

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION: SINE QUA NON FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NIGERIA

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on instructional supervision in schools in relation to its importance to the improvement of teaching and learning processes. The paper highlighted the concepts of teaching, learning and supervision, the benefits of instructional supervision. It revealed that instructional supervision has been a neglected area in school management in Nigeria. It advocated for adequately organized instructional supervision exercise for positive improvement of teaching and learning processes in schools. This will lead to high standard of education in the country. In addition, some strategies for improving instructional supervision exercise were suggested.

Key-words: Instruction, Supervision, Instructional Supervision, Improving, Teaching, Learning

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are constantly in search of knowledge which can be acquired through teaching and learning. When an individual acquires knowledge, he teaches fellow human being who in turn learn and make use of such knowledge. It is In the light of this view that Ayeni (2005) asserted that teaching and learning are synonymous with life. Thus teaching and learning are part of our lives because through the processes human beings are able create, innovate, discover, invent and postulate theories with which they develop themselves and their environment. The philosophical objective of teaching and learning is the emphasis on the need for effective teaching which leads to effective

learning. In order to achieve the objective of teaching and learning, teachers are charged with the responsibility of implementing the curriculum content effectively.

In order to effectively implement the curriculum content, Supervision of instruction remains an effective tool. This is because the quality of teaching and learning can only be improved upon and sustained by regular and systematic supervision of teachers' instructional management. In line with this idea Ihebereme (2009) maintained that the realization of the goals of education is determined to a large extent through the competency of the teacher in the proper implementation of curriculum content in the classroom. Similarly Oyeka (2007), confirmed this view by stating that teachers can perform with maximum effectiveness under close supervision either internal or external.

It is against this background that this paper viewed instructional supervision as a prerequisite for teaching in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

In this section, attempt was made to elucidate some key concepts in this paper. They include: Teaching and learning, supervision and instructional supervision.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching is an on-going activity which guides and influences learners to learn. To achieve the goal of teaching teachers adopt various strategies to disseminate knowledge and at the same time help learners to change their behavior. According to Anyeni (2005) these strategies may not be said to be effective unless they are measured as satisfactory in terms of what they are set to achieve. In the view of Anyeni achievement is measurable in a teachers ability to foster learning. Anyeni further stressed that man teaches directly or indirectly by creating situation or circumstances that could evoke learning.

Learning on the other hand is a relatively permanent change in the learner's behavior as a result of education, study and experience. Bellingham (2007) noted that learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and beliefs through study, education and experience. Learning is said to have taken place when students are able to demonstrate independently a given knowledge, interest, value, skill or attitude he was unable to demonstrate before a learning situation (Afrianmogbon & Nwokocha, 2011). The authors maintained that learning has the potential to permeate and enhance all aspects of a person's life from narrow scope of acquiring knowledge and skill to a broader viewpoint of learning to be a person in the society and through every aspect of social life including leisure, wealth creation, health, family, workplace and political life. Teaching and learning are complementary process. They go together hence one enhances the other. Learning can only be possible through effective teaching which in turn is determined through effective learning outcome. It is important to note that for the processes in the two concepts to be effective greater attention must be given to teachers' instructional role as well as learner's learning situation through thorough and meaningful supervision in order to ensure improvement in instruction.

SUPERVISION

Supervision is referred to by Ajayi (2002) as an activity which ultimate purpose is the promotion and development of conducive environment for teaching and learning. According Ajayi the main function of supervision is to help improve the learning environment for students at all levels of the education system. Similarly, Nwaogu (2000) stated that the essence of supervision as an activity is primarily and directly concerned with studying and improving the conditions surrounding teaching and learning. Therefore supervision is a tool used to see that the objectives and expectations

of the school curriculum are achieved; policies of education properly implemented and school environment very conducive for teaching and learning.

The term supervision came to limelight in 1970 when the East Central state of Nigeria and other states of the Federation took over the ownership, control and administration of education at all levels. Thus, a new change in school administration in Nigeria was ushered in, which in turn brought a new shift and emphasis in the administration of education (Idiaghe, 2009). In that period, Mgbodile (2007) discovered that there arose the need to establish a centralized national plan of education to replace the old regional planning which hitherto existed. Following this, supervision became an integral part of school activities with the heads of schools as the chief supervisors. The school heads are expected to pay attention on how school activities are being carried out and provide corrections adequately.

