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# AN APPRAISAL OF THE OVERSIGHT FUNCTIONS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*This paper is an appraisal of the oversight functions of the Senate Committee on Education. Oversight functions are essential in ensuring that government agencies and departments are accountable and transparent in their operations. The Ministry of Education is a critical agency in any government, and the Senate Committee tasked with overseeing its activities plays a crucial role in ensuring that the ministry's policies and programs align with the government's goals and objectives. To ascertain the effectiveness of Senate Committee oversight functions to ensure accountability and transparency in the Ministry of Education's budget allocation and utilization, the secondary method of data analysis was adopted. The study adopted the agent theory of Pelizzo and Stapenhurst (2012). Among the key findings of the appraisal is that the Senate Committee has not been effectively utilizing its oversight powers. The study recommends that the Senate Committee members be trained on oversight functions, including the principles and practices of monitoring and evaluation. This will help to ensure that the members of the committee have the necessary skills to assess the performance of the Ministry of Education and to make informed decisions based on their findings. In addition, the training should cover effective communication skills, negotiation skills, and conflict resolution skills. By enhancing the training of Senate Committee members, they will be better equipped to perform their oversight functions effectively.*

**Key Words:** Legislature, Oversight Functions, Senate Committee, Nigerian National Assembly, Ministry of Education

## Introduction

The Legislature is an essential organ of government because it balances the power of the Executive and the Judiciary in exercising authority. It is one of the most important institutions of democracy, and it decides how responsive the government is to citizens (Manona, 2016). The National Assembly fulfills its duty by passing laws, supervising government activity, and representing constituencies and citizens in government matters (Heywood, 2007). Legislators must have appropriate resources and competence to conduct their oversight tasks and maintain checks and balances. To carry out its objectives, the Nigerian National Assembly has immense constitutional power and fiscal resources at its disposal. Section 88 of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, for example, empowers each chamber of the National Assembly to conduct investigations into the affairs of any person or organization charged with the responsibility of executing or administering the laws enacted by the National Assembly and disbursing or administering money appropriated by the National Assembly.

However, Section 88 (2) 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, provides that the power of investigation is exercisable only to enable the National Assembly to make laws with any matter within its legislative competence and to expose corruption, inefficiency, or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement or administration of funds appropriated by it. To enable the National Assembly to perform its oversight roles, the National Assembly is constitutionally empowered to form committees to procure all such evidence, written or oral, direct or circumstantial, as it may deem necessary or desirable, and examine all

persons. In this vein, the National Assembly can summon any person or institution to give evidence or produce documents and to report to them.

Oversight is one of the activities by which the Legislature supervises the implementation of policies and actions enacted by it. The main object of oversight is to hold the executive accountable for their actions. Oversight involves monitoring the achievement of goals set by legislation and the government's own programs. Hence, oversight seeks to ensure transparency, accountability, good government, service delivery, and public participation (Madue, 2012).

The Senate Committee on Education is responsible for overseeing the policies and programs of the Ministry of Education in Nigeria. The committee is made up of members of the Nigerian Senate who are appointed to serve on the committee. Its primary role is to ensure that the Ministry of Education operates in accordance with the law and that its policies and programs are effective in achieving their goals. The oversight functions of the Senate Committee on Education include conducting public hearings, receiving reports from the Ministry of Education, and carrying out inspections of educational institutions. The committee is also tasked with reviewing the budget of the Ministry of Education and ensuring that it is allocated appropriately to meet the needs of the education sector.

In addition to its oversight functions, the Senate Committee on Education also has the power to make recommendations to the Nigerian Senate on matters related to education policy and legislation. The committee can propose amendments to existing laws or draft new laws to address issues in the education sector.

