

Clarifying Educational Supervision in School Administration: A Case of Nigeria

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Abstract

Internal school supervision remains an obscure, underrated and under-utilized tool of school administration particularly in Nigeria resulting in diminishing quality of education. While under-funding, poor infrastructure and weak teachers are being blamed for poor quality education, the role of school leadership receives little or no attention. This paper contends that Heads of schools as the school leader and supervisor has significant role to play in the quality equation but are hardly prepared for it due to ignorance and lack of training of career supervisors. Their role as educational supervisors therefore needs to be cleared. The paper discussed the nitty-gritty of school administration, breaking it down to administrative and instructional supervision and their constituents, the concept of educational supervision and processes, qualities expected from lesson presentation as well as the qualities of supervisors and supervisees. It highlighted several factors responsible for the cloudy nature of the administrative role of school Heads and consequences on the system. It was recommended, among others, that a programme at Postgraduate level be mounted in the Universities to train career supervisors in Nigeria and appointment of school leaders be based on such qualification and merit, not just as experienced teacher or on politics.

Key words: Demystify, Educational supervision, Educational administration, Instructional supervision

Introduction

In the last two decades, there has been global concern for quality education. Parts of the global answer to that concern were setting of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, which all nations were expected to key into but which many, like Nigeria are still struggling to achieve. The challenges of each nation certainly differ. In Nigeria, the challenge of quality in the educational system is grave and worsening. It is manifested in the poor quality of language skills among teachers and students, massive failure by private candidates in public examinations organized by the West African Examination Council. The results of 2018, (17.5 %) and 2019 (26.08%) show only a small percentage of improvement (Daily Trust, 2019). In spite of the 2018 fairly good performance in the May-June West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination(WASSCE) in which Nigerian candidates score 64% with five credits including English and Mathematics and the steady rise between 2018 and 2019 (Premium Times, 2019), many Nigerians especially employers of labour and the Government are still jittery about the quality of

Nigerian school products. Some citizens have called for declaration of emergency. Of note is the sacking of 22,000 teachers in Kaduna State, Nigeria in 2018 by the State Governor over their failure to pass Primary Four pupils' examination questions. This was attributed to low quality of the teachers, both holders of Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) and University degrees (Daily Trust, 2019). While that assertion is correct due to noticeable weaknesses in the training of teachers (Okebukola, 2005; Ijaiya, 2008; 2012; Ezeoba, Obi, and Olibie 2013), a major factor that has been overlooked for many years is the internal supervision of the teachers, which is part and parcel of in-service training. No matter how good the pre-service training of teachers is, they cannot acquire all the skills they would need throughout their career. Supervision is a concept that has been grossly misunderstood, confused with inspection even in the National Policy of Education (NERDC, 2013), under-utilized and so ineffective in ensuring the desired quality education. To make matter worse, hardly is any attention paid to the supervisory role of the Head Teacher or Principal in the NPE (FRN, 2004) as a guide for action nor is there a specialized programme for career school supervisors in teacher training institutions beyond a two-credit course. This paper therefore seeks to demystify the concept and practice of supervision in education. Specifically, it will address the following:

- i. justify or clear the need to demystify the concept and practice of school supervision;
- ii. clarify the concept of educational supervision and its purpose in schools;
- iii. distinguish between types of supervision: administrative and instructional supervision; and
- iv. identify the qualities expected of both the supervisor and the supervisee.

The Rationale for Clarification of School Supervision

To clarify is to make something clearer, or to remove it from obscurity for the purpose of making it better understood and hence better performed or more effective. Internal supervision, an important tool of school administration and Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) by Heads of schools (Head teachers, Principals, etc.) remains obscure in many educational systems in terms of performance. Many school heads/leaders see their role as mainly 'controller' of school finance. This misconception is possibly a major cause of school failure to meet societal expectations of quality education especially in Nigeria. This cardinal assignment of a Head of school is known to be under-performed possibly due to ignorance, lack of or poor training, inexperience or unsuitability for the position, which is harmful to the educational system. While a Head teacher or Principal must be a trained and qualified teacher, he also needs to be certified in school management especially in 'Leadership and Supervision'. Right now, such specialization is not part of the condition for appointment of Head teachers, not even at the tertiary level in Nigeria.

