

ASSESSING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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ABSTRACT

The concern for Preparing Successful Principals has been a major research effort by the Wallace Foundation and Stanford University in conjunction examining development of strong leadership in school administration. This presupposes the importance of school leadership in enhancing the achievement of educational goals. School administration has been a critical part in building a formidable school for quality assurance because the internal administrative system determines how the staff and students cooperatively pull efforts towards achievement of the right academic material. To assess school administration for quality assurance, an amount of subsisting factors are involved which include the degree of school administrators' compliance in maintaining good School - Community relations, structure, good human relations, quality decision making, adequate financing, curriculum planning and development, government policies and time management as examined on this paper

Keywords: Assessing, School Administration, Quality Assurance

INTRODUCTION

The great need for quality education in any society, developed or developing nations cannot be overstressed. In fact, education is the wheel through which the economy of any country depends. Education has socially classified results which manifested in the society overtime. There are the immediate and longtime benefits of education propelled, supported and sustained national development mostly in a stable and unpolarized state. Unstable states create frustrated educational system that truncates the total economic structure due to missing educational linkages, resulting to serious brain drains and catastrophic decays in the entire development process, as evident in highly corrupted or war prone countries. Nigeria experienced similar situation between 1967 and 1970 during the 30 months old civil war in war prone zone.

Today the entire educational system has decayed not due to war ravage, but political mismanagement of nation's resources. Education has not been properly managed, many schools are dilapidated, salary of educational staff not paid promptly, learning facilities absent coupled with population increase. All these have culminated to public outcry on the quality of education as occasioned by poor school system management and administrative processes. Orr (2006) in her school leadership study emphasized three notable points that the public demands for more effective schools have placed growing attention on the crucial role of school leaders; that principals (school administrators) play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools; and that existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified principals is sparse.

This conception has not been fully developed in the educational management system in Nigeria for quality assurance. Basically, education as defined involved the entire processes of societal development through transformation and transmission of heritage cultures from generation to generation. In other words, education facilitates the developmental cycle for scientific, technological, social, cultural, historical and philosophical thinking of the people in national development. It is an acquisition of knowledge tool (manpower), structured for national progress, and for education to survive through generations over and over, it must be appropriately managed and administered by the nation.

The management and administration of the education sector is an important area considered necessary in every national budget both in developed and developing societies. At Dakar 2000 world conference, UNESCO fashioned out the achievement of Education for All (EFA) by 2015, this propelled even

struggling nations never let education go because it only instrument for development in meeting this global demand. The 164 nations that made the declaration are trying to develop the educational system qualitatively through provisions of training and retraining facilities for administrators and teachers, learning facilities, and funds being quality assurance processes that can enable meeting this goal.

In Nigeria educational staff development has actually been the missing part on the education road map. These area education authorities should vigorously pursue. Principals' abilities are central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students (Orr, 2006). There will be meaningful teaching and learning when the staff required to provide the services are updated with the current world trends.

The principals and teachers are the pilots of the educational industry as such need to be well informed; ironically, most developing nations with their abundant resources have been paying lip services in improving the quality of educational staff at the two tier levels which has resulted to poor management and administrative flaws in these levels of schools today. Starvation of resources to schools has led to poor quality management of school in face of quest for quality. The school traditionally takes charge of bringing out the educational needs of the state to reality. School therefore is viewed empirically as controlled mechanism of the state to enhance the transmission of culture and worthwhile values in its entirety for both individual and national development. The realization of the goals of education cannot be without quality administration involving training and retraining of staff, since quality of school depends on the quality of its staff that gives the pedagogic instructions.

