Economics, Law and Policy
ISSN 2576-2060 (Print) ISSN 2576-2052 (Online)
Vol. 5, No. 1, 2022
www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/elp

Original Paper

Education Policy in Developing Countries: Addressing the Challenge of Managing Overseas Scholarship Programs through Performance Measurement

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Received: January 9, 2022 Accepted: January 21, 2022 Online Published: May 19, 2022

doi:10.22158/elp.v5n1p1 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/elp.v5n1p1

Abstract

Education and development–whether personal, social, economic or technological–are inextricably bound. In recognition of this, governments, societies and private organizations commit huge financial resources to the funding of education. However, funding for students' higher education through scholarships suffers a huge disadvantage against funding for higher education institutions. This is more so in developing countries that are even in need of high quality education obtainable in the developed economies through overseas scholarship schemes for deserving candidates.

Governments and Sponsoring organizations such as Nigeria's Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), World Bank's Overseas Scholarships for Developing Countries, America's USAID, United Nations' UNESCO or the Commonwealth Scholarship Programs therefore need to deploy performance assessment mechanisms to effectively and regularly monitor the performances of the beneficiaries of the overseas scholarship schemes throughout the course duration of their studies with a view to recalling back home any under-performing candidate(s) to avoid wasted resources.

The deliverables of this Research Paper, therefore, include:

- ✓ ***The Nsiegbe Performance Assessment Model for Overseas Scholarship Schemes***.
- ✓ *A Performance Measurement Formula, known as,* ***The Nsiegbe Formula for Scholarship Schemes Performance Measurement***.
- ✓ *A Student Performance Assessment Plan.*

Keywords

education policy, developing countries, higher education, overseas scholarship, quality assurance, benchmarking, performance assessment, performance measurement

1. Introduction

This section gives a general overview of the study presented in this paper. It begins with a brief description of the background of the subject matter. It explores the significance of the study and also provides justification for the research. It summarizes the nature of the study and gives an insight into its methodology.

1.1 Background of the Research

Education policy and development economics can be considered as Siamese twins–hard to separate. It is therefore understandable that many developing nations around the world–in a bid to attain modern and high level development in virtually every field of existence–have been committing huge resources toward the acquisition of top notch quality education for their citizens in the hope of bridging the gap between themselves and the developed economies. For decades, this has taken the form of sponsoring candidates to various developed countries such as The USA, UK, Canada, Germany, France, Russia, The Netherlands, and, in recent times, to China, etc. on State-funded foreign education programs.

However, in most cases in the past few decades, this strategy has largely been marred by favouritism, corruption and such other vices that ensure that the most academically and intellectually deserving candidates are side-lined while the less deserving and less qualified are often the beneficiaries of the overseas scholarship programs. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of Performance Monitoring over the beneficiaries, and the absence of appropriate management frameworks for these overseas scholarship programs. In some other cases, the Scheme is marred by politicization, a phenomenon that has become rife in my own country, Nigeria, in this 21st century. The stunted growth and development of the country after many decades of a promising future have confirmed that education that is politicized and marred by corruption does not yield the desired and expected results. It can at best produce "Professors without Research and Addition of Knowledge", "Leaders without Ideas and Vision", "Doctors without Clinics", "Senior Officers without Merit", "Engineers without Projects", "Administrators and Managers without depth", etc. as is the reality in the country at the tailspin of 2021.

For the purposes of this Paper, countries classified as developing economies are those who, for the current 2022 fiscal year, are classified by the World Bank as low-income economies with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of $1,045 or less in 2020; and the lower middle-income economies with a GNI per capita between $1,046 and $4,095 (World Bank Atlas Method, 2021).

1.2 Why the Research is Important: Significance of the Study

This study is significant because of its relationship with public funding of education, and is geared towards the enhancement of public financing of education. It can be argued that education is the greatest asset and wealth that any nation, society or community of people can possess due to its great benefits. The importance of education itself cannot be over-emphasized. It and the significance of this study are inextricably bound. The benefits of education are discussed herein and are considered at

individual, economic, social, technological and revolutionary levels:

1.2.1 Individual Benefits

It can be said that the primary motivation an individual has for acquiring education is to secure a good standard of living: earn a good pay, be capable of providing for him/her and the family the basic necessities of life and quite possibly add some icing to these, in the form of some extra comforts of living. Topel (2004) states that the private monetary returns to a person who acquires education can be as high as 8-15% per year of schooling while four years of college education can raise earnings by about 65 per cent–a compounded return of about 13 per cent per year of schooling.

1.2.2 Economic Benefits

Ferguson (2006), notes that education plays a critical role in the provision of goods and services that have high economic value. He asserts that economic achievement and educational achievement–both at individual and national levels–are intertwined.

> It can be argued that improved private monetary returns brought on by acquiring higher education, as stated by Topel (2004), means a better economic life for the individual as he/she is in a better position to pay for desired goods and services. This translates to increased economic activity and benefits for the larger society.

1.2.3 Social Benefits

Acquiring higher education overseas in advanced countries assists the individual to know and understand how the legal, educational, economic, infrastructural and other systems work in those places. This knowledge can prove useful when repatriated and applied back home for the effective transformation of the beneficiary's native society.

> Moreover, additional skills–technical, academic, managerial and even research skills–acquired by studying overseas can prove very useful to the state when repatriated back home and applied for the wellbeing of the larger society. This can particularly be achieved if mechanisms are put in place to ensure the repatriation of talent after overseas study, especially where the education was financed with public funds.

1.2.4 Revolutions

On a philosophical note, an educated mind is a liberated mind. When the mind is liberated, a lot of revolutionary thoughts are germinated. This can lead to a flowering of revolutionary ideas in management of public funds and utilities, in education–such as the idea of an overseas scholarship scheme in science and technology, agriculture, power generation, housing, etc, to name a few. Such revolutionary thinking can lead to either incremental or radical innovation for the enhancement of society.

> Another revolutionary benefit of education occurs when a people can utilize new and upbeat technologies to share and organize in mass revolts to remove a dictatorial and/or unpopular government, as happenings just over a decade ago in the Arab world have proved, in what was christened "The Arab Spring".

1.2.5 Technological Benefits

There is no gainsaying the fact that the great technological advancements being witnessed in the world today are the results of **education** via **scientific research and development**. Developing Countries yearn for technological growth, and desire to be in the league of technologically advanced nations. As they struggle to catch up with the technologically advanced countries, the need for each of them to send more people to acquire higher education in science, technology, management, etc. in such overseas countries becomes a high imperative, other things being equal.

