

Effective Supervision of Instruction in Nigerian Secondary

Schools: Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward.

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ABSTRACT

Every organisation either corporate or otherwise including the school exists essentially to achieve certain stated objectives. There is no way the goals and objectives of an organisation can be achieved without putting in place certain mechanisms towards ensuring its success. In the school system, one of the mechanisms to be put in place towards achieving the goals of the school is supervision. This paper therefore examined the meaning of supervision, instructional supervision and the role of supervisor. The paper also, examined major challenges of instructional supervision in secondary schools and the way forward. Recommendations were made on how to ensure effective supervision of instruction in secondary schools.

Keywords: Supervision, Instructional supervision and Secondary education.

Introduction

Business and corporations supervise and evaluate employee performance for a variety of reasons including retention, promotion and accountability for completing job related tasks. Education is not different as it requires supervision of classroom instruction to evaluate teachers' effectiveness. Also, education aimed at bringing about the relatively change in behaviour of the learner as a result of learning. The behavioural change can only occur in learners based on the amount of instruction given to them at any level of education vis-a-vis how such instruction is been delivered during the teaching and learning process. However, well packaged instruction is at any level of education but without effective supervision during the delivery period, such instruction may fail to achieve its desired results.

In Nigeria, education is on the concurrent list of government and this makes the issue of instructional supervision to vary from one state to another. However, some states have adequate arrangement in place to effectively supervise instruction at all level of education particularly in secondary school whereas some states failed to put necessary machineries in place to effectively supervise instruction in their secondary schools. For example, Ondo State Government in 2009 created Quality Assurance Education Agency as a parastatal under ministry of education to supervise instruction in both primary and secondary schools in the state. Secondary education occupies a unique position among all levels of education. The broad goals of secondary education include: the preparation of the individual for useful living within the society and higher education. Thus, in order to achieve the stated goals, there is need for effective supervision of instruction in secondary schools. In general, instructional supervision is geared towards the improvement of the teaching and learning situation for the benefit of both the teacher and the learners. Evidence from previous studies conducted by scholars (Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Gregory, 2005 & Bilesanmi, 2006) showed that instructional supervision has always been regarded as an essential and integral part of school administration and basically geared towards the improvement of all factors in teaching and learning.

Concept of Instructional Supervision

Obilade (1989) opined that instructional supervision is a helping relationship whereby the supervisor guides and assists the teachers to meet the set targets. This definition described instructional supervision from the point of establishing the relationship with stakeholders in school system for the purpose of achieving the set objectives. Similarly, Olaniyan (1996) described instructional supervision as a means to help, guide, stimulate

and lead teachers through criticism, appraisal and practices in their education and procedures. This definition focuses much on teachers' attitudes over other vital elements that present themselves during the teaching and learning process.

Instructional supervision is a service activity that exists to help teachers do their job better (Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon, 2001). Supervision is a cycle of activities between a supervisor and a teacher with the main aim of improving classroom performance (Patrick & Dawson, 1985). Also, Nwankwo (1984) in Ajani (2001) noted that instructional supervision is a set of activities which are carried out with the purpose of making the teaching and learning better for the learner. It has been observed that instructional supervision is an essential activity for the effective operation of a good school system.

In addition, instructional supervision is a behaviour that is officially designed which directly affects teacher behaviour in such a way to facilitate student learning and achieve the goals of the school system. Through the effective supervision of instruction, supervisors can reinforce and enhance teaching practices that will contribute to improved student learning. The foregoing suggested that instructional supervision particularly in secondary schools is basically concerned with supporting and assisting teachers to improve instruction through their changing behaviour.

Who is a Supervisor?

Supervisor, according to Hazi (2004), can be described as any certified individual assigned with the responsibility for the direction and guidance of the work of teaching staff members. This implies that supervisor has the role of assisting the teachers to do their work better through collaborative efforts. Ogunsaju (1983) defined supervisor as the mediator between the people and the programme. He designs various methods in performing his function of supervision in order to achieve educational objectives of the institutions under his control.

