

# EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: ISSUES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

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## **Abstract**

The paper highlighted the meaning of supervision including supervision of instruction. It mirrored the purposes of supervision and the qualities of a supervisor. The impediments to effective supervision were highlighted. The paper further established the meaning of quality assurance and the relationship between instructional supervision and quality assurance. In conclusion, it was made clear that quality assurance can only be guaranteed and the purposes of secondary education achieved under fertile conditions, one of which is effective supervision of instruction in Nigerian secondary schools. Suggestions were then put forward.

All organizations including churches, corporate enterprises and schools exist essentially to achieve certain stated objectives. To ensure the achievement the stated objectives, such organizations are guided by certain principles and mechanisms in order to ensure success. One of such mechanisms includes supervision. Secondary education is of course a very important segment of the education ladder both in Nigeria and elsewhere. This is because secondary education not only produces middle level manpower for the economy, it also prepares its beneficiaries for tertiary education.

## **The Concept of Supervision**

In the words of Moorar in Kochhar (2005), supervision include those activities which are primarily and directly concerned with studying and improving the conditions of which surround the learning and growth of pupils. Supervision is that which helps to improve the teaching function (Igbo, 2002). According to

Nwaogu (1980), supervision is the process of helping, guiding, advising and stimulating growth in a subordinate in order to improve on the quality of his work. Supervision is therefore any programme which helps teachers achieve both qualitative and quantitative instructional delivery. From the foregoing, it could easily be deduced that supervision is an indispensable variable in the teaching learning process, as well as the overall school and educational objectives. Supervision involves supervising the teaching cum classroom activities of the teacher.

It is important to state that supervision of instruction can only be said to be effective if it achieves its stated objectives, which is quality instructional delivery. Anything to the contrary means the failure of the programme of supervision. It then becomes imperative to distinguish between supervision and inspection. Both processes aim at checking the work of subordinates. Inspection as a concept is however more outdated. It aims at evaluating the work of the teacher. It is more prone to fault finding. On the other hand, supervision which is a more modern concept aims at helping the teacher improve on his work. It aims at helping the teacher become a better teacher, especially in his capacity to deliver quality instruction to the students.

## **Purposes of Instructional Supervision**

There are two main purposes of instructional supervision in schools especially secondary schools. (a) Teacher improvement purposes (b) Non teacher improvement purposes. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Handbook on Training School Supervisors as contained in

Ani (2007:98) lists the following as the teacher improvement purposes of school instructional supervision;

- ensuring that teachers perform their assigned function effectively;
- ensuring that teachers are capable of carrying out their teaching responsibilities;
- ensuring that new teachers receive training to enable them function effectively on the job;
- ensuring that teachers are given assistance whenever there is need;
- providing professional information to the teachers;
- guiding teachers to the sources of instructional materials;
- providing technical assistance to the teachers especially in the areas of teaching methods and the use of instructional materials;
- ensuring that discipline is maintained during classroom instruction;
- helping or suggesting how to improve on the performance of incompetent teachers;
- providing an enabling environment to discover teachers with special abilities and qualities.

The non teacher improvement purposes of supervision as highlighted by Ani (2007:99-100) include;

- ensuring proper supply of teaching materials to the schools;
- ensuring that quality of instruction is maintained;
- providing the opportunity to assess the moral tone of the school;
- providing feedback to educational planners on the need for curriculum improvement or changes.

Achieving the purposes of instructional supervision in secondary schools makes the achievement of the goals of secondary education much easier. This becomes more imperative and pressing as the cry all over the federation presently is about degeneracy in the education sector. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:18), the goals of secondary education include to:

- provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;
- provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;
- inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence;
- foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity;
- raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens;
- provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

#### **Who is a Supervisor?**

A supervisor is anyone assigned the function of helping others (teachers) to improve on their instructional competencies. At the state level it could be officers from the Ministry of

Education, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), or Local Government Education Authority at the local level. A supervisor could also be the principal of a school, or a senior member of staff of a school (Ani, 2007). According to Igwe (2001:254).

*Supervision in a school system implies the process of ensuring that policies, principles, rules, regulations and methods prescribed for purposes of implementing and achieving the objectives for education are effectively carried out. Supervision involves the use of expert knowledge and experience to oversee, evaluate and coordinate the process of improving teaching and learning in schools.*

The above functions and processes of supervision is of course concretized by the supervisor. Aderonmu and Ehiamentor in Ani (2007) lists the specific functions of a supervisor to include; planning, staff-development, assessment, allocation of funds and provision of instructional materials.

Supervision which could be internal or external also involves evaluation, monitoring and quality control for the purposes of curriculum and instructional development and improvement. To achieve this, some specific tasks of the supervisor in a modern school have been identified and are listed as follows:

- helping principals and teachers to understand children better;
- helping teachers' individual professional growth;
- acquiring cooperating spirit for team work;
- making better use of teaching materials;
- improving methods of teaching;
- improving teacher appraisal of his students;
- self evaluation of teachers' plan, work and progress;
- acquisition of dignity for the teacher within the community;

- faculty plan for curriculum improvement (Igwe, 2001).