Training of staff has been proved by various studies as motivator of performance, as innovatively-prepared principals rated their learning significantly higher in all areas (Orr, 2006). The classroom becomes the clinic through which the expected societal values are remedy. Okorie and Agabi (2002) emphasized that the classroom instructional activities remain the core of the entire school system and its management no doubt form the nucleus of the entire school system managerial process. The performance of good classroom operations determines the administrative measure of the school administration. A quality school administration is ascertained from the good organizational classroom network. As Agabi (2002) noted the quality of a school's product is determined first by the quality of students admitted into the school, calibre of teachers, quality of instructional material, resource maintenance and teaching – learning environment, therefore the quality of any school administration is first determined by the quality of staff, students, resource availability, classroom management and instructional processes in the school.

Further assessing school administration, Orr (2006) citing Leithwood and Jantzi's (2005) synthesis of existing research indicated teacher job satisfaction, organizational commitment to purpose and change, improved teaching practices, distributed leadership, a school learning culture, quality content and instruction and organizational learning practices and environment as imperative factors for school leadership effectiveness which they found a positive relationship among these factors and student outcomes, and that these factors are influenced by effective leadership practices. As important as all these, a just-in- approach is required in educational system in providing in time all that is required for proper school administration (Ugwulashi,2011), that is quality assurance can only be through just – in-time approach. The students, teaching and non-teaching staff, administrators, fund, and school plant facilities must be provided and maintained in good time.

MEASURES FOR ASSESSING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Good School – Community Relations

The control and administration of schools lies within the state and individuals recruited to perform the day to day running of the school in one hand, and the community it situates for its effective functioning and survival on the other hand. Therefore for formal assessment of the school administration a marriage vow must be proposed by the school and community to operate. Igwe (1999) on this interrelationship notes that “neither the school nor the community can afford to remain self-satisfying without the assistance of the other as each constitutes a fundamental and indispensable catchments resource to the other”. That is there should be school – community synergy as to ensure harmonious relationship that leads to good administrative process.

The meaningfulness of effective school administration much rely on good school – community relations that fosters smooth organization of activities necessary to instill the right academic values and culture on the students, staff and the community it serves. The basic premise becomes that both school and community depend on the resource of each other for maintenance of the society. Formal learning to effectively take place, the community must offer the school the pupils and teachers; while the pupils learn, the teachers provide the control and instructional diets to the children offered by the community. The school provides quality system through a just – in – time approach when the community provides those right resources at their right time. The importance of school – community relations in the effective administration of education institutions cannot be overlooked. Else good school - community relations has become one major tool in assessing effective school administration.

Structure

There can be no meaning in education when the social – economic needs of the citizenries are not satisfied; else, the craze for science and technological development signified the real essence of educational development achieved through ample educational research activities on the needs of the society. In achieving this feat, the school has to be provided with necessary resource to effectively and efficiently discharge the administrative and pedagogical instructions demanded by the system through available teachers and administrators.

To this height also, the quality of schools amongst other variables requires quality educational officers in the schools that can facilitate the right academic structure that promotes standard in teaching and learning. Thus, the realization of any planned educational goals aimed at societal development depends much on the administrative capacity to translate planned policies into actions and principles with practices in pursuit of set out instructional goals.

In facilitating good school administration quality assurance, effective structure is required which must be professional (Hoy and Miskel, 2008) where members of staff are viewed as professionals capable of taking important organizational decision, that is, the actual teaching and learning methods. This school structure inherently facilitates colligate reasoning and human relations necessary in bringing out the best of each staff by the administrator. Hoy and Miskel (2008:119) cited Tschannen – Moran et. al. (2000); Mark and Printy (2003) emphases that team work and collaboration among school professional seem essential if our schools are to be productive.

A productive school system requires quality assurance and control in keeping its products in line with known standard. Based on this, Abraham (2004) condemned the hijacking of schools by quacks which he said is an unproductive disposition in lowering the quality of education and decried the recruitment of quacks in both private and public schools as quality assurance in school depends on administrators and teaching staff among other factors. That is, those administrators and teachers who are not trained in pedagogies and school administration need to be shown way out or overtly encouraging their retraining to meet the standard required.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) further upheld that decentralization and standardization at the same time is maintained in schools being professional bureaucracy or education bureaucracy (Peretomode, 1991:65). In other words, educational bureaucratic system like the schools permits easy enhancement of standard in academic pursuit and authority decentralization amongst staff. The timetable, duty rosters, form teachers, committee and subcommittee are systematic approaches to devolve responsibilities and authorities in a people system like the school for effective administration.