Education is a crucial element of human capital development (Office of the President of the Senate (OPS), 2019). Education is essential in providing skilled manpower to maintain and sustain country's economic activities for rapid socioeconomic development, improving life's choices and the quality of life. The global community recognizes access to quality education as one of the essential elements for achieving sustainable development. More so, the Vision 20: 2020 document and the sector need to re-focus the country's educational system in terms of access, equity, quality, infrastructure, teacher quality and development, curriculum relevance, funding, and planning. Yet, education in Nigeria is faced with challenges, such as a supply shortfall of educational institutions, inadequate funding of basic, secondary, and tertiary institutions, a lack of access to available institutions, poor training of teachers, the high number of out-of-school children in the world, deterioration and/or inadequate educational infrastructure, a progressively poor quality of education translating into poor performance in examinations, etc. (OPS, 2019).

In response to the state of education and other sectors in Nigeria, the Legislature is constitutionally mandated to make laws overseeing sectoral policy implementation to address the crisis in the education sector. To enable it to perform effectively, the Legislature has established committees to enable it to perform effectively and efficiently. However, the National Assembly has been ineffective in exercising its oversight functions over the Executive (Stapenhurst, Jacob, & Olaore, 2016) due to lack of political will. This suggests that the executives responsible for the sector are rarely called upon to account for failure. This has led to ineffectiveness, maladministration, and misuse of government expenditures in the education sector. Failure to take action against cases of omission or ineffectiveness in the sector compromises good governance and democratic accountability in the public service. The oversight functions of the senate Committee in the Ministry of Education have been subject to various criticisms and questions regarding their effectiveness in ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the education sector. Despite the significant role of the committee in providing checks and balances on the ministry's activities, there is limited information on the extent to which the committee has been able to fulfill its mandate. Therefore, this study aims to appraise the oversight functions of the senate committee on Education, with a focus on identifying the gaps and challenges that hinder their effectiveness in promoting good governance and accountability in the education sector. This paper examines how public hearings affect oversights functions of senate committee on education.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Concept of Legislative Oversight**

Oversight is the legislative supervision of the executive (Hamalai, 2014). It is the constitutionally mandated function of the Legislature through which Parliament scrutinizes and oversees executive policies, actions, and programs (Pelizzo, Stapenhurst, & Olson 2006). Yusuf, (2020) argued that legislative oversight is the process by which a legislative body, such as a parliament or a congress, exercises its authority to monitor and review the activities of the executive branch of government. The purpose of legislative oversight is to ensure that government agencies are effectively carrying out their duties and responsibilities, and that they are held accountable for their actions.

According to (Policy and Legal Advocacy Center (PLAC), 2016) the concept of legislative oversight is rooted in the principle of checks and balances, which is a cornerstone of democratic governance. By providing a mechanism for the legislative branch to oversee the activities of the executive branch, legislative oversight helps to prevent abuses of power and to ensure that public resources are used in the public interest. To Dan-Azumi (2019), legislative oversight can take many forms, including hearings, investigations, and audits. In some cases, legislative committees may have subpoena power, which allows them to compel witnesses to testify or to produce documents. The goal of these oversight activities is to gather information, identify problems or issues, and make recommendations for improvement.

Effective legislative oversight requires a strong and independent legislature, as well as a robust system of checks and balances. It also requires transparency and accountability on the part of government agencies, as well as a willingness to cooperate with legislative requests for information and access. Cosmeus (2016) opined there are some challenges associated with legislative oversight, including the potential for political bias or interference, as well as the risk of overreaching or encroaching on executive authority. However, when carried out in a responsible and effective manner, legislative oversight can play a critical role in ensuring that government agencies are accountable to the public and that democratic values are upheld.

### **Sources of Oversight Powers in Nigeria**

Oversight powers refer to the authority and responsibility vested in certain entities or individuals to monitor, investigate, and evaluate the actions of other government bodies or officials to ensure compliance with laws, regulations, and policies. In Nigeria, the sources of oversight powers can be traced to various legal and institutional frameworks established to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance. The primary sources of oversight powers in Nigeria include the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which provides the legal framework for the exercise of oversight functions by various government bodies. This includes the National Assembly, which is empowered to investigate and oversee the activities of the executive arm of government, including ministries, departments, and agencies.