When a person who has no medical training is caught practicing medicine, he is branded a fake doctor and would be arrested. But in the education sector there can be many unqualified/untrained teachers and they are welcomed even with open arms especially in developing countries like Nigeria, hence the army of unqualified or poorly trained teachers in the education system. In a recent qualifying test conducted by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), 19,273 out of 72,947 teachers who participated failed (The PUNCH, 2019, p.7). The main excuse usually made is that the demand for teachers is higher than supply but that cannot hold water in the last decade with 152 Colleges of Education and many Universities in Nigeria turning out thousands of Nigeria Certificate of Education, (NCE) and graduate teachers, with many roaming the streets in search of jobs. Whereas the damage caused by a fake doctor could be instantaneous as in killing a patient, that of a fake or poorly trained teacher may take years to manifest and might even be untraceable to him. This is the reason why it could take many years before the dwindling quality of education rears its ugly head. Unfortunately, this category of teachers is predominant at the foundation level of education where they cause enormous and sometimes irreparable damage for the upper levels. The fact that classrooms are manned by graduates is not a sufficient guarantee for quality teaching and effective learning as rightly asserted in Kaduna State. The quality of the skills taught in teacher training nowadays deserves serious questioning (Ijaiya, 2019).

A major intervention, after the teacher's pre-service training is the quality of supervision. That intervenes in how the teacher utilizes his knowledge and skills to bring about the desired learning in his students. Even though with the development of science and technology, the teacher is no longer the only source of knowledge as in those days in the teaching and learning process, he however remains a major guide and so his training must be sound. In fact, the demand on the teachers' competence is on the increase in the 21st century and a big challenge to his career. For instance, how the teacher assists his students to sieve the good out of the bad information overload on the internet is a major challenge nowadays for the teachers and parents. They have to be computer-literate (Ijaiya, 2019).

Meanwhile, attempt by the Government to provide opportunity for teachers at the foundation level to upgrade their certificate from Grade II to NCE in the 1990s through the Nigerian Teacher Institute (NTI) has not helped much to improve the quality of teaching and pupil learning in schools. On the other hand, it mostly created an army of certificated teachers without appropriate skills, which resonate in their students' performance especially in language and critical thinking skills. Teacher education curriculum tends to lay more emphasis on the theoretical aspect at the expense of practical teaching and attitudinal components mainly due to poor supervision in the training process. This affects their performance on the job.

Also, in spite of Government efforts to improve the quality of teachers by making NCE the minimum qualification for teaching in Nigeria, there is still a large percentage of untrained/unqualified teachers across many States as shown in Table 1. Worse still, 277,537 teaching positions are said to be outstanding in Basic education according to the National Personnel Audit report released by the Minister of Education with a breakdown showing 135,319 outstanding in Early Childhood Education, 139,772 in primary schools and 2,446 in Junior Secondary Schools (Daily Trust, 2019). To bridge the gap and cushion the negative effect, ‘Youth Corpers’ who serve for only one year after graduation including HND graduates are utilized. Another stop-gap is the recent project of the Federal Government to reduce unemployment through ‘N-Power’ teachers, some of who do not report in schools. Both cases are not good alternative to permanent teachers who can be subjected to regular supervision.

Table 1: Some States with high percentage of unqualified teachers in Nigeria

State	Qualified teachers in %	Unqualified teachers in %
Kebbi	49	51
Lagos	53	47
Jigawa	57	43
Gombe	60	40
Zamfara	62	38
Imo	63	37
Abia	64	36
Oyo	77	23
FCT	76	24
Benue	76	24
Plateau	76	24

Source: Daily Trust (December, 17, 2019). Kebbi, Lagos, Jigawa top list of States with Unqualified teachers. pressreader.com Retrieved 24/12/2019

From Table 1 which is based on the latest release by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), four States namely Kebbi with 51%, Lagos with 47%, Jigawa, 43% and Gombe, 40% top the list of States with large percentage of unqualified teachers (Daily Trust, 2019). Such teachers certainly need close supervision.

In addition, in spite of the rapid development in science and technology, the general public complaints in many countries is that many children are learning less and less possibly because of distractions from the high- tech environment and/or because the schools are not doing enough to meet the challenges posed by technology. The quality that education demands today is higher than that of yesteryears. Whereas most of what a

student needed to do to earn high grade then was to be able to reproduce what the teacher taught in the class, but in this age of science and technology, creativity, innovativeness, intuitiveness and versatility are qualities the school must develop in their learners hence the need for close supervision internally.

The NPE document itself highlighted the shortage of inspectors in the educational system, their poor performance, reports not being given proper implementation as well as poor funding that limit their outing. Some schools are “over-inspected” while others are “under-inspected” (NERDC, 2013, p.22). It failed to give prominence to internal supervision and confused it with inspection. The change of name from Inspectorate Division to Quality Assurance Bureau is not the issue in promoting quality as long as they are not on ground everyday. Even the School Supervision Officers (SSO) of the Local Government Areas Education section cannot claim to know the school challenges more than the Head teachers. For the above reasons and more, it is imperative that the Government/education policy makers and Head teachers understand thoroughly the important role of internal supervision at school level and ensure it is done correctly to save education from total collapse in Nigeria. The relevant question that should follow is what objectives does internal school supervision seek to achieve?

