

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND COUNSELLING AS INSTRUMENTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN IMPLEMENTING THE NEW SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the opinions of school principals and counsellors on some strategic issues that can lead to effective implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria. The study was done at Obollo Afor secondary education zone of Enugu State and Abakaliki Secondary Education zone (SEB) Ebonyi State. A total of 58 respondents comprising 26 male and 10 female principals; 9 male and 13 female counsellors were selected using stratified random sampling technique from a population of 110. A simple questionnaire called Strategic Management Inventory (SMI) was used for the study through survey research design. The study revealed that for effective implementation of the new curriculum: qualified and experienced teachers, well equipped laboratories and libraries, effective leadership, counselling services and good interpersonal relationships should be provided. It was recommended that only qualified and experienced teachers should be appointed as school principals; every school should have a functional counselling center; and principals and counsellors should work as partners in progress for the smooth implementation of the new curriculum in Nigeria.

In 1859, the Church Missionary Society introduced secondary education in Nigeria with the establishment of the CMS Grammar School, Lagos in order to increase personnel to spread gospel to the increasing audience of Christian faithful (Fafunwa, 1974). Between 1859 and 1959, several education policies were formulated and implemented by the colonial masters in Nigeria during which about 311 secondary grammar

schools were established. However, as Amaele, Akanbi and Salawu (2010) put it, the political independence in 1960 placed full responsibility of education and other spheres of human endeavour in the country on the government and people of Nigeria which led to the first ever National Curriculum Conference in 1969 that also gave birth to the first indigenous National Policy on Education in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1988 and 2004.

In the National Policy on Education, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) provides two basic goals of secondary education as acquisition of knowledge for useful living within the society; and preparation of students for higher education. This indigenous policy provided for two levels of secondary education, the Junior and Senior Secondary schools as an avenue to attain the above goals. In September 1982, the first set of students who graduated from the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme were admitted into the Junior Secondary schools to mark the implementation of the new policy in some states including the old Anambra State of which Abakaliki and Obollo Afar were part of.

The New Senior Secondary Education Curriculum

According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2008), the National Council on Education (NCE) met at Ibadan in the year 2005 and further reviewed the provisions of secondary education in the National Policy to reflect the realities of our contemporary society. This led to a total overhaul of the curricular of both junior and

senior secondary schools. The implementation at the junior secondary school level took effect from 2008 while that of the senior secondary schools commenced in September 2011 against 2011/2012 academic session.

The New Senior Secondary Education Curriculum structure as put together by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2008) stipulates that every student will offer five core compulsory cross cutting subjects and three to four elective subjects from their field of specialization which include humanities, science, technology and business studies. Besides, students are to pick their compulsory trade/entrepreneurship subject from a list of available 35 trades. It further stipulates that students may choose one elective subject outside their field of specialization provided that the total number of examinable subjects is not more than nine. At a glance, the curricular contents are as given on Table 1 below.

conditioning Refrigerator; Welding and fabrication, engineering craft practice; Electrical Installation and Maintenance work; Radio, TV and electrical work; Block laying, Brick laying and concrete work; Painting and decorating; Plumbing and pipe fitting; Machine woodworking; Carpentry and Joinery; Furniture making; Upholstery; Catering craft practice; Garment making; Textile trade; Dyeing and Bleaching; Printing craft practice; Cosmetology; Leather goods manufacturing and repair; Keyboarding; Shorthand; Data processing; Store keeping; Book keeping; GSM Maintenance; Photography; Tourism; Mining; Animal Husbandry; Fisheries; marketing; and Salesmanship. These thirty-five subject areas are comprehensive, demanding but relevant to the needs of Nigerians. Now, does every school have the required or minimum requirement to implement them? How will the principals and counsellors come in?

