Assessment of Principals' Supervisory Roles for Quality Assurance

In Secondary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study identified the nature of principals' supervisory roles and the perceived effectiveness of principals in the supervision of teachers' instructional tasks. Furthermore, it investigated the constraints faced by principals in the performance of supervisory duties in the teaching-learning process. This was with a view to providing information on the utilisation of principals' roles in enhancing quality assurance in secondary schools. The study employed the descriptive survey design. The target population comprised principals and teachers in secondary schools in Ondo state. The sample consisted of 60 principals and 540 teachers randomly selected from 60 secondary schools. The secondary schools were selected using stratified random sampling method from 5 Local Government Area [LGAs]. Three research instruments were used for data collection; they are Principals' Supervision Rating Scale (PSRS), Interview Guide for Principals (IGP) and Teachers' Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG). Three research questions were resolved based on percentage and mean scores. The results showed that most principals accorded desired attention to monitoring of teachers' attendance, preparation of lesson notes and adequacy of diaries of work while tasks such as the provision of instructional materials, reference books, feedback and review of activities with stakeholders were least performed by many principals in secondary schools. The study concluded that challenges that principals faced in the tasks of institutional governance, resource inputs, curriculum delivery and students' learning require effective collaboration and goal-oriented synergetic interrelationship between the school and the relevant stakeholders in its environment.

1. Introduction

Quality assurance in education is the efficient management, monitoring, evaluation and reviews of the resource inputs and transformation process (teaching and learning) to produce quality outputs (students) that meet set standards and expectations of the society. Robinson (1994) defines quality assurance as the set of activities that an organization undertakes to ensure that a product or service will satisfy given requirements for quality. Its goals are the anticipation and avoidance of faults or mistakes by setting attainable standards for a process, organizing work so that they are achieved, documenting the procedures required, communicating them to all concerned, and monitoring and reviewing the attainment of standards.

Venkaiah (1995) sees quality assurance as a philosophy and a process in which all the functions and activities of an institution are treated equally, planned, controlled and implemented in a systematic and scientific manner. Harvey (1999) defines quality assurance as the process of ensuring effective resource input, control, refining the process and raising the standards of output in order to meet the set goals and satisfy public accountability. This definition raises the issue of promoting "good value" in the institutional management and supervision of teaching – learning process to produce quality learners from the school system. Raouf (2008) opines that quality assurance in education is the process of ensuring continuous improvement in all aspects of education business in an institution of learning to satisfy the needs and expectations of the institution's customers (society). This approach is built around the premise that every step of the process of a service and of an operation has room for improvement. This was corroborated by Deming's cycle of continuous improvement which is normally based upon Plan, Do, Check and Act cycle (PDCA). This process enables the principal to regularly monitor, assess and evaluate the resource inputs, instructional process and outputs by identifying the key elements/aspects that need improvement and ways of addressing these, implementing the plan, analyzing the result to ensure that significant agreement exists between the original goals and what is actually achieved, and acting on the plan full scale by conducting further work through feedback and reviews with those

concerned(Deming,1986; Stahl, 1998; Temponi, 2005).

A critical look at the definitions shows that quality assurance in education encompasses systematic management, monitoring and evaluation procedures adopted to measure the performance of school administrators (principals), teachers and students against educational objectives to ensure best practices in resource inputs, utilization and curriculum management by the principals to produce students that achieve the set educational goals in secondary schools.

2. School Principalship, Functions and Quality Assurance

Principalship is a well established position of the chief executive who provides instructional leadership by coordinating curricula, co-curricular programmes and is responsible for the general administration of the secondary school. The principals being instructional leaders are at the vantage positions to supervise, monitor, assess, evaluate and disseminate current information on educational issues and modern teaching techniques to teachers in order to stimulate them for scholarship and best practices in curriculum delivery.

Quality assurance is achieved in schools that have strong principals who devote considerable time to coordinating and managing instruction; such principals are highly visible in the school and stay close to the instructional process. In many instances, effective principals adopt continuous and consistent classroom visitation to ensure adequate teaching and learning processes (Peters and Waterman 1988). At the same time, instructional leadership is in many ways a shared responsibility. It engenders a common sense of commitment and collegiality among the staff. Effective school principals establish clearly defined goals for academic achievement, and they concentrated their available resources and their operations on attaining them, provide adequate time-table for teaching, routine check of lesson notes and subject dairies, observation of classroom instruction, continuously monitor students progress to determine whether their instructional goals are being met, provide feed-back on student performance, motivation of teachers for improved performance, reinforcement of students for excellent performance, maintenance and appropriate usage of physical facilities, enforcement of discipline to ensure peaceful atmosphere, capacity building of teachers for effective service delivery and provision of instructional facilities and materials to enhance quality teaching-learning processes.

