LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract

Leadership and management are two complementary and essential phenomena for achieving success in every human endeavor. Through leadership, people are influenced to achieve stated goals while management deals with effective organization and co-ordination of human and material resources to achieve organizational objectives. The child is becoming very relevant in global discussions because the child is the cradle of civilization, the actual foundation of human existence and talents. This paper discusses the concept of leadership and management. It explains the early childhood types of education. The paper examines the resources in early childhood education. It attempts to highlight the problems of poor resources in early childhood education. Recommendations include that stake-holders of education should provide adequate resources for proper development of the child. Teacher-child friendly class leadership is essential at this early stage of development.

Introduction

The quality of leadership and management provided by any organization determines the worth and output of such organization. Through good leadership, a group of people in an organization are influenced to achieve stated objectives. Management on the other deals with decision making and implementation. It involves a
set of activities such as, decision making, planning, organizing, controlling and transforming of resources (land, material, labour, capital and information) to achieve maximum output and desired goals of an organization. Leadership as opined by (Madu, 2013:13) is about the ability of the leader to “galvanize his subordinates into a formidable and united force” to accomplish group objectives. Therefore, both leadership and management are necessary for uplifting an organization to a greater height.

Early childhood education is an essential aspect of education because the formation of children in this industrial and busy society needs child-friendly class leadership and management, conducive environment, with enabling management of other resources to inculcate right values in children. The quality and quantity of children we educate at this stage will determine the stuff or caliber of people in the society and leaders of tomorrow.

Concept of Leadership

Leadership is direction, inspiration and motivation of a group or organization towards goal attainment. It involves management of flow of information, decision taking, brevity, positive exercise of authority and team spirit, to reach a prescribed target. Madumere (2013:13) rightly orally stated “To lead is to show the way and guide people to a destination, therefore leadership entails vision, action, commitment, and tolerance”. Leadership is a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (en Wikipedia or/wiki/2013). Leadership is therefore, various styles a person can use to persuade a group to achieve group objectives.

There are many types of leadership but those that will be discussed here include: autocratic, participative or democratic, laissez-faire, narcissistic, toxic leadership, and paternalistic. The autocratic or authoritarian style of leadership assumes that all decision making powers are centralized on the leader, as with dictators, while participative or democratic style allows shared leadership and promotes interest of members. The Laissez-faire or free rein leader is simply figure-head, delegate’s authority and is not involved in problem solving. Rather he gives free hand in deciding policies and methods. Group members could become creative and innovative. In Narcissistic leadership, the leader is interested in his welfare at the expense of other group members. He/she exhibits arrogance, hostility, dominance and selfishness, as is common with most leaders. Toxic leadership depicts a situation where the leader leaves the group or organization in a worse off condition than when he/she joined it. The paternalistic leader acts as a father and shows complete concern for followers who in turn have absolute trust and loyalty for the leader and have commitment to duty. (http://en wikipedia. Org/wiki/leadership styles 2013). A true leader is therefore a visioner, guide and motivator of a group, aimed at goal attainment.
Management is effective co-ordination of human and material resources by a committed team to reach the goals of an organization. Management involves articulation, decision taking, distribution of resources, assessment and evaluation of out-put in order to make in-put in improvement of resources and adapt to changing situations in the global systems. Ikuegbu (2006) saw it as a process undertaken by one or more individuals to co-ordinate the activities of others to achieve results not achievable by one individual acting alone. Therefore, management is a team work and deals with delegation of authority. Activities of management include: describing tasks to be performed to accomplish certain objectives, assigning these tasks to carefully selected and trained personnel in the organization, ensuring the performance of the task by providing necessary tools, & co-ordinating some formal structure, which permits a hierarchical allocation of responsibilities with communication flow (Edam 1982 in Abiahu, Anoruo and Amadi, 2012). Management is systematic in approach because of co-ordination of human and material resources.

Generally speaking Ikwuegbu and Nwaneri (2003) opined that management means the process which enables organizations to achieve their objectives by planning, organizing, co-ordinating and controlling their resources, including commitment of employees. Team work and team spirit are stressed in management for effective output.

