

IMPROVING PRINCIPALS' EFFICIENCY IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND SUPERVISION OF INNOVATIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CROSS RIVER STATE

Ambrose Beluaye Anashie

*Inspectorate Department,
Obanliku Local Government Education Authority,
Sankwala, Cross River State.*

And

Ifreke Uko Akpabio

*Department of Curriculum Studies,
Educational Management and Planning,
University of Uyo,
Uyo.*

Abstract

Education is recognized world wide as a catalyst for socio-economic and technological development of nations for sustainable future. The study was aimed at determining some strategies for improving principals' efficiency in strategic planning and supervision of innovations in Cross River State secondary schools. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. To guide the study, two research questions were posited, answered and analyzed using statistical mean scores and standard deviation. A 22-item questionnaire was administered on a sample of 486 respondents made up of 54 principals and 432 teachers in Cross River State public secondary schools. The study revealed that principals and teachers affirmed that the use of several strategic planning practices and effective regular supervision could be adopted in ensuring efficiency in the implementation of innovations in secondary schools. Based on the findings, it was recommended that principals should use goal- setting and other strategic planning practices to improve the efficiency of innovations in secondary schools. Innovations should be adapted to meet local school needs by motivating teachers to improvise and observing how teachers implement instructional innovations in classes. Principals should provide teachers with variety of resources, direction, model and guidance that may help them to easily adapt to change.

The increasing awareness of the role of innovations as fundamental tools for qualitative education has made education planners and policy makers to consistently seek avenues to ensure efficiency in the management and supervision of innovations. Innovation, according to Ajewumni (2004) is a new positive endeavour in an

educational process. Innovation in education can be a new technique or strategy for facilitating understanding in the teaching and learning process. Thus, innovation is viewed in this paper as new principles, ideas, strategies and techniques adopted into an education system to improve its functionality and quality.

In Nigeria, the educational sector especially the secondary school system has witnessed a lot of innovations to match the dynamic society. These innovations include the Universal Basic Education programme, policies, new techniques of teaching, instructional management structure, new ways of managing personnel and restructuring of education funding arrangements (Fashina, 2005).

It is obvious that the laudable objectives of any of the aforementioned innovations may not be realized if not properly managed by school administrators (principals) through efficient strategic planning and supervision. The alarming rate of school population explosion and sudden drop-outs, teachers resistance or slow rate to adapt to innovations and inefficient teachers instructional practices due to principals' inefficiency in strategic planning and supervision is an impediment to the effective growth of Nigerian secondary education.

For a successful implementation of any educational innovation and subsequent realization of its objectives, principals of secondary schools need to be knowledgeable and efficient in strategic planning and supervision to achieve the desired goals. This is why Craston (2000) confirmed that the principal is at the centre of the changes that occur in schools, and the purpose of innovation can not be achieved without effective and efficient strategic planning and supervision.

It is sad to note that, despite the incessant training and retraining workshops organized by Cross River State Government for principals and teachers, some prefer leaving the job rather than adapting to these viable academic innovations. This perhaps is hinged to poor planning and effective supervision by principals. This is why Umejih (2005) asserted that the rising cases of declining morale of principals and the number of teachers leaving the job coupled with low academic achievement of students might be due to planning and supervision inefficiencies of principals. Many principals fail to set goals and plan with school staff to prioritize strategies for implementation of innovations. Also, they do not effectively supervise the activities of their subordinates to ensure achievement of standards. These have become worrisome and have a negative impact on the school system.

The fundamental thrust of this paper therefore, is to ascertain how principals can improve their efficiency in strategic planning and supervision of innovation in secondary schools to ensure qualitative education for sustainable future.

Conceptual Framework

Efficiency in education simply means the possibility of school to achieve maximum results with the limited resources it has. Bosah and Eneasator in Anashie (2011) defined efficiency as the optimal relationship between inputs and outputs in an enterprise (school). Arinze (1996) further posited that a school is said to be internally efficient when it turns out graduates without wasting any student's year or without drop-out and repeaters. This implies that a school is efficient when it harnessed both human and material resources to achieve desired goals with minimal or no wastage. Akpa (2002) also asserted that internal efficiency of an educational system entails compliance with standard norms, accessibility criterion, functional relevance of curriculum and cost effectiveness of running the system.