Purpose of Educational Supervision

There are good reasons for Chief Executives/Head of schools to take control of all activities of their schools. some of which are:

1. To provide leadership in the school community. According to the literature, leadership is key to organizational success or failure and its effectiveness is measured by outcomes or end results of its actions or inputs with emphasis on students’ achievements (Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin&Taherdoost, 2017);
2. To ensure that education policies are correctly interpreted and implemented;
3. To promote quality education in schools, not by ‘the end justifies the means’ but by positive actions/processes;
4. To ensure that teachers and non-teaching staffs render quality services to students;
5. To ensure, in particular that teachers use appropriate methodology, textbooks, and classroom management to enhance effective teaching;
6. To ensure provision of adequate resources for teaching and students’ welfare;
7. To ensure credible examination of students and prompt release of results;
8. To uphold discipline in the school;
9. To ensure accurate record keeping and easy retrieval;
10. To promote good standard of education and even raise it higher; and
11. To promote cordial relationship with the school’s immediate community and home – school collaboration.

A school leader's performance /effectiveness can be measured through those outcomes.

Concept of Educational Supervision

Supervision of workers is provided as an intervention by a superior officer to a subordinate to see that the latter does what he is supposed to do and even improve (McNamara, 2011; Canlas, 2017). To administer a school is to supervise its activities that could lead to its success. Educational supervision is not just concerned with growth and development of knowledge and skills but also the personality of the supervisees through guidance and feedback, which may directly or indirectly impact positively on student learning. It is apparently associated with leadership functions covering personnel management, human relations, curriculum development and so may be also defined as all efforts and activities that a school leader takes to promote effective teaching and learning and ultimately achieve educational objectives (Ijaiya, 2012).

By the nature of teaching, the Head of the school is primarily accountable for the students' learning. However, since he cannot do everything, that role is therefore delegated to the teachers and other staff and must be so performed. In other words, the subordinates are sharing part of the authority of the Head in the performance of their duties in the school. It however does not mean abdication of the Head of the school's power who is the primary supervisor. In the exercise of his power, the Head can delegate some of his responsibilities to the deputies, e.g. Vice Principals, Deputy Vice Chancellors, etc. The same goes for the non-teaching staff. The hierarchical structure which is always vertical and top-bottom depicts the path of supervision and authority. In simple terms, the staff one reports to directly is one's supervisor. The Head of the school is however, the overall supervisor.

Broadly, his major responsibility is to take positive action that would promote learning success for his students for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. In the process, he performs several duties which are both administrative and academic including "monitoring students' progress, keep teachers trained and motivated, formulate mission statements, visit classrooms to evaluate teaching methods and provide performance standards for teachers and other employees" (Canlas, 2017, p.1). That function is basically divided into two but which are complementary namely Administrative Supervision and Instructional Supervision. There is a need to distinguish between the two.

Administrative Supervision

Administrative supervision is about ensuring/overseeing that school operations run smoothly without hitches and keeping standard and quality up. It has to do with leadership in which the Head or leader ensures that all staffs are engaged in doing what is expected of them without violating educational policies, school rules and regulations and there is effectiveness and efficiency. The former has to do with attainment of educational objectives measured by students' performance academically and behaviourally while the

latter implies they are achieved with minimal or no wastage. An organization is as effective as its leadership. Administrative supervision involves activities such as planning, implementation and evaluation.

Planning –all school activities require thorough planning to guarantee effective administration. Planning would cover mission statement, needs assessment in terms of staffing and other resources, budgeting, assigning teachers to classes and for other responsibilities such as committees, etc.

Implementation – This would involve organizing and delegation of duties, coordination of such tasks, and motivation of the subordinates to perform optimally as well as record keeping. Others include staff and students' discipline, organizing examinations and ensuring prompt release of the results.