1.3 Justification for the Research: Gap

The importance of education is further supported by scholarly articles and case studies that dealt with the funding of higher education. Much of this literature, however, focused on the funding of the higher education institutions rather than on student scholarships for higher education, or their **management**. Frolich, Schmidt, & Rosa (2010), for instance, discuss how funding systems influence higher education institutions and their strategies and core tasks. They used the results of a comparative study between Denmark, Norway and Portugal to identify and analyse the main features of these state funding systems, their strengths and weaknesses, and their impact on academia. They acknowledge there are vast differences in funding systems for Higher Education, and, citing Salmi & Hauptman (2006), identify two major types of funding systems namely:

- Direct public funding of institutions, i.e., funding of teaching through negotiated formula, demand-side vouchers, performance-based funding, funding for specific purposes and/or combined funding for teaching and research, block grant funding and project funding; and,
- Funding for students via government grants and scholarships, tax benefits and student loan models.

However, their research focuses on the first type of funding and does not give much attention to funding for students via government grants and scholarships.

Hagood (2019) explores the financial benefits and burdens of performance funding in higher education. However, the focus in this regard is on the funding of higher education institutions without exploring how this policy can also impact on high performing students through scholarships for student higher education acquisition.

Akinkugbe (2001), on the other hand, examines the financial flows within the educational system in Swaziland and tries to compare public contribution to unit costs in education relative to the contribution of households. He found that higher education is heavily subsidized by the government, with 83% contribution, at the expense of basic education. He does not, however, tell us how this 83% is distributed between the funding of the Higher Education Institutions and funding of student scholarships or how their student scholarship funding is managed.

Ortagus *et al.* (2020) examined the intended and unintended consequences of Performance-Based Funding (PBF) policies in higher education in America. They observe that the adoption of PBF is generally associated with modest positive effects on such intended outcomes as retention and graduation but that there are also unintended disadvantages for underserved student groups and under-resourced institution types. Again, their public funding discourse does not deal with how these underserved student groups can be better served through scholarships based on individual performance assessment.

Mutula (2001) delves into the **management** of library finances under the funding of public universities in eastern and southern Africa, which still falls under the studies of the funding of Higher Education Institutions, while Mutula (2002) discusses how public funding of higher education institutions has affected overall operations of the universities in Kenya. The focus here is: Public Funding of Higher Education, which is also what the student scholarship programs are all about.

None of the studies in the existing literature has dealt with the issue of developing a framework to assist in the effective management of student overseas scholarship programs. Furthermore, none has been able to provide a performance assessment formula that should be applied to such programs despite the fact that, according to Frolich *et al.* (2010), incentive mechanisms and quality assurance in the public funding of higher education do get weakened by the lack of performance parameters. This study has attempted to fill these gaps and to also open a possible window to new engagements in academic discourse in this domain area.

1.4 Nature of the Research and Its Methodology

The study is **Qualitative** in nature and adopts an **Inductive Approach** that is based on **Grounded Theory** Research Strategy.

Research Philosophy: The Philosophy on which the research is based is Social Constructivism/Interpretivism, with a spicing of pragmatism.

Research methodology: As mentioned above, the research is qualitative in nature because it is based mainly on theoretical information gathered from a review of existing literature. However, the outcome of the study, which is the Performance Assessment Model/Tool and the Performance Measurement Formula, can only be utilized through the application of quantitative data to the model but this does not qualify the study as a quantitative research. This does not also therefore qualify the study as a Mixed Methods research. Consequently, the choice that was made for the study presented in this paper, therefore, was ***an innovative research methodology*** referred to by this researcher as "***Quasi-Mixed Methods***", and this was derived from the combination of qualitative method and "quasi-quantitative" method, in light of Bloomberg & Volpe (2008, p. 7).

2. Method

This study is concerned mainly with developing ideas, forming opinions, understanding meanings, interpretations, gaining perceptions, or looking at, describing and understanding experience (Wisker, 2008, p. 75; Breach, 2009, p. 45) to enable the accomplishment of the desired results. The method therefore adopted for achieving this is that of literature search.

2.1 Literature Review

Developing nations are in need of real development, yet most of them do not know how to go about it–even when the resources to achieve the desired development abound. Most of those who know how to go about achieving this development do not have the political will to fight the main enemy of development: Corruption in high and low places. Among this latter group exist those societies who recognize that real and sustainable development hinges upon high quality education. They therefore place high premium on quality education and are willing to commit substantial financial resources to the funding of education, both at home and overseas.

Their funding of education may take the shape of formal, structured funding or informal, unorganized funding where many factors may dictate what is done at any particular point in time. Those who adopt formal, structured funding of student education through scholarships may choose to do so through the instrumentality of bodies, departments or agencies established by statutes. Such agencies are then charged with the responsibility of managing all processes involved in the funding of the scholarship schemes.

Here then lies the big challenge for such organizations: To effectively manage the scholarship schemes for optimal results and to international best practice standards. To assess the performance of such organizations it is necessary to contextualize or situate their application of the necessary tools and techniques in relation to the management processes of their scholarship programs, most especially the overseas scholarship schemes. This is so because it is here the bulk of the funding goes.

This literature review will focus on Quality Assurance and Benchmarking as tools and techniques for improving the efficiency of the Overseas Scholarship programs.

2.1.1 Quality Assurance

Before exploring the concept of quality assurance in the operations of the overseas scholarship scheme it is necessary to understand first the concept of quality.

2.1.1.1 What is Quality?: -

Quality, in the business context, is primarily concerned with customer satisfaction. Hence, intense competition in the global market calls for business excellence. The success of organizations in Japan has been attributed to the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) which they freely adopt and implement, such as those propounded by well-known Quality exponents and gurus like Deming, Juran, Philip Crosby, Armand Feigenbaum, Kaoru Ishikawa, Taguchi, etc. (Ahmad & Yusof, 2010; Harry & Schroeder, 2004).

Despite the business context of quality and its apparent acceptability, Reeves and Bednar (1994) argue that there is no globally accepted definition of quality but, rather, different circumstances warrant different definitions. They posit that the era or applicable sense of the study of the concept of quality notwithstanding, the concept has been associated with a variety of experiences but with often confusing definitions. Tracing the manner in which the definition of "Quality" has evolved and the trade-offs that are inherent in adopting any particular definition over another, they conclude that there are too many components or variables in the quality construct space and so any model of quality construct or definition that attempts to encompass all the possible components or variables will find little areas of usage. The challenge therefore remains that of formulating comparable constructs for quality rather than attempting to define the concept in one single construct that will take care of every variable thinkable.

This may have led Doherty (2008) to assert that there is no simple answer to the question of what quality is since, like "beauty", it is subjective and depends on personal judgment. Consistent with the arguments of Reeves and Bednar (1994), and the assertion of Doherty (2008), the Chartered Quality Institute (CQI, 2011) gives 20 different answers to the question, "What is Quality?" From among the CQI's pool, however, the definition of "Quality" that best suits the purpose of this study, in line with Reeves and Bednar (1994), is that:

Quality is the characteristics of a product or service that make that product or service capable of satisfying specified needs or their implied aspects (CQI, 2011).

