

Improving Secondary Education through Efficient Intra-School Supervision in Nigeria

Enaigbe Patrick .A. Phd*

*Department of Educational Foundation, College Of Education,
PMB 1144, Benin City; Email patenaigbe@yahoo.com
Tel: 08038394983

Abstract

The importance of secondary education to the advancement of any economy cannot be over-emphasized. The above assertion informed the choice of this topic, particularly as it pertains to the role of intra-school supervision by school principals and other appointed school personnel in improving the standard that will lead to the achievement of the objectives of secondary school education in Nigeria. The paper looked at the distinction between supervision and inspection, the responsibilities of school principals, the areas of concern during supervision, methods or techniques as well as the problems of supervision. Relevant recommendations were made in enhancing intra-school supervision in Nigerian secondary school system.

Introduction

Secondary education is a major pivot upon which greater or higher education pursuits and national development stand. Therefore, the teaching and learning processes as well as the interaction between and among students, teachers and the school heads (principals) must be taken seriously if the objectives of secondary education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education would be achieved. One of such interactions is the intra-school supervision of teachers by principals and other designated officers. Intra-school supervision is undertaken by school heads or other appointed persons to monitor the teaching and learning processes and outcomes. The importance of this task in the educational process cannot be taken for granted as the school system would be in jeopardy if those entrusted with this duty undermine it, either due to inexperience, inadequate commitment or both.

The idea or assumption that teachers always know what to do is capable of making supervisors pay less attention to duty, thereby, making teachers less serious with their work. This lack of adequate commitment on the part of the teachers could be responsible for the falling standard of secondary school education in Nigeria. This paper is therefore, an attempt at highlighting the need for school heads (principals) to pay adequate attention to intra-school supervision

of their teachers in order to salvage and improve the present falling standard of secondary education in Nigeria because secondary education plays an important role in national development as well as prepare students for higher education and personal development.

Concept of Inspection and Supervision

There seems to be some confusion in the meaning of supervision and inspection. There is therefore the need to clarify these concepts.

To inspect means to investigate, find fault or ascertain that all is in line with expected standards. It also means to examine a thing carefully or critically. It could also mean to examine officially on visit to make sure that rules and standards are being observed. On the other hand, according to Igwe (2001), to supervise means to direct, oversee, guide or to make sure that expected standards are met. Thus, supervision in a school implies the process of ensuring that principles, rules, regulations and methods prescribed for purposes of implementing and achieving the objectives of education are effectively carried out. Supervision therefore, involves the use of expert knowledge and experiences to oversee, evaluate and coordinate the process of improving teaching and learning activities in schools.

Consequently, supervision could be seen as an interaction involving some kind of established relationship between and among people such that people influence people. Such interactions are greatly influenced by a predetermined programme of instruction. In this regard, and according to Netzer and Kerey (2007), the systematization of the interaction of those responsible for operating within the structure of administration is called supervision. Thus, the supervisor is expected, in the course of his duty, to initiate several activities that will lead to a successful merging of these two contexts in order to achieve any satisfaction.

The responsibilities of school heads or supervisors, according to Guynm (2006), are:

1. Helping teachers and stimulating curriculum improvement;
2. Emphasizing the use of group processes with teachers, students and other school personnel;
3. Carrying out administrative functions to help instructions through in-service;
4. Teaching of teachers for improving instruction through in-service.

Igwe (1981) noted that supervision involves evaluation, monitoring and quality control for the purpose of curriculum and infrastructural development and improvement. In order to achieve this, some specific tasks of the supervisor in a modern school have been identified and listed here under:

- a. Helping principals and teachers to understand students better;
- b. Helping teachers and individual professional growth;
- c. Acquiring cooperating spirit for team work;
- d. Making better use of teaching materials;
- e. Improving methods of teaching;
- f. Improving teachers' appraisal of his standards and
- g. Making faculty plans for curriculum improvement.

The common denominator in the task of supervision as outlined above is to help teachers become more effective in planning their class work in terms of maximally utilizing textbooks and other basic materials and curricular aids as well as helping teachers with guidance and evaluation.

The Role of Principals in Instructional Supervision

Ogunu (2002) noted that principals are the instructional leaders of their schools. Upon them depends, to a large extent, the success of the instructional programme of their schools. Their functions, as instructional leaders, include the following:

1. Working with teachers in the development of instructional goals and objectives and ensuring that such are clearly understood and consistently followed.
2. Providing teachers and other instructional staff with the necessary resources for effective teaching.
3. Obtaining and making all relevant educational information available for teachers.
4. Stimulating, encouraging, supporting and facilitating all activities designed to improve instruction
5. Visiting classrooms often to observe how teachers teach.
6. Holding individual and group conferences with teachers to exchange views with them and discuss ways of improving instruction.
7. Helping teachers in the evaluation and development of curriculum materials.
8. Visiting other schools and curriculum centres for the purpose of finding out the good aspects of their curriculum practices that can be utilized by his school.
9. Developing a sound library and an instructional resource centre in his school.
10. Inspecting teachers' lesson notes, class registers, diaries and teaching aids and offering professional advice for their improvement.
11. Encouraging teacher participation in in-service courses, workshops and professional organizations.

