



SUPERVISION AS A STRATEGY IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Supervision is an age old management practice usually employed to ensure functions are effectively carried out. It has remained a major strategy in education in order to hold teachers, learners' providers, parents and even community accountable for the improvement and development of schools and their products. In this paper, supervision defined as provision of leadership in school setting is espoused as a strategic tool to enthrone quality assurance in secondary schools.

Keywords: supervision, quality assurance, secondary school, improvement, performance and development

1. Introduction

Secondary school education has witnessed tremendous expansion in the past five decades. The situation has been attributed to a number of factors among which are National Policy on Education in which education is to be adopted as the foundation of national development. Still arising from the provision of the National Policy on Education is government's liberalization and extension of school ownership to private individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as Religious Organisations. The other factors have been the constitutional provisions and legal instruments compelling all tiers of government in the federation to provide education to citizens who are willing to access it (FRN, 2014).

The various international protocols, agreements, and declarations yielding such efforts as Education for All, Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals have also contributed in no small measures to rapid expansion and access to secondary education in Nigeria. (Chieke, Madu & Enelum, 2017).

The expansion and access, as well as state policy such as free and compulsory education especially at primary school, caused a massive explosion in enrolment to secondary education. Apparently because, secondary school education is also almost free and those leaving primary school needed to take advantage of that (FME, 2011 & 2017).

Massive enrolment in secondary school education itself has had implications for funding, facilities, teachers, curriculum school improvement and learning (Bianchi, 2015 & Akareem and Hossain, 2016).

Thus, given that the trend in enrolment in secondary school education continues to be on the rise, funds and facilities have not been rising correspondingly due to dwelling budget allocations, not having teachers put through required retraining and development programmes, doubts exist as to the integrity and standard of secondary school education as a chosen tool for the advancement of national development (Talawar, 2010 and Obanya, 2004). The challenge for such lacks must give educational administrators at various levels concern as to what efforts have been made to ensure quality education with available resources. Thus, the paper turns its focus to one measure among many others that can contribute tremendously towards ensuring the fitness of the educational system in achieving the desired goals of secondary school education for national development and transformation. This measure is supervision as a managerial tool for accountability in the educational system.

2. What is Quality Assurance?

Quality assurance is a measure taken or adopted to ensure the integrity, consistency, standard of input, process and output of a given product/system as originally proposed for satisfactory service delivery to clientele. Quality assurance is quite a critical issue for every product designed for public consumption. This is demonstrated when National governments and international organisations set up organisations to monitor standards or quality of products put out for consumption by the general public. In Nigeria, there is a body charged with ensuring standards of consumable products known as the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) (Athanasius 2018). At the global level, there are international standard organisations that are also concerned with quality control and assurance. The Wikipedia (5/10/2019) recognises the international organisation for standardization (ISO) as the international standard-setting body consisting of representatives from different national standard organisations which was established in 1947 with its headquarters in Geneva- Switzerland, with 164 members.

3. Quality in Education?

Students' performance, school development and improvement are critical elements that have been held as determinants of success of secondary school education in Nigeria (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2017). Performance, development and improvement of students and schools are predicated on internal processes of the school environment and the external applications resulting from policies, governance and plans (FRN, 2014).

Determining the performance of students and school improvement are within or outside the school. Factors such as quality leadership (Bush, 2017) high expectations of students, monitoring students' performance and development, set goals and highly

organised system are capable of producing effective schools and students (Lynch, 2015). Other factors such as the climate of the school, parental involvement and approach to motivation are classified as germane to performance of students and effectiveness of school (Hoy & Miskel, 2018) of equal importance are several physical conditions grouped together under environmental factor. They include classrooms, textbooks, equipment and social supplies. The availability or otherwise of these factors are known to affect teaching and learning in the school (Meador, 2019, Linenburg and Onstein 2012). Similarly, Gray, Kruse and Taarter (2016) factor in organisational learning, enabling school structure and collegial trusts are critical issues in addressing school as a professional learning community built for promoting quality and school effectiveness.

