

Principals' Effective Task Performance: A Tool for Proper Education Delivery in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract:

Secondary schools have nowadays become more complex than ever before. This is because of the ever growing number of students and population of the staff. The school principal should possess certain qualities that would enable him to face the administrative tasks efficiently and effectively in order to achieve the school goals and objectives. This paper therefore, reviewed the Principals' Effective Task Performance as tool for proper Education Delivery in Nigerian Secondary Schools. The tasks of the principal in meeting these challenges were examined as the chief executive, relating to system and human relation theories. Qualities of an ideal school principal were highlighted, emphasizing on transformational leadership qualities. Tasks of the principal were also highlighted; instructional supervision, and motivation of staff. The paper concluded that, leadership qualities are strong determinants of principals' tasks performance effectiveness in proper delivery of secondary schools education in Nigeria. Principals' leadership qualities influence effective school administration. Finally recommended that, the principals should be well prepared; knowledgeable, professionally and administratively competent for the challenges involved in the mantle of leadership. Government should from time to time be organising conferences and workshops for the principals. Sponsorship is a mark of encouragement.

Introduction

School as an organisation is a combination of human beings who interact with each other in one way or another, with specific tasks to perform in line with their assigned duties. A further look at the specific duties of the members of the organisation, are broken down in to that of Administrator, Teachers, Non-teaching staff, and Students. In any way there is the need for a force that controls the affairs of the participating members, within and outside the group, this call for leadership. No any organisation can achieve its goals without a leader, school inclusive. Headship in a school is a multifaceted task to be performed. In those days when there were little number of schools and the students were small in number, the duties of the head teacher were very minimal. Now schools are expanding, the number of students is increasing rapidly, so the duty of the head teacher is becoming more complex. School as it operates, reflects on the person that is heading it. In other words, the personality of the person heading a school shows on the image of the school to the community it serves.

No policy or programme can be carried out successfully in the school without the efforts of the school machineries; though, it is not quality or quantity of workforce that assures the successful implementation and achievement of programmes or policies. Rather, the ability of the school head to perform the duties reposed upon him. Aghenta & Omoregie, (2006) viewed school head as a leader that provides direction and expert advice on development of teaching and learning in school. This entails that the principal being the head of the school as an organisation cannot single handily achieve the goals of the school. There has to be some kind of enter dependence between the principal and his subordinates; as reflected in the system theory perspective.

Literature Reviews

System theory

Systems theory was formulated in 1920 by Bertalanffy, and further developed by Bakke in 1959. He advocates that, a system is composed of interconnected and mutually dependent sub-systems. These sub-systems can have their own sub-systems. A system can be perceived as a composition of some components, functions and processes. Therefore a system is seen as a series of interrelated and interdependent parts in such a way that the interaction of any part of the system affects the whole system. That is, one part of the system must interact and depend on the other parts around it to function effectively. DeGreene in Owojori & Asaolu (2010) explain that, system is a set of interrelated and interdependent parts arranged in a manner that produces a unified whole. Using a systems perspective, we assume an organization as being made up of interdependent factors, including individuals, groups, attitudes, motives, formal structure, interactions, goals, status and authority. The system approach believes that system is made up of parts which are differentiated in some ways but are connected to make up the whole through the interaction between its component parts. Kelechukwu (2011) observe that, system theory is relevant to education system because education system (school) is a system and the concept of interaction and interdependence of parts with the education system. From the system perspective point of view, school being an organisation is a system that operates by manipulating, harmonising, and coordinating human, material, financial, and time resources to achieve specific goals. Status and authority as reflected in the work of Owojori & Asaolu (2010) can be referred to the earlier is the rank of the principal and the latter is the responsibilities reposed upon him.

In order for the principal to achieve the goals of the school by exercising the authority given to him, he must work with other parts of the system; the teachers and other non-teaching staff as well as the students. Human beings are naturally complex. To work with human beings and achieve a certain goal, one needs to display human dimension in his management style; that means applying human relation principles.