Based on the foregoing arguments, therefore, it is safe to say that practices of quality assurance are context-dependent (Wu *et al.*, 2011) which implies that certain total quality management tools and practices will be rendered ineffective if used under certain situations (Dean & Bowen, 1994). This paper will proceed to look at the issue of assuring quality in higher education.

2.1.1.2 The Education-Context of Quality: -

In addressing viewpoints on quality in the context of Higher Education, Harvey and Green (1993) primarily acknowledged that:

- Quality has different connotations to different people.
- Quality relates to processes or results achieved irrespective of the conceptual viewpoint it is considered from.

They noted that there are varying ideas about quality that influence what a stakeholder may consider as a preference in higher education and went ahead to give some definitions of quality in higher education in discrete but comparable (Reeves & Bednar, 1994) categories that include:

- ✓ ***Quality as Exceptional: -*** This category views quality as something special and has three variations:
  - A perception that classifies quality to be something in a class of its own
  - Seeing quality to be an embodiment of excellence, and

- An idea that quality is something that passes certain established minimum standards required by stakeholders in higher education (Harvey & Green, 1993)

✓ ***Quality as Fitness for Purpose: -*** A view of quality that relates it to what purpose a product or service was made to serve. It is an effective and inclusive definition that has practical applications, as opposed to the exceptional definition that is special, distinctive and elitist with a conferment of status. It presumes that an educational program or institution should fit the purpose for which it was established (Harvey & Green, 1993). In the case of a Higher Education Institution, "fitness for purpose" also relates to the mission statement of the institution and presumes that the HEI should be able to fulfil the objectives or mission it has set for itself.

✓ ***Quality as Value for Money: -*** This equates the concept of quality with value for money, but also incorporates other criteria like standards, levels of specification, and reliability. According to Church (1988) and Moodie (1988) as cited in Harvey and Green (1993) the British government established a strong connection between the quality of education and value for money as far back as the 1980s, through its demand for efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector (Joseph, 1986; DES, 1987; Secretary of State for Education, 1988; Cave, Kogan & Smith, 1990 cited in Harvey & Green, 1993). This approach to public sector funding forms the bedrock of the methodology of funding higher education in Britain (PCFC/UFC, 1992a, b cited in Harvey & Green, 1993).

✓ ***Quality as Transformation: -*** This conceptualization of quality has its roots in the concept of "qualitative change". It is centred on the transformative quality in the process of education whose participant or consumer–be it student or researcher–is enhanced and empowered by the process (Harvey & Green, 1993). Through quality education, changes are effected in the participant who is also enhanced at the same time.

2.1.1.3 Quality Assurance in Higher Education:-

According to Harvey and Green (1993), in the UK, quality in higher education is regarded as an important issue to government as well as to employers. The main concern and role of quality assurance, therefore, has been that of monitoring to identify whether the higher education institution is achieving its purpose as set out in its mission statement. In this regard, through its validation function, the key role of the Council for National Academic Awards (Church, 1988 cited in Harvey & Green, 1993) was to ensure that necessary mechanisms, processes and procedures have been put in place to yield the desired quality, however defined and measured.

In addition to the UK, many parts of the world have witnessed a growing emphasis on the issue of assuring quality in higher education and have recently implemented reforms to expand the sector (Law, 2010), with increasing calls for adherence to global trends in the sector. In this respect, there have emerged in the literature, for example Doherty (2008); Houston (2008); Stensaker (2008) new views in the area of assuring quality.

Sponsors of higher education generally expect to get some level of satisfaction from what they are paying for, irrespective of whether such sponsor is the parent, employer or government (Doherty, 2008), and Quality Assurance is their means of ensuring they get value for what they are paying for. This is achieved through the monitoring of Higher Education quality (Harvey, 2002) that has witnessed increasing uniformity of practice as a pragmatic response from governments (Houston, 2008) who demand a demonstration of value for money and "fitness for purpose" (Harvey & Green, 1993). This practice of Quality Assurance in higher education becomes enhanced and even more rewarding if the organizational change that can result from the process is well understood (Stensaker, 2008).

Quality Assurance as a tool for continuous improvement and performance enhancement is itself enhanced through the use and application of the benchmarking tool which is the next area of focus for this literature review.

2.1.2 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a strategic tool which underlying principle is the sustainable pursuit of excellence (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997) and has proved particularly useful for performance assessment while enabling organizations to ensure continuous improvement in performance. As such, it also helps organizations to gain better understanding of their own internal administrative operations and by so doing identify areas needing improvement. When this is achieved, the organization succeeds in eliminating waste and improving its competitive advantage (Allan, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997).

Bhutta & Huq (1999) saw benchmarking primarily as a tool that can bring about improvement through comparisons with other organizations. They disagreed with the idea of benchmarking that relates to an organization's own internal administrative operations as argued by (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997) and argued, instead, that it is meaningless to make comparisons of strategy at internal level but very beneficial for improvement when such comparisons are made between the organization and its competitors. Hence, by forcing an external focus of the organization on improvement, benchmarking is able to raise industry standards of competition and thus weed out those who cannot maintain a competitive edge in the industry.

Lee, Zailani & Soh (2006), on the other hand, showed more interest in the aspect of performance improvement and agreed with Elmuti & Kathawala (1997), describing benchmarking as a simple but effective strategic tool which organizations have used to improve their performance at three levels:

- Processes
- Products, and

- Services.

It would appear that these levels pertain only to manufacturing organizations alone. However, a closer scrutiny would reveal that they can be adapted to suit any particular organization, such as a government agency or department that deals with overseas sponsorship of education. This viewpoint is in agreement with Bhutta & Huq (1999) who noted that various organizations have adapted the benchmarking methodology to suit their needs. According to Cook (1995 as cited in Lock, 2001), the benchmarking tool can be most beneficial to an organization if the following procedures are followed:

- ✓ The organization needs to link benchmarking to objectives that form the core of its business or services
- ✓ Targets that can be measured should be set by the organization in respect of the benchmarking activity
- ✓ The commitment of the organization's senior management to the benchmarking process has to be assured
- ✓ A powerful benchmarking team needs to be created by the organization, and
- ✓ Issues that are considered to be the right ones should form the main focus of the organization in respect of the benchmarking activity. Cook (1995 as cited in Lock, 2001)

Barber (2004) had noted that what is most important about benchmarking is that it is "a comparison" and as such any evaluation that is done is only limited to that of the level against which it was benchmarked. This would imply that different types of benchmarking techniques or combinations thereof may have to be applied to different benchmarking needs so as to be able to obtain objective and comparable results.