Table 1: Senior Secondary Education Curriculum Content

| Compulsory/core subjects | Science and Mathematics | Technology | Humanities |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. English Language | 1. Biology | 1. Technical Drawing | 1. Nigerian Languages |
| 2. General Mathematics | 2. Chemistry | 2. General Metal Works. | 2. Literature in English |
| 3. One trade with Entrepreneurship studies | 3. Physics | 3. Basic Electricity | 3. Geography |
| 4. Computer Studies. ICT. | 4. Further Mathematics | 4. Electronics | 4. Government |
| 5. Civic Education | 5. Agriculture | 5. Auto-Mechanics | 5. Christian Religious Studies |
| | 6. Physical Education | 6. Building Construction | 6. Islamic Religion Studies |
| | 7. Health Education | 7. Wood-Work Management | 7. History |
| | Business Studies | 8. Home Management | 8. Visual Arts |
| | 1. Accounting | 9. Foods Nutrition | 9. Music |
| | 2. Store Management | 10 Clothing and Textile. | 10. Arabic |
| | 3. Office Practice | | 11. French |
| | 4. Insurance | | 12. Economics |
| | 5. Commerce | | |

Source: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)

The Trade subjects out of which a student must pick at least one are: Auto body repair and spray painting; Auto Electrical work; Auto Mechanical work; Auto parts merchandising; Air

The Concept of Administration/Management

Administration and management in this context is used interchangeably. Administration or Management is seen by Onifade (2004) as a process of making use of human and non-human resources to achieve organizational goals. Adeleke (2001) narrows this down by saying that school management is a process of planning, controlling, organizing, staffing, leading, coordinating and directing available resources in a school towards the achievement of an educational goal. Ijaiya (2004) sees educational administration/management as a business that concerns implementation of educational policies and programmes formulated by agencies in charge of educational administration. Specifically, strategic management involves careful selection of managerial procedures based on needs and available resources aimed at achieving a set goal. It is an objective process of approaching issues to satisfy some areas of need using available resources and awareness. Strategic management of education ensures planned achievement of

educational goals and objectives using available limited human and material resources.

The Concept of Counselling

Counselling is defined variously by different experts. Onah (2002) sees counselling as a formalized and specialized activity in the school guidance programme which helps students to resolve personal problems and conflict, situations. Iwuama (1999) defines counselling as a preventive and curative helping service for both normal persons and persons having problems by creating opportunities for them to cope with their problems now and in future. Counselling is therefore an approach that helps individuals to avail themselves of satisfying life conditions based on available alternatives at their disposals. It improves learning outcomes and better adjustment to life both within and outside the school system or environment. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2000), counselling objectives at secondary school level are among others to equip students with the skills of making appropriate and satisfying choices; mobilize all the available resources of the school, home and community for the satisfaction of students' educational, vocational and psycho-social needs; and equip students with problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Related Literature

Over the years, implementation of reforms, policies and innovations in Nigerian education system especially at secondary school level has been affected by several factors. According to Gusau (2008), failure of implementation is basically due to shortage of infrastructure and qualified teachers as well as inconsistencies in implementation itself. Alagbu (2010) has inadequate funding, unreliable statistical data, inadequate infrastructural facilities, overpopulation and non-involvement of stakeholders as major problems that militate against implementation of educational programmes in Nigeria. Both Gusau (2008) and Alagbu (2010)

are of the opinion that the only way to ensure sincere implementation of educational policies is to provide infrastructural facilities, qualified experts, funds and involvement of stakeholders. Of significant importance and relevance to this study is the issue of non-involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of secondary education policies in Nigeria.

This study therefore sought to find out the views of school principals as school administrator and counsellors as stakeholders in involving them in the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria through strategic management and counselling. The study became necessary as all efforts put in place by the researchers to trace available literature that highlighted a more appropriate strategy of educational policy implementation proved abortive. Besides, due to the numerous provisions of the new curriculum as outlined, there is the need for strategic management of available resources in secondary schools through genuine due process that can enthrone quality assurance. Ijaiya (2002) is of the opinion that quality assurance as a means of identifying, preventing and solving problems of implementation of secondary education rests squarely on school principals and other stakeholders (like school counsellors). Hence, strategic management by school principals and adequate functioning of counsellors in secondary schools will ensure smooth implementation of the newly introduced curriculum in Nigeria. The principals are to make resources available, ensure effective administration, programme planning, provide policy making strategy, make available funds and facilities that can improve instructional programmes (Nwankwo, 1982) while the counsellors act as lubricating oil in the system to ensure smooth implementation and quality assurance in our educational institutions especially at the secondary school level. These will no doubt wipe away the inconsistencies and confusion that

hitherto bedeviled educational policy implementation in Nigeria.