Quality of education is thus seen from the various dimensions of physical availability and utilization of plants, facilities, textbooks and culture of a school, goal setting and definition, parental dialogue, motivation, negotiated expectations from students and deliberate efforts at school improvement. Thus, quality education can then refer to the outcome of education that fulfils the aspiration of the individual in terms exuding skills, capacities, knowledge and attitude germane to their functioning effectively within and beyond their immediate environment. Then national aspiration and expectation of quality education will be reflected by the capacity of citizens to become agents of national development. Such education must cause socio-political, technological, scientific economic and cultural development (FRN, 2014).

4. Quality Assurance in Education

Having identified what quality education is, it becomes natural to ask how to ensure that quality is maintained in secondary school education. What now has to be done in view of identified factors that are held responsible for quality in education?

Quality assurance in education is seen as measures taken to ensure conformity of actions and actors in the educational system to keeping predetermined standards that bring about required competence. It is also to ensure the integrity and acceptance of the educational products as was predetermined.

Goals of capacity Assurance as outlined in the national policy on education (FGN, 2014) section 9, item 148 includes:

- a) Set, maintain and improve the standard in all aspect of the system.
- b) Ensuring minimum standards and quality of instructional activities in schools through regular inspection and continuous supervision.
- c) Identify and analyse on regular basis information on challenges, and difficulties which teachers and schools may face and offer practical solutions and
- d) To disseminate information on changes and innovation beneficial to school principles and practises through publications, workshops, meetings, focus group discussions, seminars, conferences and talk shops.
- e) A close analysis of the goals of Quality Assurance as enunciated in the National Policy on Education shows that it is a dynamic activity which must be a present

feature and constantly applied to all sections of the school system. The elements in the school improvement and students' performance require regular inspection, supervision and evaluation. These include the teachers, the curriculum, educational resources, the environment, the community engagement (Ololube, 2009).

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) in identifying the goals of Quality Assurance mentioned the services of inspection and supervision as some of the mechanism in ensuring Quality Assurance.

5. Supervision as Mechanism in Quality Assurance

What is supervision and what are its roles in ensuring quality in secondary school education?

Supervision refers to a deliberate effort or attempt at providing professional leadership to teachers and similar personnel within the school system with a view to improving instructions, learning and adaptation and use of other educational resources. The underlying emphasis of supervision remains the enhancement of quality of education provided and the products of the school system. It does not only enhance quality but sets standards that are to be maintained (Kotirde & Yunos, 2014). Kotirde and Yunos (2014). Supervision must target the resolution of "constraints arising from the execution of school duties, cooperation that engenders achievement of set objectives, promotion of professionalism, and enhancement of motivation for staff. The target of these activities is to ensure the healthy culture and climate of the school (Lunenberg & Ornstein, (2012)).

Where can constraints be found in secondary school education and what can supervision leaderships do?

Supervision of the following areas is critical for quality assurance in secondary education.

a. Educational resources

The secondary school system has witnessed reforms in the past five decades which has occasioned massive access for all who are willing. This is coupled with that level of education being almost free of any cost to students and parents. In Rivers State of Nigeria, virtually all communities host a secondary school each.

The implication of huge populations in secondary schools is the capacity to provide needed facilities for quality delivery of education (Kotirde and Yunos, 2014). This is even as adequate quality and functionality or otherwise of educational facilities in schools have been correlated to school performance (Ugwulashi, 2017, Owoeye & Yara, 2010).

The importance of educational facilities to school achievement means that it requires regular supervision as the means of determining if such facilities as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, sports equipment, hostels, computers, are of the quality comparable internationally and which are able to guarantee learners achievement in the

light of 21st-century demands. Supervision at this point cannot be limited to external sources alone. External and internal supervision regimes are to collaborate to determine what constitutes standards in facilities provision and usage, determine what effective evaluation in facilities maintenance.

While external supervision which comes in periodically is expected to develop reports and disseminate information, internal supervision must adopt such information for regular evaluation of school facilities (Owoeye and Yara, 2010).

b. Teacher and Teacher professional development and growth

Teachers are the dynamic centre of the school system (Agi and Adiele, 2015). The teachers are responsible for curriculum execution, students learning and development, discipline, counselling and guidance (Ololube, 2010). An effectively huge part of school and student performance is tied to the teacher in the school. Thus the unique place of the teacher in school demands that adequate attention is given to his quality as a professional in the field. Often, teachers simply bring their academic qualifications to the job and now have to acquire experiences over the years they work (Ololube, 2010).

