

The Role of Educational Administrators in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The school system in Nigeria is often influenced by the constant changes that are occurring within the political institutions. The ability of the stakeholders and actors within the educational system to adapt to the organizational changes has attracted attention in the last decade. Currently, there is controversy as to the nature, pattern and methods of training teachers in the country. At the centre of the controversy is the confusion over the role of the educational administrators in secondary schools. This paper conducts a comprehensive assessment of the role of educational administrators in Nigeria in view of the dynamism of the constantly changing political and economic landscape. The paper presents information and recommendations on how teachers training and continuous professional development can be positively influenced by the school administrators.

Keywords: Training, Teachers, Administrators, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Teaching involves the use of wide body of knowledge about the subject being taught. Teachers at all levels of the educational system are very important in the overall development of any nation. Teachers' education is the process which nurtures prospective teachers and updates qualified teachers' knowledge and skills in the form of continuous professional development. It is on this basis that the educational administrators play several roles in teacher education in Nigeria. The terms, "teachers training" in this paper is used interchangeably with "teachers education".

Teachers' education revolves around the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skills required in the performance of effective duties in the classrooms, and in other social gatherings including churches. Teachers' education is often divided into three stages namely:

- a) Initial teacher training;
- b) The induction process involving the training and supports of the trainees during the first few years of teaching or the first year in a particular school; and,
- c) Teacher development or continuing performing development and intensive process for practicing teachers.

The above processes and stages of professional development of teachers constitute the concept of "teacher training" and/or "teacher education".

It is generally anticipated that the key goal of Nigeria's teacher education should be based on the prospect and achievability of the 21st century standards hence, should emphasize on the training of highly motivated, conscientious and successful classroom teachers for all educational levels. It should encourage in potential teachers to develop spirit of improved creativity, nationalism and patriotism. It should help the prospective teacher to live into the social life of home and community providing him with intellectual and professional background adequate for his professional assignments; educate on discipline, adaptability, to cope with the changing roles of education in society.

The task for the Nigerian teachers' education authorities is to strive to meet these challenges and to adequately design programmes that are able to inspire children to learn. These cannot be achieved without the efforts of the educational administrators whose responsibilities include the management of human, financial and material resources of the school. Historically, the first teachers training college in Nigeria was established by the Church Missionary Society in 1859. From the outset, most teachers were trained at government expense and many received allowances during training. Currently, teachers' education continues to be the most heavily subsidised public training in the country.

At the head of leadership in teachers education in Nigeria, are the principals; that administers the schools with the support of the other teaching and non – teaching Staff. Accordingly, the principal is regarded as the chief executive of the school, who is responsible for all that, happens in the school (Oyedeki and Fasasi, 2006). As the chief executive, the principal assigns duties to those who could perform the duties, though all responsibilities still resides in him as the accounting officer. It is in this regard that Babayemi (2006) noted that the position of the principal as involving the control of human and material resources of the school. The position of the principal in the school is so important to the extent that the school cannot exist without that position. Babayemi further noted that the principal is the supervisory manager; school climate developer; and change facilitator. Akpa (1990) opined that the principal is a human resources manager and a liaison and public relations officer as well as an instructional leader. Obemeta (1984) describes the principal as a manger, administrator, an exemplary leader, a counsellor, a public officer, a building contractor, a nurse and even a messenger.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Greenfield (1987) and Macmillan, et. al (2001) suggests that the principals of schools are instructional leaders whose duties are intimately involved with instructions. For in-depth discussion in furtherance of greater understanding of the principal's role in the education of teachers, literary discourse is conducted in pragmatic format in this paper. The materials are literature from various sources.

DISCUSSION

Often Educational Administration is erroneously conceived by teachers as an esoteric art end activity which is the exclusive preserve of school principals within the school system. They fail to realise that educational administration is, first and foremost, a function - a set of related tasks end activities shared by every person in an educational institution from teacher on up or down. When teachers are unaware of their role, and are incompetent in school administration, the smooth daily functioning of the school is threatened with conflict.

