Safety and Public School Administration for Quality Education Delivery in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The concept of safety in public school administration is necessary considering the precarious situations most public schools face today. Teaching and learning are done in very deplorable conditions as most of these schools look like monsters. However, in such mockery situations school personnel also faced real dangers while trying to ensure they carry out their statutory functions. Schools operating under such conditions are not safety assured for quality education delivery. Safety of human and material resources is a necessary factor for quality education delivery in schools. Therefore there is obvious need for safety in public school administration as to enable teaching and learning thrives under good safe climate which this paper examined.

Key words: Safety, public school Administration, Quality education delivery.

INTRODUCTION

The collation of individuals of different tribes with divergent cultural backgrounds involved in teaching and learning under one formal position for the purpose of knowledge transfer and acquisition can be regarded as school. Hoy and Miskel (2008) see school as service organization committed to teaching and learning with ultimate goal of student learning. To be a school, there must be formal environment where life and properties are capable of enhancing transfer and acquisition of knowledge through established curricula. In addition, Igwe (1999) asserts that the focus of the school is to pass instruction of knowledge and development of cognitive. School creates avenue for scientific and technological transfer of experiences and worthwhile knowledge for societal development and growth. However, there are guiding laws regulating the behaviours of school personnel (staff and students) towards achieving the corporate goal. These regulating laws stipulate conditions that met health, safety and environmental standards. Based on this, Agabi (2005) in Agabi, Okorosaye – Orubite, A.K.Ezekiel – Hart, and Egbezor (2005) postulates that a school exists primarily for the provision of educations in a conducive environment and its nature depends on the type of education it provides, the type of pupils / students and the education policy of the society it serves.

In furtherance to this, Igwe (2000) points that school as an organization has its own unique culture (norms, values and beliefs) that set the direction of performance for the principals, teachers and students. School culture accommodates diverse family, religious, ethnic, language and socio economic status differences inclusive its own behaviour, speech, dressing and relationship and it is this unique culture identified that differentiated it from non-

educational organization (Agabi, 2005). This legitimate behavioural pattern of school helps towards achievement of its objectives and goals without control of these socio parametric differences.

The primary objective of school has been to educate pupils under its custody in a proper environment. Public schools nowadays do not bequeath these characteristics due to the degeneration of physical facilities and human resources available. There are numerous evidences of decays of infrastructure and instructional facilities and decreasing human resources that lay doubt of its safeness. School must be a shaped organization statutorily empowered to redesign the conceptual ability of the child into a coordinated whole through the inculcation of the right attitudes, values, worthwhile knowledge and characters. School acts like a conduit through which raw material are delivered into finished goods. It is like computer accessories that supplied information to it and finally turned into finished work. Hence, school turns the raw child into final product through its own culture of teaching and learning.

The value of education from the wider perspective is the quality state of manpower fulfillment. It becomes meaningless when school products do not meet societal demands. In efficiently and effectively achieving the specific objectives and goals of education safe environment is required to facilitate growth at all levels (primary, secondary tertiary). This calls for safety in public school administration as human, material and financial resources cannot be mobilized in a hostile environment if a society wants to develop and grow.

Mobilization of school resources in suitable environment is important as a social system (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, Obasi & Oluwuo, 2008), which implies existence of structural interaction and interrelationship as a people system for enhancement of educational goals. Even though, human needs are insatiable the achievable needs of the school remains the aggregate derivable made from the tiny resources in safe conditions. School climate is a predominant part of administrative successes (Okorie, 1999; Uche & Asodike, 2005 in Agabi.et al (2005); Hoy & Miskel, 2008), while school safety climate is an important component of school climate for school administration (Ugwulashi, 2014).

Achievement of educational goals without safety considerations is a misnomer as studies on managing stress among principals of public secondary school (Ikiriko, 2006), occupational hazards in teaching profession (Imediegwu, 2006); facilities (Uche, 2002; Uche & Asodike, 2005; Ogbonnanya, 2010; Ugwulashi, 2014), leadership behaviours (Okorie, 1999; Hoy & Miskel 2008; Obasi & Oluwuo, 2008) indicate inherent hazards affecting school administrative processes. This paper examines concepts of hazard, safety, implications and ways of improving safety in public school administration for quality education delivery including recommendations and summary.