Good Human Relations

The support gained by a school depends on the good human relations approach adopted by the administrator. Severally scholars held the view that the level of good human relations approach applied by the administrator in the daily affairs of the school determines the quantum of supportive cooperation received from members of staff and society that efficiently and effectively facilitate easy achievement of good administrative and instructional results. This implies that school administration is measured relatively to the amount of success achieved in the overall performance of the school. It relates to style applications and administrators own perceptions of their staff.

The school administrator therefore, needs to adopt facilitative and supportive (participatory) process and adapting good human relations skills by appropriately using equal mix of high task and high relationship in situation favourableness. This approach motivates and integrates group effort (team work) among staff in efficiently and effectively discharging their pedagogical functions. It creates happy motivated individuals and organization as the borders of the idiographic and nomothetic dimensions are not skewed for any reason. That is to say effective school administration is reviewed in terms of perception of the principal's reputation, organizational member satisfaction and organizational goal achievement (Obasi and Oluwuo, 2008).

Decision Making

The quality of good decision making determines the quality of the school administration. Administering good decision involves special skills in administration as Ogunu (1987) in Obasi and Oluwuo (2008:77) identified that the difficulty in the provision of morally and professionally sound and effective administrators to manage the schools has been a major problem in Nigeria school system. The obvious reason being that most school heads are appointed from a pool of serving teachers with no training and experience in school administration, such administrators and schools do not have a good decision base often leading to conflicts among staff, students and community.

Ogunu (1987) therefore suggested that selected candidate for leadership should receive appropriate professional and administrative education to improve their leadership skills. Thus professional retraining enhances good decision making by appropriately adopting an evolving system embracing staff, students and community in taking crucial decisions relating to the internal administration.

It is maintaining this stance that Igwe (1999) further pointed out that the administrator must be democratic, resilient and receptive especially to genuine inputs from the community aimed at the growth and development of the school especially in the process of decision making. Participatory decision making approach involving staff and community in area of school interest encourages viable contributions to the success of the school as postulated.

Size and Location of School

The size of school can contribute to the measure of administrative success or failure. Demographically, size can influence the principal's administrative effectiveness (Obasi and Oluwuo, 2008:91). The compliance to rules and regulations may be more effective in a small school or class room size, than, a large school or class size. Classroom management indicates good measure of administrative performance in a school. The location of the school is also contributing as traditional community supports the school more than other typologies (Igwe: 1999: 47).

The implication for administrators is that effectiveness is achieved more with full community support system where there is direct contact with community in assessing the immediate needs of the school through such agents like age groups, chiefs, PTA, churches, clubs and other non – profit organization. It becomes self-evident that size and location of school is important in quality assurance process of educational system.

School Fund

The availability of other resources so provided are important but school cannot function in absence of adequate financial support. Finance is an important resource that determines the efficiency and effectiveness of other resources. It is the power or back bone for every administrative success or failure. The needs of schools are so enormous that in order to maintain quality, financial assurance must be considered in time. Accordingly, finance solves more than required in keeping organizational members together. The school physical and instructional facilities, staff salaries and other recurrent expenditures require money. Ineffective school administration today is a factor of financial unavailability, even the school routine administrative imprest amount are no more in full existence at the lower levels of the education system.

Curriculum Planning Development and Implementation

Assessing school administration, curriculum planning, development and implementation is an important area. The school is a small part of the society that helps in the organization of the society

through instilling the right academic values and attitude on the pupils aimed at building viable enlightened citizenries for national development. What the school teaches must therefore reflect the needs and aspirations of the wider society which eventually is determined by the type of curriculum design, development and implementation in place.