In furtherance of quality assurance, it is necessary for an ideal school principal to set reasonable expectations for work and achievement. The concept of the school as a place of learning is communicated clearly to the students, and a commitment to learning is expected in every classroom. Expectations of the society are manifested in the performance standards set by the school. High standards reflect high expectations; low standards reflect low expectations. It is therefore crystal clear that the complex task of the principal is how to organize the school to meet the various challenges facing school administration so that the education aims and objectives can be achieved. As the Chief Executive of the school, the principal must make it possible for staff to have access to suitable facilities of all kinds in order to discharge fully their responsibilities in achieving the educational objectives. The teachers must be well supervised and motivated in order to sustain their interest and make them dedicated, committed, willing, enthusiastic and inspiring teachers. The quality of the supervision of teachers' instructional tasks by the principal is an index of effective school management. Of all the major tasks of a school principal, none is as sensitive and as challenging as the one relating to the supervisory role and it is expected to be given the deserved attention in the scheme of things.

Instructional supervision is an internal mechanism adopted by principals for school self – evaluation, geared towards helping teachers and students to improve on their teaching and learning activities for the purpose of achieving educational objectives. The principal ensures effective supervision by interacting academically and socially at a regular basis with teachers and students within and outside the classrooms. The primary aim is to monitor the implementation of curricular and ensure desirable increase in teachers' capabilities, upgrade their conceptual knowledge and teaching skills, give them support in their work to facilitate better performance in teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning outcomes in the school settings (Wiles, 1975; Oyekan, 1997, Adepoju 1998; Olagboye, 2004; Adetula, 2005).

Instructional supervision provides a vehicle and structure which allows schools, departments, as well as individuals (teachers and students) within them, to respond effectively to curriculum and instruction in order to achieve the stated educational objectives. Instructional supervision, if handled with utmost attention, has the potential to strengthen the principals' capacities for managing human and materials resources. The principal who is the driving force behind the school programme needs to proactively mobilize all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, the governing board, parents and the community towards identifying the schools strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate decisions on type of follow-up action required to improve teachers' inputs and students' learning outcomes in the school.

The appraisal of teachers' pedagogical practices is necessary in order to safeguard quality standards in schools. In order to accomplish this task, the principal must have an intimate knowledge of the psychology of human learning, have a

command of the various theories of instruction, be acquainted with the sources and uses of instructional media/materials, be familiar with evaluation techniques, be skilled in individual and group counselling, and have a good knowledge of Nigerian education system and goals (Lucio, 1979; Adetula 2005). In pursuit of these goals, the school principals make use of supervisory techniques: clinical supervision/classroom observation, micro-teaching, seminar/workshop and research to improve the conceptual knowledge, skills and competence of teachers, and students' learning (Ogunsaju, 1983; Peretomode, 1995), as enumerated and discussed below:

The clinical supervision technique is commonly used by principals; according to Goldhammer (1969) clinical supervision involves the following five-stage process: (i) a pre-observation conference between supervisor and teacher concerning elements of the lesson to be observed; (ii) classroom observation; (iii) a supervisor's analysis of notes from the observation conference between supervisor and teacher; (iv) a post-observation conference between supervisor and teacher; and (v) a supervisor's analysis of the post-observation conference. During observation, the supervisor takes note of the teacher's knowledge of the subject being taught, evidence of adequate planning and preparation for the lesson, lesson presentation, teacher's personality and the extent of students' participation or interaction with the teacher. These form the bases for providing constructive advice on how to improve the quality of classroom instruction. The visit may be repeated until the required improvement is achieved. Despite the obvious advantages of clinical supervision in its various forms, it has been criticized by researchers such as Garman and Hunter (1987) because it is time consuming and labour-intensive, rendering it impossible to use on any regular basis given the large number of teachers that supervisors are expected to supervise in addition to their other administrative responsibilities. He therefore advocated the use of research approach to stimulate effective teaching and improvement in students' learning outcomes.

The research approach is a well-planned activity which involves systematic and objective collection and analysis of data in order to find solutions to identified problems. It could be used as a technique for instructional supervision. In this respect, the supervisor has to engage teachers individually or in team work to find solutions to problems of teaching/learning that confronts them instead of dictating solutions to problems relating to teaching and learning.

