

Professional Development of Administrators: A Quality Assurance Index for School Administration in Nigeria

Vita-Agundu, Uche Calista (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Foundations

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

08062957535

uche.asogwac@unn.edu.ng

And

Ambrose-Iheanacho, EbereChidinma

Department of Public Administration and Local Government

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

08060206093

chidinma.ambrose-iheanacho@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The quality and quantity of educational services provided in the school systems seem to have fallen short of the required standard (quality assurance). This could be traceable to resurgence of unprofessional administrative processes and activities of the school administrators. These downsides in educational quality assurance could be seen in students' poor academic performance both in the internal and external examinations, teachers' lackadaisical attitude to their teaching profession and improper school organization as well as leadership abeyance by the school administrators. These shortfalls are irrespective of the enormous functions of the school administrators in the effective utilization of both human and material resources for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. These abysmal performances of the school administrators have greatly affected their functions which cut across the implementation of the policies and programmes of schools. This is worsened still by regular changes in educational policies and technological innovations. Hence, the failure and success of schools is to a large extent dependent on the school administrators, who oversee the day-to-day running of the schools. Therefore, this study is focused on the concept of a school administrator in school administration, quality assurance in school administration for professional development of school administrators for quality assurance (conferences, seminars,

workshops and monitoring), conclusion and way forwards. The researchers concluded that the school administrators lack the prerequisite professional development capacities and capabilities needed for quality assurance in school administration in Nigeria. Based on the finding and conclusion of this study, the researchers recommended among others that the Ministry of Education should ensure that all school administrators must attend to two professional development programmes like conferences, seminars, workshops and mentoring in every academic session in order to acquire the needed skills and administrative know-how that will ensure quality assurance in the educational programmes and activities in the school.

Key Words: Administration, Administrators, Schools, Quality assurance, Professional development

Introduction

The Nigeria school system seems to be replete with the mirage of poor quality administration and educational delivery. More so, the quality and quantity of educational services provided in the Nigeria school systems have fallen short of the required standard (quality assurance). This could be traceable to unprofessional administrative processes and activities of the school administrators. These downsides in educational quality assurance could be seen in students' poor performance in internal and external examinations, teachers' lackadaisical attitude to their teaching profession and improper school organization by the school administrators. These shortfalls are irrespective of the enormous functions of the school administrators in the effective utilization of both human and material resources for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. This unsatisfactory state of affair could be traced to administrators' inability to measure up with regular policy changes in the educational system that requires their professional expertise and prowess. One wonders whether the formal training alone in the educational institutions that qualifies one as a graduate is not enough to handle the day-to-day challenges in their administrative

jobs?. To this end, this study is focused on the concept of administrator in school administration, quality assurance in school administration for professional development of school administrators for quality assurance.

School is a place where education is acquired by various age groups, namely infants, adolescent or youths and adults. The attainment of the noble objectives of schools demands administrators that are visionary, proactive, innovative, and creative as well as to keep pace with the demand of education. This is because, implementing policies through the use of human and material resources in schools in the 21st century is assuming a complex matrix of practices which vary by location, organizational level, individual and institutional variables (Obasi & Chuu-Uzomah, 2015). Therefore, Peretomode (1991) views administration as the performance of executive duties, carrying out policies and making decisions to fulfill a purpose, and the controlling of the day-to-day running of an organization. School administration is a systematic process of managing and utilizing human and material resources for quality service delivery. It is the process of achieving the educational goals and objectives through proper utilization of human and material resources in education (Ukala & Nwabueze, 2015). School administration is a positive response to the management and administrative efforts/actions with the intention of equipping students with knowledge and skills to enhance individual and national development. Nnabuo (2001) opines that educational administration is the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts and it is accomplished by performing the function of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. It also involves the careful and systematic arrangement and use of resources (human and materials), situations and opportunities for the achievement of the specified objectives of a given organization (Ekudayo, 2010). In the views of Haegon (2008), school administration involves managing, administering the curriculum and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment, evaluation and examination, resource allocation, costing and forward planning,

staff appraisal relationship with community and use of practical skills necessary for surviving the policies of organization such as decision making, negotiation, bargaining, communication and conflict handling. However, Abraham (2013) conceptualized that school administration is the coordination of human and material resources with the school for the optimal achievement of pre-determined objectives of education.