Strategic planning is a comprehensive statement of an organization's mission, objectives and strategies; a "detailed roadmap" of direction and course that an organization intends to follow in conducting its activities (Yepwi, 2007). It is also viewed as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and why it does it with a focus on future. It also spells out what is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved, who is to achieve and the impediments to its achievement taking into cognizance the availability and utilization of resources. Onwuchekwa (2000 p.23) viewed strategic planning competencies as:

Formulation of organization's long-term goals, missions and purposes, identifying current objectives and strategies for effective planning, analyzing environmental changes and plan to adapt to the changes, strengths and weaknesses and dealing with problems, given the available resources and skills.

Supervision on the other hand, is the element of administrative process concerned with the effort of the administrator (principal) to guide the daily operations of the organization (school) by stimulating, directing and coordinating the subordinate staff and their efforts and cultivating good working personal relations so that all move collectively towards a more efficient performance of all the functions that lead to achievement of organizational goals. Firz (2001) described a supervisor as an agent and process of planned innovations in educational policies, curriculum, or evaluation. The word "supervise" emanated from the Latin word, "supervidere" which means to watch, oversee and direct the performance of a person, a task or activity of the work. According to Igwe (2011), school supervision is a process or ensuring that the policies, principles rules, regulations and methods prescribed for the purpose of implementing and achieving the objectives of education are carried out. It involves the utilization of expert knowledge and experience to oversee, evaluate and coordinate the process for improving teaching and learning activities in schools.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that strategic planning and supervision are very important administrative techniques. Thus, principals of secondary schools, as internal supervisors must engage in strategic planning and supervise the activities of school personnel in implementing innovations, so as to achieve the organization (school) goals and objectives.

Statement of Problem

It is quite obvious that, Nigeria has adopted series of innovations in her educational sector to ensure quality education that will produce self reliant graduates from schools, yet there is still an alarming rate of youth unemployment and restiveness in the country. The increasing rate of principals' inefficiency in strategic planning/supervision, leading to teachers resistance or slow rate to adapt to innovations and inefficient teachers' instructional practices makes the effective growth of secondary schools difficult (Madueke, 2005). It is unfortunate that, hitherto, the implementation of most of these viable academic innovations is very slow especially at the secondary of education. This is why Umejih (2005) asserted that the rising cases of declining morale of principals, and the number of teachers leaving the job coupled with low academic achievement of, students might be due to planning and supervision inefficiencies of principals.

It is against this background that this study seeks to find out how principals efficiency in strategic planning and supervision of innovations can be improved in secondary schools to achieve the desired objectives of secondary education system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to:

1. Find out how principals can improve their efficiency in strategic planning of innovations in secondary schools in Cross River State
2. Ascertain how principals can improve their efficiency in supervision of innovations in Secondary Schools in Cross River State

Research Questions

1. How would principals improve their efficiency in strategic planning of innovations in secondary schools in Cross River State?
2. How would principals improve their efficiency in supervision of innovations in secondary schools in Cross River State?

Research Design

A descriptive survey design was used for the study. Descriptive survey design is chiefly concerned with finding, describing and interpreting "what is" and it is aimed at collecting large and small samples from population for examination and description that will permit inferences from the generalization (Denga and Ali, 1983). The design enable the researcher to gather existing data at appropriate time of the

Improving Principals' Efficiency in Strategic Planning and Supervision of Innovations in Secondary Schools in Cross River State- Ambrose Beluaye Anashie and Ifreke Uko Akpabio

study and to describe the attitude of school personnel towards educational innovations.

Area of Study

The study was carried out in Cross River State of Nigeria. It has 3 educational zones namely; Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja in each Senatorial District. Cross River State is situated within the tropics. It has a land mass of about 24,000km² comprising of Coastal mangrove, virgin Rain forest, Savannah Parkland and Wetland. It is lying between Latitude 5^o32 and 4^o27 North and Longitude 7^o50 and 9^o28 East (Mfam, 2002). It is a tourist destination.