2.1.2.1 Types of Benchmarking: -

The different types of benchmarking that an organization can implement are as follows:

- ***Performance Benchmarking*** – Involves the comparing of performance measures to enable an organization know where it stands in relation to others (Bhutta & Huq, 1999).
- ***Process Benchmarking*** – This type of benchmarking involves comparing methods and processes to enable the organization improve its own processes (Bhutta & Huq, 1999).
- ***Strategic Benchmarking*** – If a need arises to change the strategic direction of an organization, strategic benchmarking can be conducted to compare the organization's strategy with that of its competitors (Bhutta & Huq, 1999).
- ***Internal Benchmarking*** – This involves benchmarking internal operations of an organization when there are similar functions within its business units. Its main objective is to determine the internal performance standards of the organization (Matters & Evans, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997). It involves making

comparisons between departments within the same establishment (Bhutta & Huq, 1999).

- ***Competitive Benchmarking*** – This type involves externally comparing direct competitors who operate in similar markets with similar products or services/work processes (Finch & Luebbe, 1995 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997). Its purpose is the comparison of performance/results (Bhutta & Huq, 1999).
- ***Functional/Industry Benchmarking*** – Also external in nature and involves benchmarking organizations that are recognized as industry leaders or organizations that are known to have the best functional operations (Matters & Evans, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997). It compares the technology or the process in the organization's area of technology with the known technology leaders in the organization's industry (Bhutta & Huq, 1999) with the aim of becoming the best in the industry.
- ***Generic Benchmarking*** – This type of benchmarking is also done externally but does not necessarily have to be against a similar organization. It involves comparing the organization's processes against best process operators (Bhutta & Huq, 1999). It is not directed at the business practices of an organization but instead emphasizes work processes that are considered best practice. It also emphasizes similar functions or procedures in any organization. It is a difficult approach (Finch & Luebbe, 1995; Matters & Evans, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997).

It is important that the organization does a thorough evaluation of how it views Benchmarking and the way the tool is used (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997). Therefore, defining the type of benchmarking or combinations thereof to be adopted for yielding better results should be based on what is being compared and against what the comparison is being made (Bhutta & Huq, 1999). This is the best way for an organization to start the process of benchmarking (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997).

Figure 1 shows the matrix combinations of types of benchmarking that can be used in this regard for effective results:

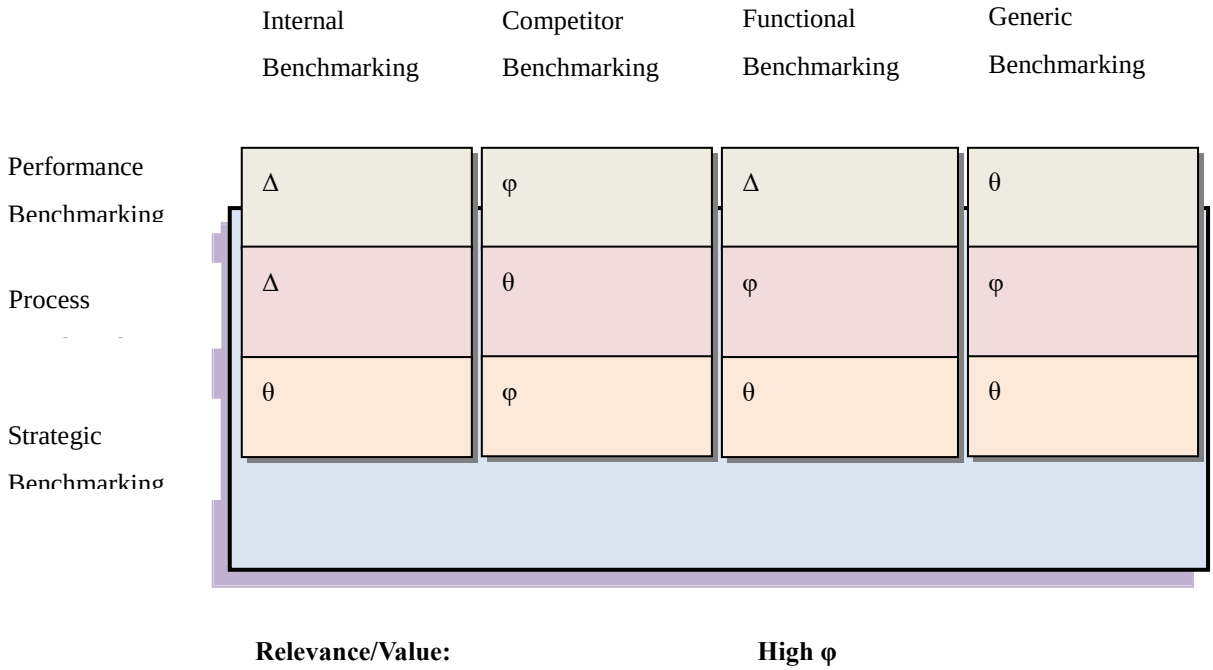

Figure 1. Types of Benchmarking (Integrated Matrix Format)

2.1.2.2 The Benchmarking Process: -

According to Lee *et al.* (2006), benchmarking is a structured process that consists of several steps that involve ethical and legal issues which an organization needs to take into consideration when embarking on the benchmarking process. The ethical and legal issues merely serve to provide guidelines that can ensure that the benchmarking partners mutually achieve their objectives. Elmuti & Kathawala (1997) emphasize that before an organization decides to benchmark, determining first what needs to be benchmarked is of paramount importance.

There are five major components or stages of the ***benchmarking process*** (Bhutta & Huq, 1999; Matters & Evans, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997) which in itself follows the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle propounded by Edward Deming (Pulat, 1994 cited in Bhutta & Huq, 1999). The "Plan" phase deals with early decisions to be taken such as determining what to benchmark and the choice of what benchmarking study should be conducted using the matrix format choice-making (Leibfried & Mcnair, 1992 as cited in Bhutta & Huq, 1999). The "Do" phase involves forming a benchmarking team, doing a characterization of the processes to be benchmarked, identifying the benchmarking partners and gathering information relating to them. The "Check" phase would involve doing a gap analysis on the benchmarking information with the aim of identifying negative gaps that need to be closed or positive gaps that can be built upon. The "Act" phase involves making necessary strategic decisions for change and implementing the decided actions in line with the outcomes of the "Check" phase (Bhutta & Huq, 1999; Matters & Evans, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997).

The five stages of the benchmarking process are often presented in models (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997). The model presented by Bhutta & Huq (1999) is one in which the five major components or stages are linked together in the fashion of spokes on a wheel; hence they referred to the model as ***the benchmarking wheel***, shown in ***Figure 2***.