Integration of Leadership and Management of Resources in Early Childhood Education

A qualitative leadership is sine qua non for good management and they both form an inseparable Siamese for excellent corporate governance. Leadership of resources implies that quality actions, control and persuasions are required to ensure that both the human and material resources are effectively used for successful completion of tasks. Means of effecting quality leadership for effective control of resources include:

- The proprietor of the childcare centres ought to motivate teachers to be child-friendly.
- Teachers have to cultivate paternalistic leadership, thereby seeing the children as their own, cuddling them and exciting them to have love for studies.
- Teachers need to introduce to children the spirit of fair-play, and sharing, since not much intellectual work is involved but mainly the use of play-way method in teaching and learning. This will help the child to become democratic in later years.
- Teachers ought to nominate bigger and wiser children as monitors to give them opportunity for preparatory leadership.
Teachers of children centres ought to use autocratic leadership style in handling the children sometimes in order to maintain some form of disciplinary instructions such as, do not urinate in the class, or do not eat in the class before break period.

Teachers of kindergarten schools can also apply the Laissez-faire attitude towards the end of school section by allowing more or guided freedom to pupils to perform tasks on their own. Pupils could learn from experience, discovery and creativity while on their own.

Management of resources on the other hand is concerned with people at work and their relationship with the organization (Ikwuegbu and Nwaneri 2012). This implies the capability of working together as teams and being able to adapt to new situations to ensure development. For management of educational resource in early childhood education therefore, proprietor of the childcare centre as the chief executive ought to see that helpless children are kept in clean environment with the necessary facilities. The classroom has to be properly spaced with enough ventilation. Teachers have to work as a team in cuddling the little children, and use many relevant toys as instructional materials to keep them busy, happy, and directing them to creative knowledge. Teachers can also improvise low cost teaching materials that will enhance learning. Others are:

- Effective management of educational resources for childhood education entails that government ought to encourage private efforts in the provision of this preprimary education because of the teeming population in Nigeria and the fact that most parents are busy at work to make ends meet. It is necessary that well trained teachers are employed from pedagogical institutes.
- Teachers need to be motivated by being supplied with furniture, equipment, text books, toys, and library to reduce boredom and frustration.
- Teachers in pre-primary schools need to enjoy good salaries and fringe benefits whether in private or public pre-primary schools, because of the nature of work they do, especially in providing hygiene for the children.
- Retraining of teachers for early childhood education is necessary through in-service programmes such as workshops, seminars, conferences, sandwich etc to enhance their professional growth.
- Provisions need to be made for their retirement benefits.
- The Proprietor has to ensure that security is provided for the institutions because no culture jokes with children.
- The Proprietor has to ensure that teachers are disciplined and are punctual to duties because of weak and helpless nature of children, and to encourage patronage of the school.
- Evaluation of teachers performance and pupils performance including supervision of work is necessary for improvement.
- Open communication systems and involvement of teachers in decision making is important, as guardians of the children.
Leadership And Management Of Resources In Early Childhood Education

- Provision of school midday meal is necessary to accommodate children that are not well provided for.
- Early childhood education centres need well prepared first aid boxes and medical personnel like nurses or doctors ought to be attached to them for quick delivery.
- Conveniences for both teachers and pupils ought to be provided in neat environment.

Finally, the financing of early childhood education is not to be left alone to government or private owners. It is a new and post-war venture in Nigeria. For effective and adequate out-put, all hands need to be on deck to provide children with needs for a better Nigeria. Integration of quality leadership and good management of resources are inevitable factors for early childhood education.

Types of Pre-primary Education

There are three categories of early childhood education and these are:

i. Crèche /Day Care centres (6 months -2years)

ii. Play – Group (2 years – 3 years). These two groups mainly learn the toilet habits, eating habits, rhymes, alphabets, playing with toys and other good moral habits.

iii. The kindergarten (3 years-5years). The name kindergarten was given by Friedrich Frobel (1782 – 1852), who established the first kindergarten in 1840 which was called “Universal kindergarten”. He advocated for child-centred education in curriculum and methodology, using play-way method. The children learn subjects for smooth transition to primary school, such as English language, mathematics, poems, drawing, neatness etc. (Opara and Ifediatu, 2012; and Ihebereme and Nwaneri, 2012).