School administrators or educational administrators are those who carry out or implement and organize those educational policies and programmes soon after they are formulated by educational manager. They are those who implement educational policies and also engage in planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling in teaching and evaluating education at a micro level (Ikwuegbu&Nwanari, 2015). School administrators at the various levels of the educational system are headmasters/headmistress for primary schools, principals for secondary schools, Vice Chancellors, Rectors, and Provost for Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Educations respectively. School administrators are very important in the education system. They work with the policy framework set by State Schools Board, and the Ministry of Education, in line with the National Policy on Education in carrying out executive duties. They implement various policy statements in education and take decisions to fulfill a purpose from the day to day running of schools. According to Adeleke (2001), school administrators deal with installation and carrying out the procedures by which programmes, plans, and targets are laid down, communicated and the progress of activities regulated. Educational administrators help in the management of institutions designed to foster teaching and learning.

Although, educational administrators may contribute in one way or the other to plan, make policies, and design educational programs, it is important to note that their major roles rest with the effective and efficient implementation of such plans, policies and programmes for the benefits of education. School administrators engage in the arrangement of human and material resources and

programmes that are available for education and carefully, using them systematically with defined guidelines or policies to advance the achievement of educational goals (Ikwuegbu, 2015). The effectiveness of school administrators rests on acquiring basic competencies in administration which involves understanding of self and group dynamics with respect to working effectively with other group settings. This requires the administrator to see the school as a whole and understand how the various parts of the organization depend on one another and how a change in any of the parts can affect the whole system. The administrative performance of education administrators in task areas of managing schools like: decision-making, instructional management, delegation of duties to subordinates, conflict management, plant management and communication etc according to Ukala and Nwabueze (2015), is an effort to create a conducive environment for the accomplishment of educational goals and objectives.

The purpose and functions of an administrator in Nigerian schools are to make sure that resources for enhancing teaching and learning produce useful citizens and adults in the society. More specifically, the functions of school administrators according to Chijioke (2014) are:

1. Discerning and influencing the development of educational agents, policies and decisions making.
2. Stimulating and directing the development of programmes designed to achieve the pre-determined education goals of policies.
3. Procuring and managing human and material resources necessary for the support and maintenance of the organization and its programming.
4. Planning the work to be done, establishing and reviewing the organization to be effective and productive.

Ensuing that quality is in educational output is one of the functions of school administrators in the implementation of policies and programmes in the

education system. The attainment of quality output in the educational system is enhanced by quality assurance measures.

These variables notwithstanding, an impeachable administrator at the helm of affairs that produces quality educational output is the expectation and desire of every school organization. In other words, an administrator is charged with the responsibility of formulating, organizing and implementing school policies for the achievement of quality educational delivery in the school. This led to the assertion by Bassey (2009) that administrators can be prominent and impactful when they are abreast with the current trends in educational sector especially in the areas of technological innovations and advancement. The role of professional development programme in the enhancement of educational services cannot be overemphasized (Frank, 2010). The school administrators in the Nigerian educational system require great deal of professional development programmes in order to enrich their administrative skills and competences.

Professional Development

Professional development is a crucial area for administrators to acquire skills in the management of schools in Nigeria. These are the series of articulated training programmes designed for enhancing values re-orientation and attitudinal change of the human resources in an organization (Lawson, 2007). These specialized training when given to the administrators will make them more professionally effective than those who are not exposed to such training. This is so because these training programmes empower and motivates them for better performance. Therefore, in the opinion of Achunine (1998), the length of time one stays on the job does not necessarily make one perform efficiently rather, professional training is a more important factor than on-the job experience in job performance. Acquiring the necessary skills and aptitudes through professional development by administrators could enhance quality assurance in the output of schools in Nigeria for international best practices.

Quality and Quality Assurance

Quality is the standard of something when compared to other things of its nature. Quality according to Okebukola (2005) is fitness for a given purpose. It refers to the processes that are designed to encourage all those involved in the production of a product or delivery of service to constantly review their work to ensure quality of output (Nwufu, 2008). The quality of school administration in terms of services delivery is the effectiveness of administrators in the accomplishment of the goals of Nigerian education. Quality in education according to Nwiyi (2009) is the extent set goals are achieved with standard. Okoroma (2006) sees quality as unstable phenomena because of the vagaries of situations and circumstances, which affect resources availability. Therefore, quality could mean an additional value to both human and material resources meant for education towards having a standardized form of education. Assurance on quality for certainty is also essential in school administrators' functions.