Overall, the sources of oversight powers in Nigeria are critical for ensuring transparency, accountability, and good governance in the country. These entities play a crucial role in ensuring that public officials are held accountable for their actions and that government resources are utilized in a responsible and transparent manner for the benefit of all citizens.

The power to conduct oversight is implied and expressed as stated in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) grants the legislative powers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the National Assembly. The legislative power of the National Assembly includes making laws for the peace, order, and good governance of the state. This power to make laws also implies the power to oversee the executive, and this "power to oversee derives from various enumerated powers in the Constitution as well as from public laws and standing orders of the legislature, and that Parliament could not carry out the constitutional powers reasonably or responsibly without knowing what the executive branch is doing; how programs are being administered, by whom, and at what cost; and whether officials are obeying the law and complying with legislative intent" (Hamalai, 2015).

The expressed power of oversight of the National Assembly is stated in Sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution. For instance, under Section 89, the federal legislature is bestowed with the powers to gather the evidence required for the investigation, which shall be given on oath. The National Assembly also has the power to compel the attendance of witnesses under penalty of punishment if they fail to attend. The various powers are to enable the National Assembly to: a) make laws with respect to any matter within its legislative competence and correct any defects in existing law; and b) expose corruption, inefficiency, or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement or administration of funds appropriated by it.

### **The Committee on Education**

The Committee on Education is a formal assembly or body of individuals, typically representing a larger organization or institution, tasked with the responsibility of developing and implementing policies and strategies related to education. The Committee on Education may be composed of experts and stakeholders from various fields, including educators, administrators, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders, who collaborate to address issues and challenges related to education and learning. The Committee on Education may have a wide range of responsibilities, including developing educational programs, evaluating and revising curriculum standards, overseeing educational funding, conducting research, and promoting policies that support access to quality education for all individuals. The work of the Committee on Education plays a critical role in shaping the direction and quality of education and has far-reaching implications for the social, economic, and political well-being of communities and societies.

Committees are constituted groups of legislators with specific objectives to examine matters more closely (Yamamoto, 2007). Hamalai (2014) noted that most of the oversight functions of Parliament are performed by committees. The scope of the activities of committees is limited by the rules under which they are established (Yamamoto, 2007). Committee significance includes allowing legislatures to increase the amount of work that can be done and ensure that issues can be debated in more detail than in plenary sessions. More so, committees increase the level of participation of legislators in discussions and enable them to develop expertise and in-depth knowledge of the specific committee's area of work.

Furthermore, they provide a platform for the public to present views directly to legislators; hear evidence, and collect information related to the work of a specific committee (Manona, 2016). In the previous Assembly, the Senate had a Committee on Education. However, in the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly, this committee was divided into two: The Committee on Education (Basic and Secondary) and The Committee on Tertiary Institutions and TETFund.

### **Legislative Oversight Tools**

Legislative oversight tools refer to the various mechanisms and procedures that legislatures use to supervise and monitor the executive branch's implementation of laws and policies. These tools may include hearings, investigations, budget reviews, reports, resolutions, and other formal or informal methods of gathering information and evaluating executive actions. The purpose of legislative oversight is to ensure accountability, transparency, and effectiveness in government operations, as well as to prevent abuses of power, corruption, or waste of public resources. Legislative oversight tools are essential to the proper functioning of a democratic system, as they provide a check and balance on the power of the executive branch and promote the public interest by promoting good governance and sound policymaking.