Research Question

One research question guided the study. What are the basic implementations of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H0₁ There is no significant difference between the views of school principals and school counselors on the basic strategies needed for the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria.

H0₂ There is no significant difference between the opinions of male and female school principals on the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria through strategic management and counselling.

H0₃ There is no significant difference between the opinions of male and female counsellors on the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria through strategic management and counselling.

Research Methodology

The study employed the survey research using the population of all the principals and counsellors in Abakaliki education zone of the Secondary Education Board (SEB), Ebonyi State and Obollo Afor zone of the Post Primary Schools Management Board (PMB) Enugu State with 65 and 45 secondary schools respectively. Through stratified random sampling, a total of 36 principal

and 22 counsellors were selected from the 23 principals and 7 counsellors from Abakaliki zone and 13 principals and 15 counsellors from Obollo Afor zone, making a total of 58 subjects for the study. The fewer number of counsellors from Abakaliki zone is due to non-availability of practicing counsellors in Ebonyi State Secondary schools.

A simple questionnaire known as Strategic Administrative Inventory (SMI) was constructed, validated and used for the study. It was constructed using item-statements with four response categories: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree which were weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The final version of the instrument with 15 statements survived after the original draft with 25 statements went through validation exercise by experts in Educational foundations and counseling psychology.

The questionnaires were distributed by the researchers and some lieutenants. Out of 70 copies that were sent out, 58 were properly filled and used for the study. The information contained in the questionnaires were extracted, weighted and used for data analysis.

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and t-test statistics. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation (SD) while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 per cent level of significance using t-test. A mean score of 2.5 and above on a particular statement shows strong opinion of the respondents about that statement as a strategic management technique for implementing the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria while a score of less than 2.5 indicates non-acceptance of the statement.

Table 2: Responses of School Principals and Counsellors on Strategies Required for Implementing Nigeria’s New Senior Secondary Education Curriculum.

| S/N | Item | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | SD |
|-----|---|----|---|---|----|------|------|
| 1 | Provision of physical facilities | 44 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 3.62 | 0.67 |
| 2 | Equipment of school laboratories and libraries. | 49 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3.79 | 0.52 |
| 3 | Engaging artisans in teaching special subjects. | 10 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 2.38 | 1.03 |
| 4 | Provision of counselling services | 32 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3.22 | 1.03 |
| 5 | Counsellors as partners in progress. | 41 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 3.50 | 0.88 |
| 6 | Counsellors as subordinates to Vice Principals. | 4 | 6 | 3 | 18 | 2.02 | 0.09 |
| 7 | Sourcing funds from donor agencies. | 31 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3.47 | 0.71 |
| 8 | Provision of genuine leadership. | 46 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 3.69 | 0.65 |
| 9 | Provision of relevant information. | 39 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 3.50 | 0.79 |
| 10 | Training and re-training of teachers | 46 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3.70 | 0.82 |
| 11 | Proper evaluation of academic programmes. | 49 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 3.74 | 0.54 |
| 12 | Periodic evaluation of curricular contents | 28 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2.94 | 0.91 |
| 13 | Engagement of only qualified teachers. | 45 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3.71 | 0.76 |
| 14 | Effective interpersonal relationship. | 48 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 3.68 | 0.49 |
| 15 | Motivation of teachers and other staff. | 50 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3.84 | 0.36 |

The data on table 2 indicate that the respondents are unanimous on the indices that need to be put in place in order to effectively implement the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria. However, they don’t see the need to engage and involve artisans in classroom business (Item 3 with only 2.38). Also, placing school counselors under the Vice Principals is unacceptable (Item 6 with only 2.02). It is therefore emphatic that provision of physical facilities, genuine leadership, training

and re-training of teachers, proper evaluation of academic programmes, engagement of qualified teachers, effective interpersonal relationships and motivation of teachers and other staff are essential for the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria. Also very vital as revealed above is the provision of viable counselling units in secondary schools to provide counselling services and relevant information to the students.