- Organizing and Delegation –Both work together. The Head of the school either directly or indirectly determines who performs what duty in the school and so the teachers hold their positions in trust on behalf of their boss, using his authority and are therefore accountable to him. Teachers need to be assigned to classes based on their qualification, experience, needs of the students, etc.
- Coordination - This is important because the Head still holds the power and authority in the school and so needs to get adequate picture of his school on daily bases. He needs to pull together all delegated functions through optimal feedback regularly from individuals or in group. It may involve problem solving and decision making on important or knotty issues. These last two are constant in school administration even on daily basis. Coordination is often taken for granted in school administration even at the tertiary level. For example, at the Faculty level, it is expected that the Dean would hold coordination meeting with Heads of Departments at least twice per semester to know how each department is faring, their challenges, especially on their students' progress and help needed. Principals and Head teachers can do the same thing. It is different from general staff meeting. That way, the school or Faculty can become a caring and learning community.
- Motivation – This is also very important in school administration. Teachers and other workers expect it and it sometimes determine their level of job satisfaction. Workers want their own goals to be matched with that of the school for achievement especially their financial welfare. Prompt payment of salaries and other emoluments have become motivational factors in Nigeria's educational system, so is regular promotion. Tracking individual worker's job satisfaction and providing interventions is a key factor in enhancing work environment, staff motivation and productivity but very weak in Nigerian work places.

- Evaluation – Staff appraisal is a key function of administration. It involves assessment of the performance and contribution of each staff to the accomplishment of the school goals as well as his personal challenges that need improvement or solution. It contributes to staff promotion or elevation. However, of great importance in supervision is self-evaluation by the supervisor, which is usually overlooked in the supervisory function. While evaluating subordinates, it is necessary for the supervisor to evaluate his own performance and contribution in the whole process so that he too can improve on his performance.
- Record keeping- The quality of Administrative supervision can be measured by the level of record keeping in a school. However, this is a poorly performed function in many schools. The National Personnel Audit report alluded to the difficulty of obtaining accurate records in both public and private Basic schools. School records are many, both manual and digital. Some are statutory, i.e. made compulsory by law, and non-statutory, i.e. not legally bound but are none the less important. Where records get lost, no matter the age, or students' transcripts cannot be produced when required, it is a sign of poor administration. Records must be backed-up at all cost against crashing or virus attack or natural disaster such as fire, etc. Teachers must also keep copies of their submissions. Question papers, answer scripts, students' results, admission records, staff records, attendance register, and financial records, are sacrosanct to be kept among others. The role of the Head teacher or Principal is to ensure that accurate, complete and clear records are kept in the school, that they are stored securely and are easily retrieved and useable. He needs to collect some records, scrutinize them and sign.

Instructional supervision in schools

This is part and parcel of school administration. Without students, there is no school to administer. To the extent that teaching occupies important if not central position for the attainment of educational objectives, what goes on in the classroom must be held cardinal by the school Head in the performance of his responsibilities for which he is accountable even if delegated. Put succinctly, the primary assignment of any Head/Chief Executive of a school is to ensure that the learners entrusted to him receive the best education in all ramifications (knowledge, skills and character). His administrative functions revolve around that. Thus instructional supervision is second to none in his duties. He needs to provide necessary human and material resources for teaching, ensure appropriate implementation of the curriculum including examinations, and guide the teachers to continuously improve on the school' standard. However, it is mostly under-

performed as mentioned earlier which results into poor quality teaching and ineffective learning especially in public schools in Nigeria.

Supervision of teaching or instructional supervision involves several stages. There would be need for planning at least to know what lesson to observe, which class to go, topic of the lesson and which teacher to supervise. It involves the observation of the lesson and interaction with the teacher. Supervision of instruction is therefore not an accidental exercise as some school Heads take it. It is a planned process, formative in nature and part and parcel of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) strategies. The traditional approach of rushing through lesson observation, or five to ten minutes visit to the class or peeping from the door devoid of a systematic approach is not acceptable and hardly productive. A systematic approach should involve planning, some pre-lesson discussion of the lesson note, and observation of the lesson with an assessment instrument, after lesson discussion that addresses the quality of the lesson and feedback for improvement. Self-evaluation by the supervisor and supervisee is an added value in the supervisory relationship. It leads to personal improvement. The style to adopt in the process cannot be prescribed. It is situational. However, since supervision is formative, a democratic style that favours sharing of ideas would be more productive. Proprietors of private schools tend to be draconian in their supervision of teachers. While this may be effective in the short term, it may not work for job satisfaction among teachers and may lead to high teacher turnover.

In addition, the supervisor may need to organize workshops, seminars, group discussions, expert lectures, or some other strategies to help his teachers based on the outcomes of supervision or the needs of the students.

A pertinent question that may need answers is what quality should a supervisor watch out for in a lesson?