12. Ensuring that the progress of each student is systematically and accurately monitored, recorded and regularly communicated to parents.
13. Organizing orientation programmes for new members.
14. Evaluating all facts of the educational process directly related to instruction.

Areas of Concern in Supervision

An effective intra-school supervision is based on identifying certain critical areas that, if well looked into, would help improve the quality of secondary school education in Nigeria.

Afolabi and Loto (2008) identified some of these:

i. Lesson Note

The lesson note is a reflection of the level of preparedness as well as the effort the teacher made in gathering information for the lesson. So, a poorly written lesson note not only indicates the quality of the teacher, but also the level of his commitment to the primary task of teaching. The school head (principal) must critically examine the following items on the lesson note:

- a. The clarity and appropriateness of the learner behavioural objectives.
- b. The relevance and adequacy of the lesson note.
- c. The selection of appropriate teaching aids.
- d. The selection of appropriate evaluation techniques to determine the extent of effectively realizing objectives.

ii. Lesson Presentation

Teaching is said to be effective if the desired objectives are achieved. The school principal is required to carefully pay attention to the following areas:

- a. The introduction of the lesson and the teacher's ability to maintain students' attention throughout the duration of the lesson.
- b. The teacher's voice quality, speed, clarity of expression, intelligibility and appropriateness of language, and effective use of learning materials such as audio-visual aids and the chalkboard, etc.
- c. Teacher's knowledge of the subject matter in terms of structure and sequence.
- d. Use of classroom management techniques including skills in affecting students' participation in class activities.

iii. Reference Materials

The use of appropriate reference materials such as textbooks, schemes of work and syllabuses cannot be overlooked. The principal must look into the following:

- a. The appropriateness of the reference materials;

- b. Author(s) of the book(s);
- c. The skill of the teachers in the use of such materials;
- d. Use of current as opposed to obsolete materials.

iv. The Relationship Between Teachers and Students

Without doubt, a harmonious interpersonal relationship between teachers and students could engender learning and attainment of educational goals. In this regard, the principal must seek for genuine love and concern, and positive and acceptable disposition between and among the teachers and students. His ability to accommodate or tolerate and if possible, lend a helping hand through guidance and counselling services must be considered.

v. Classroom Management

Effective classroom management facilitates the teaching and learning processes. The principal or other appointed school personnel must be conversant with the following:

- a. Ability to discipline and control students.
- b. Reward system put in place to reinforce good performance or conduct.
- c. Ability to identify cases and causes of students' misbehavior.
- d. Creation of conducive classroom climate.
- e. Sitting arrangement of students.
- f. Classrooms' physical condition.

vi. Personality of the Teacher

A teacher's personality include his personal traits or characteristics, emotional status, appearance, intelligence, physique, leadership skills, communication skills, etc.

Techniques for Supervision

A lot of techniques of supervision have been identified by scholars. Good (1945), Afolabi and Loto (2008) discussed some of these techniques:

- a. **Classroom Visitation and Observation:** This involves the physical presence of the supervisor in the class of instruction, whereby he supervises the teaching process and inspects the textbooks and other instructional materials. Other things he also supervises are the physical condition of the classroom, the appearance of as well as the quality and quantity of assignments given to the students.
- b. **Workshop Techniques:** These techniques involve bringing together participants to share experiences and ideas of innovation on various aspects of

- the educational process. Resource persons guide the discussion whereby new teachers gain experience.
- c. **Micro-Teaching Techniques:** These techniques offer an opportunity for principals and teachers to identify, define, try out, describe and analyse certain teaching skills outside the real teaching situation. This is mostly like an experimental condition where teachers could examine the skills and make necessary adjustment in their teaching styles or any other area.
 - d. **In-Service Education:** This is usually a remedial programme aimed at refreshing teachers or helping to improve on their weaknesses. It is not aimed at replacing pre-teaching programmes, but it is organized with modern innovations in instructional strategies. The ideas learned could improve the teachers' classroom teaching experience which could also be shared with their colleagues.
 - e. **Inter-School Visitation:** In an attempt at keeping the teacher abreast of new innovations in the teaching profession such as techniques or methods, the principal could organize inter-school visitations to afford the teachers the opportunity to watch or interact with colleagues from other schools. The observed behaviour could be very rewarding to both parties.