Table 3: The t-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of Principals and Counsellors

| Respondents | Number | Mean | SD | T-Cal | T-Val | Decision |
|-------------|--------|------|------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Principal | 36 | 3.46 | 0.44 | 0.55 | 1.96 | Not Significant |
| Counselors | 22 | 3.35 | 0.57 | | | |

The data on table 3 indicate that the t-calculated (0.55) is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 per cent level of significance. By implication, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the views of school principals and counsellors on the basic strategies needed for the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria is hereby upheld. What this shows is that the school principals and counsellors believe that they have significant roles to play in ensuring that the new curriculum is implemented irrespective of the dearth of facilities and qualified manpower in our secondary school system today. It is therefore left for the various governments, organization and individuals concerned to provide the enabling environment that can lead to the realization of this desirable curriculum reform in senior secondary schools so that school principals and counselors can work effectively and efficiently to achieve the desired results.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of the Responses of Principals on Gender Basis

| Respondents | Number | Mean | SD | T-Cal | T-Val | Decision |
|-------------|--------|------|------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Male | 26 | 3.61 | 0.25 | 0.41 | 1.96 | Not Significant |
| Female | 10 | 3.54 | 0.19 | | | |

The data on table 4 show that the t-calculated (0.41) is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 per cent level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the opinions of male and female and school principals on the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria through strategic management and counseling is hereby accepted. It shows that both male and female principals of secondary schools are in agreement that both strategic management and counseling are important variables that cannot be treated with levity in the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria.

Table 5: t-test Analysis of the Responses of Counsellors on Gender Basis

| Respondents | Number | Mean | SD | T-Cal | T-Val | Decision |
|-------------|--------|------|------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Principal | 9 | 3.62 | 0.22 | 0.052 | 1.96 | Not Significant |
| Counselors | 13 | 3.61 | 0.16 | | | |

The data on table 5 indicate that the t-calculated (0.052) is far less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 per cent level of significance. By this result, it means that the null hypothesis of no significant difference between male and female counsellors on the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria through strategic management and counselling is hereby accepted. Both male and female school counsellors indicated through their responses to the statements on the instrument (SMI) as confirmed by the t-test result above that strategic management and counselling are needed for the implementation

of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria.

Discussion

Policy makers in Nigeria always provide and put together lofty ideas while articulating their views. The recent curriculum review at secondary school level is a welcome development in the history of secondary education reform in Nigeria. The policy provides a comprehensive overhaul of senior secondary education to enable school leavers become good and useful citizens, employable, self-reliant, trade conscious and equipped with what it takes to advance to tertiary institutions. In the past, several reforms failed majorly because of poor implementation and neglect of stakeholders (Gusau, 2008). The recently introduced dual leadership in secondary schools that provided for a separate principal each in Junior and Senior secondary schools under the same roof or compound failed to see the light of the day because of poor management of leadership crisis that ensued in the process.

This study discovered some key areas that are required to be handled by school heads and counselors to ensure smooth implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria so that the efforts of those who put the reform together will not be in vain. Two things are basically required as observed in this study. They are good and purposeful leadership through strategic management and proper counselling services and strategies in all senior secondary schools in Nigeria. Through strategic management, there would be physical facilities, equipped laboratories and libraries, qualified teachers and leadership per excellence that can strategically place every senior secondary school in a better footing (Table 1). This finding is in line with the position of Gusau (2008) that for reforms to be meaningful in schools, efforts should be made to equip schools with the required infrastructure and human resources.