Purpose of Early Childhood / Pre-Primary Education

The National Policy on Education by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) prescribed the purpose of education as follows:

a. Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.

b. Prepare the child for the primary level of education

c. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (in the farm, market, offices, etc).

d. Inculcate social norms.

e. Inculcate in the child, the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art music, and playing with toys etc.

f. Develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit.

g. Learn good habits especially good health habits, and

h. Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc through play (F.R.N. 2004).
Therefore, the main thrust of pre-primary education is to prepare the minds and thoughts of little children towards skills acquisition and knowledge in primary schools.

**Appraisal/Evaluation in Early Childhood**

Appraisal/evaluation is an act of estimating the worth of or judging the nature or value of something/someone in a careful and thoughtful way. Evaluation is also used to determine the existence of a delay or disability, to identify the child’s strengths and needs in areas of development. Screening includes activities to identify children who may need further evaluations in order to determine the existence or a delay in development or particular disability. Assessment as an aspect of evaluation is used to determine the individual’s child’s present level of performance and early interventions or educational needs. Early childhood education is that education given to children between the ages of 3-5 years plus. The national policy on education (2004) defined it as education given in an educational institution to children of age 3-5plus prior to their entering the primary school. It is a period that falls under where Jean Piaget called pre-operational stage of a child’s development ie 2-7 years. It is indeed an organized series of learning experience for children from 3-6 years of age.

In the past, it was an exclusive right of the privileged children whose parents were wealthy. It was an expensive and preserve for the children of colonial masters during the colonial era (Ekpo 1960). Presently, Early Childhood education is no longer though not completely the reserve of privileged children. Recently, there has been a great outburst of interest in Early Childhood education in Nigeria; both in rural and urban areas. Today, almost every parent gives Early Childhood education to their children. It is looked at as a lucrative business, proprietors and proprietresses operate their school in uncompleted buildings, garage, church premises and so on (Fuller, 1960).

Some key vital parameters for evaluating early childhood education with reference to its curriculum in Ihebereme and Nwaneri (2012) are Physical development, Affective and psycho-social development and Cognitive development.

**Physical Development (Psychomotor Development)**

The child acquires the basic skills to say his/ her name, names of parents, school, etc. The child also interacts with his immediate environment – the parents, elders, children and materials. Teachers are advised to use locally made instructional materials for teaching, not only to drive the lesson home but to help the child have access to such materials. Children learn other psychomotor skills like dancing, singing, running, climbing, drawing, and writing. These should be done in safe environment.
The skills here deal with character formation of the child for meaning life in the society. These include: accommodation, love, appreciation, and peaceful co-existence with others. Without good emotional development, the child could be intelligent but will be insensitive in the society. Such social, moral, spiritual, and emotional skills include: greetings, respect, honesty, trust, praises, encouragement, affection, and fear of God.

Through arts, drama, sport, creativity values. Children express their feelings and thoughts, release tension and be less aggressive. Through social education, they learn about gender issues, teamwork, neatness etc.

Children learn mental and language skills, uses their brains to make connections in the world around them. They venture into problem solving, ask numerous questions which their elders and teachers are expected to answer them with love, truth, and stories. Children can sort materials, do matching and solve problems in mathematics. In language skills, they learn how to speak, listen, greet. etc.

Method for evaluating performances in pre-primary schools include: observation, interview, assignment and discussion. Observation method involves a wide range of information on a child’s academic progress based on class participation and production rating. The teacher has to participate actively in class activities, observe every individual pupil performance and rate them, probably with a chart. Interview method involves patient and friendly dialogue with each pupil and from facts-finding improve the learner. In assignment method, the teacher gives the learners either take-home assignment or in-the-class assignment. These help the pupils to explore knowledge while the teacher corrects them for improvement in learning. The discussion method helps the pupils to develop confidence, logical thinking and language development Ihebereme and Nwaneri (2012). Evaluation helps to determine the quality of school programme, curriculum and output.

Schools are established to provide conditions and services which will enable children learn. To accomplish these objectives, proper administration must be established. Human educational resources for early childhood development include the personnels such as Headmistress/Headmaster / proprietor, teachers, caregivers/attendants and so on. Teachers act as parents of children outside their homes. They show love, care, kindness and friendship to the pupils. They also supervise their activities and provide them with their needs when and where necessary care for them. Teachers play with children because (Ihebereme and Nwaeri, 2006) suggested that, play is the child’s serious occupation and children like body movement in learning, even the disabled ones. The teachers demonstrate behaviours which help the children to
become sensitive to other people’s feelings, how to share, have patience and co-operate in group endeavours, models of greeting in society, respect for elder/leaders, and other values held high in the society.