Also, Olele in Kiadese (2000) defined supervisor as a person by virtue of his functions, carry out duties, which deal with managing both human and material resources within the school system and how they can be best utilized. In other words, supervisor is expected to assist in the learning environment to maximize the available resources to achieve the set goals. Eya & Leonard (2012) defined a supervisor as anyone assigned the function of helping others (teachers) to improve on their instructional competencies.

In view of the functions of supervisors in instructional supervision, there is need to discuss the qualities of a good supervisor in a school system. Ogunsaju (1983) identified the following as qualities of a good supervisor, namely:

- He should be honest, objective, fair and firm.
- He has to be open and democratic;
- He should be approachable;
- He has to be creative, imaginative and innovative;
- He has to be a good listener and observer;
- He should be friendly, courteous and consistent in his interactions with teachers and others;
- He should be an educational facilitator.

Similarly, Eferakeya & Ofo in Olorunfemi (2008) highlighted the following qualities of an instructional supervisor which include:

- He must have enough energy and good health;
- He must have good leadership style;
- He must possess ability to get along with people;
- He must possess sound knowledge and technical in his own area of specialization;
- He must develop positive attitude towards management; and
- He should have good communication skills.

Roles of Supervisors

In general, the major function of the supervisor is to assist others to become efficient and effective in the performance of the assigned duties. Apart from this general function, supervisors also perform the following roles in the school system especially at the secondary school level.

- **Instructional leader:** Instructional leadership is one of the most important roles of supervisor. Supervisor leads other teachers in instruction to make them as effective as possible. They also lead teachers in developing and implementing an effective plan of instruction. Supervisors have to adapt to meet the needs of the people and the particular environment rather than practice a normative kind of leadership. Instructional leaders improve the quality of instruction by furthering professional growth for all teachers. Supervisors should be flexible enough to deal with any situation and should maintain a

good relationship with their staff.

- **Assessing student progress:** A supervisor assesses students progress toward the established standards by the regulatory agencies, and also facilitates the planning of various types of instruction. Supervisors ensure that teachers are utilising information from a variety of valid and appropriate sources before they begin the planning of lessons or teaching. Supervisors determine if teachers are using the numerous evaluation processes available to assist in planning meaningful instruction.

The Supervisors ensure that teachers are preparing and maintaining adequate and accurate records of student's progress. This will include the regular and systematic recording of meaningful data regarding students progress on specific concepts and skills related to the standards for each subject for the grade level they are teaching.

In addition, Aderonmu and Ehhiemetalor in Kiadese (2000) identified the following roles of supervisor in the school system.

Planning: The supervisor needs to apply the planning principles to the supervision from the beginning in order to ensure the aims of supervision are attained. The planning principles involve the articulation of objectives, selecting of the best strategies, mapping out of policies, programmes and procedures that would best help in achieving the stated objectives.

Staffing: supervisors are expected to identify through the process of supervision, staff vacancies in terms of grades and disciplines in accordance with the organisation structure of the school.

Coordination: The supervisor is expected by this function to co-ordinate the efforts of all participants and ensure that by so doing, decision making becomes a collective responsibility.

Observation: Supervisors are expected to observe management, staff and students at work during a typical supervision session. Thus, in a bid to help improve observed habits and standards, the supervisor should through consultation, offer advice to the participants in the school system.

Curriculum development: In view of the level of involvement of supervisors in the school activities, they can however through observations make useful suggestions which can help the process of curriculum development in the country.

Similarly, Kathleen (2006) summarized the roles of supervisor in this way:

- i. Monitoring or providing for mentoring of beginning teachers to facilitate a supportive induction into the profession.
- ii. Bringing individual teachers up to minimum standards of effective teaching (quality assurance and maintenance functions of supervision).
- iii. Improving individual teachers' competencies, no matter how proficient they are deemed to be.
- iv. Working with groups of teachers in a collaborative effort to improve student learning.
- v. Working with groups of teachers to adapt the local curriculum to the needs and ability of diverse groups of students, while at the same time bringing the local curriculum in line with state and national standards.
- vi. Relating teachers' efforts to improve their teaching to the larger goals of school-wide improvement in the service of quality learning for all students.

From the forgoing, it is evident that the role of supervisor in a school system especially in the secondary schools in Nigeria is very crucial. Thus, for effective supervision of instruction, supervisors should be able to discharge their functions as expected if the goals of education are to be attained.