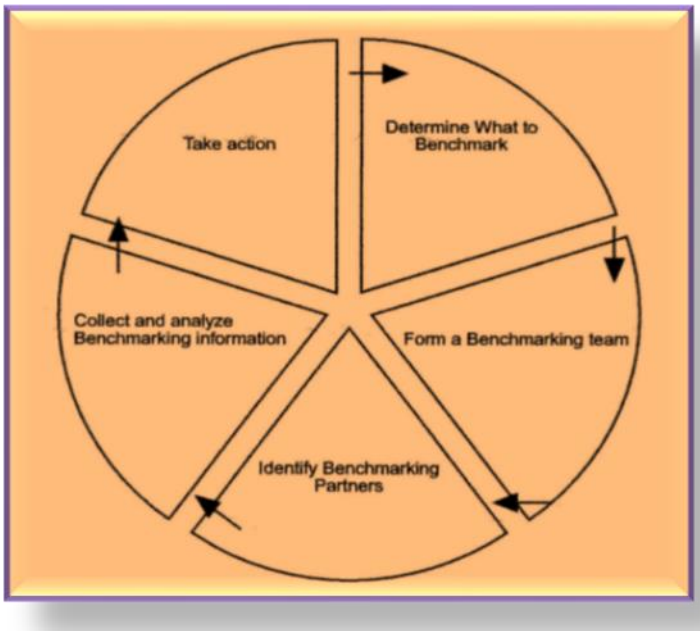

Figure 2. The Benchmarking Wheel–the 5 Stages of the Benchmarking Process

The five stages of benchmarking as determined by Bhutta & Huq (1999) through a fundamental process evaluation include the following:

- ***Plan the Benchmarking Study:*** **-** Involves decisions pertaining to what is to be benchmarked, taking into consideration that the critical success factors of the organization have to be the driving force behind the decision. The critical performance measures are also to be decided.
- ***Form the Benchmarking Team:*** **-** Members of the team should come from different areas of the organization, where applicable (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997) and need cooperation and communication with one another for best results to be achieved. The team is subdivided into three main teams: (1) the lead team who have the responsibility of ensuring that the organization maintains focus and commitment to the process. (2) The preparation team whose responsibility it is to carry out the detailed analysis of benchmarking data/information. (3) The visit team who have the responsibility of carrying out the visit to the benchmarking partners.
- ***Identify Benchmarking Partners:*** **-** This involves the identification of organizations who would be the potential benchmarking partners.

- ***Collect and analyse information:*** **-** This can be considered as the crux of the benchmarking exercise and it involves comparing the information on the benchmarking partner with the organization's own data to enable the understanding of gaps (Bhutta & Huq, 1999). The organization should first identify its own processes, products and services to enable a full realization of the extent of improvements required from the benchmarking study (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997).
- ***Take Action:*** **-** At this stage of the process what is most important is determining what needs to be done in light of results of the benchmarking data analysis and taking appropriate action to implement the changes decided (Matters & Evans, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997).

According to Bhutta & Huq (1999), benchmarking can be carried out in many steps that can be classified under the five major stages, and while some organizations have used as many as thirty-three steps at a go, others have used just as few as four. ***Figure 3*** is a nine-step benchmarking model presented by Elmuti & Kathawala (1997). It can be tailored to suit any organization.

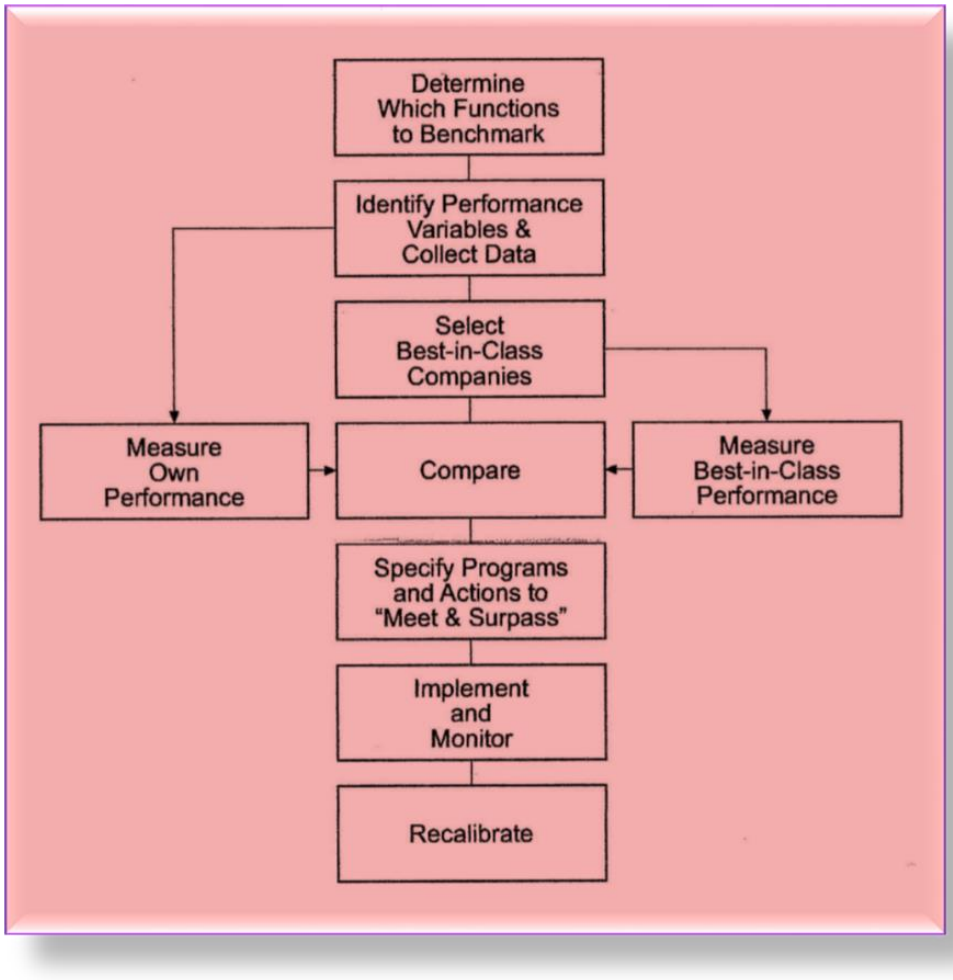

Figure 3. A Nine-step Benchmarking Model

3. Results

3.1 Performance Assessment and Measurement

Having thoroughly examined the concepts of Quality Assurance and Benchmarking and their respective applicable roles in managing Overseas Scholarship Schemes, this paper will proceed to lay the foundation for the most vital aspect of addressing the challenge of managing Overseas Scholarship Schemes for Developing Countries.