Population of the Study

The population consisted of all the 250 principals and 5,896 teachers in all the 250 public secondary schools in the study area.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for the study comprises 486 respondents made up of 54 principals out of 250 and 432 teachers out of 5,896 from 54 public secondary schools out of 250. The simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents from each of the 3 education zones. In the selection process, 18 schools were selected from each education zone, then 1 principal and 8 teachers per school making a total of 54 principals and 432 teachers.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a four point rating scale questionnaire developed by the researchers tagged "Questionnaire for Principals Efficient Strategic Planning and Supervision of Innovation" (QPESPSI). The instrument was divided into three sections; A, B and C. Section 'A' consisted of two items on the bio-data of the respondents (whether principal or teacher), section 'B' consisted of 10 structured items to elicit information on strategic planning, while section 'C' comprised 10 items on supervision. The response of a four point rating scale ranging from strongly Agree of 4 points, to Strongly Disagree of 1 point was used.

Two experts in measurement and evaluation in the faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar validated the instrument. After scrutinizing the instrument, they offered useful suggestions. The instrument was pilot tested in ten secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State with a sample of 10 principals and 30 teachers to ensure its reliability. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This gave a coefficient value of 0.79. The result was considered high, hence reliable for the study.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaires were administered by the researchers with the aid of 3 research assistants from the three education zones in the State. The copies of the questionnaire were completed and retrieved immediately which led to a 100% retrieval. The data collected were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation scores based on a 4-point rating scale. The midpoint for the mean scale is 2.50. Any item with a mean response of 2.50 and above was considered positive indicating acceptance while any item with a mean response below 2.50 was considered negative and regarded as an indication of rejection of the item.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Research Question 1: How would principals improve their efficiency in strategic planning of innovation in secondary schools in Cross River State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Items Relating to Improving Principals' Efficiency in Strategic Planning

S/No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd	Decision
1	Set goals by planning clear vision and mission statements for the innovation.	3.46	1.04	Accepted
2.	Planning school goals to be achieved with a time frame or stipulated time.	3.42	1.11	Accepted
3	Prioritizing the needs of teachers and students when planning for resource provision for innovations.	3.92	0.73	Accepted
4	Planning with school staff to prioritize strategies for implementation of innovations.	3.71	0.86	Accepted
5	Planning for improved students' achievement standards, in relation to education Innovations.	3.68	1.09	Accepted
6	Planning clear objectives and timetable for implementing innovations.	3.53	1.13	Accepted
7	Prioritizing the need of school personnel when planning for resource provision.	3.68	1.15	Accepted

Improving Principals' Efficiency in Strategic Planning and Supervision of Innovations in Secondary Schools in Cross River State- Ambrose Beluaye Anashie and Ifreke Uko Akpabio

8	Deliberating and designing with staff, strategies for improved parental involvement in managing innovations.	3.23	1.80	Accepted
9	Planning innovative schedules of duty to permit maximum use of skill and decision by staff	2.53	0.62	Accepted
10	Planning should be optimistic in nature so as to be flexible and adaptable	3.64	1.22	Accepted

Data in table 1 shows that all the 10 items investigated has arithmetic mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that the principals could improve their efficiency in strategic planning of innovations in secondary schools in Cross River State by using the strategies stated.

Research Question II: How would principals improve their efficiency in supervision of innovations in secondary school in Cross River State?

Mean rating of the items relating to improving principals efficiency in supervision.

Table II: Mean Ratings of the Items Relating to Improving Principals' Efficiency in Supervision

S/No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd	Decision
1	Providing a variety of resources, direction, model, and guidance so that teachers see the need for adopting innovations	3.39	1.35	Accepted
2	Helping teachers identify sources of test materials	3.44	1.12	Accepted
3	Equipping teachers with skills for organizing resources and materials for more effective instructions.	3.42	1.11	Accepted
4	Assisting teachers identify sources of test materials for objectivity and validity	3.46	1.04	Accepted
5	Directing teachers to utilize modules regularly and effectively.	3.23	1.80	Accepted

Journal of Assertiveness

6	Directing and motivating teachers to improvise instructional resources when necessary.	3.42	1.01	Accepted
7	Observing how teachers utilize available instructional materials.	3.19	1.09	Accepted
8	Organizing workshops and seminars to help teachers improve their pedagogical skills	3.46	1.04	Accepted
9	Observing how teachers experiment with innovations in order to beef-up their effectiveness	2.80	1.67	Accepted
10	Assisting teachers to carry out action. Research to identify instructional problems	2.45	1.06	Rejected

Data in table 2 shows that only item 10 was rejected because its mean rating was below 2.50. All the other items had mean ratings above 2.50. This implies that the principals could improve their efficiency in supervision of innovations as per the accepted afore-stated items in the table.