Attaining quality in service delivery by administrators makes a difference in school administration. Deming in Kaegon (2014) noted that quality starts and finishes with administrative leadership. It is true that everyone contributes to quality but without a principle-centered administrator it is impossible to attain tangible goals in the education system. This according to him is that, school administrators engage in behaviors that develop a school climate that supports academic achievement of students, gain staff commitment, engender high expectations, to supervise individual teachers work in schools and entire instructional programme, while carrying on varied and complex duties connected with maintaining order in the school. The need for effective school administration is necessary to achieve quality educational goals through professional development. This is because, perhaps, most school administrative lapses in the implementation of policies and programmes in the education system is as a result of inadequate professional development to make school administrators more effective in their performance. An in-depth appraisal of

literature is unveiled to bring to the fore the highlights of professional development training for school administrators in the education system.

Assurance is a statement that something will certainly be true or will certainly happen, particularly when there have been doubts about it. In administrative roles, assurance implies that administrators will consistently perform their duties to meet standards and requirements for global demand or competitiveness. Assurance in school administration in Nigeria according to Onacha (2002), could harness the process for attainment of educational goals in producing a generation of people that are responsible with character worthy of emulation and equipped with skills and knowledge to serve the needs of society. This assertion appears congruent with the fact that the child may have learnt moral values and skills from the parents and peers at home. The school where administrators' carry out their functions further shapes their mind and character to be more responsible and diligent member of the wider society (Izuagba, 2014).

Quality assurance is the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service or facility to ensure that standards of quality are met. Quality assurance is the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a programmes, services or facility to ensure that standards of quality are met. Ciwar (2005) defines quality assurance in reference to education as the setting of standards for various processes and activities that lead to the production of quality output/grandaunts by training institutions. According to Ojo (2011), quality assurance in teacher education is a broad sense involving the prevention of problems through planned and systematic activities. He reiterated that the prevention strategy concentrates all attention on the front end of the process- the inputs – and changes with emphasis to making sure that the inputs are capable of meeting the requirements of the process. Quality assurance of administrators therefore provides a set of rules which if followed, can provide for more effective ways of operating a viable educational enterprise; it will permit eradication of the demanding nuisance which perverse the educational system.

Mkpa cited in Egbe and Eze (2012) emphasized that quality assurance in the context of education is multi-dimensional. It incorporates the enthrone and maintenance of quality in issues relating to contents, resources and process. According to Ojo (2011), quality assurance in school administration is a broad sense involving the prevention of quality problems through planned and systematic activities. He reiterated that the prevention strategy concentrates all attention on the front end of the process- the inputs – and changes with emphasis to making sure that the inputs are capable of meeting the requirements of the process. Quality assurance in school administration therefore provides a set of rules which if followed, can provide for more effective ways of operating a viable educational enterprise; it will permit eradication of the demanding nuisance which perverts the educational system.

The effect of globalization on education in Nigeria and the world at large has made quality assurance a yardstick by which the standard of programmes run by educational institutions is determined. The quality of global education and the need to compare the standard of one county's education against another has brought to the education system a new emphasis on quality assurance. Quality assurance is the concern that certain accepted criteria of minimum standard of quality should be achieved in the production of goods and services. This means that certain techniques and procedures that ensure the quality of products are put in place. Every product or outcome of an industry is a function of a variety of activities of inputs assumed to have a value input into process. Education as a productive enterprise is subject to those same assumptions. Quality evolves the provision and maintenance of the conditions determined to guarantee a high standard of outcomes and product of education. Quality assurance thus is the guarantee of confidence and certainty by programme of a study given by an institution that standards and quality are being maintained and enhanced.

In the education system, Dashen (2005) stated that quality assurance entails setting minimum level for determining quality, deciding on mechanisms

or indices for ensuring quality achievement and sustenance in outputs. He reiterated that the commonwealth of learning itemized the following indices to look for in determining quality in the pursuit of education goals by school administrators.

1. Ensuring that mission and aims of the institution are clear and known to the all.
2. Ensuring a well thought out system, fool proof, and known to all.
3. That everybody understands their responsibilities.
4. The institution standard for quality is clear.
5. A reviewing process to ensure that everything is working according to plan.
6. Providing for possibility that things may go wrong and mechanism for putting them back on course.

These philosophical objectives behind quality assurance are the decision of educational institutions to train individuals to achieve competency in their productive unit. This requires the attainment of quality skills to enhance individual performance toward achieving set goals. school administrators are no exception in the attainment of more knowledge in service delivery in the implementation of policies and programmes. However, the administrative effectiveness of administrators had been observed by Menchaca (2003) as a factor inhibiting the accomplishment of objectives and goals of education which had limited the quality of education products. Walson and Yellowe (2019) identified professional development of teachers is an index for performance effectiveness for quality results in the education system. The need for professional development of school administrators becomes imperative to acquire contemporary skills of carrying out their duties to bring forth quality output in the education system.