Human relation theory

This theory started with Mary Packer Follett (1868-1933). As the pioneer, she concentrated on human side of the organisation. She considered socio-psychological aspect of the organizational life as a factor for contributing towards efficiency and effectiveness in the organizational management and productivity. Other people who advocated along, in human relations theory as pointed out by Chukwu, (2014) include Elton Mayo (1945); Felix Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939); Lewin, Lippit and White (1938); and Yauch (1949). As a social philosopher, she was concerned with the human problems encountered in organisations, and therefore concluded that, such problems can be minimized when there is cooperation among the workers. She therefore emphasized coordination as the basis of any organisational effectiveness. The theory propounded that workers had to be assisted to satisfy their natural desire and feel part of the unit and organization of which they belong to. Thus, a human dimension was added to management orientation.

For any programme or policy to be carried out successfully by the principal in the school as a system, there has to be a touch of human dimension from the principal's management approach. As human beings, the teachers and non-teaching staff are the elements of the components that form the system called 'school'. Therefore, these human beings have to be assisted to satisfy their natural desire and to feel that they are part of the unit and organization of which they belong to. This will evoke loyalty and guaranty effectiveness and efficiency from the staff. It is natural, that equity, fairness and justice when applied and combined with the principal performing his task effectively and efficiently, the output of the school is going to be highly impressive.

Secondary school education

Abdulrasheed & Bello (2015) cited Fabunmi, who defined Secondary school education as the form of education, which children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. It is the second level of education in Nigeria headed by a school administrator called 'principal'. Secondary school education is one of the levels of education in the Nigerian system of education. It is a six year training that is attained by the child after leaving primary school. The training is divided in to two segments, the first three year is the junior secondary school and the other three year is the senior secondary school. The broad goals of this level of education as enshrine in the National policy on Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), is to prepare the individual for useful living within the society; and for higher education.

School principal

School Principal is presumed to be a person of higher level of education, experience and dedication among teachers who is appointed to head the school. In his capacity, as a leader of the school is bestowed with the authority to control the day to day activities of the participating members of the school. Anuli (2014) assert that, Principal is the head of an institution that occupies a pivotal position, requires initiatives and skills for the day to day administration of a secondary school. In the same line of thought, Ekundayo & Timilehin (2010) opine that, the principal is in charge of administering the curriculum and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment evaluation and examinations, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal relationship with

the community, use of the practical skills necessary for surviving the policies of organisation such as decision-making, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict handling, running meetings and so on.

Nwagwu in Owojori and Asaolu, (2010) assert that, the primary objective of the school system is to ensure effective teaching and learning process. For this objective to materialize, the school head (The Principal) must be able to plan, organize, direct, coordinate and control the activities of the staff and students in an atmosphere devoid of persistent and unresolved conflicts. To this end, there is need for clear-cut policy concerning staff relations, duties and functions and most importantly, motivation in terms of remuneration and other staff welfare oriented policies.

Results and Discussion

Qualities of an ideal principal

Jaiyeoba & Atanda, (2005) opine that quality is synonymous with standard, efficiency, excellence, relevance and worthiness. Similarly, sitting Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, Ekundayo & Timilehin, (2010), define quality as a peculiar and essential character of an inherent feature; a degree of excellence; a distinguish attribute. Therefore, quality is an indicator qualifying the standard of a product revealing how good or bad the product is. In other words, it is concern with comparing the standard or performance of an item with other similar ones. In any case, a yard stick is set against which the outcome is compared. When the above definitions are applied to principal ship in the school, it is the effectiveness with which a principal provides an atmosphere in the school that enables subordinates to efficiently achieve worthwhile goals of teaching and learning. Leadership qualities are those leadership attributes that attract followers to the leader and make them to work cooperatively to accomplish set goals. In his attempt to identify the qualities of a good school principal Bass, in Akpan (2016), identified two types of leadership; transactional and transformational leadership.

Transactional leader; motivates the subordinates through reward and punishment. The subordinates have to obey the orders of the leader and the workers are closely monitored, supervised and controlled to get the work done from them. The leader seeks compliance and practice.