CONCEPT OF HAZARD IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Hazard is potential danger or known accident causal factor. It is any condition with the potential to cause harm. Hazards are curbed through identification, assessment and management processes. This hazard curbing processes help to prevent accidents that can emanate from dilapidated school facilities (buildings, furniture, black boards, tables, desks, hostels and classrooms), poor communication, classroom arrangement, decision making, assignment of teachers, prefects and duty teachers, cultism, prostitution, drug and alcohol
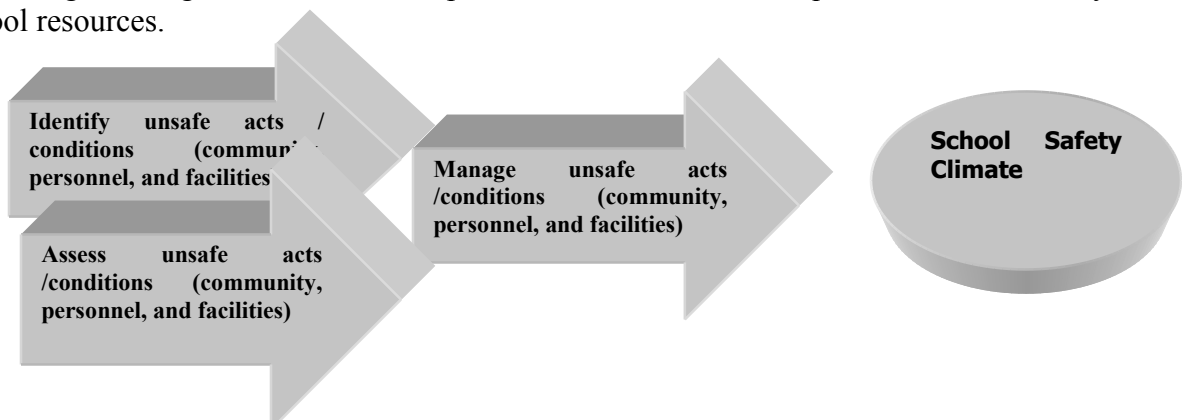
abuses, smoking, theft and hooliganism that greatly affect the internal administrative capacity of school. Hazards emanate from unsafe conditions and unsafe acts.

| Unsafe acts (community and personnel behaviours) | → | **School hazards** | ← | Unsafe conditions (dilapidated Facilities, etc.) |

(Researcher's concept on school hazards)

CONCEPT OF SAFETY IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Safety simply defined is any act of saving life and property. It is achieved through the process of hazard identification, assessment and management of identified risk factors. It is an emotional concept that requires constant refreshing of the mind. In the school, hazards are abounding that urgent corrective and preventive measures are required to ensure safety of school resources.

Identify unsafe acts / conditions (community, personnel, and facilities

Assess unsafe acts /conditions (community, personnel, and facilities) → **Manage unsafe acts /conditions (community, personnel, and facilities)** → **School Safety Climate**

Steps for managing hazards to achieve school safety climate

(Researcher's concept on school hazards)

CONCEPT OF QUALITY

Quality assurance in education has been major concern in the educational sector worldwide. It is a primary concern to nations because quality education is the basic foundation for national development. Quality in this paper adopts Juran's definition of '**fitness *for* use or purpose'** *because no matter what goods or services it must be fit for its purpose. Therefore school graduands must be fit to be used by society.*

Quality education delivery can be realized through putting in place the right personnel, facilities, funds and other resources required to improve education standard at that level of the school organization (Ugwulashi, 2011) which are quality assurance processes; thus, quality delivery goes with safety principles commonly associated with the right personnel, right tool, right environment and right time.
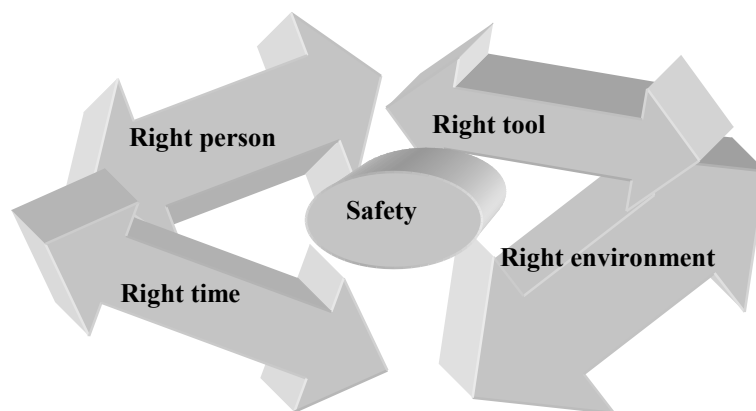
(Researcher's concept on quality education delivery process)