It is from this viewpoint that Fagbulu (1981) segmented the school day into 38 administrative tasks and activities including; school plan, school assembly, roll calls, the teachers' lessons etc. Educational administration is seen as an art of bringing men and

materials together for effective and functional teaching and learning. Administrative efforts in the context of the school therefore, are directed towards the enhancement of teaching and learning process. Whatever the educational administrator does in his official capacity must be geared towards the attainment of the school's educational objectives. Educational administration is therefore a service activity or tool through which the fundamental objectives of the educational system can be more fully and efficiently realised. Educational administration has to do with interaction of people in a social system.

In Nigeria, teacher education is in the hands of several educational administrators or agencies like officials in the Teaching Service Boards, (TSB) or Post Primary Education Board (PEB), the Local Education Board and the individual schools which is the major focus as regard their role as educational administrators in teacher education. Gordon (1983) asserted that administration of teacher education is concerned with broad issues by the educational administration which will be analysed in this work as the roles of Principal as an educational administrator in teacher education.

In consideration of the above discussion, it is crucial to explain the concept of educational. The term is used in a restrictive sense to denote the few senior persons in teacher education such as the school head, who come closest to the people who are responsible for overall school system.

Some claims made on educational administrator would sound inferior but it is a fact that educational administrators are rarely supermen, but they do acquire and represent wide range of experience. In teacher education, the school head such as the principal, is regarded as the educational administrator in the secondary school system and he is the key person in the administrative organisation. It is his duty to oversee the proper running of the school in terms of staff and students' welfare, development and implementation of educational programmes, provision of proper instruction, school-community relations, discipline and proper keeping of school records. Other duties include students' admission, proper documentation of school finances and the creation of good atmosphere for learning and teaching.

Teachers training are designed to infuse certain qualities that are necessary for the performance of the duties of school administration. The qualities are: Professional skills and ethics; leadership; and, diagnostic skills. Professional ethics and skills are varied but essentially include the ability of to listen to Staff and students; offering supports to the teachers; managing the budgets; liaising with government; organising school events; and, offering advice/guidance to students and Staff. Leadership skills are highly emphasized in teachers' training. It is crucial for the principal to see himself as team leader rather than a boss. He should be supportive, creative, and considerate. He should be capable of diagnosing simple problems and offering solutions. Graham (1982) observed that diagnostics skills which are very important for managing situations arising from organisational settings. Apart from diagnostic skills, the educational administrator role is multifaceted including accountability and responsibility (Cruzeiro and Morgany, 2006).

Aderounmu and Ehiarnetalor (1985) and Peretomode (2009), elaborates that the functions of the educational administrator can be categorized in two broad headings namely: Structuring of the school for purpose of instruction, and curriculum development. Structuring requires that the school environment is suitable for teaching and learning; one of the ways by which the principal can do this is by clearly identifying positions and roles, and acquainting the position occupants with their roles, and relationship that is supposed to exist between role occupants. For example, departments based on subject can be created with heads of department appointed to oversee the running of the departments. The principal should assign responsibilities to the heads department and give them the relevant powers with which to carry out such assigned responsibilities. Curriculum development function of the principal is

concerned with the leadership of the overall planning and implementation of sets of objectives. The principal should be seen to be playing the role of the team leader in relation to curriculum development. The principal should play this role by way of serving as a guide to the various teachers either directly or in conjunction with the heads of departments in terms of helping to identify relevant goals to the community, planning and selecting relevant learning experiences, helping to implement programme improvement and evaluating programme changes.