Professional development of school administrators for quality assurance in school administration

Professional development is the series of training and retraining given to workers in an organization to increase their knowledge and skill for better job performance. Professional development otherwise known as human resource development according to O'Neil (1995) is the series of activities engaged in by employees in an organization to enhance their knowledge, skills and attitude in order to improve productivity. In the education system, Uwalaka (1998) described professional development as the comprehensive process by which educational institutions working with and through their faculty design both on and off campus, a variety of programmes and activities to strengthen faculty members in their Institutions. Okendu (2009) asserted that human resource developments in the educational system are planned activities concerned with increasing and enlarging the capabilities of teachers to successfully improve instruction. It enables them occupy higher positions in the hierarchy to handle current responsibilities. It is geared towards improving upon workers' performance with the ultimate aim of achieving set organizational goals.

Human resources are the most important factor of production. The human resources in any organization according to Hunter (2006) is the fulcrum upon which all other resources revolve. Igwe (1990) pointed out that in the educational system, the teachers are the most important elements. This according to him is because with the best of all facilities, books, infrastructure and other materials and equipment, the aims and objectives of education may still not be achieved if the teachers/administrators as the organizers of all these are incompetent. Therefore, instructional professional development is important to realize the ever cherished dream of a greater tomorrow. This implies that no organization can succeed without the availability of human resources in the right quantity and quality. Lawson (2007) reiterated that the human resources even when available in the right mix could not attain organizational goals because they

are either not properly utilized for effective performance or may not have been properly harnessed for effective result-oriented purposes.

The 21st century school administrators according to Samuel and Chukuma (2015) face lots of challenges in executing their administrative tasks due to globalization of the world. The task of school administrators such as providing leadership for curriculum development and instructional improvement, creating conducive environment for the realization of human potentials, influencing the behavior of staff, supervising instructional activities and controlling the financial management of the school needs to be harnessed through continuous training and re-training. Regular changes in educational policies coupled with educational and technological innovation greatly seem to affect the speed of knowledge production and administration and these have rendered most school administrators inadequate in discharging their duties. The task and challenges facing school administrators have made it necessary for school administrators to embark on training that make them professionals on their job. This training can take different form such as conference, seminars, workshops, symposia, mentoring and colloquial.

A conference is a meeting of professional to discuss on a particular topic or interest in education with the aim of facilitating career growth. Asiabaka and Emenalo (2011) are of the view that conference is usually a gathering of individuals with common interest for the purpose of sharing knowledge that would contribute to local, national and internal development. The main purpose is of a conference is articulated in the form of a conference theme which is subdivided into sub themes. Conferences are usually organized annually or biannually, and afford teachers/school administrators the opportunity to access training that improves their growth and development. It enables teachers/administrators the chance to embrace new knowledge, skills, attitudes which they utilize in imparting knowledge to learners or carry out administrative duties. Carey (2007) added that conferences enable school administrators the

opportunity to network to know as much as possible about trends, theories and strategies of handling issues in school administration.

On the other hand, a seminar is a type of in-service programme designed to upgrade the knowledge, skills, and ability of teachers and administrators to help them assume greater responsibility in their present and higher positions. The training is arranged periodically for teachers/administrators especially when innovations or new ideas are introduced in the education system. These innovations are inevitable and administrators need some form of continuous development so that they can grow in competence and excitement and be able to handle the changes dictated by social political, technological economic and ideological changes in the society. At the end of seminars, teachers/administrators are expected to display effectiveness and efficiency as a result of experiences gathered in the course of the training.

Workshops are also seen as a form of development programme for both new and old teachers and administrators. According to Asiabaka and Emenalo (2011) workshop is a forum for addressing and identifying solutions to critical organizational problems and where distinguished scholars and experts serve as facilitators while providing needed guidance for the participants. They maintained that unending educational problems can be reasonably solved through workshops. A workshop can be on a particular issue and in this case, it will involve detailed discussion and practical work on that subject by a group of academics and professional. The significance of workshop in the professional growth and development of school administrators is perceived as vital inputs in the management process, aimed at improving and enhancing educational outputs.

