Teachers’ role in improving teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools’ education

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INTRODUCTION

Education management and development of Nigeria secondary schools involves the application of managerial principles in designing, developing and directing resources towards the achievement of educational goals. Today, the demand for effective management and development of schools is rapidly taking centre stage all over the world (Okumbe, 1999). This effectiveness can be judged by the extent to which schools acquire the necessary teachers’ instructional materials; how they provide a congenial organizational environment and their effectiveness in meeting the expectations of the society within which they are established (Okumbe, 1999). It is in established schools that formal education takes place and it is there that the success or failure of the national educational objectives are determined (Orora, 1997). To achieve this objective, teachers and school executives are expected to apply appropriate managerial skills.

Teachers of secondary school have crucial roles to play in many schools that have their doors almost open for reforms (Henig and Stone, 2008). This “reform” churn while intended to improve performance, often constrain efforts at organizational improvements as change-weary schools often engage in reforms without proper consideration (Coburn, 2003; Datnow et al., 2006; Hubbard et al., 2006). Reform efforts are typically implemented using a variety of formal structures, processes and accountability levers, to improve teaching. However, the approaches are really mean for improving education at all level of learning.

Lazaridou and Tsolakidis (2011) opined that educational setting refers to a system with a mixture of stakeholders of institutions which include teachers,
parents, students and the community members. Gunbayi (2007) also reported that young teachers seem to appreciate and increase their zeal for the job they prefer and seem to be more positive and committed in teaching. However, young teachers seem to get impatient quickly when they have to face challenges. As a result, when teachers enjoy their work, they tend to improve in their teaching and learning pedagogy, and the students in turn also improve in their performance.

In the school system, it is common for principals and teachers to have discussions and interactions on issues concerning schools’ matters. According to Adeyemi (2004), conditions that create relationship between teachers and students may develop and may influence the society for a better change. According to Birdsall et al. (2006) enrollment of children in school, the challenges of access/quality of teaching and facilities must be resolved if schools are to offer quality education. There are few reasons that contribute to low level of teachers’ performance and they include inadequate pay, poor career structure, lack of promotion opportunities, poor school facilities, inadequate school disciplinary policy, principal’s leadership behaviour, students’ poor work attitudes and teachers’ behaviours.

George et al. (2008) reported that the behaviour of some principals and some teachers can be correlated with their teaching performance.

IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS’ SUPERVISION IN SCHOOLS

Teachers’ are the closest to the students in terms of teaching and guidance in schools. According to Wehmeier (2004), the aspect of teacher’s guidance in school is an act of being in charge and making sure that the student adheres to instructions accordingly. Also, ensuring that everything done by the student is done correctly and safely. In our contemporary society, schools are considered as social systems and are guided by sets of elements (subsystems) and activities that communicate to constitute a single social entity. Improvement, as the most effective function of every social system (schools included), is assumed to be dependent on the quality of their development and production in the system.

The need for teachers to improve on supervision of students as well as a number of other factors have been highlighted to explain differential achievements and causes of poor performance between schools and amongst students. But one factor that needs investigation is the head teacher’s or team supervisor’s role. It is therefore, important to investigate the influence of head teachers’ team management practices on students’ academic performances. There has been a growing focus on effective development of secondary schools, since management of teachers is part and parcel of school management (Hill and Crevola, 1997 in Collins et al., 2012). According to Bateman (2006), the importance of consistency and continuous quality improvement in secondary education are many. Some of the benefits associated with consistency of teacher guidance and continuous quality improvement in education include:

- Establishment of cordial relationship between teachers/ principals and students increase excellence in academic standards which in turn go a long way to enhance and improve the whole schools reputation and image.
- Increase in skill information across the school system.
- Improvement of scholarly outcome so that policies and procedures are regularly revisited through analysis of the delivery of teaching and learning process.
- Identification of the problems and solutions to issues that affect the strengths and weaknesses of the entire system.

TEACHERS’ DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETENCY IN SCHOOLS