One crucial issue to consider is how teachers training and continuous professional development can be positively influenced by the school administrators. The principals can positively influence teachers training in many ways as follows: (a) By identifying the Staff needs. This involves the evaluation of qualifications and areas of specialization and how the collected statistics can serve as a basis for their recruitments or making representations to the appropriate body in charge of employment matters; (b) By orientation of new members of Staff; (c) By assigning the new Staff to relevant positions; and, (d) By classroom observations noting areas that requires improvement and suggesting possible further trainings where necessary

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are certain conditions in terms of personal characteristics which a school administrator must possess. Some of the qualities are:

- (a) **Teaching Experience:** Teaching experience in the practical sense is one important factor that is considered in the selection of school administrators. The school as a formal organization encourages this by ensuring that the very senior teachers are appointed as school administrators. Experience as a factor in appointing school administrators cannot be over emphasized. This is because in climbing the seniority ladder, the teacher would have held several supplementary positions including the position of vice principal. After going through these various positions, the individual would have acquired enough experience to be able to lead other people. The essence of the experience acquired is to help in the development of leadership thrust which according to Hackett (1979) is concerned with developing leadership qualities and team work.
- (b) The school administrator to possess some minimum required level of intelligence. Aderomnu and Ehiainetalor (1985) explains that, there is however no definite correlation between high test scores and ability to be a good school administrator though, it is obvious that a school administrator with a low intelligence quotient, all things being equal, is more likely to have leadership problems than one with a high intelligence quotient.
- (c) Language usage criteria is crucial, the school administrator should be able to communicate both verbally and in writing in a very clear manner so as to read people and be read clearly for the avoidance of ambiguity. This is because unnecessary problems could arise as a result of such unclear language being used to address issues that concern staff, students and the community.
- (d) Awareness is another component of good team leadership. One of the problems that some leaders faces is the inability to problem of being concerned with the routine of doing their jobs in an unimaginative manner with a total lack of appreciation or what they can do to become hotter managers and leaders. To take care of this problem among school administrators, a good school administrator should be aware of the

various factors that make for leadership effectiveness and according to Koontz (1980) of the way in which styles are contingent on a range of situational considerations.

- (e) School administrators should have empathy which is the imaginative project or a person's consciousness into another person. This deals with putting oneself in the place of another person in terms feelings, prejudices and values. This is not an easy attribute to develop because as on the part of the leader could be wrong. Despite these shortcomings, an insight into the feelings of a subordinate would allow the administrator to deal better and in a more understanding way with the subordinate.
- (f) Apart from experience, the track record of the intended school administrators should be taken into consideration prior to being appointed as school administrators. Virtues such as human relations, punctuality and comportsment should be considered along side track record. These are some of the basic attributes which should be taken into consideration in the appointment of school administrators. This is because these school administrators constitute an important links between the agencies that provide education and the beneficiaries in particular and the society in general.
- (g) In the course of teachers' training, the prospective school administrator should be taught the principle of objectivity, particularly as it relates to writing staff reports. This is important because of the effect it could have on motivation, morale end apathy on the part of the teachers.
- (h) The prospective school administrator should be taught the various disciplinary procedures and when to apply them. By being taught, the administrator will know when and how to relate to his staff and students. The employers of the school administrator would also be saved some legal complications which could arise as a result of error of judgment on the part of the school administrator.

CONCLUSION

In formal organisations, administrators owe their authorities to the position and role; and not primarily to their own talents. This is because, historically, the school principals as educational administrators have tended to associate themselves psychologically with classroom teachers rather than to think of themselves as a distinctive administrative group.

Principals' orientation towards teacher education had its logical roots in the classroom since many principals were appointed to positions after long years of service as classroom teachers. "We need to have a detailed analysis of what administrators are doing on a day-to-day basis to fulfil their mandated responsibilities". There is little doubt that "some principals are evading some responsibilities as a result of competing pressures such as the increased involvement of outside agencies". The various teachers' training programmes requires assessment as to determining whether "they are reflecting the changes in educational policy and school governance. This is important "given the number of administrators" that retires yearly (Macmillan, et. al., 2001)

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