Problems of Instructional Supervision in our Schools

There are several problems which militate against effective supervision of instruction in our schools.

Staff Inadequacy: The number of professionally trained supervisors in some of our schools is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of an effective and efficient programme of supervision. The population of students in the school has so exceeded the stipulated teacher/pupil ratio that some principals find it difficult to effectively carry out their duties.

Lack of Time: Most secondary school principals are so weighed down by routine administrative burden that they hardly find time to visit the classrooms and observe how the teachers teach. When principals give more time to correspondence with the ministry of education and its parastatals, community affairs, parents and a host of other visitors, and in the process neglect their primary duty of overseeing instruction in the schools, we cannot expect good performance from students. Some unscrupulous teachers easily exploit the principal's neglect of supervision to achieve their own selfish ambitions.

Inadequate Basic Instructional Materials: There can be no effective teaching when schools lack even the basic materials and equipment for teaching such as textbooks, chalkboards and decent classrooms for students. Other problems are lack of facilities and materials for the supervisors to use. External supervisors (inspectors), for example, often do not have transport facilities and writing materials to carry out their inspectoral duties.

Lack of Adequate Training and Orientation in Instructional Supervision: Many newly appointed principals are not given the necessary training and orientation to equip them with the skills they need to carry out their instructional supervisory functions. They manage for years without a proper understanding of what instructional supervision entails and how to do it.

Fiscal Inadequacy: Lack of funds often results in principals' inability to organize in-house orientation and in-service programmes for their staff or travel out to other schools and resource centres to gain access to new developments in curriculum and instruction that could benefit their schools.

There is the urgent need for governments to provide adequate funds and the right calibres of personnel for the supervision of instruction in secondary schools.

Strategies for Improving Intra-School Inspection and Supervision

Intra-school supervision could be improved through several means which the school heads could adopt. Some of these strategies are:

Proper Orientation of School Supervisors of What is Required in Intra-school Supervision.

The principal in conjunction with other qualified educational personnel, could organize regular in-house orientation or training for newly appointed or promoted staff to get them abreast of relevant information on or method of supervision. Sometimes, the ministry of education could organise a general orientation workshop for such classes of teachers even though principals or major school heads could also attend.

Use of Appropriate Reward System.

Rewards are incentives for improved or sustained performance (when a proper and recognizable reward system is in place) whereby efficient and effective supervisors are rewarded or others could be encouraged to step up their performance or conduct.

Submission of Monthly Reports of the Year Heads or Vice Principals to the Principals.

Regular and accurate reports of activities as observed by the year heads or the vice principals to the principals will keep all of them abreast of peculiar events, inadequacies or areas of need, which could be jointly resolved or addressed for an effective intra-school supervision.

Principals' termly Report to the Chief Inspector of Education (C. I. E.)

The knowledge that the Chief Inspectors of Education (CIE) would demand termly reports from the principals will keep the principals on their toes in their respective schools. Because no principal would want to be sanctioned, they are more likely to take their intra-school supervision seriously.

Appointment of Year Heads and Vice Principals to Assist in Intra-School Inspection

As it is the practice in some schools, year heads and vice principals oversee certain aspects of the school administration viz: Academic and non-academic or special duties. This practice should be encouraged and properly monitored by the principals in order to achieve efficiency. Erring supervisors should be sanctioned to serve as a deterrent to others.

Use of School Prefects to Monitor Absentee or Truant Teachers

One of the problems in some secondary schools is that some teachers have the habit of absenting themselves from classes, thus abandoning the primary duty of teaching. Therefore, school prefects could be used to monitor their attendance in classes by keeping daily records of their attendance which should be submitted to the immediate supervisor. If this problem is adequately resolved, higher school supervisors such as the vice principals or the principals could be informed for necessary disciplinary actions.

Recommendations

In the light of the above, it is hereby recommended that school principals take school supervision seriously by paying regular visits to teachers and organizing seminars, workshops or inter school visitations as regularly as possible. This is aimed at keeping teachers in readiness for their responsibilities.

- ii. School supervisors should also keep themselves abreast of modern trends in the teaching profession in order to know what is expected of them during supervision.
- iii. Teachers that are found to be deficient should be carefully reoriented by the supervisors to enable them to learn the right principles. But if after several corrections and there is no positive change, appropriate sanctions should be placed on them.

Conclusion

The relevance of intra school supervision by secondary school principals and other appointed school officials to the advancement of secondary education cannot be overemphasized. If the objectives of the national philosophy of the country are to be achieved, secondary education should be taken seriously. This dream might be difficult to realize if teachers saddled with the responsibility of teaching are not properly supervised by school principals and other appointed school officials. It is the hope of this paper that if the content of this write-up is given the deserved attention, Nigerian secondary education system would be better.

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