effective, it should undergo some systematic steps in order that the school head would have a direction for the future. Budgeting is made up of different types, and the knowledge of the types, as discussed here, will reveal the meaning, advantages and disadvantages of such which will definitely guide the head of an educational institutions in his choice of the type to adopt.

Suggestions

Based on the discussion of this paper and the educational planning implications arising there-from, the following suggestions were made:

The budget process of budget preparation, budget defence, budget approval, budget implementation and budget evaluation should be strictly adopted by heads of educational institutions in compliance with the Financial Guidelines and Regulations to ensure prudent management of educational resources.

Budget preparation, defence and approval should be done at the appropriate time, without delay, by the appropriate authorities, since it is a financial instrument to work with during a given financial year or an academic session. Approving a budget in the middle of an academic session makes mockery of the entire financial system in the educational institution.

Government should ensure that budgetary allocations to educational institutions are released to them at the appropriate time. This is because the education system requires a regular flow of funds to enable it to function optimally and to achieve its goals.

Government at all levels should adequately release the budgetary allocation to the educational institutions. It has been observed that most of the budgetary allocations to the education sector were mere ‘allocation on papers’ which were never disbursed in full.

Heads of educational institutions should ensure the allocation and utilization of funds as budgeted.

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