The micro-teaching is a teaching situation which is scaled down in terms of time, class size and teaching complexity to allow the teacher to focus on a selected teaching strategy. It is designed to develop new skills and refine old ones. The lesson consists of two elements, namely, content (usually a segment of a topic in a subject area) and the skill which is a chosen specific teaching skill. Depending on the availability of facilities, the micro-lesson may or may not be video recorded. This process allows the teacher together with the supervisor and the students to view the replay of the videotape of the lesson and evaluate the person and discuss aspects of the lesson. The supervisor points out the strengths and weakness and skilfully changing those weakness into strengths through constructive dialogue with the teacher supervised. Based on the knowledge of the immediate feed-back and suggestions for improvement, the teacher re-teaches the lesson to the same group or a different group of students. Micro-teaching technique can be applied at the various stages in the professional development of teachers, including both the pre-service and in-service stages.

The seminar/workshop involves a small group of people that is temporarily formed to discuss a specific topic, or work on a common problem and trying to find solution to a specific problem or resolve issues affecting teaching-learning process in schools. Improved methods of teaching basic concepts and topics are not only discussed but also demonstrated during the workshop. The situation also provides opportunity for critical analysis of ideas related to the issue, problem or topic at hand in a permissive, topic-centred and face-to-face interaction and directed practice. Tape recordings of selected portions of a class meeting have been successful in stimulating group discussions and consequently modifying teacher behaviour toward higher teacher effectiveness.

A cursory look at the various methods of instructional supervision discussed above shows that the principal acts as a change agent for the professional growth of teachers and the improvement of curriculum delivery which is the central focus of instructional supervision. The areas that usually attract the attention of secondary school principals include the planning of lesson notes, effective delivery of lessons, assessment and quality of tests/assignments given to students, improvisation and utilization of instructional materials, providing regular feed-back on students' performance, adequate keeping of records and appropriate discipline of students to ensure quality assurance in secondary schools.

A well-planned and adequate instructional supervision enhances teaching and learning effectiveness in schools. Adetula (2005) reporting on some studies carried out in Europe, America (Canada and U.S.A.) and Australia, identified the main goals of a school supervisor to include: to seek insight into leadership process, motivational forces, decision-making processes, goal-setting processes, team work and group interaction which in turn lead to effective and functional schools. Adetula's study corroborated the present study which intends to examine principals' supervisory roles in the teaching-learning process that entails effective leadership direction, motivation, goal setting, decision-making and team work among teachers. Similarly, the various supervision techniques highlighted by Goldhammer (1969), Garman and Hunter

(1987), Ogunsaju (1983) and Peretomode (1995) would lend support to the present study which is intended to determine the perceived effectiveness of principals in the supervision of teachers' instructional tasks in secondary schools.

3. Statement of the Problem

The ultimate goal of secondary education is to develop the individual's mental capacity and character for higher education and useful living within the society (FRN: NPE, 4th edition, 2004). In spite of the societal demand for quality assurance in education and the need for thorough supervision in schools, there is a growing concern about the realization of secondary education objectives due to doubt that many principals give little attention to supervision of instructional activities in secondary schools. Consequently, there have been steady decline in teachers' instructional task performance and students' academic performance which depicts non-realization of quality assurance in secondary schools (Adeniji 2002). This has been largely attributed to gaps in teachers' competence, curriculum instruction, learning facilities and resources, funding and institutional management. Findings from literature (Ayeni & Akinola, 2008; Ipaye, 2002; Ogunu, 2001; Okebukola, 1996; Zobaida, 2008) revealed that quality assurance in education is being affected by many problems. The identified gaps and challenges include the following:

1) lack of commitment to supervision by many principals;

2) lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of students' learning outcomes;

3) inadequate training facilities to develop teachers for professional growth and increased productivity; and

4) the conception that lack of adequate feedback to teachers affects working relationship between principals and teachers and this has perhaps constituted an impediment to quality assurance in secondary schools.

A consideration of the above shows that there is a greater challenge ahead of principals partly because of existing gaps and inadequacies in their supervisory duties. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine principals' supervisory roles in meeting the challenges of quality assurance in Ondo state which is the only state that operates autonomous Education quality assurance agency in South-west, Nigeria.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for the study

1) What supervisory roles are performed by principals in secondary schools?

2) How do teachers perceive principals' supervisory roles in secondary schools?

3) What are the constraints faced by principals in the performance of supervisory roles in secondary schools?

5. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design. With this design, both quantitative and qualitative methods which involve systematic and objective collection and analysis of data were adopted to elicit responses from the participants in order to find solutions to the problems identified. The target population comprised principals and teachers in secondary schools in Ondo state. The sample consisted of 60 principals and 540 teachers, representing five percent [5%] of the total 10,798 teachers in post in the State were randomly selected from 60 secondary schools which represent 10% of the existing 599 public secondary schools (now re-articulated into 301) in Ondo State. The secondary schools were selected using stratified random sampling method from 5 Local Government Areas (LGAs) out of the existing five educational zones in Ondo State. Three research instruments were used for data collection; they are Principals' Supervision Rating Scale (PSRS), Interview Guide for Principals (IGP) and Teachers' Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG). Three research questions were resolved based on percentage and mean scores.

6. Results

The results presented in table 1 show the percentages and mean scores of teachers' ratings on principals' supervisory roles. The cumulative mean score was 4.10. This indicated that most principals performed supervisory tasks such as ensuring preparation of lesson notes [95.5%], scheme of work [93.5%], monitoring of teachers' attendance [92.8%], students' attendance [77.7%] and feedback to teachers [78.3%], while provision of instructional materials and feedback to stakeholders were least performed and as such constitute major constraints to quality assurance practice in secondary schools.

<Table 1 about here>

7. Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine and describe how principals' supervisory roles contribute to quality assurance in secondary schools. In an attempt to accomplish this objective, efforts were made to examine key variables

pertaining to teachers' tasks and instructional supervision, instructional materials, students' learning and challenges of instructional supervision in secondary schools.

The extent to which the principals had been performing their supervisory roles was investigated with an instrument titled Principal's Supervision Rating Scale (PSRS) administered on 540 teachers. The ratings of principals by teachers in the instrument yielded the data in Table 1. From the table, mean rating ranged from 3.07 to 4.62 with a mean of X = 4.10. Items 6 (X= 3.07), 9 (X= 3.81) and 8 (X = 3.89) had the lowest rating while items 3 (X = 4.62), 1 (X= 4.61) and 2 (X= 4.57) had the highest ratings. Thus, it could be deduced from the ratings that the major supervision roles performed by the principals were: monitoring of teachers' attendance during lessons, checking and ensuring adequate preparation of lesson notes, checking and ensuring adequacy of scheme of work and record of work. However, the supervisory roles that were least performed by principals were: provision of instructional materials and teachers' reference books, monitoring of curriculum delivery and regular feedback and review of students' academic performance with stakeholders.

A large number of the teachers interviewed said that their principals enhanced their interest on the job by giving letter of commendation and merit rewards for those who performed outstandingly on the job, and in most cases, the school authorities sponsored teachers to attend seminars/workshops and conferences that were organized by the Ministry of Education and professional associations while most of the principals organized in-house seminars for teachers and engaged them in supervision and invigilation of examinations to build their capacities for effective job performance. Most of the teachers are also allowed to participate in the marking of WAEC and NECO SSCE to update their knowledge and skills in their various subject areas. However, the teachers expressed displeasure over poor condition of infrastructure, inadequate instructional materials, absence of financial support for in-service training and low commitment of parents to their children's education as most students were not provided the required textbooks to facilitate effective teaching and learning, while   some heads of department said that about 10% of teachers were still writing skeletal lesson notes and a relatively low number of teachers engaged in research to improve curriculum delivery. This situation has been a source of concern to the school administrators, government and other stakeholders. According to Fafunwa (2010), there is a big gap in quality, resulting from large number of students in crowded classrooms, using inadequate and obsolete equipment and with disillusioned teachers. These combined deficiencies constituted impediments to the full realisation of   secondary education objectives in Nigeria.

The in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher, revealed that principals were responsible for planning of both curricula and co-curricular activities, job analysis and allocation of duties to teaching and non-teaching staff, resource control, welfare services, monitoring and supervision of teaching and learning activities, co-ordination of the bursary department, enforcement of discipline, maintenance of infrastructure, collaboration with the Parents-Teachers Association and other relevant stakeholders in education, and serve as link between the school and Ministry of Education. Also, the principals said that in spite of the efforts made to discharge their duties, they could still not provide adequate instructional materials and relevant reference books for effective teaching and learning while infrastructural facilities were inadequate. The class size was congested and ranged from 60-70 students per class. This constituted hindrance to effective classroom management and supervision. Many of the secondary schools lack well equipped laboratories and libraries. There were multipurpose science laboratory as against the autonomous science subject laboratory. There were no adequate fixtures, equipment and reagents in the laboratory. In most cases, science subjects were taught in abstract. Many schools were short-staffed. The affected subjects were English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Computer Studies, Government, Commerce, Accounting, Physical and Health Education, Home-Economics, Fine-Art, Music, Wood works, Metal works and Auto Mechanics. Also, some teachers were overloaded and made to teach subjects outside areas of specialization since some of the teachers transferred were not replaced. The consequences of these inadequacies have become visible in students' low academic performance in external examinations. For instance, only 49.7% of students achieved quality assurance standard (5 credits including English and Mathematics) in Junior School Certificate Examination in Ondo state in year 2009 (MOE, Akure, 2010), while the results of Senior School Certificate Examinations conducted by the West African Examination Council and the National Examination Council were below average in Nigeria between 2007 and 2010. The percentage of students who obtained five credits including English Language and Mathematics was   25% in Nigeria and 35% in Ondo state during the period under review (Bello-Osagie and Olugbamila, 2010; Owadiae, 2010; MOE, Akure, 2010). There is therefore a great task ahead of school administrators, teachers and students and other stakeholders in stemming the tide of abysmal academic performance that is bedevilling the secondary education system.