Emphasizing on the need for supervision in schools Ogunsanju (1983) succinctly identified three categories of teachers to whom supervisory assistance should be directed to as:

- a. New teachers who are fresh from school and so need encouragement and support in their new profession in order to achieve the stated goals.
- b. Old teachers who attempt to resist change because they have been used to certain styles of teaching hence they consider change as a threat.
- c. Incompetent teachers, who have shallow knowledge of subject matter, poor classroom organization, ineffective use of language.

Supervisory roles in teaching and learning can be discussed following these approaches:

SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT APPROACH

This approach stated that effective and meaningful management is achieved if the manager is sure of what is to be done and at the same time makes sure that they are done better. Ikedingwu (2008) observed that this approach sees human being as tools in industry that may not be strictly controlled to enhance effectiveness.

- I. **Human Relation Approach:** This approach stated that workers should be treated as human beings not machines. It is opposite of scientific approach.
- II. **Human Resources Approach:** This approach perceived human beings as possessing resources, skills, potentials and abilities which can be harnessed by management and used depending on the ability of the users. School supervision involves many areas but in this paper the area of interest is instructional supervision.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION:

Instructional supervision is a process of improving instruction for the teacher so that the student learns as effectively and efficiently as possible. Similarly instructional supervision is the interaction between the supervisor and the teacher in order to effectuate the quality of instruction. In agreement to this view Ukpore (2004) maintained that instructional supervision involves coordination of different tasks by autonomous and delegated authority and ensuring that there is fairness in the treatment of concerned client with the view to facilitating the attainment of goals for which school is set up. Instructional supervision aims at improving teachers' skills in classroom instruction and their professional growth. Instructional supervision is not meant to criticize teachers hence its objectives as articulated by Ihebereme (2009) are to:

- Improve teachers skills in classroom instruction

- Improve teachers professional growth and teaching experience in classroom
- Ensure that teachers are utilized appropriate methodologies in teaching students
- Create a favourable atmosphere for teachers to air their views on possible strategies for improving instruction.
- Assist a teacher to improve himself and his instructional abilities so as to enhance effective teaching and learning.
- Modify lapses in teachers' instructional performances in the classroom.
- Ensure that a teacher has the knowledge of the effectiveness the effectiveness of classroom management.

In consonant with principles and objectives of instructional supervision, Ezedi (2002) observed that instructional supervision strategies in the school organizational framework should analytically examine the following variables closely on a regular basis;

Teacher Service: Regularity/ punctuality, weekly lesson preparation, coverage of work schedules and documentation of pupils work.

Pupils learning effort: Regularity and punctuality of classes, completion of assignment, achievements and guidance counseling in the school system.

School facilities: Adequate sanitation and maintenance of accommodation facilities (classrooms, laboratories, library, halls, offices, etc) equipment and supplies.

Notably school heads and their assistants are the obvious supervisors who will undertake the stated roles in their various schools. However, external supervision is the exclusive role of the inspectorate section of the ministry of education. School heads are advised not to be so involved in administrative work to the extent that they neglect instructional supervision in the classroom. They should see it as most important

responsibility. This view was corroborated by Dull (2003) when he categorically pointed out that the prime justification of the position of principals in schools is to give leadership in teaching and learning process.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION

The importance of instructional supervision cannot be over emphasized as part of school administration especially at this period people are seriously concerned about the falling standard of education in the country due to teachers' poor instructional delivery and other related factors. Instructional supervision in the administration of schools in Nigeria should not to be neglected. Instructional supervision should be an area of priority in Nigeria education system because of the importance in improving teaching and learning process. Instructional supervision provides opportunity to gain information about a wide range of teaching processes and methods. The information observed by the supervisors is used to give guidance support to teachers to make accurate evaluative ratings and to give feedback to the teachers' performance. The supervisors should endeavour to give constructive criticism and guidance to teachers with a view to helping them develop and improve their teaching proficiency.

Furthermore, through instructional supervision teachers inspiration and motivation in relations to improving teaching performance are fostered. Instructional supervision makes the coordination of all educational activities possible thereby improving teaching and learning process.