3.1.1 A Performance Assessment Plan to Ensure Effective Monitoring of the Academic Performance of the Scheme's Beneficiaries

One of the solutions advanced to bring about better strategic performance is the application of performance assessment as a tool toward achieving this goal. This section describes the performance assessment plan that was developed for that purpose. It was achieved through the application of Benchmarking as a management tool.

3.1.1.1 Performance Assessment at Student-Level: -

Performance assessment at the student level relates to assessing the academic performance of each student who is a beneficiary of the government's or organization's sponsorship program. This is considered a vital aspect of the management of the scholarship scheme since the quality of output of the beneficiaries sponsored by government is largely determined by their academic performances at their various universities and colleges. Meeting the objectives of the funding scheme, for the benefit of the larger society, from the perspective of the government or organization who instituted it is largely dependent on the quality of candidates selected for the public funding program. Where transparency is lacking in the selection process at the selection stage, the best way to ensure quality would be to put mechanisms in place to find out and assess how the selected and sponsored candidates are performing in their various institutions of learning. This will be aimed at eliminating waste (Allan, 1997 cited in Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997) by weeding out poor quality beneficiaries and saving resources that could be channeled to other areas of usage for the benefit of the larger society. This approach could be mostly effective with regard to undergraduate students who are under the government's or organization's sponsorship and whose study programs take as much as four years of sponsorship.

The method that was proposed in this paper for achieving that goal is to benchmark student performance against those of other students of the same country who are studying at the same institution of higher learning as private students, regardless of what part of that country the benchmark student partner comes from. This entailed developing a performance assessment plan.

3.1.1.2 The Performance Assessment Plan: -

The performance assessment plan developed here was derived from the principles of benchmarking (see ***section 2.2***) as a management tool for continuous improvement (Lee *et al.*, 2006). The plan follows the benchmarking models put forward by Bhutta & Huq (1999) and Elmuti & Kathawala (1997), with necessary adaptation to suit the purpose of this study. In essence, the performance assessment plan developed here is a combination of these two models, with the basic principles

retained. The plan incorporates the following steps:

1) ***Determining what to Benchmark: -*** Employing the integrated benchmarking matrix (Leibfried & Mcnair, 1992 as cited in Bhutta & Huq, 1999), the benchmarking combination type that is needed to carry out the benchmarking study would be Performance-Competitor combination type. Decisions have to be made concerning what performance parameters should be used for the purpose. As already noted, the academic performance of each beneficiary is paramount. Their exam and coursework scores are the variables to use. This stage will incorporate decisions on what would constitute the critical performance measures for the assessment. This involves deciding the minimum average scores that must be met and surpassed (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997).
2) ***Forming the Benchmarking Team: -*** This would involve looking into the scholarship board to select individuals with strength of character and confidence, with good communication skills and bringing them together as a team to execute the benchmarking study. They could come from any section of the board. The selected team would be divided into three sub-teams made up of:
    a) The lead team who would ensure focus and commitment to the process
    b) The preparation team who would do the detailed analysis of the data/information collected for the benchmarking exercise, and
    c) The visit team who would carry out the actual visits to the various overseas universities and colleges where the government's or organization's scholarship beneficiaries are studying.
3) ***Identifying the Benchmarking Partners: -*** Since the Sponsorship Board already knows the various universities and colleges where the beneficiaries are studying, this stage would involve communicating with the institutions to notify them of the exercise. A formal request would then be made detailing the type of information needed in the benchmarking study in line with the decisions reached in stage one.
4) ***Collecting and analyzing Data/Information: -*** What is needed here is to first collect information with regard to the exam and coursework performance scores of all the scholarship beneficiary students. This information needs to be grouped according to the institution, level of academic study (Masters or Undergraduate), and the program of study. The next step would involve collecting information on other students of that same country under the same grouping categories. This second group of students is regarded as the student benchmarking partners but all information relating to them has to be anonymous so as not to contravene data protection laws.
5) ***Taking Action: -*** At this stage, the funding body needs to decide on what should be done in light of the results of the benchmarking data analysis, with a view to

enhancing the academic performance and quality of the funding scheme's outputs or products. Most importantly, whatever decision is taken for change implementation should be followed to the letter for effectiveness.

The performance assessment plan outlined above is represented as a model in ***Figure 4*** below.