Among them are:

1. Knowledge of the subject matter is basic and the supervisee must demonstrate that he knows his onions; were the objectives made clear to the students' right from the start?
2. The quality of interaction between the teacher and the students- to what extent is the teacher encouraging interaction or students' participation? What is the quantity and quality of his questions? Does he listen to the students' answers and correct their mistakes? Does he promote student-student interaction?
3. Quality of class discipline- how organized and neat is the classroom? Does the teacher condone or deal appropriately with indiscipline?
4. Thinking skills-Does the lesson promotes reflection, problem solving, creativity and critical thinking skills?
5. Quality of learning-Does the teacher monitor students' learning during the lesson?

6. Chalkboard- Is the chalkboard work well structured and correct?
7. Promotion of language skills-Does the teacher promote language skills?
8. Quality of assignment-Does the teacher give quality assignments and mark them?
9. Over-all picture- Is the presentation stimulating and lively or made interesting? Were the objectives achieved?

Another important issue to ponder on in the supervisory relationship is the qualities that both the supervisor and the supervisee should demonstrate for effective supervision.

Qualities of the supervisor and supervisee

Effective supervision or cordial relationship is not automatic. It depends of both of them and how they work together or accept each other. However, supervision can only be said to be effective when their actions result into best education for the learners and the objectives of education are attained. A common measure of effective supervision is students' performance in internal and external examinations but not enough. They must be found worthy in skills and character as well.

Both of them must bring to the table some qualities that are similar such as:

- i. They must be qualified teachers;
- ii. They must possess knowledge of the subject matter and be familiar with the subject's syllabus and the work scheme;
- iii. They must be good listeners, presenters and have good human relation qualities such as being pleasant, accommodating and cooperative;
- iv. They must be good learners, ready to learn from the each other and accept corrections without rancor, i.e. be open-minded;
- v. They must be good with social intelligence, i.e. ability to communicate well and socialize;
- vi. They must possess emotional intelligence;
- vii. It is important for them to be good models in terms of dress sense and comportment;
- viii. They must be innovative especially in the methodology and teaching aids; and
- ix. The supervisor must possess leadership skills, demonstrate maturity, knowledge of counseling, and be ahead in solving educational problems through his preparedness for supervision. Being computer- literate in this age would be an added advantage so that he can be familiar with recent development in education.

However, a great impediment to instructional supervision is overcrowded classrooms in Nigerian cities where class size runs to over 100 students in some schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper contends that internal supervision of schools at all levels of education appears obscure to many school leaders and seriously accounts for the dwindling quality of education in Nigeria. There has been so much laxity in schools without effective leadership. Weak internal supervision has been the bane of qualitative education. Internal leadership has been grossly underrated and Principals made to look like bulls without teeth. Merely improving access to education or funding without equal attention to quality delivery is counter-productive and detrimental to what education stands for. Heads of schools need to understand that leadership is a big responsibility. The position has to be moved out of obscurity, hence the need for proper training of any teacher to be appointed to head a school or serve as deputies. Nigeria's education policy makers are yet to recognize the importance of internal supervision hence the lukewarm attitude to the training of certified supervisors or its recognition in the appointment of or accountability of Heads of schools. The consequence is the dwindling quality of teacher quality and students' poor achievements. An effective school needs sound administrative and instructional supervision.

In order to possibly overcome the anomalies in school supervision, the following steps need to be taken by the policy makers:

- i. Training of career education supervisors— such training could be at Post graduate Diploma or Master's level specifically on Leadership and Supervision among other courses and incorporating at least six months of practical experience in school administration. The NUC should provide the Benchmark.
- ii. Making such training a condition for appointment to head schools, Deputies at least;
- iii. Heading a school should not be a political appointment , but based on qualification, experience, proving integrity and seniority;
- iv. Improved demand for accountability from Head teachers, Principals, etc., for students' performance;
- v. Constant leadership training for teachers and school leaders and meeting their needs.
- vi. Grading of schools based on performance so that Nigerian schools can become competitive again as they were before 1980s;
- vii. More regular inspection of schools and implementation of its recommendations;
- viii. Better funding of schools and maintenance of their structures; and establishment of more schools at the lower levels to decongest the classrooms especially in the cities;
- ix. Reading and language comprehension should be given a prime place in school time table at the Basic education level in Nigeria;

- x. Government should distinguish College of Teacher Education from College of Education so that the former would concentrate on training highly skilled qualified teachers and the latter on general A'Level students.
- xi. Government should stop proliferation of Colleges of Education to save teacher education from all-comers and the educational system.
- xii. The role of NTI needs re-examination and re-engineering.
- xiii. Government should restore the former Grade II teachers colleges as equivalent of Senior Secondary and as feeder to Colleges of Teacher Education and Faculties of Education.

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