Qualified personnel contribute to the development of suitable curriculum supervision and control of quality of such institutions. The headmaster/proprietor sees to the acquisition of school needs such as toys, books etc, formation and meeting of parents and teachers (PTA), appoints departmental heads to assist him/her. The role of pre-primary school teacher is to create a safe, happy, stimulating, child-centred and child-friendly environment in which the child develops his full potentials. Teacher has to provide an environment that induces learning through exploration, discovery, observation, encouragement and support of child’s effort. He ought to encourage purposeful involvement in work and play, verbal encouragement like very good and good morning, material incentives, such as giving a child a pencil or ruler is encouraged. He has to let children see mistakes as step-up in learning (Iroegbu, 2005). Parents have to encourage the education of the pre-primary children by providing them with enabling home environments, textbooks, toys, etc and help children to do their assignments. The use mother tongue is mainly the responsibility of parents to their children. They have to promote discipline in the family, prevent any form of child abuse, or cursing their children when they misbehave. Recreational activities have to be encouraged in the home for good social integration. Government also encourages parents and other non-governmental agencies to participate in financial management of schools, (FRN, 2004).

The government is an important resource in promoting the early childhood education through maintenance of standard. Most private individuals see it as a business venture, so the ministry of education has to ensure that the environment, curriculum, methodology etc used for early child education are of required standard through inspection and supervision. Government has to give support to private owners to maintain their schools because the charter of the Organization for African Unity (OAU 1979 15) opined that “State Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts”. An individual may not do these.

Physical Facilities

Physical facilities otherwise called school plant are essential for intellectual and socio-cultural activities in the pre-primary schools. These include: buildings, fittings, land, and instructional materials. Attractive school facilities encourage children to come to school.
Buildings – These are mainly classrooms and must conform to the following:

a. Standard classroom size of 12m by 6.5m to accommodate about 25 children (30 sg. ft).
Leadership And Management Of Resources In Early Childhood Education

b. Gross- ventilated and well lighted

c. Must have storage facilities and built in cupboards for large and small items of equipment.

d. Must also have two access door ways to serve as alternative exits and a veranda on the side of the classroom.

e. There must be a cloakroom, toilet and wash hand basins of appropriate height.

f. There must be separate staff room, office for the Head teacher and first –aid units with provision of two to four beds per class.

g. A good source of water supply should be available.

Play Ground: It has to be well – fenced play ground varying in size according to the enrollment of a school, and good for security purposes. Where possible, provision should be made for further growth.

- The play ground should be grassed and installed with facilities for climbing, jumping, pulling, handling, swinging, balancing and rocking.
- A track of hard surface for pushing along wheeled toys should be provided facilities provided should ensure safety of children.
- Other play ground facilities include:
  i. Out-door play ground facility for swings, climbing and sliding, large, stationery ladder, park bench.
  ii. Indoor play ground facility with space for sand and water play-corners, dramatic play centre, house-keeping distress like dolls, dishes, small tables and chairs, storage unit for dress-up clothes.
  iii. Active play areas (open grass area) for soccer ball, Jump rope, park etc.
  iv. Gardening area contains toy shovels, toy buckets, toy rakes, toy hoes, garden hoes, watering cans.
  v. Quiet play area for relaxation which includes children’s books, board games, puzzles, portable record player, portable cassettes tape recorder.
  vi. Wheel toy play area should have space for riding car, truck, train, motor-cycle, tri-cycle, wagon.
  vii. Carpentry area where all the tools of the carpenter are displayed in the workshop/shape.