CONCEPT OF SAFETY IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Safety is an important aspect of our daily life. There will be no meaningful execution of activity whether industrial or not without safety appreciation. Education is one industry that requires appropriate safety because of knowledge transfer and acquisition. Hazards are everywhere even the food we eat or water will drink. School being a people organization is faced with hazards that can result to accident anytime which requires safety measures to ensure quality education delivery without harm. Thus, school needs good climate to operate (Igwe, 1999; Okorie, 1999; Hoy & Miskel 2008; Obasi & Oluwuo, 2008; Ugwulashi, 2014) because these hazards are capable of destroying knowledge transfer due to poor awareness of safety. Unlike the production industry where hazards are immediately identified and mitigated to avoid incident records, inherent hazards in school environment are not given required attention leading to decay of infrastructural and learning facilities thus, increased low performance by schools. There are many known hazards emanating from educational facilities, behaviours, community relationship and security. School safety awareness begins with identification, assessment and management of these hazards thereby making school environment a better place to operate.

Much unsafe behaviours have resulted to litigations like professional misconduct, negligence, assault and battery (Okorie, 2002; Igwe & Obasi, 2005; Igwe, 2010). Professional misconducts occur mostly when teachers sexually abuse their students or certificate forgery very rampant today. Corporal punishments lead to assault and battery too when the teachers arbitrarily punish students without recourse to required procedure; without fair trial and fair hearing (Okorie, 2002; Igwe & Obasi, 2005; Igwe, 2010). Negligence occurs when teachers do not take duty care of the pupil in their classroom or school that resulted to an accident. For instance, pupils playing uncontrolled like climbing desks or performing dangerous activity and in that circumstance incur injuries (break of hand) that result to serious problem due to fall incident. The teacher may be charged of negligence (not taking reasonable care).

Unsafe conditions exist in the school environment like poor design or dilapidated school buildings, damaged infrastructural and instructional facilities with sharp edges nails, desks, chairs, tables, windows, glasses, doors bad floors and thick bushes around the school. This Okorie (2002:198) summarized that "the classroom, and indeed the entire school environment is pervaded with potential hazards and dangers, which are often over looked by teachers and

other school personnel". The crucial challenge for every school administrator is to operate a safe and secured school.

Safety in school is a means but not an end in itself because teaching and learning done in precarious manner cannot assure quality in the education industry. Ajayi and Ayodele (2011:9) thus, emphasized that the accomplishment of the objectives is the end product of managerial process. School safety is a managerial decision that will aid accomplishing set out objectives because activities when sequentially planned, organized, staffed, directed, coordinated, controlled and evaluated lead to achievement of result without harm or loss of resources.

Unsafe Acts and Implications in Public School Administration

Unsafe acts involve practices which human beings perform hazardously, i.e. rushing, short cuts, horseplay, alcohol or drugs abuse within the workplace. It is any act that deviates from recognized safe ways or specified methods and which increases the probabilities for an accident occurring. It contains elements of unsatisfactory behaviours before an accident occurs. In the school system it occurs in many forms.

Poor Communication: Poor communication in organization affects performance (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Obasi & Oluwuo, 2008; Igwe, 1999). Lack of effective communication in school has resulted to various demands, strikes, demonstrations and students' unrests, indiscipline and malpractices. It has made administrators to be labelled mechanistic isolates (Luthans, 2005). Effective communication is necessary for quality education delivery. Olaleye (2007:44) maintains Adewoyin (1991) assertion that the purpose of all communication is to persuade, influence, modify or change the behaviour of others. Safety awareness modifies behaviours in result achievement. Nnabuo, Okorie, Nwedeeduh and Uche (2006: 91) assert that when intentions are not released to the intended users as and at when due, it may be detrimental to the entire schools system, because what the administrator has not communicated may be very vital, especially safety of the school.

Good communication is a proactive approach to mitigating hazards. Similarly, classroom effectiveness depends on persisting communication among the teachers and learners. It helps to resolve issues that would distort good climate of the school. Lack of attention is typical example of unsafe acts emanating from poor communication in the classroom.