Transformational leader; on the other hand, focuses on changing and motivating subordinates. The leader is very much interested in innovations that will lead to achievement of school goals. The leader is a model of values and keeps on changing those values of the school in order to bring about realization of the vision. Northouse in the same work of Akpan (2016) maintain that, managers (principals) who exhibit transformational leadership are more effective leaders with better work outcomes. They are strong role models, encouragers, innovators and coaches that help to transform their subordinates into better, more productive and successful individuals. In this regard, an effective principal therefore, should be a transformational leader.

In a similar attempt, Sharma, (2011) identified the leadership qualities of a school principal to include communication skills, comfort, empathy, decision making skills, influence, self management, time management skills and commitment. Other leadership attributes or qualities asserted by Lunenburg & Ornstein, (2008) that can enhance effective administrative task performance of school principals are relationship and emotional stability; relationship deals with ability to be sociable, sympathetic, cooperative, good-natured, warm and approachable. While emotional stability refers to the capacity for composure, self-confidence and self awareness.

The effectiveness of the principal in discharging his administrative task reveals his leadership qualities. Leadership qualities are those leadership characteristics that attract followers to the leader and make them to work cooperatively to accomplish set goals. They command respect and trust for the leader. Subordinates under the principal rely upon his confidence and that earns him the ability to induce the workers. Hoy and Forsyth in Akpan (2016), reported that the greater the inducement pattern created by the school leader, the more committed teachers and other staff members will be to the school and this will enhance administrative task performance effectiveness.

Duties of the principal

Principal is the chief executive officer of a secondary school; he must be a person of high intellectuality and integrity as that assists him in his position of guiding the fellow staff with regard to instructional supervision, teaching methods, and evaluation as well as reporting the achievements of the school and other wise regarding curriculum development and instructions. Principal should develop a good rapport with the entire staff and students as that will evoke loyalty from them, leading to exploiting their maximum abilities. For the school to function well, Abdurashied & Bello, (2015) maintain that, the principal must be in a position to exploit all possible means to keep a healthy environment for the students, staff and the general public. Also, Uyanga, (2007) assert that, the principal identifies and set goals and objectives of the school, which of course, must be in line with the national objectives, analyses tasks and share responsibilities to the staff according to specialization and expertise.

In the same line of thought, Nkwoh in Anuli (2014) advised that Nigerian principals should learn to use their position to create an atmosphere to the release of human potentials. From the above assertions, it can be deduced that the most desired management orientation to be applied by the principal in discharging his duties in

the school is the human dimension approach. The principal single handily cannot achieve the laid down goals and objectives of the school. In his managerial duty, he must transfer some of his responsibilities and delegates authority to some members of staff that are experienced, with evidence of specialities so as to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the teaching and learning activities. Timilehin, (2010) in his work conclude that, secondary schools can only be productive if the principals are effective and efficient in the management of human and material resources in the system.

In the view of Ogundele, Sambo, & Bwoi, (2015), the tasks of a principal can be reduced to planning, organising, directing, supervising, and evaluating the school system. These activities are those of the school principal who must ensure they are all directed towards efficient and effective teaching and learning in the school, so as to be able to produce quality outputs. Principal in the school is a role model of the school, whose effectiveness translates the success or failure of the school. In the same way, Maduabum, (2002) opine that, Principal is the person on whose shoulders rest the entire administration, success or failure of the school; much is expected of him in the school; from the staff, and students also from the hosting community. Akpagwu (2012) outline some administrative tasks of the principal to include staff and students' personnel administration, school-community relations, school finance management and physical facilities administration. Other administrative tasks of the school principal are motivation of staff, communication, decision-making, co-curricular activities, conflict management, record and examination management. Another important administrative task of a school principal is curriculum development and instruction. Principal is the instructional leader of the school. He supervises the activities of the teachers within the school and in the classrooms, improving the performance of the teachers in the delivery of teaching activities, through correction, advices and guidance.

