

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF PRINCIPALS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The principals' performance in the effective administration of secondary schools ensures a result oriented service delivery that would move the nation's educational sector forward. The attainment of the above desired outcome is subject to the principal's leadership effectiveness. If the principal failed to be proficient in his job, there must be some factors endangering his proficiency. This paper explores the factors which are clogs in the wheel of effective performance of the principal in secondary schools. Besides, some remedies were suggested as panacea to quench the identified factors.

Introduction

Qualitative secondary education invariably bothers on the effective performance of the principal. It becomes pertinent to note that principals are saddled with multiple responsibilities to adequately maintain standard and excellence in the teachers and students conduct appropriate to a good setting for learning. Sequel to this, the principal owes it as a duty to guide, direct and motivate the progress and well-being of the school. It behooves the principal to institute rules, regulations, guidelines, modalities and techniques tailored towards effective administration of the school (Nwaugo 2004).

It is indisputable to assert vividly that the principals in Nigeria have faced a lot of challenges to the leadership of secondary schools. To this end, Nwaugo (2004: 4), opined that "principals are faced with truly professional tasks covering leadership of staff and students toward the significant purpose of accomplishing a common goal. From the above assertion, one can easily deduce that the complexity of the principal's job demands certain measures to be

taken in avoidance of any factor that are likely to meddle with the effective performance of the principal.

The Concept: Principal

The principal is an expertise who by legal implication, is vested with the authority and power to control and co-ordinate the helm of affairs in secondary schools. According to NPE (2004), a secondary school head is known as the principal. He can also be referred to as the chief executive, curriculum director or leader of a school. He is also said to be in-charge of the secondary schools.

The principal as a leader of secondary school should be endowed with unique qualities. Included in these qualities are the powers to instruct without ordering, correct without nagging, understand without being ^gullible, persuade without insisting, ask without demanding and to lead opinion without dictating his will (Adesina and Ogunsaju, 1984). In consonance, Ihebereme (2006: 101), pointed out that, technical and personality traits enable the principal to organize his staff and students'.

Consequently, Okoh (2003) contends that, the principal should possess the attributes of a charismatic leader so as to create an enabling atmosphere for success in all school programmes. As a leader, the principal gives direction, inspires, encourages, and serves as a catalyst and a control agent in order to ensure that all pre-set goals are met. However, a popular criterion for judging the performance of the principal in proven desirable and ^ relevant leadership remains very crucial in the effective administration of secondary education.

Factors Militating Against Effective Performance of the Principal

The following factors hinder effective performance of the principal in secondary schools:

1. Authority and Power

This factor according to Ezeocha (1985), is a projection of the result of over-centralization at the zonal board and the multiplicity of controlling agencies. The principal now finds himself in a position, where his authority is restricted and where he has to obtain permission to use his authority. The principal's inability to exercise authority over his staff vigorously erodes his confidence and potentials in management.

2. Finance

For the school system to function effectively, it must be financially viable. The reason is that finance is required for providing infrastructures, laboratory equipment, sports equipment, library equipment etc. Some of our schools today are poorly maintained, some have inadequate buildings while others have dilapidated infrastructures. These situations emanate from the fact that the government claims to have no money or its failure to allocate enough finance towards education in the state. It therefore, imposes a lot of administrative problems to the principal who finds it difficult to run the school programme with inadequate fund (Ezeocha, 1985).

In addition, the issue of non-payment of teachers' salaries is another impinging factor encountered by the principals. The teachers become uncontrollable and very difficult to discipline when they are not paid. The principals would never have the moral justification, to query the absenteeism of a teacher who has not been paid. If there is no effective teaching and learning going on in the schools, the students would become unruly and uncontrollable too.

3. Communication

Ukeje, Okorie and Nwagbara (1992), posited that, communication involves sharing and transmitting messages, ideas or attitudes among administrators, teachers, students, parents and other interested constituents. Effective communication brings about realization of stated goals and objectives in the school system. Most of the school principals lack the use of effective channels of communication. According to Okeke and U wazurike (1997), the channels of communication are formal, informal, downward and upward channel, lateral or horizontal and diagonal communication channel. Formal communication is information transmitted through the chain of command in the organizational structure. There would be no much flow of activities and achievements of stated objectives, if the principal is unable to use this type of communication channels. The school will be in disarray, if there are no proper directives from the principal.

Informal communication channel is a type of unplanned message and information that permeate the organizational structure. It could be termed grape vine. It affects the principal when this is neglected, for it will be impossible for him to get the actual feelings of his staff and students. Downward communication channel conveys directives from super-ordinates to subordinates. When the principal fails to disseminate information to his staff through this channel, the school would not achieve much work. The standard of the school will also be low when the principal fails to create a good atmosphere or proper method of getting information from his staff and students by way of having effective upward communication channel (Uwazurike, 1997).