Poor Decision Making Process: Many administrators adopt patterns that deter school progress. Safety is not done in face of poor decision making approach, because safety involves every one. School decision making must be accommodating to all because of the delicate nature of knowledge transfer and acceptance (teaching and learning). To be effective, decision making process should consider all stake holders in school business. Any administrative approach that ignores safety creates stern relationship among staff, students and society making education not relevant. In order to maintain modified supervisory practices, higher-level managers must communicate high safety priorities even under increased work pressure (Zohar & Luria, 2003), even under tiny economic conditions.

The principle of democracy permits that those affected by any decision should be involved in making such decision affecting them (Igwe, 2000; Idu, 2004; Nnabuo, et.al 2006). School decision is of all, and even the community it serves. Since the school situates in the community, its safety depends on the immediate community efforts to provide enabling

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environment. Community Development Committee (CDC), Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Council of Chiefs, youths, age grades and friends provide the leadership model to the school which will ensure safety for quality education delivery in areas of fund, school buildings, desk, chairs and tables; even providing labour to the school.

Improper Administration Of Discipline*:* Most administrators, teachers and students carry out disciplinary actions in an unsafe manner. This constitutes pure safety problems in the school as no parent would appreciate condition that disposes their wards to danger. Duty teachers and prefects should appropriately be orientated because their actions inappropriately can stern school image. Safe act is required in handling students in issues like lateness, prep, labour, sports, dinning or siesta. In other hand, deterrent stern measures are required for acts like cultism, prostitution, theft or arson. Based on this, Okorie (2002:186) upholds that "the instrument used to administer corporal punishment must be such that will not inflict an injury on the student even with the application of reasonable force by the teacher". Also before administering punishment, the offence committed, age of the offender and fair hearing to the offender be considered in most deterrent manner (Igwe, 2010; Igwe & Obasi, 2005). School administrators should understand that discharging their duties wrongly may affect safety climate.

Social Vices*:* This includes among others drug and alcohol abuses, cultism, prostitution, smoking, theft and other unacceptable behaviours. When an administrator or teacher partakes in any of this activity eventually it will be difficult to be mitigated, the learning environment becomes tense for all. If the school administration collectively reject the exhibition of such acts as well as carrying out deterrent measures against offenders, a good safety climate will exist for proper teaching and learning. Social vices are contributing factors for incessant killings and demonstrations by students.

It becomes pertinent that school must operate in safe climate. Education staffers are meant to show exemplary characters not to mingle with the students in displaying unfortunate acts. In furtherance to this, Ogbonnanya (2010:184) blames all these problems in secondary schools due to lack of proper government policy on discipline. Presently in Nigeria, State governors are curious to build model primary and secondary schools as safety measure for quality education delivery, thereby reducing teachers and pupils' truancy and other failure factors.

Unsafe Conditions and implications in Public School Administration:

Involves any physical conditions of workplace, which rendered it unsafe, and do not guarantee safety of life and property. Unsafe condition is an unsatisfactory physical condition existing immediately before an accident was significant in initiating an event. It is something existing that varies from a normal accepted safe condition that results to injury, death, or property damage, if not corrected properly (US Legal, 2012). They are inherent hazards inbuilt or artificially created in course of our actions or inactions. These include:

Dilapidated Buildings: These are common hazards found in most public schools. Dilapidated buildings and bad school structures have demoralizing effects. Ogbonnanya (2010:9) points that most schools lack standard buildings or structures to accommodate little kids and some of the kids are harbored in the village halls and exposed to cold and heat. This situation constitutes unconducive school safety climate for quality delivery in the educational system. Teachers and students are found carrying out activities in dilapidated structures constituting

death traps in public schools built over three decays. The fast decaying nature of school facilities lies that there is no respect for school properties (Idu,2004), thus school furniture and buildings seen destroyed by students and community hoodlums' exposing them in dangerous positions.

In view of these ugly scenes, Idu (2004:73) stresses further that proper maintenance procedures begin with the inculcation of respect for school properties. Safety preaches proactiveness that is maintenance culture. School safety is undermined by many factors; most importantly free education for all without adequately planning for equipping schools with facilities, trained teachers and administrators for quality delivery.