In addition, through instructional supervision teachers become acquainted with sources of aids in solving their teaching problems. In the same way they are provided with the force and direction that propels them towards the actualization of educational goals which is enhancement of teaching and learning among others.

Instructional supervision assists the supervisors to check identify the capabilities of teachers with a view to improving the performance of the incompetent ones. Instructional supervision does this by offering guidance to the teachers for them to become competent in self analysis, self criticism and self-improvement. This is instructive to teachers as many of them are young graduates and new in the job and so do not have enough skills for teaching job.

In his contribution to the need for instructional supervision in Nigerian schools Ogunsaju (1983) articulated the following:

- To determine the performance of teachers recruited in the system
- To determine whether a teacher should be transferred retained promoted or dismissed.
- To improve the incompetent teachers
- To discover special liabilities or qualities possessed by the teachers in the schools.
- To provide guide for staff development
- To find out the effectiveness of classroom management by the teachers.
- To determine the direction of the school.
- To assess the tone of the school and identify some of its most urgent needs

So far it is recognized by the researcher that there are gains in instructional supervision; however, there are some constraints which militate against instructional supervision in school in Nigeria.

CONSTRAINTS OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

Instructional supervision in Nigerian schools is met with the following challenges:

LACK OF ADEQUATE MOTIVATION BY THE GOVERNMENT

Motivation in the context of instructional supervision means providing the supervisors with the necessary materials that will motivate them to do their work effectively and to facilitate the work itself. These include enough funds for their allowance, other remuneration, vehicle or alternative means of transportation, etc.

LACK OF SPONSORED PROGRAMME FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The age of information and communication technology (ICT) demands that supervisors of instruction should be informed periodically on the new and modern ways of carrying out their supervisory function (Ihebereme, 2009). According to Ihebereme supervision of instruction is better handled by supervisors with an updated knowledge, skills and techniques. The author maintained that the present predicament of granting supervisor only an occasional opportunity to attend workshop and seminars is not encouraging for an enviable professional growth.

In addition most school supervisors have not had adequate professional training and consequently are not informed on what to do as far as supervision is concerned. There are few trained supervisors to go round the schools. In this regard, what is obtainable in schools is a situation where the unqualified ministry of education personnel is sent to schools. Unfortunately they perform ineffectively and this calls for the concern of all stakeholders in education.

CORRUPTION

Corruption on the part of supervisors is a major constraint of instructions supervisions in Nigeria. Some corrupt supervisors instill fear in the teachers who have no other option than to contribute money to “settle them”. This attitude undermines the aim of instructional supervision. In the words of Osoba (2000), the supervisors’ consciences are trapped with such illegal packages.

RESISTANCE OF HEADS AND TEACHERS TO INNOVATION:

Resistance of some heads and teachers to innovation is the greatest constraint to instructional supervision. In some instances, most heads of schools and teachers may feel that they are old in the system and so always insist on the maintenance of the statusquo.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION

To improve instructional supervision in schools, this paper suggests the following:

1. A lot should be done by the government to improve the motivation of supervisor. To this effect, Ihebereme (2009) suggested that government should endeavour to remunerate supervisors of instruction. This will motivate supervisors to put more effort in the job for positive oriented result.
2. Exposing supervisors to new ideas and skills through on the job training, seminars, conferences and workshops will help them acquire new ideas and skills.
3. There should be orientation of new supervisors with a view to familiarizing them to the nature of their work. In line with this view Obi, (2007) asserted that the orientation programme is necessary as it will help them to make adjustments to their task environment.
4. Government should determine and enforce sanction and punishment for supervisors who involve in any form of corrupt practice that would jeopardize the effective supervisions of instruction (Ihebereme, 2009)
5. A closer, regular and continuous supervision of teachers in school should be encouraged rather than snappy and unscheduled visits (Oyewole & Ehinola, 2012).the authors noted that teachers should be encouraged to record their

teaching during the supervision process for the purpose of play back and analyses.

CONCLUSION

Instructional supervision is seen as a pre-condition and an indispensable activity needed for improving teaching and learning in schools in Nigeria. It is the desire of the researcher that some the strategies as indentified in this study be adopted or adapted from improvement in school in the country

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