According to Nwaogu in Ani (2007), the personal qualities of an ideal supervisor include; respectability, sense of humour, creativity and inspiration. Nwosu (1997) lists the leadership qualities of supervisors to include the capacity to; appreciate the human dignity and individual worth of teachers; respect the individual differences in teachers, and appreciate the potentialities and delegate function, and authorities where and when necessary. Above all, Nwosu maintains that the supervisor should be resourceful. Ani (2007:83-89), highlights the professional qualities of a good supervisor to include;

- professional certificate in education
- broad general education;
- knowledge of pedagogy;
- indept knowledge of the subject matter;
- ability to evaluate and explain factors in productive teaching and learning;
- willingness and ability to continue and encouraging personal and professional growth.

#### **Impediments to Effective Supervisor of Instruction**

Effective supervision of instruction whether internal or external can only succeed if the conditions are fertile. Some of the impediments to effective supervision of instruction in schools include:

- lack of experience on the part of the supervisor;
- favouritism
- lack of personal, leadership and professional qualities;
- lack of incentives on the part of the government;
- lack of motivation.

### **Quality Assurance**

According to Webster's Dictionary (1977), quality is the characteristics of anything regarded as determining its value, worth, rank or position. Assurance on the other hand connotes "to make sure, secure, guarantee or make certain. Quality assurance therefore implies making sure that the value or worth of anything or service(s) is secured, guaranteed or maintained. Fergabaum in Nwagbara (2008) opines that the word quality is often used to signify excellence of a product, service or action. He asserts that quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. It is therefore the ability of such products or services to meet the expectation of the recipient or users. This of course involves Quality Control", which is the regular process through which products, services and quality performance are measured.

Longman (1990) defined quality assurance as all those planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will satisfy given requirements for quality. This implies meeting or even surpassing the minimum standards set by appropriate authority.

Quality assurance is regarded as a process and practice primarily concerned with conformance to mission specification and goal achievement within the publicly accepted standards of excellence (Okereke, 2008). It is a strategy for ensuring quality in the school system (Ololobou, 2008). According to Vlasceanu, Grunbery and Parlea (2004), quality assurance refers to an aggregate of actions and measures taken regularly to assure the quality of education products, services, or processes, with an emphasis on assuring that a prescribed threshold of quality is met.

Quality assurance means putting in place appropriate structures, legislations, supervision of personnel and materials in order to ensure that

set minimum standards are attained, sustained and seen to have meaningful impact on society. Quality assurance is important because it ensures that goods and services produced in a country are of the highest possible standard, as well as protecting buyers from purchasing sub-standard products (Uya, 2008). According to Oriafe in Maduewesi (2005), quality assurance is a baseline standard in education which can be measured on a scale of reference. It is an expression of standard or a means by which a certain set standard in education can be achieved.

It could easily be deduced therefore that quality assurance in education is a totality of the combination of such indispensable variables as quality teachers, quality instructional materials and quality infrastructure (classrooms, seats, tables, chalkboards etc). Others include; favourable teacher/pupils ratio, favourable pupils/classroom ratio and quality instructional supervision. All these and more surely results to quality product (student) who is exposed to a balanced and result oriented education, especially secondary education. He is well prepared to face not just the challenges of tertiary education, but the challenge of providing middle level technical and administrative service in any sector of the Nigerian economy.

### **Instructional Supervision and Quality Assurance**

The paper have so far tried as much as possible to make an indepth exposee on instructional supervision and quality assurance. Instructional supervision is of course an indispensable variable in attaining quality assurance at all levels of education especially secondary schools. Ogunu (2001:274) listed the following as impediments or constraints to effective supervision of instruction in schools:

- inadequate number of inspectors
- inadequate funds for inspection
- lack of transportation;

- non-implementation of inspection reports;
- inadequate facilities for supervision;
- lack of incentives and motivation;
- lack of training and experience in educational supervision;
- lack of in-service opportunity for training and retraining of school supervisors;
- lack of time for inspection due to non-supervisory administrative burden;
- lack of executive power to ensure implementation of recommendations;
- lack of commitment by supervisors;
- uncooperative attitude of principals and teachers;
- supervisors' autocratic supervisory style;
- lack of follow-up supervision;
- corrupt practices by some supervisors;
- use of unqualified (untrained and inexperienced) classroom teachers for school supervision.

A close look at the above constraints show that both concepts supervision and inspection were used interchangeably. It is clear that effective tackling of the listed impediments give a positive impetus to supervision of instruction and thence to quality assurance in our secondary schools.

According to Chukwu (2008), adequate instructional materials, fat salaries, bonuses and other financial incentives are important variables needed by the teacher and the supervisor to perform.

### **Conclusion**

The paper tried as much as possible to convey the meaning of supervision and instructional supervision, its purposes, qualities of a good supervisor and some of the impediments to effective supervision of instruction. Attempt was also made to highlight the synergy between instructional supervision and quality assurance. From the foregoing, it is

clear that quality assurance in instructional delivery will remain utopian in the absence of effective instructional supervision of schools in our country.

### **Recommendations**

The following are recommended.

- Experience definitely counts in every endeavour. Retired but strong headteachers and teachers who have long years of on the field experience should be used as supervisors.
- The question of handling different teachers differently in the name of favouritism should be checked by supervisors as this does not promote merit.
- Bumper incentives should be provided to encourage the supervisors. This should come in the form of fat salaries and allowances. It also checks corrupt tendencies amongst supervisors.
- Provision of requisite materials that aid their work including adequate transportation for both urban and rural areas should be top priority.

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