

MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE; NEED FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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ABSTRACT

Many Secondary Schools principals in Nigeria have no serious or professional training in educational management and are therefore bereft of the changing trends in administration of the 21st century. This paper argues that enhancing the professional administrative skills of school principals requires training in School administration as this would enable them to effectively perform their administrative tasks such as planning organizing, directing and budgeting. Undergoing training in school administration will also made them to be in line with the modern trend. This in turn will improve the tone of the school system and reduce conflict.

Key-words;-management competence, professionalization, principal, Secondary-education system.

Introduction

The School manager is the principal. he/she is a major determinant of Secondary education system. The tone of the school depends on the principal's effectiveness. The quality of training acquired by them will sharpen their administrative visions and missions.

This view is well expressed in National Policy on Education (1981:21). It stated that government will work towards improving the quality of secondary education by giving support to measures that will ensure effective administration, specially, it outlined the selection of persons of the "right caliber for principal of schools and the mounting of induction courses for newly appointed principals. This noble intention of government presupposes that the appointed of principals of schools should be based not on year of graduation but on administrative competence. Principalship involves the control of human and material resources for the achievement of the school's goals and objectives. Sitting at the top of the administrative ladder of the Secondary School level therefore is the principal.

It has however been observed in recent times that appointment of principals to manage schools is not based on administrative professionalism but on politics and mass promotion. This practice does not urgur well for effective secondary school administration. It is as a result of this flaw that this paper consider the prescriptive functions of school principals and the management problems in schools in this 21st century.

Functions of School Principals in School Administration

As the head is important to the physical body so also is the importance of principal as the executive head in school organization. There are certain basic functions a principal is expected to perform Liphman and Hoeh (1974), Adetona (2003) summarized some of these functions as:

- Instructional and Curriculum development
- Students and staff personnel management
- Management of school plant
- Organization of staff for the implementation of education programmes and participation in educational planning and School finance and business management

These tasks areas are no doubt enormous and challenging for the principals. These task areas are however attainable only when there is an effective professionalization of principleshap in Nigeria secondary schools.

Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) dichotomized principal's roles into professional and administrative divergence. His professional duties include what Ezewu (1983), Ogunu (2000) Adelakun (2004) coined into "POSDCORE"

Planning: The principal works closely with the staff, students parent and government in a wide range of plans relating to curricula and co-curricular activities. The principal and the staff members make decisions on relevant and scope of the curriculum for the school.

Organizing: Principal designs a framework of implementing plans in the organization to achieve predetermined objectives and goals.

Staffing: He/She assists in selection and recruiting qualified personnel and deploying them for effective execution of planned programmes of the school.

Directing and Co-ordinating: In the school organization, it is the duty of the principal to continuously channel all efforts to coordinate and direct the activities of the school in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisaiton.

Budgeting: Drawing a financial plan on activities in the system for a given period. Budgeting assists the administration in making decisions.

Evaluation: It involves assessing the performance of every aspect of the system and making necessary adjustment for effective recycle. The accomplishment of all these functions depends solely upon the principal's administrative and management skills. It would be better therefore for them to be professionals because a professional person generally has a high need for achievement and self actualization, Professionals try to keep up with changing knowledge in their field(Apimana 1993).

Principalship Today and Yesterday

In recent times, management of secondary schools has be deviled by various factors both internally and externally. Internally there were forces that have posed serious challenges to school administration. Some of such perennial problems have been associated with youths in contemporary society. Students in secondary schools were involved in cult activities, drug abuses, hooliganism, examination malpractices, gross indiscipline, vandalism, truancy and low academic malpractices. Olaleye (2001). Activities of secret cults in higher institution and in secondary schools in the country had been a major concern of government, educators, parents and the press. The extent of students involvement in crime was as frightening as the crimes themselves with the full immersion of students in the pool of crime and violent crimes, armed robbery, cultism, gansterism, rape, extortion and drug trafficking (Bension 1997, Adebola 1997, and Fawole 1997) noted.

The teachers in schools were not left out of the crisis. There was lack of dedication to job on the part of some teachers. Many teachers and institutions aided and abated examination frauds. There were cases of indiscipline and sexual harassment of female students by male teachers which had resulted to chaos in schools.