The study also revealed that motivation of teachers and other stakeholders through incentives and training and retraining as well as effective interpersonal relationship are appropriate strategies that can be effectively employed in implementing the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria. Here, the quality of school principals matters a lot. This discovery is in agreement with the position of Agbulu (2010) that implementation issues in secondary schools can be handled effectively through adequate motivation, funding and good public relations.

Another important discovery of this study is the need and position of school counsellors in implementing the new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria. This concurs with the position of the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) that in view of the apparent ignorance of youths about careers coupled with adjustment problems, there is need for counsellors to be posted to secondary schools. The new curriculum has numerous subjects from where students are to pick only nine. For instance, there are thirty-five trade subjects from where every student must pick at least one as a cross-cutting core subject. It is the professional responsibility of school counsellors to assist the students in choosing their subjects in line with their career aspirations and personality traits like interest, abilities and capabilities. They need to be guided in order to choose from the required groups and satisfy their life ambitions. The counsellors will also assist students in developing good study behaviour that can lead to their excellent performance in examinations in order to upturn the incessant mass failure of students in both internal and public examinations. With this, they (the students) can also shun and resist the temptations of examination malpractices.

Finally, there was a unanimous voice irrespective of gender as revealed (Tables 4 and 5) in the study that strategic management and counselling are very vital in the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum in

Nigeria. This discovery is in total agreement with the positions of Gasau (2008) and Alagbu (2010) that involvement of stakeholders (including males and females) in the formulation and implementation of education policies in Nigeria is a very cogent factor that no government should toy with.

Conclusion

Strategic management of schools is an aspect of educational administration and planning that involves appropriate utilization of available resources to solve the most critical needs of schools and the larger societies. The new senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria is well loaded and requires concerted and careful implementation in order to achieve the set goals and objectives of secondary education in the country. It provides for a wide range subjects that cut across core subjects, science and mathematics, business studies, humanities, technology and trades. This calls for proper identification of needy areas and purposeful implementation using minimum standards through strategic management and counseling. Prominent among the strategies are adequate provision of qualified and experienced teachers, equipment, information/awareness, genuine leadership, counseling services and effective interpersonal relationships among others. With this in place, school leavers in Nigeria can be gainfully employed, proceed to tertiary institutions, write examinations without cheating, become self-sustained and remain good citizens in the midst of life challenges.

Recommendations

The task of implementing a sound and comprehensive senior secondary education curriculum that can stand the test of time and ensure continuity of education policies in Nigeria cannot be left in the hands of mediocre. There is need for genuine experts and stakeholders to come in and work out modalities and action plans for the implementation of the new curriculum in a manner

that will provide quality assurance, It is in realization of this that this paper recommends that:

1. Only qualified, experienced and hardworking senior teachers should be appointed as school principals irrespective of their political or ethnic affiliations.
2. Schools should be equipped with qualified and relevant teachers, laboratories, libraries and workshops.
3. Teachers and other stakeholders should be motivated regularly through financial rewards, regular promotions, enhanced salaries and allowances, comfortable accommodation/housing and training and retraining through seminars, workshops and professional conferences.
4. School principals should be genuine leaders who must be conscious of their leadership qualities and styles so as to carry all his staff along in the process of discharging his duties.
5. School principals should evolve effective interpersonal relationship that can enable them liaise with the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), donor agencies and wealthy individuals in their localities in order to seek their support in providing physical facilities, funds and other assistance that can help their schools to grow and implement the new curriculum with ease.
6. There should be proper evaluation of academic programmes devoid of examination malpractices.
7. Every secondary school in Nigeria should have at least one professional and functional counsellor whose office should be autonomous, well equipped with supporting staff, counselling materials, facilities, and funds to source for information, and periodically organize career week, orientation for new students and staff, and public lectures.
8. On no account should school counsellors be subordinate to any Vice- Principal no matter their rank or grade level.
9. School counsellors should be given free hand to discharge their professional duties.
10. School principals should see their counsellors as partners in progress whose duties are for the smooth running of the school and not as rivals.

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