Discussion of Findings

The responses to research question one, revealed that all the items were accepted. This implies that principals could become more efficient in strategic planning of innovation if school activities are planned as stated in these items. This also indicates optimism of the respondents to be ready to adapt to innovations if their activities are properly planned. This finding is in line with Onwuchekwa (2000) who highlighted basic steps that can be taken to provide the necessary incentives for efficient reform and innovations management in schools. These steps among others are: formulation of organizational goals, identifying current objectives, analyzing environmental changes and plan to adapt to the changes.

The responses to research question two, showed that the respondents accepted that to improve the principals' efficiency in supervision of innovations, they should provide a variety of resources, direction, model and guidance to make teachers see the need to easily adopt innovations; observe how teachers experiment with innovations in order to establish their effectiveness; teach and motivate teachers to improvise instructional materials as well as organize workshop to help teachers improve their pedagogical skills. These findings corroborates those of Craston (2000) and Igwe (2001) who asserted that principal is at the centre of changes that occur in at the school and viewed supervision as a process of ensuring that the policies, principles, rules, regulations and methods prescribed for the purpose of implementing and achieving the objectives of education are carried out. Hence the supervisor must

Improving Principals' Efficiency in Strategic Planning and Supervision of Innovations in Secondary Schools in Cross River State- Ambrose Beluaye Anashie and Ifreke Uko Akpabio

see himself as a model and learning resource through which the teacher learns to improve thereby, ensuring a sustainable future of the students as output.

Strategic planning, according to Leotimates (2006), presents a situation of high complexity, fluidity and vastness that only a process of committed planning by school administrators can be sufficiently responsive to. As a management tool, strategic planning assists principals in prudent management of resources by paying attention to priority areas. As Babalola (2006) noted that, without strategic planning competencies in goal setting, resource use, job scheduling and supervision, the challenges of education in Nigeria will be difficult to surmount. Thus, it is pertinent to note that principals, who adopt strategic planning, will find ease in policy implementation and improving students' academic achievement standards which will be in tandem with the desired objectives.

It becomes obvious that principals without these strategic planning competencies might be handicapped in terms of setting school goals, allocation of resources to school personnel based on need, result oriented supervision, efficient job scheduling, increasing academic standards, and curbing examination malpractices. These are among the proactive measures taken to transform Cross River State to achieving her vision which is "to become a leading Nigerian State with prosperous healthy and well educated citizens living in harmony with people and nature and pursuing legitimate interest, in freedom moderated by good governance" (Offiong, 2012).

Conclusion

The study has highlighted some essential hints that could assist principals to more efficiently use strategic planning and regular supervision in managing educational innovations to meet the expectations of these educational innovations experienced globally today. Principals as school administrators need to assist immensely through strategic planning and supervision. It is believed that if principals efficiently plan strategically and effectively supervise the activities of their subordinate staff, they will be able to keep pace with educational innovations and enhance effective teaching and learning process that will bring about quality education for sustainable future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Principals should set school goals and use other strategic planning practices to improve the smooth implementation and success of innovations in schools

- ii. Every plan should be comprehensible in nature so as to be flexible and open to making changes to strategic planning.
- iii. Innovation should be adapted to meet school needs by motivating teachers to improvise and observing how teachers implement instructional innovations in classes.
- iv. Principals should not only plan, but supervise the teachers to direct and guide the planning process, to help them easily adapt to change.

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Improving Principals' Efficiency in Strategic Planning and Supervision of Innovations in Secondary Schools in Cross River State- Ambrose Beluaye Anashie and Ifreke Uko Akpabio

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