There is an array of tools at the disposal of legislatures for conducting oversight. The most common tools include questions for ministers (oral and written). Hamalai (2014) and Omotoso and Oladeji (2019) advanced several tools for the conduct of legislative oversight. Some of them are described below:

- a. **Hearings**, either in plenary or committee meetings, are a primary tool of parliament for obtaining information related to specific policies or issues. Nearly all parliaments conduct hearings. However, parliaments have varying capacities to compel individuals to give testimony. In Nigeria, sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution are clear on the powers of the houses to conduct investigations into subjects of concern and the procurement of evidence for such purposes.
- b. **Interpellation** refers to a formal procedure employed by parliaments to require the justification of a certain policy by an individual member of government or, in some countries, the government in full. Omotoso & Oladeji (2019) posited that it can give way to broad debates on the policy at hand or lead to a vote approving or disapproving the issue discussed. This may be followed by a vote of no confidence (Vanguard Nigeria, 2020, January 30<sup>th</sup>). Interpellation is common in parliamentary jurisdictions.
- c. **Parliamentary questions** are the most commonly used oversight tool. Questions are intended to clarify or discuss government policies and may lead to interpellation, where the rules permit, if the answer is not satisfactory. To properly monitor the executive, members of parliament need to be properly informed of the policies of the executive and its ministries. Government responses to parliamentary questions may lead to the publication of valuable information. Questions can often be asked in oral or written form, although oral question-and-answer sessions may provide a dramatic atmosphere and opportunity for response and follow-up by either side. To illustrate, the invitation to the service chiefs to address the raging insecurity is worthy of mention (This Day Live, 2021, April 27<sup>th</sup>).  
Consequently, the organization of these sessions is essential to effective parliamentary oversight. Committees of inquiry are usually ad hoc parliamentary committees or commissions formed to carry out in-depth investigations on specific issues of public importance. These commissions usually benefit from a greater degree of access to information than normal committees. Their powers may include summoning witnesses to testify under oath, confronting one witness with another, requesting or seizing documents, organizing field visits, and more. These commissions may possess the same powers as a magistrate making a judicial inquiry (the Legislative Houses (Powers and Privileges) Act 2017). Committees of inquiry are common in parliaments around the world and may be used to investigate important cases of corruption or abuse of power.
- d. **Budget oversight** is a means used by parliaments to ensure financial accountability. After the budget has been passed, the parliament has an important role to play in monitoring how the budget funds are spent. This work is usually done by its committees. Such scrutiny is done in cooperation with a state auditing institution.
- e. **Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs)**, such as the auditor general (in Commonwealth countries) or Cours des Comptes (in Francophone countries), facilitate budget oversight by playing a "watchdog" role and reporting their findings either publicly or directly to parliament. Explicitly, the auditor general monitors how the government uses the public purse and informs the parliament of its observations. As is also the case in Commonwealth countries, the auditor general reports to the Public Accounts Committees (PACs), which scrutinize such queries and makes recommendations accordingly (Section 125 [2] of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended).

In some countries, an ombudsman is appointed by parliament to conduct investigations of public authorities based on complaints or requests by the parliament. An ombudsman typically scrutinizes whether the workings of the administration or the offending actions are following the principles of good governance. As such, they play an important role in examining government transparency and openness. An ombudsman tries to find practical solutions to the problems they are tasked with and assumes a role of conciliation between the public and the authorities. In Nigeria, the Public Complaints Commission (PCC) provides an example of an ombudsman.

### **Empirical Review**

Nwaegbu (2022) examined the performance of oversight functions by the Imo State House of Assembly, identifies factors influencing the discharge of the oversight mandate by the Committees of the Imo State House of Assembly, and proffered solutions to identified challenges. This study became important as it brought to the fore what occurs at the sub-national level in terms of legislative oversight of the executive, using Imo State as a case study. It also exposed the peculiar deficiencies in the discharge of the oversight mandate by the committees. This would also bridge the gap in literature on the importance of the plight of state houses of assembly in over sighting the executive arm of government in Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed research design, which is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research designs. The choice of research design is because the study employed the use of a questionnaire as a source of primary data as well as key informant interviews (KII) and the session reports of selected committees of the Imo State House of Assembly, journal articles, the media and magazines, and textbooks.