However, the experiences teachers acquire would also require professional input from school and educational leadership. This is where supervision becomes necessary. School principals and supervisors from the Ministry of Education are to assist classroom teachers with required knowledge, aptitude and skills to improve and successfully fulfil their role in teaching. National Association of Secondary School Principals in the United States of America argues that to improve learning, teachers' supervision is key.

Providing effective supervision for teacher professional development and improvement, encouraging teacher's license, certification, organisational learning, communication and dialogue on classroom practices, students handling, curriculum understanding are all quality enhancement measure that supervision does. Teacher quality also requires improvement in teacher recruitment strategy and retention, preparation, evaluation and professional pathway (Milwater, Wilkinson & Yarrow, 1996). At entry into the service, qualifications, conditions to be fulfilled and development plans of teachers require contractual agreements and understanding. It is also to note that at this point, the role of internal supervision is critical. The principal of a given school determines the quality of teaching staff required in the light of prevailing circumstances in his school (Bredeson, 2000). At employment, the principal together with the teacher set development and career agenda and follow this to achieve needed effectiveness for teacher job performance and learners success.

c. Supervision of students' portfolio

Supervision in the secondary school system refers to the provision of leadership. At the point here, supervision provides instructional leadership to directly impact on students learning. There are also character development and career guidance which school must provide leadership to students. Glanz, Shulman & Sullivan (2007) identify principal leadership responsibilities which can engender learning in school. These include:

- 1) Situational awareness;
- 2) Intellectual simulation;

- 3) Change agent;
- 4) Fostering shared beliefs and sense of community;
- 5) Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on learning;
- 6) Establishment of standard operating principles and rules;
- 7) Source for teacher professional development and facilitator of school resources for learning.

The principal who provides internal supervision has the responsibility of gathering information regarding students' performances, school constraints and environmental challenges needed to be addressed to enhance and improve teaching effectiveness and students' learning.

6. Curriculum and Instruction

The curriculum is the major guiding document of learning. Whatever that is taught and learned in secondary school is derived from the curriculum. The curriculum, also, is suggestive pedagogical practices. The interpretation and execution of the curriculum as the guiding pole of learning are so important that they should not be left to exigencies of the teacher personality and scope of content authority. Brooks, Salloway & Allen (2007) identify that teachers should be cultivated into the professional practice of curriculum execution through guidance, direction and best practice of the school instructional leadership. The implications are that through observations and participation of the principal in classroom activities of teachers involved, dialogues, cross-fertilization of ideas, teaching strategies, instructional aids, students' reactions to learning and evaluation technique can generate knowledge and experience germane to the improvement of learning and performance of students and school development. Thus, supervision promotes the quality of curriculum and instruction in secondary school when internal supervision synergizes and compliments the periodic evaluation and contribution from the schools' board and ministry of education.

7. Conclusion

Supervision like other management inputs or factors at school contributes effectively to the enhancement and maintenance of quality assurance in secondary schools. Quality Assurance in secondary school education can be entrenched when educational facilities, teachers, students and curriculum and instructions are constantly subject to regular examination, evaluation, innovation communication. Through the strategy of supervision, the educational system continues to reinvent itself and help the schools to improve for the betterment of society.

8. Suggestions

Following the significant role supervision plays in helping the school system to regularly reinvent itself, it becomes expedient to make the following suggestions,

- 1) Internal supervision should be institutionalized in secondary schools through legal instruments.
- 2) The schools' board and ministry in collaboration of Principals Association must institutionalize three workshops per annum where experiences, data, information gathered from internal supervision are to be discussed.
- 3) The government should on posting of principals, conduct inductions that expose principals to ardent practice comprehensive school management.
- 4) School principals should be exposed to 'twinning' programmes overseas for school improvement.
- 5) Mentorship programme should be introduced for would-be principals.
- 6) Principals should be encouraged to access to learning communities.
- 7) Schools should organise learning communities as well.

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