Ekundayo & Timilehin (2010) reported the following as the duties of the principal in ensuring the efficient service delivery towards producing quality outputs

1. **Management of school finance:** the principal is the chief executive and accounting officer, who is entrusted with the responsibility of controlling the revenue accruing from the school and ensuring judicious utilisation of PTA levy. In order to raise fund to complement the efforts of the government, the principal can establish a very good rapport with the Parents Teachers Association, Board of Governors, Old Students' Association and Non-Governmental Organisations for fund raising activities.
2. **Provision and maintenance of physical facilities:** principal must be fully concerned with the physical environment and other facilities around the school; dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, abandoned projects and over-grown trees, lawns, dingy and dark buildings etc. As a result, the principal has the responsibilities of ensuring that these facilities are in good shape. Even with the meagre resources at his disposal, he has the responsibility of providing teachers and other instructional staff with necessary resources for effective teaching.
3. **Principal as a motivator:** As the chief executive, the principal owes it a duty to modify the attitude of the staff and motivate them to put in their best at achieving educational goals through effective teaching-learning process; motivation enhances job performance.
4. **Principal as a curriculum and instructional supervisor:** the functions of the school principal as a supervisor include: obtaining and making available for teachers all educational information; visiting classrooms often to observe his teachers teaching; inspecting teachers' lesson notes and class registers, diaries and teaching aids and offering professional advice for their improvement.
5. **Principal as a change facilitator:** when it comes to efforts to improve the quality of school, the principal is the critical person in making change to occur. This responsibility is very obligatory and the principal is expected to deploy the managerial skills in adapting to this effected change in the school system; the principal is the key-supporting agent for such change.

One important role of the principal is public relation. The personality of the principal as the head of the school plays a vital role to the outside community. The principal is a sales agent of the school, by establishing a reciprocal relationship between the school and the community in such a way that both the school and the community practically benefit each other; by running adult education for the community members over the weekend, renting the assembly hall for some events, play ground of the school to be used for foot ball matches and other similar events.

Principal is the channel through which the outside organisations lice with, for the implementation of policies and programs. Circulars and other letters from the education board and outside community are addressed to the principal for any further necessary action. In the same way, clubs and societies that exist in the school can as well be used in cleaning of worship places and market places over the weekend. Metal or woodwork shops and school farm or garden can be made to supply some items of furniture and produce respectively for some token in order to raise funds from the community.

Ibukun, in Timilehin (2010), assert that, jobs of the school principal in Nigeria has progressively become more complex and highly hazardous. This entails that, school as a system is a combination of human, material and time resources and cannot be run without crisis and complicit. Principal-ship is the arrangement of human and material resources available in education towards the achievement of educational goals of the school.

Heading a school therefore, can be viewed as a multifaceted responsibility. The principal is confronted with tripod challenges (from the school community, education board, and outside community). The ability of the principal to confront and deal with the challenges at a time or simultaneously is what makes an effective leadership of the school.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the effective principals' task performance as a tool for proper delivery of education in Nigerian secondary school system and concluded that, leadership qualities are strong determinants of principals' administrative tasks performance effectiveness in the perfect delivery of secondary schools education in Nigeria. Principals' leadership qualities influence effective school administration, teachers' morale and commitment as well as the students' learning achievement. A well established relationship with the immediate community and the officials of the education board are tools for effective principal ship.

Recommendations

As the job of the principal in Nigerian secondary schools today has progressively become more complex and highly hazardous.

The principals should be well prepared; knowledgeable, professionally and administratively competent, as well as resourceful so as to confront the challenges involved in the mantle of the leadership towards achieving the goals of the school.

Government should from time to time be organising conferences and workshops for those in position of principal ship and their lieutenants for professional growth. Sponsorship is a mark of encouragement.

Open line of Communication is an effective means in resolving conflicts and staff development through delegation of authority, close monitoring and motivation.

The principal in his own small way should make efforts to raise funds for emergency procurements of minor expenses before being provided by the education board. Such funds ease difficulties and make the school running smooth.

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