Lack of Instructional Facilities: Many literature have revealed evidences of obsolete equipment and furniture in schools , lack of modern facilities for record keeping, poor ventilation, high noise level, lack of instructional materials, poor welfare packages (Agabi, 2002; Uche, 2002, in Agabi, & Okorie,2002) constituting poor school safety climate. Materials used for instructional purposes must be safe use and not exposed to endanger the lives of the learners, even the teachers that use them in teaching (Ebong, 2002:44 in Agabi, & Okorie, 2002). It becomes deplorable that public schools lack facilities for quality education delivery in Nigeria.

Improper Assignment of Teachers: This approach constitutes unsafe condition for proper teaching and learning activities. Assigning teachers to areas outside their specializations not only affect teachers' skill but classroom organization making learners avoid classes leading to truancy and other socially unacceptable behaviours. There should be professionalism on teaching job to avoid hazards for quality education delivery in Nigeria.

Poor Sanitary Conditions: Good or hygienic environment is a necessary issue of concern for school pupils, staff and community. Unhygienic conditions like bushes and moribund buildings inhabit pests like rodents, reptiles and dangerous insects likely to spread diseases. Poor drinking water spread of infection (Cholera, fever), thus school environment needs to be cleaned properly. Schools must learn how to induct pupils on good hygiene spread and general safety for quality education delivery in Nigeria.

Social Vices: These contribute to unsafe conditions in school when not properly mitigated. Acts like prostitution, alcohol, drugs and secret cult activities often end at killings of innocent students, teachers, students' demonstrations, and resuscitation of students and closure of school. Therefore quality education delivery depends on school administrative capacity to handle these hazards arising on time when identified with necessary preventive measures put in place.

IMPROVEMENT OF SAFETY IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION:

Improvement of school safety starts by identifying hazards and providing measures for corrections. Hazards like dilapidated structures, broken furniture and damaged equipment need to be renovated, repaired and constantly maintained for efficient and effective use. The reconstruction of old primary and secondary schools as model schools by some State executives in Nigeria is another improvement method. Teaching and learning process must be carried out under very conducive environment for quality delivery, accompanied by good administrators, right teachers, right tools and other resources. Hazards are also eliminated

when school tasks are professionally handled reducing ineffectiveness in classroom management.

There should be good infrastructure and instructional facilities that meets safety requirement. The school administrators must be well equipped to carry out physical inspection of facilities, and provide culture of respect for school properties by synergizing with community. There should be acts by the federal government to regulate unacceptable behaviours like cultism, drug and alcohol abuses, prostitution, and sexual harassments. This measure will guarantee safety of innocent staff and students from holiganistic attacks. Every administrator must be abided by school laws for effective internal administrative purposes. Moreso, staff should be well paid to enable them concentrate on their teaching tasks. Similarly, regular professional staff development courses, workshops, seminars and conferences should be put in place.

There should be periodic inspection of schools by the Ministry or zonal boards while administrators carry out routine daily supervisory functions. Administrators should adopt cooperative administrative style to accommodate the feelings of people for the smooth operations. That is inventing good inspectoral and supervisory practices ensure school safety epitomizing good school climate.

In nut shell, safety in public school administration is improved when all quality assurance processes are maintained in the school creating good teaching and learning environment. These include trained administrators, trained teachers, infrastructural and instructional facilities, periodic staff retraining, proper funding, adequate allocation of time proper time management amongst others that enables teachers and learners realize organization purpose with good intents.

SUMMARY

This paper postulates that there are numerous inherent hazards due to unsafe acts and conditions in the school if undermined affect teaching and learning. These hazards if allowed to persist would eventually destroy quality education delivery in public schools if urgent actions are not taken to revisit state of these schools in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. School planners and administrators should step up good communication in the affairs of school.

2. There should be decision making involving all stakeholders with the need to instill respect on school properties as maintenance culture through seminars, workshops, conferences, and other supervisory actions in schools.

3. There should be talks to students during assemblies or social gatherings on safety.

4. There should be talks to parents and community on need for school safety.

5. Provide secured accommodation for students and teachers in the school compound.

6. Introduction of safety audit checks to help provide assistance required to checkmate administrative, staff and students behaviours and security amongst others.

7. To provide emergency response plan for every school.

8. *Government should embark on aggressive demolition and reconstruction of old school buildings.*

9. *Government should provide funds for internal management of school facilities .*

10. *There should community involvement to ensure safe and secured teaching and learning environment.*

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