8. Conclusion

The study concluded that the gaps in input-process-output system were   challenges that principals faced in the tasks of

institutional governance, resource inputs and curriculum management; these require that the principals being instructional leaders are expected to be more resourceful and pro-active in collaborating with the stakeholders in education sector to ensure effective resource inputs, coordinating and managing human and material resources in their strive to meet the competing demands of school administration and instructional supervision which are germane for continuous improvement and achievement of   the set goals in secondary schools.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made in order to improve instructional supervision for the achievement of the set educational goals in secondary schools.

The school principals should provide adequate instructional materials and facilities through Parents-Teachers Associations, (PTA), Old Students' Associations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Communities, Philanthropists and other Development Partners, to enhance effective teaching and learning processes in secondary schools.

The school principals should provide constant and adequate feedback to the teachers on their instructional task performance to ensure periodic review and facilitate further improvement in the teaching-learning process in secondary schools.

The school authority should provide constant and comprehensive feedback on students' academic performance to parents in order to sensitize and encourage them to provide the required textbooks and other learning materials for their children/wards.

School principals should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to promote capacity development of teachers through intensive and regular in-house seminar/workshop to improve knowledge, pedagogical skills and competence of teachers in various subjects, and improvisation of instructional materials to enhance teaching- learning process in secondary schools.

Government and professional bodies in the education sector should organize periodic capacity development workshops for educational managers (Principals) on institutional management and instructional supervision to improve the quality of teaching and learning processes in secondary schools.

All the stakeholders in the education sector should collaborate to organise annual education summit for comprehensive review and assessment of the degree of success in school supervision with a view to producing the desired outputs and achieving the overall educational objectives to ensure sustainable improvement in institutional management and curriculum delivery in secondary schools.

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Table 1. Principals' Supervisory Roles

S.	Supervision Quality Indicators	Frequency of Responses										Mean Score
		Highly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Fairly Agree (3)		Disagree (2)		Highly Disagree (1)		
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1	The principal/vice-principal/heads of department checks and ensures adequate preparation of lesson notes by teachers on weekly basis	357	66.2	158	29.3	13	2.4	7	1.3	1	0.2	4.61
2	The principal/Vice Principal checks and ensures adequacy of scheme of work and record of work on weekly basis	345	64.0	159	29.5	26	4.8	6	1.1	1	0.2	4.57
3	The principal monitors and ensures teachers attendance during lessons on daily basis	328	60.9	172	31.9	28	5.2	5	.9	3	0.6	4.62
4	The principal monitors students' class attendance on daily basis	170	31.5	249	46.2	90	16.7	20	3.7	5	0.9	4.12
5	The principal/Vice Principal visits the classroom to evaluate teaching-learning process and checks students' written work on daily basis	162	30.1	216	40.1	117	21.7	31	5.8	10	1.9	3.95
6	The school has adequate instructional materials and textbooks to improve teaching-learning process	44	8.2	114	21.2	231	42.9	88	16.3	59	10.9	3.07
7	The principal encourages parents to buy relevant textbooks for their children	246	45.6	197	36.5	65	12.1	20	3.7	5	0.9	4 .24
8	The principal provides regular and constructive feedback to teachers after classroom monitoring and evaluation of lessons	127	23.6	241	44.7	119	22.1	39	7.2	10	1.9	3.89
9	The principal provides feed-back on students' academic performance and review same with teachers and other stakeholders on termly basis	128	23.7	235	43.6	124	23.0	37	6.9	11	2.0	3.81
	Total											**36.88**
	Cumulative Mean											4.10