In a school system, teachers are the most urgently needed during the first take off. This is in accordance with Liethwood et al. (2007) report in Fullan (2007) which stated that school teamers are crucial for shaping trust in schools. This also has an important influence for direct and indirect promotion of the effectiveness of the school system (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Teacher’s roles at the departmental and/or classroom level accounts for a significant part of the development in schools (Fullan, 2007). Here, teachers are expected to play good strategic roles; and promote and develop kind attitudes that correlate with the teacher’s character in the community; such that the society can benefit from such good behaviour. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Develops, OECD, (2012)’s report stated that teacher’s leadership is the starting point for the promotion, transformation and development of low-performing (and) disadvantaged schools. Some teachers’ mode of enquiry and leadership style for school improvement have distinguished them from others who have little impact for proper management and understanding of their roles (Stoll et al., 2002 in Stoll et al, 2006). However, for a system to be good, one needs to consider the most effective teacher/principal - who is the one that spend more time in the classroom. Being in the classroom lets them know what is going on and gives students the opportunity to receive help with their instructional efforts. For busy school administrators, this is an enormous task because they cannot be present in all the classrooms all the time. Many successful principals use a strategy for co-ordinating both human and materials resources; a
principles known as "Walk-Through" School Management Programme (Ankomah et al., 2005). The practice involves a principal making a 5-7 min visit to some of the classrooms in the school and identifying a focus area for classroom observation ahead of time; usually by posing a question. Examples of questions include: Is there enough teacher-student, student-teacher interaction? Is there evidence that multiple learning styles are being carried out? These questions help the principal focus on the key elements he or she is trying to identify. After completing the "Walk-Through", the principal analysed the information and decides how best he or she can help the staff to improve on their teaching skills. The teacher may want to take a "Learning Snapshot", a method that involves focusing on one training skill, technique or communication during a 5-10 min period in a classroom. For example, if the principal wants to know whether there are student-student interactions in the classroom, the principal may snap a photo of students working in groups. This image can then be sent back to the classroom teacher with a note, indicating that the principal saw it as a positive instructional method.

A teacher should have an in-depth knowledge of the subject he/she wants to teach (Butin, 2004). The teacher should have international and technical skills without which he or she cannot pass the required knowledge to the student (Airansian, 1991). A function of this is when teachers see themselves as developmental in nature and not merely to impact knowledge, "parrot fashion" (Butin, 2004). The tasks the teacher has to face include rendering direct assistance to individual student by helping the student to better understand the lessons. The teacher is also expected to improve the general class through group assignments and discussions (Rockoff, 2004). Unification is the part of supervision which marries educational goals with the teacher’s own needs; and the final product of all this efforts is an improvement in the students’ achievement (Airansian, 1991; Butin, 2004).

Nigeria public secondary school is poised unendingly with teachers’ low professional standards which affect their abilities for personal modification, production, social recreation, innovation and social placement (Nwagwu, 2008; Reddy and Sinhas, 2010; Fafunwa, 2004). More effort by teachers and adequate school instructional facilities that can add to production in the said system is needed. Teachers are charged with the responsibilities of improving promotion and production, conservation and change in the society; for the betterment of all. (Haralambos et al., 2008; Burke et al., 2011; Gemici and Rojewski, 2010). The teachers are most likely to improve pupils/students knowledge because they are well trained and entrusted with the values of educational standards for social change (Anuforo, 2007; Adegoke, 2003; Marshall, 2004). As teachers are the promoter’s they need good teaching and learning strategies, adequate instructional materials, conducive classroom condition, pleasant school culture, objective administration and good school physical structures; so that things may be somehow easy for them. The availability of these features can help in making education successful. Thus, the absence of these can make students in secondary schools to be poorly socialized, uneducated, wrongly informed, half trained and become unskilled person (Lenet et al., 2001). But the failure of the school system in Nigeria is more accrued to public secondary school (Nakpodia et al., 2011; Egbochuku, 2007). The failure of the school to meet the expectations of students has led to poor academic performance, frequent absenteeism, lack of interest/courage and students dropout from school (Rumberger and Sun, 2008; Fafunwa, 2004).

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NIGERIAN TEACHERS

The prospect of the Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN (2004) with respect to the goals of teacher education programme are to:

- Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational systems;
- Encourage further the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers;
- Help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large, and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background sufficient for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situation;
- Enhance teachers’ commitment to the teaching profession.

Teachers are the interpreters of any and all educational plans and philosophy (FGN, 2004; Anuforo, 2007; Nakpodia, 2011). Teachers are best known for their constructive effort towards interpreting government policies on education and putting the features of the policies into practical measures for assessment (Farrant, 2004; Nakpodia, 2011). A skilful teacher needs continuous training in order to sustain and increase in knowledge.

PRINCIPLED ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

This is a system whose bureaucratic organisation and leadership style as well as decision making process always remain a focal point of discussion between and within teachers and students of a particular school (Macionis, 2012; Carpenter and Vul, 2011; Alude, 2011). Leadership style affects school administration
(dealing with both the specified and unspecified governing rules and regulations). Both the written and unwritten socially constructed norms and administrative behaviour has effects on teacher’s job, in terms of commitment and discipline in the school environment. A rigid administrative organisation causes fear in students, lateness and absenteeism. School leadership affects school culture and classroom organisation positively or negatively (Nwagwu, 2008; Ananga, 2011).

NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THEIR TEACHERS

The challenges that teachers are facing in Nigerian public secondary schools are detrimental to the students as these are the major factors affecting the schools’ productivity and efficiency. The challenges teachers face result in students’ dropout from school. Disciplinary measures are the prime concern to school management and an integral part of the school culture as well as a factor that controls the administrative organisation (Reddy and Sinha, 2010). The absence of discipline in school renders the school unsafe for learning. Schools systems are the environments where significant social rules are thought, without which the control of youths becomes very difficult. School premises are built on disciplinary ethics, both in the classroom and outside (Nwagwu, 2008). Earlier on, we had seen that school system is a place where significant social rules are thought to the younger ones in preparation for adulthood. Discipline in the school is one primary factor/objective that has to be moderated to accommodate all students and teachers. A rigid, harsh and uneducated school rules push students out of the school. This however interprets the school system and culture negatively; and the consequences to the teacher is the loss of traditional confidence created in the profession by students, parents and the community (Nwagwu, 2008; Azetta et al., 2009; Aluede, 2011). The provision of standard public school system to Nigerian teachers and students is a challenge to the FGN and if not properly addressed, it militates against productive teaching. The schools have been observed to be short of instructional materials, poor school structure, inadequate teaching staff and overcrowded classrooms. Pre-existing conditions for positive schools system includes:

- Students conformability need to have high priority in school activities;
- Attaching strong value to school culture;
- Acceptability on the part of students and teachers to work adherence and to their job performance as referred to by an act of accomplishing or executing a given task for improvement of the system (Griffin, 2012).

TEACHERS AND UNITY

In an effort to improve the quality of education in schools, capable hands are now assigned to teach specific subjects based on areas of specialization and needs. Some senior school teachers are now teaching junior classes while some brilliant teachers in junior schools have been assigned to teach senior classes (Ubben et al., 2007). This has given room for more interaction among the teachers and has developed a spirit of team work towards improving and promoting the quality of education in Nigeria public secondary schools. No doubt, many challenges have been placed on the teachers as they need to update their knowledge by additional qualification, attending international conferences and seminars in their subject areas rather than recycling them on a particular class. Many can now carry out some research to meet up with the curriculum content and need. Also, teachers are becoming more proficient in skill acquisition and in the successful delivery of the acquired knowledge.

TEACHERS INFLUENCE IN SCHOOL

Teachers cannot provide knowledge and activities that guide students’ progress towards understanding an ideas if they do not know what these ideas are; neither can they deal with experience, challenge of students, if they do not understand the student’s misunderstanding. The implication of this is that greater emphasis should be placed on teacher’s professional development within a school developmental/ improvement strategy, alongside greater focus on curriculum, instruction and performance standard of pupils (Badmus, 2006). Such programmes should be funded by government agencies and mounted by suitable training units/centres. Teachers’ continuing education programme must be expanded to curriculum change and practices that can influence learners’ achievement. Teachers’ development should not be limited to professional development alone; rather, it should cover the professional order and job title. A special welfare scheme should be introduced for teachers at all levels so that teachers can feel relaxed with respect to salary issues. In fact, teachers should have a robust salary structure where the anticipated teachers’ salary scale should be implemented fully. In addition to this, teachers’ work environment should be enlarged and enriched to make teaching work interesting and worthwhile. These put together will enhance the teacher’s image and commitment to his professional work.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING

Those directly engaged in the development of schools
in recent decades agree with Fullan (2007) who stated that what matters most is strengthening the capacity of teachers, rather than tightening the controls over education, because public policy has in some settings pulled in the other direction. In other places, new initiatives invest more in well-prepared and well-supported teachers rather than in regulations to direct what they do (Darling-Hammond, 2010 in Hargreaves, 2010). In any context, school improvement requires teacher training development. A wider view of the institution in its environment is relevant at the classroom or the departmental level, though teaching itself remains a clear focus. Researchers in this field recognise the overwhelming importance of teacher motivation and commitment to achieve reform, while suggesting that accountability measures by themselves are less effective (Liethwood et al., 2007 in Thompson, 2010). Therefore, improving teaching and learning in school should consist of adopting of good strategies outlined for effective improvement of teaching and learning in Nigerian schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007). According to Raza and Shah (2010), a teacher is a guide, he has to teach the student 'how to learn' rather than stuff his mind with factual information. The development of teaching and learning according to Okorie (2002) in Nnabuo et al. (2004), results from an inter-play among a broad range of success factors that have improved the consequence for effective teacher performance and student learning. Such factors include:

- Modern school facilities such as classroom, standard libraries, well equipped laboratories, staff offices, improved related teaching and learning facilities in the system.
- Development of the financial aspect such as the provision of funds to schools, staff remuneration, school budget and good implementation.
- Administration personnel including quality and quantity, mindset and orientation among personnel usually resulting from the organization's motivational efforts, staff satisfaction, commitment and morale and so on.
- Schools environment and its organization including environment and leadership perspective should be revisited.

CONCLUSION

Practitioners of education management, policy makers, education officers, teachers and head teachers, parents, Parent Teacher Association, Board of Governors and school sponsors should base their management functions, decisions and actions on the suggestions of this review. This will help education stakeholders to have conceptual illumination of the art of head teachers' supervisory role in secondary schools and will also discourage them from relying on haphazard personal experiences or subjective expert judgments in the management of educational institutions. It is hoped that this review will form the basis for further research on the management of teachers in secondary schools and the management of educational institutions in general.

REFERENCES


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