Purpose of Instructional Supervision in Nigerian Schools

It must be noted that the essence of instructional supervision in schools is to ensure things are done the way it should be in order to achieve the stated objectives. Hence, the purpose of supervision of instruction includes:

- i. To directly influence the behaviour of teachers and the teaching process employed to promote students learning;
- ii. To ensure that each individual teacher within the school system has been performing the duties to which he was scheduled; and to cooperatively develop favourable climate for effective teaching and learning.

Others purposes of supervision of instruction according to Ogunsaju (1983), Olatoye (2006) and Chike-Okoli (2006) are:

- To know the performance of the teachers recruited to teach in the school system.
- To determine whether a teacher should be transferred, promoted, retrained or dismissed.
- To provide professional information to teachers.

- To improve the incompetent teachers.
- To discover special abilities or qualities possessed by teachers in the schools.
- To guide teachers to the sources of instructional materials.
- To provide a guide to staff development.
- To know the effectiveness of classroom management by the teachers.

In summary, supervision of instruction must be built on the supervisor's thorough understanding and in-depth knowledge of instructional theory and not on a check list of what should be in a lesson.

Challenges Militating Against Effective Instructional Supervision in the Secondary Schools

Onoyase (1991) stated that supervision is an organisational behaviour system, which has the function of interaction with teaching behaviour system for the purpose of improving learning situation for students. However, instructional supervision has to be carried out within the school system and every system has various forces that present themselves as challenges that may affect effective functioning of the entire system.

However, there are challenges facing instructional supervision in Nigerian schools particularly the secondary school education. These challenges present themselves in form of problems and they are discussed hereunder:

- **Poor incentive:** Supervisors at times are dissatisfied with their job because of motivating factors that are minimal. In Nigeria context, several people who are not directly involve in a particular process or a given assignment may receive more compensation and reward more than those who actually carried out the assignment due to the high level of corruption in the country. This singular act may at times affect the way in which instructional supervision is being done in the secondary schools.
- **Limited educational resources:** The issue of scarce resources is an economic one that attempts to rationalise spending in order to avoid waste. Effective instructional supervision however would be difficult to carry out if the funds that are supposed to be available are not there. School administrators as well as instructional supervisors would require certain resources to put things in order before supervision; non-availability of such resources would affect the supervision exercise.
- **Administrative issue:** Administrative inadequacies emerge when planning fails to specify the scope of responsibilities and results that instructional supervision is expected to bring about in a school. Thus, detail planned visits should be made known to the supervisee and the agreement reached between the supervisor and supervisee on the objectives and the procedures. In other words, both instructional supervisor and school administrators must come to term if the instructional supervision is to achieve its objectives.
- **Lack of pre-professional training for supervisors:** Technical issue: One of the major challenges facing instructional supervision in Nigerian secondary schools is the issue of competence and technical knowledge of the instructional supervisors. Most often than not, in Nigeria, political affiliation at times dictate who get a particular assignment without recourse to the technical competence of the person. Evidence from previous studies (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2006 and Eya & Leonard, 2012) revealed that some instructional supervisors lack knowledge and competence to carry out the exercise. Some instructional supervisors were appointed based on their level of involvement in the government of the day and not as result of their skills they possessed.
- **Corruption among major stakeholders in the school system:** Both the school administrators as well as instructional supervisors are found guilty in this regard. Unholy collaboration between the supervisor and the school administrators on account of funds meant to procure necessary materials for the school system would not augur well for instructional supervision in secondary schools. When funds are misappropriated in schools, instructional supervisors are in the best position to identify this problem but if they are been duly rewarded, such problem will continue unabated which would affect the standards that should to be achieved in the school system.
- **Political instability:** The frequent change of government usually brings about incessant change of government policies regarding instructional supervision. In Nigeria, it is a common thing that the successive administration always discontinues the policy and programmes put in place by the previous administration. This singular act usually affects the effective supervision of instruction in schools. In other words, inconsistent policies on how instruction in schools should be supervised and the categories of people to be involved would adversely affect and pose a big challenge to instructional supervision especially in secondary schools in Nigeria.
- **Integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education:** This involves the use of modern technological equipment and computer devices for the teaching and learning process. Anderson (2008) stated that technologies and internet offer students an alternative to traditional