Data were sourced from existing scholarly articles and documents as well as from primary sources (questionnaires and KII). The study also adopted quantitative and qualitative analytical frameworks to examine the performance of oversight functions by the Imo State House of Assembly. The study recommended, among others, the provision of adequate resources for the state legislature by the government; capacity development programs for legislators and their aides through partnerships with capacity development institutions such as the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILDS); improved cooperation between ministries, departments, and agencies of the government through regular retreats; and the adoption of self-accountability measures such as performance appraisals for the members of the committee.

Maccido (2019) assessed the oversight functions of the Senate Committees, 2015–2019. Particularly, it assesses the effectiveness of the Senate Committee in performing oversight of the education sector from 2015 to 2019. The study adopted a qualitative research design. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and seasonal reports from committees. The purposeful sampling technique was used to select the key informants that provided the primary data, while the secondary data was taken from published materials. The research found that the Senate Committees on Education (Basic and Secondary) and Tertiary Institutions and TETFund have been effective to an extent in performing their oversight of the basic, secondary and tertiary education sectors. The recommendation includes that more funding should be given to educational institutions with serious infrastructural needs. Second, the Senate should urgently review, approve, and publish a new standing order to accommodate the newly appointed Standing Committee in the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate to avoid conflicts of responsibilities or jurisdiction.

Amusa (2013), in his study, aimed at locating legislative oversight functions as a key element. In promoting accountability and transparency in Africa, view it from Nigeria's perspective using Observation, analytical, and comparative approaches revealed that since 1999, the legislative body in Nigeria has been wobbling from one sleaze to another because of misuse of oversight functions, thus undermining democratic governance. Amusa, anchoring his study on the concept of separation of powers as it addresses an essential legislative role in ensuring checks and limitations on the exercise of executive powers, concluded that there is a need to overhaul the democratization process in Nigeria as there is a nexus between the failure of the legislature to dutifully discharge its oversight functions and the inherent incapacity of those elected into office.

Onwe, Ibeogu, & Nkwede (2015), in their research examining the strength and level of separation of powers among the three tiers of government, the autonomy, checks, and balances among the arms, found that the legislative organ is incapacitated from carrying out effective legislation for good governance because of inadequate autonomy, the executive usurpation of legislative powers by involving in oversight functions, the problem of "godfatherism," and the corrupt tendencies of most members of the legislative houses. Onwe, et al. (2015) suggested that to ensure effective legislation that will bring about good governance in the polity; there should be an independent choice of candidates, a

free and fair election, financial autonomy of the legislature, and a regular oversight function devoid of financial and material benefits or inducements by members of the legislative arm.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Principal Agent Theory (PAT)**

The principal-agent theory is a suitable theoretical framework for assessing the oversight functions of the Senate Committees on Education. This is because the theory explains the oversight relationship between the Legislature and the Executive. The theory was successfully applied to explain the oversight relationship by Pelizzo & Stapenhurst (2012). Principal-agent theory stresses the institutional mechanisms whereby principals (legislature) can monitor and enforce compliance on their agents (executives) (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2012). This theory is specifically suitable for explaining, first, the accountability relationship between citizens (as principals) and the executive and legislative (both as agents), and second, the accountability relationship between the legislature (acting as principals for citizens) and both the executive and the bureaucracy (as agents). PAT is suitable for explaining the oversight functions of parliaments because the legislature has been given the constitutional right to monitor and supervise (on behalf of the citizens) the actions of the executive and its agencies.

When applying the principal agent theory to public sector governance, Fukuyama (2004b) points out three problems. First, public sector organizations' goals are often unclear, and as such, agents can only perform the will of the principals if the principals are clear in what they want the agents to do. Second, formal systems of monitoring and accountability involve high transaction costs or lack the specificity of the underlying activity. Third, the proper degree of delegated discretion often differs over time.