The Library

This is a very important educational resource for early childhood development. It provides books with Nigerian background about life i.e. animal, animal stories, stories about children both in Nigeria and other lands, funny stories, nursery rhymes and “why” stories with suitable illustrations. Suitable books for pre-primary children are about everyday life.
Instructional Materials

Education at the early childhood stage implies more use of instructional materials than at any other stage. This is because of the age of the children. Instructional materials are effective means of learning with understanding in less time as well as a means of communication. They arouse and maintain pupils interest and attention for effective learning exercise to take place, they help teachers to convey the intended message effectively and meaningfully to the learners. They also provide answers to questions during teaching and learning. Children learn very well when they see, touch, observe and make use of materials. Lessons taught through a medium of practical work, a lot of enjoyable learning takes place. Instructional materials include: pictures e.g. a blacksmith at work, models, diagrams of people dancing or map of Nigeria etc. Others are: display boards, notice boards, flannel boards, radio, toy, slides and film strip projectors and projecting slides.

Challenges Facing Poor Resources in Early Childhood Education

There are problems of poor human and material resources in early childhood education. These include environmental factors, facilities, personnel, curriculum, language, leadership, and parental challenges. Environmental factors ranges from poor school mapping, citing of schools in dirty, swampy areas and uncompleted buildings. Since early – childhood education is a recent development in Nigeria, education policy makers have to identify with the location, spacing, geographical, economic, linguistic, pedagogical and social factors surrounding the citing of such schools. However, some of pre-primary schools are well kept in good environment. Facilities and equipment provided by some early childhood centres are below standard. Most of them are owned by private sectors who run them as profitable business ventures. The classroom facilities and age-range are not adequately considered.

Early childhood departments are newly introduced in few universities and colleges of education. Therefore, some of the proprietors and teachers are not qualified to teach the children. Both the teachers and proprietors need more seminars and conferences to meet the demands of their duties.

Diversified curriculum is used by various schools in the urban and rural areas. The subjects and methods of teaching are determined by proprietors/headmasters. This could result to low standard of education.

Government does not give adequate inspection, supervision, guidance and control of these schools in all nooks and crannies. It does not give subvention to private owners. Government has not enhanced the local government chairmen to implement the early childhood education. Government has also failed in the implementation of use of mother-tongue in these schools which affects the intellectual and cultural development of children. It has not established childhood education centres for children of normal
which adversely affects their growth. Government has failed to get involved in motivation of teachers across all the education systems by not involving in payment of teachers in these centres. Some of the headmasters/proprietors are autocratic and see the school as their family affair. Teachers could be fired without notice and not be involved in decision taking. They operate with high unchecked school fees.

Finally some parents do not provide adequately for the children in terms of books, snacks and clothing. Any child could get ill and poorly handled if there as medical centre in the school.

Conclusion

Proper education of the child at the pre-primary level is of global concern because economic task on most parents has made it inevitable and the child of today is the adult of tomorrow. Child-centred and child-friendly education through adequate leadership and effective management of resources will boost the quality development of these children. Any mal-formation of the child at this level, physically, spiritually, socially and intellectually affects the adult personality. Therefore all stake-holders of education should ensure that both human and material resources, provided for early child education are well guided and properly channeled for meritorious outcomes.

Recommendations

1. Headmasters/Proprietors of pre-primary schools should lead the schools in a democratic and child friendly manner.
2. Early childhood education should be in a conducive environment with adequate facilities.
3. Teachers have the main thrust of cuddling these children and using child-centred methodology to impart knowledge.
4. The attendants / assistants should act as foster fathers/ mothers of these children while they are in school by keeping them neat, changing their pampers, feeding them and showing kindness.
5. Team management and effective use of both human and material resources will definitely encourage parents to send their children to good child-care centres/schools.
6. School management should ensure that mentally and physically challenged children have available resources for training and recreational opportunities to achieve their social integration and intellectual development.
7. The family as the basic social unit and owner of the child has to protect the child from all forms of child abuses, provide the child with warmth and basic needs for smooth transition from home to school.
8. Government should ensure that both government/public and private pre-primary schools are registered. Adequate inspection and supervision of such schools should be frequently made.
9. Health care delivery of early childhood schools is very necessary.
10. Ideal and well-spaced play-ground with recreational facilities, good library, toys and other instructional materials should be effectively directed and used.
11. Only teachers who had undergone education and training in early childhood should be employed in such schools/centres for expertise and quality handling of children. Their occasional retraining is also recommended.
12. Children should be encouraged to develop good moral and social behaviour. These should also form aspects of their continuous assessment.

References


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Leadership And Management Of Resources In Early Childhood Education