education in a classroom in a physical school building. This innovation has broken the traditional way of teaching and learning at all levels of education. However, with the current innovation in teaching, it is difficult for instructional supervisor to have access to how teaching is being conducted in the school system. The process of instructional supervision has generally occurred in a face-to-face setting with teachers and administrators physically present in the same location (Glickmeim, et al, 2001). This traditional model of instructional is being threatened by online learning opportunities that are changing the delivery of instruction to a virtual environment (Anderson, 2004). Thus, since the use of ICT permits individual student to learn at their own convenient time (asynchronous learning), therefore the current innovation in education pose a challenge to instructional supervision in the school system.

The Way Forward

The primary objective of the supervision process in secondary schools is to offer teacher direct assistance to improve their performance toward the goal of increasing student learning. To achieve the goals of instructional supervision in secondary schools, efforts must be geared toward overcoming most of the challenges facing instructional supervision.

In addition, if education would be one of the tools to realise the goals of transformation agenda of the present government in Nigeria, there is need to improve upon the quality of learning in secondary schools through effective supervision of instruction in the following ways:

- **Adequate funding:** Government at all level must strive to make adequate fund available to education sector in order to procure the necessary materials that will aid effective supervision of instruction in secondary schools. This can be done by way of increasing the grant usually allocated to school on termly basis. Government can also seek public private partnership in funding education since it has become clear that government alone can no longer provide necessary funds that are required in the education sector. The United Nations resolution was that 26% of nation's budget should go to education sector. Implementing this resolution would equally boost the fund available to the education sector which will afford all agencies and parastatals in education to carry out their educational activities effectively.
- **Capacity building among major stakeholders:** In order to ensure adequate and effective supervision of instruction in secondary schools in Nigeria, government need to embark on capacity building of supervisors, administrators as well as teachers to enable them perform their duties effectively. This can be done through regular training, induction programmes, seminars and workshops to equip them with necessary skills and keep them abreast of the current trends in the school system. They can equally be given opportunities to participate in international conferences in other to acquit themselves with what operates in the school system outside the shores of Nigeria.
- **Selection of qualified supervisors:** One of the ways of ensuring effective supervision of instruction is to select or appoint personnel who have technical skills about education especially at the secondary schools level. Government should not sacrifice the merit and competence on the altar of political affiliation. Qualified personnel in the field of education with sufficient knowledge, skills and experience in secondary school education should be appointed as supervisors in order to exhibit all sense professionalism in carrying out their functions in the school system.

Conclusion

Supervision requires the leader to oversee, assess, evaluate and direct teachers as well as school administrators to ensure an educational institution is meeting its goals. Also, successful supervision promotes a vision to implement change in the school system that facilitates improvement. The supervision of instruction is by design a developmental process with the main purpose of improving the instructional programme, generally and teaching specifically. Only when this process is carefully planned and executed can success be assured.

The supervisory function is best utilised as a continuous process rather than one that responds only to personnel problems. Thus, administrators with supervisory responsibility have the opportunity to have tremendous influence on the school activities and help ensure the benefits of a strong programme of instruction for students. Successful supervisor should be knowledgeable about educational leadership, management and administration. They should know the culture of the schools and communities in order to ensure effective supervision of instruction. Supervisors of instruction should be knowledgeable of real life issues.

Recommendations

In view of the importance of instructional supervision in Nigerian secondary schools, the following recommendations were made in order to make it achieve its desired results in the school system.

- Government should organise training programmes for teachers as well as school administrators with

- greater emphasis on the need for supervision of instruction in the school system.
- Necessary equipment and materials should be given to the instructional supervisors to enable them perform their functions effectively.
 - Instruction supervisors should be engaged in regular training to update their knowledge and skills and provide them with useful information that will keep them abreast of the current trends in the educational system.
 - Necessary facilities and instructional materials should be supplied to all secondary schools in order to generate effective functional school system that would facilitate effective supervision exercise.
 - Parents as well as community should be properly involved in the supervision of instruction in the school system. This would form a synergy in the system to achieve greater effectiveness.

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