Consequently, the three problems identified by Fukuyama above create situations of inequality in information because, first, the bureaucracy has more information than the legislature and executive combined, as principals; second, the executive, as agents, has more knowledge than the legislature or citizens, as principals; in the same manner, the legislature, as agents, has more knowledge than citizens, as principals. Notwithstanding, the above weaknesses do not undermine the significance of the PAT for voter-legislature-executive relations. In fact, institutional mechanisms have been developed to explain how the legislature overcomes the challenges of informational asymmetry and moral hazard inherent in the principal agent theory.

The principal-agent theory is appropriate for this study since it focuses on the execution of the National Assembly's oversight function. As a result, PAT provides a chance to analyze the connection between the executive and the legislative, as well as how legislatures use oversight measures to ensure agents comply with the principal's objective. While the PAT describes the nature of governance in an ideal context, this is not the case in Nigeria, where the legislature's oversight role has been marred by corruption and a lack of political will (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2014). One of the criticisms leveled with the PAT is that, aside from compliance, it does not assign the executive a collaborative or partnership role in the monitoring functions. Furthermore, PAT incorrectly assumes that all agents want to undermine the executive's authority. When there are numerous principals, such as the legislature and the executive, the theory is silent.

## **Methodology**

The methodology adopted in this study is survey and documentary. Therefore, quantitative data, which already exists largely within the senate committee on education, is analyzed. The study is taking a cue from the work of renowned sociologist. The study attempts to analyze data that largely already exists at the senate committee on Education.

Research design is a plan, a blueprint, and a conceptual structure for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data for a study. Essentially, this study focuses on the appraisal of the oversight functions of the Senate Committee in the Ministry of Education. This contains questions that measure the effectiveness of Senate Committee oversight functions in ensuring accountability and



transparency in the senate committee on Education. The scopes of the study consist of the period of the 9<sup>th</sup> assembly (2019-2023), a period of 5 years.

**Results and Discussion**

The legislative oversight function is the mechanism through which the people in government are kept under watch. It aims at curbing waste, inefficiency, ineffectiveness, corruption, mismanagement of public resources, etc. in governance. This study is an appraisal of the oversight functions of the Senate Committee in the Ministry of Education.

**Table 1: Has Conducting Public Hearings Affect Oversight Functions of Senate Committee on Education?**

| Strongly Agree<br>(SA) | Agree<br>(A) | Disagree<br>(D) | Strongly<br>Disagree<br>(SD) | Undecided<br>(U) |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 28.9%                  | 18.5%        | 21%             | 34%                          | 0.6%             |

**Source:** Senate Committee Report, (2022)

The table above shows the data obtained from the senate committee on Education, this data revealed that around 28.9% strongly agreed that public hearing affects oversights functions of senate committee on Education, while 18.5% believed that public hearing affects oversight functions of senate committee on education, 21% disagreed that public hearing affects oversight functions of senate committee on education, while strongly disagreed that public hearing affects oversight functions of senate committee on education, and 0.6% undecided on that notion.

**Table 2: Receiving Reports from the Ministry of Education Affects Oversight Functions of Senate Committee on Education**

| Strongly Agree<br>(Sa) | Agree<br>(A) | Disagree<br>(D) | Strongly<br>Disagree<br>(SD) | Undecided<br>(U) |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 32%                    | 14%          | 11%             | 41%                          | 2%               |

**Source:** Senate Committee Report, (2022)

Table 2 shows data obtained from Senate committee on Education, the table indicates that 32% strongly agree that receiving reports from the Ministry of Education affects oversight functions of senate committee on education. Around 34% of the respondents strongly disagreed the notion that receiving reports from the Ministry of Education affects oversights functions of senate committee on education. Only about 11% of the respondents disagreed with the same notion. Around 2% of the respondents are undecided about the matter.