The curriculum whether actual, hidden, formal or informal all constitute the totality of experience and knowledge gained by the learner and must be planned and administered towards achieving the set out goals of education. Curriculum reform is necessary to meet people's needs, time, and manpower threats. These circumstances propel the improvement of existing curriculum to resourcefully sustain the changes and innovations carried out. Essentially, the type and maintenance of existing curriculum depends on the resources available for administering it, because teachers need to be retrained, new books, libraries and instructional facilities are required for the current curriculum needs.

Therefore school administration to be effective, curriculum planning, development and implementation must be factual for an increased level of academic performance. Schools with good funding and other avenues of resource accruing can do well than those without good resources in all round performance. In other words, administrators that plan school curriculum activities very well achieve success with the cooperative efforts of their staff, whereas several pitfalls are met due to poor planning of curriculum. In achieving this, school administrators must collaborate with all staff from planning stage as teachers are the actual implementers of the curriculum.

Government Policies

Government policies are also determining factor in school administration. Studies have shown that the way teachers are recruited and transferred by the Education boards affect the organizational capacities of administrators. They are not in full control of the process as teachers are recruited and transferred out schools at the volition of the Education board officials in deciding who goes to where and when. School administrators do not control the postings or transfer of staff. This affects administration of school because most teachers are posted to school where their services are not significant or being transferred out from where their services are needed to where they are not required.

Obasi and Oluwuo (2008) frown at the attitudes of some highly placed executives of the Education ministry in exercise of recruitment, posting and transfer of teachers. The administrators are handicapped in applying proper control on the teachers, because most of them are related to the executives who posted them to the school. Based on this it was postulated in many angles that school administration would be very easy when principals, are involved in the recruitment of the required personnel according to their school needs. On the other hand it was agreed that when the principals are given this opportunity most of them could build empires or turn the school to family bureaucracy which can affect the required quality assurance process.

Time management

School needs time to plan and execute activities accordingly because time one of the scarcest resources an administrator requires for efficient and effective performance. Time management helps to curtail excesses arising from non-utilization of school time for unrelated activities. When a school is managed without proper time management approach it means there is no direction to achieving quality education goals. Ugwulashi (2011) sees time management in school administration as necessary in achieving quality assurance in the school system.

It helps in early completion of activities avoiding wastage and conflicts decayed facilities. Time table schedule helped to save this situation as classes can be adequately managed in discharging curricula and extra curricula functions. This approach of time management helps in qualitative and learning as every class teacher has an equal opportunity to teach the students. The classrooms are properly managed through this process.

Successful administration means resources (teaching and non teaching, classroom, instructional facilities and fund) which must be timely provided. Time management makes thing work as resources are grossly inadequate. School plant is a necessary part of school administration that facilitates good teaching and learning. It is supposed to offer the learners good experiences but unfortunately, there is lack of maintenance of existing plants in the school unless in a situation of total collapse. There are lot

of moribund classroom, libraries laboratory, equipment meant to implement the 6.3.3.4 educational system which were not utilized for one day and all these equipment vandalized.

All these increase cost of total school administration and frustration on the staff and learners who are meant to use these facilities. The resultant effect becomes breeding truancy as many students stay out of class grouping and re grouping in different corners of the school. Invariably, such groupings lead to acts like cultism, theft, drug, smoking, prostitution, and thuggery. Proper time management is absolutely required in the school to keep everyone busy with the curricular and extracurricular activities.

In summary, many factors need to be considered in assessing school administration, which can not be finished in this single paper. It is the conviction of the writer that maintaining good human relations, school – community relations, participatory decision making, size and locations of design and development and government policies could be used to assess school administration in achieving quality assurance.

It is therefore recommended that to assess the effectiveness of school administration, the mentioned parameters among others are necessary to be in place as to achieve qualitative educational system.

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