4. Manpower

The principals need enough resources such as manpower to manipulate and direct all the resources made available to them. There are still some unprofessional teachers in the secondary school system (i.e. those teachers

without education certificates). This can cause an administrative chaos to the principal as he may not be able to train and direct the teacher who has no teaching skills and methods. The more prevalent manpower factor in the school system is mostly in the area of over staffing. For instance, all the urban secondary schools are over staffed with teachers. While rural located schools are denied the opportunity of having enough teachers. The urban secondary school principals do not have authorities to reject the surplus teachers sent to them and they encounter many problems in allocating the teachers to subjects and classes. (Anukam and Anukam, 2006).

5. School - Community Relationship

The school cannot exist in isolation but in co-operation with the community or society in which it finds itself. The success or failure of the principals of schools depends to a large extent, on the general educational environment of the communities and their value system. Some of the social environments in which some of the principals find themselves do not pave way for effective readership. For example, the business oriented communities like Onitsha, Aba, Nnewi etc give less attention to education. The utmost concentration of the youths in these areas is on how to make successful business and big money. The result is either they do not go to school at all or, they go with lack of concentration and seriousness. Students like these are difficult to discipline and they can also intimidate their principals, teachers and fellow students (Ezeocha, 1985).

Another instance is the case of communities that prefer farming to education. Thus, there is poor enrollment of students into secondary schools in such communities like Ohaozara, Abakaliki, or some of the communities in the Northern States. The few students who are in school do not show much interest and can leave school at the slightest opportunity. The principals find situations like these difficult to handle, they only need expert

skills to be effective in performing their administrative task (Ezeocha, 1985).

The issue of local politics in certain communities such as crisis between the Eze's and the Town Unions, inter-village crisis would also hamper effective performance of the principals in such areas. As a result of disunity in the community, the school may not get any support from them, and the principals in such situations would be at cross roads as to what to do or say in order not to offend any group (Oguike, 2005).

6. Social and Technological Change

Ejimadu (2001: 122), saw the technology of a society as that aspect of its culture that is primarily concerned with the capacity of the members of the society to adapt to their environment. As the society gets more and more sophisticated, their ability to adapt to the changing environment increases. This change is accelerated by new knowledge, skill, procedure and attitude that are introduced into the society e.g. the Information and Communication Technology which has interconnected the nation into a global village. The principal therefore, will be faced with the problem of how to integrate these technological changes into his administration. (Oguike, 2005).

7. Policies

Ogunna (1999), posits that, politics concerns itself with the power to take decisions that affect the entire society. Whoever has the political power in any society is in a position to take decisions that affect both the economy and the education of the society. According to Uwazurike (1991: 49), the history of Nigeria is punctuated by endemic disruption of the flow of governance. Each government comes in with its new methodology or change in the educational system. The school administration is therefore, constantly affected by the various political changes as each change would require change in the administration of the school.

8. Role Conflict.

Role conflicts arise from a number of sources, one of them is from the inconsistencies of multiple concurrent roles. If for instance, a school principal who is supposed to be an administrator is at the same time the bursar in the school. He will simply not perform well in his duties hence role conflict emanates. To buttress this, Uwazurike (1991), posits that, the commonest type of role conflict is observed when a worker held two positions at the same time.

Some Suggested Remedies to the Factors Militating against the Effective Performance of the Principal

From the foregoing, this paper highlights the following suggestions:

- 1) The Ministry of Education and the Zonal Board should endeavour to put in use effective means of communicating the principals in their various schools to avoid their coming to the offices for every of their needs.
- 2) The principals should be given free hand to utilize their power and authority in controlling the staff and students.
- 3) The principals should be made part of decision-making bodies in education matters.
- 4) The government should be more active in ensuring functional education that will achieve the aspiration of the community.
- 5) The principal should demonstrate an active interest in the life of the community and make the community feel the existence and importance of the school.
- 6) The principal should as much as possible, show interest in the local politics of the community in order to defend the interest of the school.
- 7) Regular workshops, seminars and conferences should be sponsored by the government, in other to enlighten the principals with innovative changes in methods and delivery system of school administration.

Conclusion

The principal as has been clarified in this paper is the administrator in secondary school. Therefore, the success and failure of any secondary school in achieving its stated goals depend to a large extent on effective performance of the principal. This paper discussed some of the factors that inhibit the secondary school principal from succeeding in his duties. Finally, suggested remedies were proffered.

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