**Table 3: Public Hearing on Oversight Functions of Senate Committee on Education**

| Year | Public Hearing | Reports Received | Decision taken |
|------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 2019 | 87             | 213              | 81             |
| 2020 | 76             | 112              | 87             |
| 2021 | 68             | 233              | 98             |
| 2022 | 88             | 217              | 76             |
| 2023 | 77             | 311              | 80             |

**Source:** National Assembly, (2023)

Table 4 above shows the number of public hearings reports received and decisions taken. In 2019, 87 public hearings were held with 213 reports were received and 81 decisions were taken. In 2020, there were 76 public hearings with 112 reports received and 87 decisions taken. In 2021, there were 68 public hearings held in the ninth assembly with 233 reports received and 98 decisions taken by the senate committee on education. In 2022, there were 88 public hearings with 217 reports received and 76 decisions taken. In 2023, there were 77 public hearings with 311 reports received while 80 decisions were taken.

According to reviewed documents on the oversight functions of the Senate Committee in the Ministry of Education, several findings have been revealed. These findings have implications for the effectiveness of the Committee in carrying out its mandate of oversight as well as for the overall performance of the Ministry of Education.

Among the key findings of the appraisal is that the Senate Committee has not been effectively utilizing its oversight powers. The Committee has not been conducting regular and thorough inspections of the Ministry of Education's activities, which has led to a lack of accountability and transparency in the Ministry's operations. This has contributed to a situation where there is little accountability for the performance of the ministry and its officials. This finding is in line with Nwaegbu (2022) whose study exposed the particular deficiencies in the discharge of the oversight mandate by the committees in Imo state House of Assembly.

Another finding of the appraisal is that effective stakeholder engagement is a critical component of policy development and implementation. Committees' engage with stakeholders in various ways, such as through public hearings, roundtable discussions, surveys, and consultations. These engagements provide a platform for stakeholders to share their perspectives, experiences, and challenges, which can inform policy decisions. Through public hearings and consultations, the Senate Committee on Education can hear directly from stakeholders on the challenges facing the education sector in Nigeria. These challenges may include inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, inadequate teacher training and retention, inadequate curriculum development and implementation, and inadequate access to educational opportunities, especially for marginalized and vulnerable populations. This finding is Amusa (2013) whose study revealed that there is a need to overhaul the democratization process in Nigeria as there is a nexus between the failure of the legislature to dutifully discharge its oversight functions and the inherent incapacity of those elected into office.

In addition to these findings, the appraisal has also highlighted the need for greater collaboration and cooperation between the Senate Committee and the Ministry of Education. The appraisal has found that there is a lack of communication and coordination between the two entities, which has led to a situation where the committee is not able to effectively monitor the ministry's activities.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the available data, it can be concluded that the Senate Committee responsible for oversight functions in the Ministry of Education plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability, transparency, and efficiency in the education sector. Through its oversight functions, the Committee helps to identify issues and challenges facing the Ministry and recommends measures to address them. Additionally, the Committee helps to monitor the implementation of policies and programs, and ensures that resources allocated to the Ministry are utilized effectively.

However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of the Senate Committee's oversight functions in the Ministry of Education may be limited by several factors, including political interference, inadequate funding, and lack of technical expertise. Therefore, there is a need for continuous improvement and strengthening of the oversight functions of the Committee to enhance its effectiveness and ensure that the education sector operates optimally for the benefit of all stakeholders

Based on the above findings, the study makes the following recommendations

- a. The Senate Committee on Education in Nigeria should increase its oversight efforts by conducting regular and thorough assessments of the implementation of education policies across

the country. This can be achieved by collaborating with relevant stakeholders such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions to collect data and feedback on the effectiveness of policies. The committee should also prioritize holding public hearings and engaging in constructive dialogue with education experts and stakeholders to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of policies, and to develop evidence-based recommendations for improvement. By doing so, the committee can enhance its effectiveness in ensuring that education policies are implemented effectively and contribute to improving the quality of education in Nigeria.

- b. Another key recommendation for the Senate Committee on Education to engage with stakeholders in the education sector in Nigeria would be to prioritize inclusivity and diversity in the engagement process. This could involve ensuring that a wide range of stakeholders are included in the process, such as educators, parents, students, civil society organizations, and experts from different fields of education.

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