More so, mentoring is a process of coaching where a more experienced person with a record of integrity facilitates the development of skills and knowledge of a less experience person to improve their standard in a profession. Mentoring is a process by which persons of superior rank, special achievements, and or prestige instruct, counsel, guide and facilitate the intellectual and or career

development of a person identified as protégé (Ugwoke, Ejionueme&Ezenwaji, 2012). Mentoring according to Mason and Bailley (2007), helps to improve effectiveness, show how to become an expert, in a profession, teaches how to develop skills and help to open new doors. Daresh (2001) added that mentoring brings about overall job satisfaction, increased recognition from peers, greater opportunities for career advancement, and renewed enthusiasm in one's profession. Mentoring benefits both the institution and the administrator. It helps institutions to become effective educational organizations. Other benefits of mentoring according to Klasen and Glutterburk (2002), include: providing valuable support for new administrators, and positively affecting the retention of these administrators. However, in spite of the numerous benefits of mentoring, it has been observed that while some countries like United Kingdom, United State of America, Australia, and Singapore are effectively using mentoring to achieve great heights in school administration, very great number, especially in Africa, seem to be contented with on-the-job experience. Training and development programmes are expected to be continually given to school administrators relative to their roles to enhance their performance due to innovations. School administrators according to Ikpeba (2012) noted that through these learning activities joint problem solving attitude/spirit is cultivated which have a direct impact on instructional improvement.

The importance of continuous training cannot be overemphasized. Emechebe (2009) and Isiozor (2014) stated that professional development of school administrators ensures the follow:

1. Helps to update their knowledge and be current in administrative issues on the job.
2. It helps them to be more productive.
3. Exposes them to current administrative issues in education.
4. It enables them to acquire new methods and skills relevant to their job.
5. Helps them adapt to changes due to innovation and technology.

6. They become more resourceful.
7. Enable them build confidence in performing their job.
8. Foster national and international co-operation among colleagues.
9. Help them to handle complex educational problems.
10. Motivates challenges and assist them to improve their performance on the job.
11. Helps them to be globally compliant in performance of duties.
12. Gives them new value re-orientation in job performance.
13. Provide valuable support for new administrators.

Professional training gained from different training and development focuses on improving the conceptual skills – the intellectual abilities needed to handle complex situations and do a better job. Kabiru (2000) noted that for the school administrators to be fully equipped for their professional duties, continuous training in instructional management, decision making, budget preparation, developing supervision and evaluation plans, dealing with parents, working with various socio-economic groups, conflict management skills, school plant management skills, and other managerial ethics are needed so as to meet the objectives of education. Continuing, Kabiru noted that the glaring insinuation of a short fall in the administrative competency level of administrators in educational institutions in Nigeria is a direct reflection of lack of training of incumbent and would be administrators by the educational planners. Buttressing this point, Nwosu (2009) stated that from available evidence, it has been discovered that the methods of selection of school administrators in Nigeria is unsatisfactory. This is so because a situation where all shades of persons without teaching and administrative experience are appointed administrators of schools gives room for concern. The consequence of this anomaly according to Nwadinigwe (1997) is that most of the school administrators grope around and often use trial and error method in the day-to-day administration of their school.

Commenting, Iguisi (2009) stated that the shallow knowledge of managerial skills of most administrators tend to affect negatively their morale, perception and work attitude, hence the need for continuous re-training to update their knowledge with new work methods, ethics and skills about their work and organizational environment to enable them handle complex situations and do better jobs with the aim of enhancing quality of results from set objectives.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, the researchers concluded that formal training alone in the educational institutions cannot guarantee quality assurance in our educational system. It is worthy to note that the school administrators lack the prerequisite professional development capacities and capabilities needed for quality assurance in school administration in Nigeria. More so, the inability and inconsistency of administrators to enroll in professional capacity building programmes such as conferences, seminars, workshops and monitoring are the banes for effective and efficient school administrations as well as quality assurance in the educational systems in Nigeria.

Way Forward

Going forward, the following are suggested to ensure professional development of school administrators for quality assurance in school administration.

1. The Ministry of Education should ensure that all school administrators must attend to two professional development programmes like conferences, seminars, workshops and mentoring in every academic session in order to acquire the needed skills and administrative know-how that will ensure quality assurance in the educational programmes and activities in the school.
2. The head of services should appoint the school administrators meritoriously with emphasis on their antecedents in administrative

functions instead of using the instrumentality of political influence, nepotism, favoritism and religious bigotry.

3. The Ministry of Education should sanction any school administrator that is not committed to professional development programme for self development and enhancement.
4. Proper supervision of delegated duties should be enhanced to avoid deviations from set objectives in the implementation of educational policies in schools by administrators.

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