Externally, there were the problems of dwindling financial resources at the disposal of the principals to carry out their functions. Governments poor funding of education led to deterioration of infrastructure. There was no doubt that the multiplicity of these problems had serious implications for school administration Okebukola (1996) noted that at no other time in the history of secondary education in this country has the principal been faced with such multitudes of challenges that came his way today. For effective administration of schools in this 21st century, it is pertinent for school principals to imbibe these qualities, such as intelligence and self confidence. Professionally minded and morally strong. He needs to be competent in human skills, maintenance of students and staff welfare. Community relations, proficient knowledge of administration, especially in areas of techniques, procedures or processes and conceptual skills (Ogunu 1988).

The challenges of 21st century in education sectors demand a professional education administrator who will be able to face new experience, initiate, actions, avert crises, resolve difficulties, surmount obstacles and make significant positive contributions to national development.

In the past secondary education was highly esteemed, school were well organized and orderly, students were well disciplined, and there were no reports of drug abuse, cultism and examination malpractices. Teachers were dedicated and respected in the community. The school principal was adored and rated highly in the community. Unlike now, when educational system is in disarray and at the brink of collapse. An emerging trend was an increasing focus and attention on the roles of principals in school administration. Some observers blamed the principals for the woes in our public schools while others put the blame on government and the parents. However for effective school administration, there was need for professionalization of principals who could manage human and financial resources to ensure the realization of the goals of secondary education.

Contemporary Perspective of School administration as a profession in Nigeria

Ukeje (1986) saw a profession as a calling in which one professes to have acquired some special knowledge by way of either instructing, guiding or advising others. Some characteristics of a profession are stated as long period of specialized preparation, the size of schools and its complexities today now require full time administrators who are professionals (Leigha 2000).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981) pronouncement on her intention to legally and publicly approve school administration as a profession and that qualified accreditation, registration, regulation discipline and tract in principal ship appointments will be ensured. This statement calls for the effective professionalization of Nigerian principal.

The increasing demand for an interest in qualitative and relevant education have become so uncompromising that one cannot leave administration of school into incompetent hands. Thus, the need for a well trained administrative personnel in the secondary schools should take precedence over old practices of selection of principals. The task of school administration in the years ahead therefore is a polar opposite to the conventional practices, which makes appointments of principal rely on seniority, years of experience or political affiliation.

Effective Professionalization of school administration will expose the principal to realize the present objectives of the educational system as he is the instructional leader and the executive officer. Since doctors, lawyers and engineers are not born but trained it implies that educational management training effort already in tertiary institutions be sustained toward the production of good principals to manage secondary school. Ajayi and Oni (1992) opined that a school administrator must not only be trained in the art of administration but must be well acquainted with the principles that guide and control administrative practices. Heller (2002) emphasizes, personal and professional development of managers in which case a practicing manager must personally identify and develop what he or she wants with respect to unique personality, interests, skill and ambitions to achieve managerial success at workplaces. Educational managers (principals) should complement pre-work training with personal readings to develop the right skills both technical and interpersonal.

Recommendations in improving the quality of the Principal

To improve the quality and competence of principals, seminars workshops and conferences have to be organized by universities and ministries of education. Principals need training and re-training in administration of schools. The current efforts on the part of Federal government in improving the quality of secondary education nation wide and the accreditation of various universities educational management programmes by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in principal's preparation for administrative training are steps in the right direction. It is a welcome development in education industry.

Principals of secondary schools need additional training in school administration. This will make them competitive in the committee of nation. It will also equip them with specialized skills and systematic body of principles to sharpen their administrative skills.

The present recruitment of school principal is largely based on possession of Bachelors degrees and seniority. This method needs drastic renovations. If we must attain an improved quality of secondary education in this 21st century. A master degree in educational management is necessary for a would be principal of secondary school in Nigeria.

Induction courses for newly appointed principals should be organized by universities and ministries of education, such short-term practice oriented courses would enrich practicing school administrators.

There is need for a wider curriculum to accommodate the tremendous challenges facing school administration. The need to replace remnant of the colonial-oriented curriculum with a more enterprising and realistic one is imperative. If the principal is poorly trained, he is by implication ineffective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that professionalization is imperative for enhancing effectiveness of the principal in Nigeria secondary Schools. This therefore called for quality administrative and professional training, effective implementation of management curriculum for principaship education in the universities.

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