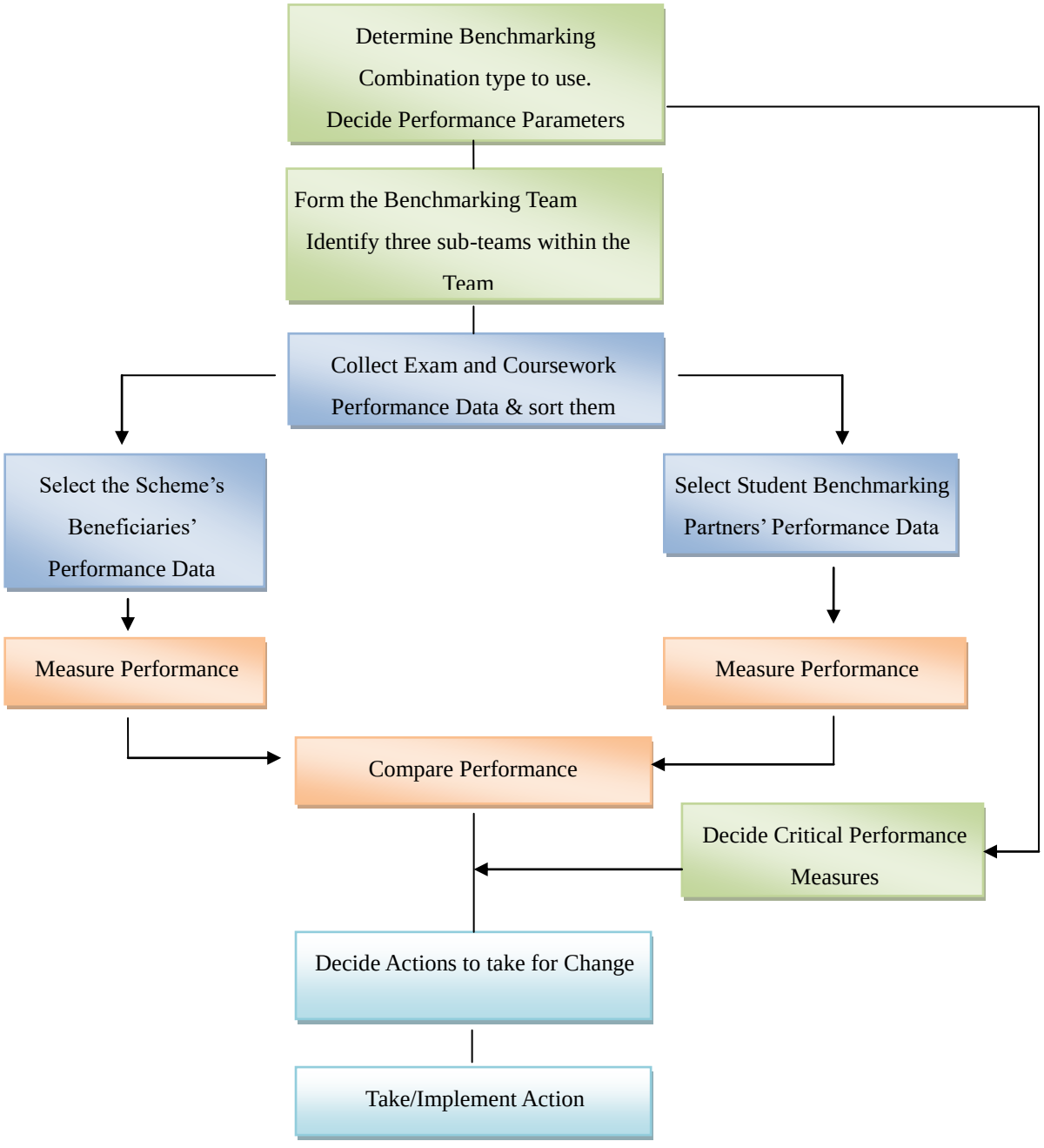

Figure 4. Student Performance Assessment Plan

3.1.2 Performance Metrics for Assessing the Scheme and How the Performance Can Be measured

Performance assessment at Program Level is discussed here in two stages. The first stage involves developing a model that is referred to as, ***Nsiegbe Performance Assessment Model for Overseas Scholarship Schemes***. The second stage involves the development of a mathematical formula for measuring the Scheme's Performance. The formula is referred to as, ***Nsiegbe Formula for Scholarship Schemes Performance Measurement***.

3.1.2.1 The Scheme's Performance Assessment Model: -

Performance assessment at program level relates to finding out how well the entire funding scheme is doing in terms of academic performance of the entire sponsored students. The assessment at this level therefore involves the integration of all levels of student performances in each institution and then extending this integration across all other universities and colleges where the Sponsor's beneficiaries are studying. In other words, the scheme's performance is first determined at institutional level and then executed across all the applicable institutions in an integrative mathematical fashion.

Determining the performance of the scheme at the level of each institution employed a weighted average computation methodology to arrive at the applicable performance value for that particular institution. A simple average or mean value computation methodology was then applied to the entire values obtained for all the institutions to work out the mean value of the performance figure for the sponsorship scheme. A benchmark figure can be specified, below which the scheme can be said to be underperforming, thereby placing the responsibility on the funding body to reassess their internal selection processes at the candidate selection phase of the management process and then recalibrate to improve performance in line with Elmuti & Kathawala (1997).

The process explained above is represented in a flowchart model as shown in ***Figure 5*** below:

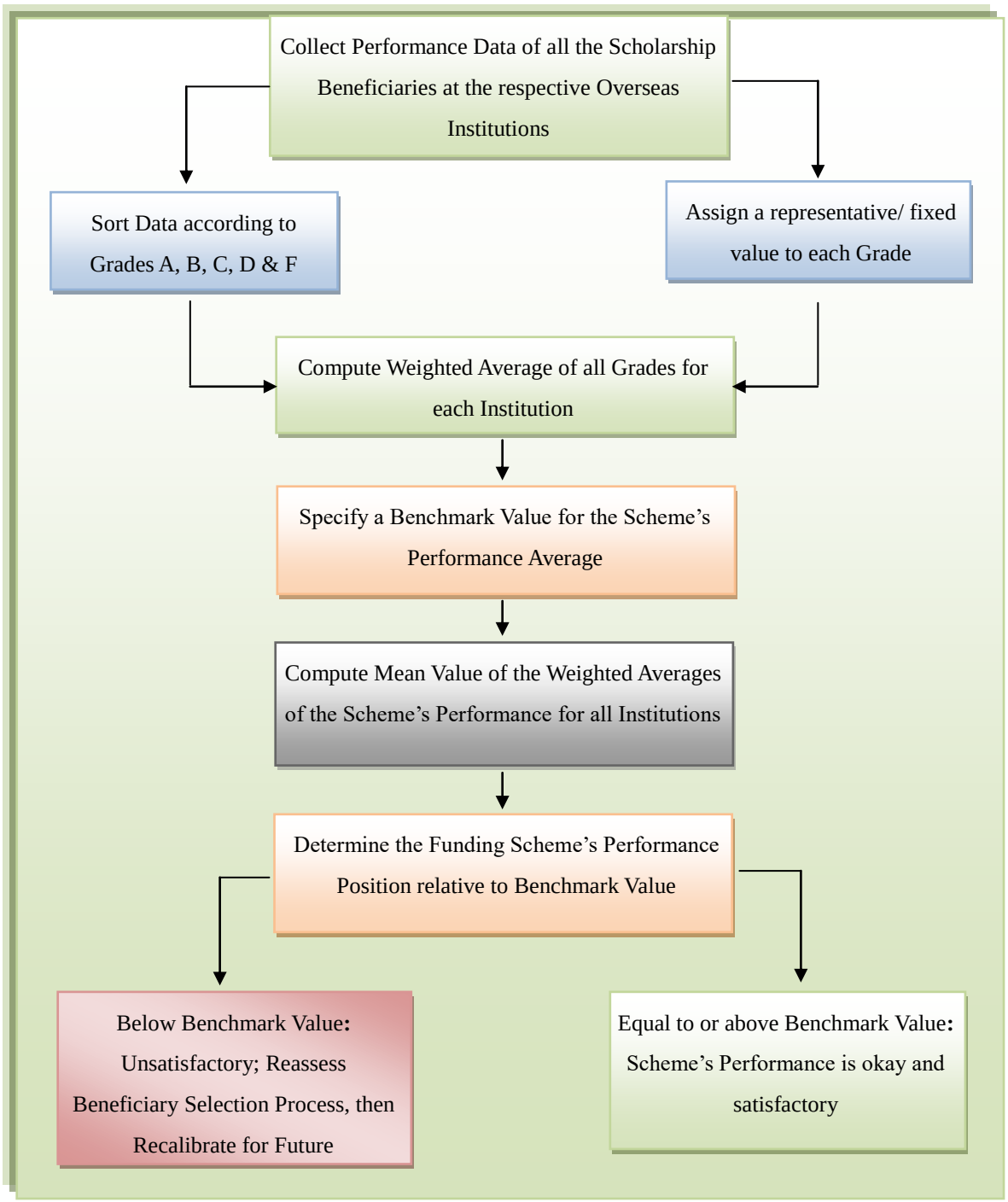

Figure 5. Nsiegbe Performance Assessment Model for Overseas Scholarship Schemes

3.1.2.2 Nsiegbe Formula for Scholarship Schemes Performance Measurement: -

This section describes the derivation of the mathematical formula to be used for the computation of the performance of an Overseas Scholarship Scheme. It is derived from the ***Nsiegbe Program Performance Assessment Model*** shown in ***Figure 5*** above. It is necessary to explain the following features of ***Figure 5***:

- ***Sorting the Data:*** - Level 2 of the model requires the sorting of performance data collected from the respective overseas universities and colleges of the scholarship beneficiaries. The data is to be sorted according the five categories of A, B, C, D, and F as follows:
  - A = 70% and above
  - B = 60% - 69%
  - C = 50% - 59%
  - D = 40% - 49%
  - F = 39% and below
- ***Assigning Representative/Fixed Values to each Category: -***
  - ***Category 'A':*** - Since this is the highest grade in all universities and colleges, the baseline of 70% was utilized as the representative value for this category.
  - ***Category 'B':*** - The best representative value for this category was assumed to be the mid-value of 65% to account for that range of student performance scores.
  - ***Category 'C':*** - Similar to category "B", a median of 55% was assumed to represent this range or category.
  - ***Category 'D':*** - Here, like in 'B' and "C", the median of the range was assumed as the representative value, at 45%.
  - ***Category 'F':*** - As in category "A", a baseline value was used as the representative value for this range but with a negative coefficient. Since the highest student exam/coursework score that amounts to a "Fail" grade is 39%, this score was assumed as the representative value for the "F" category. A negative coefficient was applied because failure amounts to a waste of resources.

Using the foregoing categorization of exam/coursework performance scores and the representative values, the following mathematical relationships were proposed:

$$\Sigma W_{\psi i} = \frac{\lambda_{ai}A + \lambda_{bi}B + \lambda_{ci}C + \lambda_{di}D - \lambda_{fi}F}{\lambda_{ai} + \lambda_{bi} + \lambda_{ci} + \lambda_{di} + \lambda_{fi}}$$

Where, $W_{\psi i}$ = weighted average of all beneficiaries' grades at institution "I"

λ_{ai} = number of beneficiaries scoring category "A" at institution "I"

λ_{bi} = number of beneficiaries scoring category "B" at institution "i"

λ_{ci} = number of beneficiaries scoring category "C" at institution "i"

λ_{di} = number of beneficiaries scoring category "D" at institution "i"

λ_{fi} = number of beneficiaries scoring category "F" at institution "i"

Now, substituting the representative values of A, B, C, D and F, the weighted average of all beneficiaries' grades at institution "I" is given by:

$$W_{\psi i} = \frac{0.7\lambda_{ai} + 0.65\lambda_{bi} + 0.55\lambda_{ci} + 0.45\lambda_{di} -}{\lambda_{ai} + \lambda_{bi} + \lambda_{ci} + \lambda_{di} + \lambda_{fi}}$$

This mathematical relationship represents the Overseas Scholarship Scheme's performance at each university and college where beneficiaries of the Scholarship Scheme are studying for their degrees. Measuring the overall performance of the scholarship scheme, therefore, can be done by computing the mean value of these weighted averages. The mathematical expression for this is given by:

$$P = \frac{\Sigma W_{\psi i}}{\gamma}$$

Where, P = the scholarship scheme's performance measure

γ = number of institutions–universities and colleges–where the scholarship beneficiaries are studying, and

$\Sigma W_{\psi i}$ = sum of the weighted averages from all institutions where the beneficiaries are studying

The scholarship scheme's performance measure will always be a fraction; so it is most appropriate to express it as a percentage as follows:

$$P = \frac{\Sigma W_{\psi i}}{\gamma} \times 100\ \%$$

This formula is known as the ***Nsiegbe Formula for Scholarship Schemes Performance Measurement***, and can be used to assign a performance value to any wide scale student sponsorship scheme. However, a user who is not conversant with the logic behind the derivation of the weighted average, $W_{\psi i}$, may have an uphill task using the formula in that form. It was thought necessary, therefore, to express a Scholarship Scheme's Performance value in full format as:

$$\mathbf{P = \frac{100}{\gamma} \Sigma \left\{ \frac{(0.7\lambda_{ai} + 0.65\lambda_{bi} + 0.55\lambda_{ci} + 0.45\lambda_{di} - 0.39\lambda_{fi})}{(\lambda_{ai} + \lambda_{bi} + \lambda_{ci} + \lambda_{di} + \lambda_{fi})} \right\} \%}$$

4. Discussion

Education policy and development economics are inextricably tied together. The developmental strides of countries like India and China in recent decades in the field of ICT have shown that where the education policy is right, high and accelerated levels of development can be guaranteed. It is therefore understandable that many developing nations around the world–in a bid to attain modern and high level development in virtually every field of existence–have been committing huge resources toward the acquisition of top notch quality education for their citizens in the hope of bridging the gap between themselves and the developed economies.

However, a great chunk of these financial resources goes into the support and development of higher education institutions while the sponsorship of individuals to acquire higher education is relatively negligible. This is true of most developing countries.

For those developing countries who try, this paper has succeeded in providing them a few nuts and bolts to assist them manage their overseas scholarship programs as a matter of ***Policy***. Among such outcomes of this study are the following:

1) The Nsiegbe Performance Assessment Model for Overseas Scholarship Schemes

2) A Performance Measurement Formula known as, ***The Nsiegbe Formula for Scholarship Schemes Performance Measurement***

3) A Student Performance Assessment Plan.

These outcomes can also be useful to those International Organizations who run overseas scholarship schemes for candidates from developing countries.

In this drive, it is very important that the funding bodies and organizations develop the will and commitment to improve their internal processes for selection and assessment of candidates for the scholarship schemes.

And, finally, this paper has also opened up a new vista of opportunities for research by Scholars in the domain area. Future work should involve collection of quantitative data and their practical application to the outcomes of this paper for verification, because Knowledge is incremental in nature.

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Appendix

Table 1. End Notes

S/No.	Description
1.	**Figure 1:** ***Types of Benchmarking (Integrated Matrix Format)***
	Source: Adapted from **Leibfried & Mcnair (1992) as cited in Bhutta & Huq (1999)**
2.	**Figure 2:** ***The Benchmarking Wheel–the 5 Stages of the Benchmarking Process***
	Source: Adapted from **Bhutta & Huq (1999)**
3.	**Figure 3:** ***A Nine-step Benchmarking Model***
	Source: Adapted from **Elmuti & Kathawala (1997)**
4.	**Figure 4:** ***Student Performance Assessment Plan***
	Source: Lasbrey N. D. Nsiegbe
5.	**Figure 5:** ***Nsiegbe Performance Assessment Model for Overseas Scholarship Schemes***
	Source: Lasbrey N. D. Nsiegbe