



RELEVANCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Supervision of instruction has been a neglected aspect of school management in Nigeria. Instructional supervision, if properly organized and executed can lead to positive improvement in the achievement of effective learning in our schools and consequently lead to rising standard in educational system. Teachers are identified as individuals who have to develop professionally because they need the support of colleagues whose professional development is greater. The principal possesses greater information about the school system and about instructional and management strategies that can strengthen the teachers' capacity to cope with classroom problems and thereby ensure adequate and effective learning on the part of the students. This paper examines the concept of instructional supervision, the principal as an instructional supervisor and relevance of instructional supervision in effective learning in Nigerian schools. It concludes that a closer, regular and continuous supervision is urgently needed especially now that a lot of changes have been introduced into the school curriculum.

Keywords: Effective learning, Instructional supervision, performance, principals, supervisors, teachers.

Introduction

Supervision of instruction is important for the realization of an effective education system. Supervision of instruction may be defined as the process of bringing about improvement in the teaching-learning process through a network of cooperative activities and democratic relationship of persons concerned with teaching and learning.

Egunyomi (1988) observed that instructional supervision is the interaction between supervisor and the tutor to effectuate the quality of instruction. Instructional supervision implies the analysis of the behaviour, and teachers' antecedent factors of the two groups in the interaction process and proposition, which seek to explain the interaction process itself. This interaction process involves the supervisor who happens to be a professional superior and a professional teacher who is a subordinate. The behaviour of the supervisor in his relationship with teacher is assumed to be one of the significant factors on the teacher efficiency or performance.

Glickman, (1990) opined that instructional supervision is a process of improving instruction for the benefit of students. He noted that instructional supervision helps the students to learn as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Teaching and learning are complementary process. Learning is indicated by a change in behaviour of the person concerned as a result of experience brought about by personal motivation, interest, thinking, activity and external factors (e.g. direct instruction, incidental experiences, reading, discussion, etc).

Supervision of instruction is required to guide teachers to be able to combine relevant input for enhancement of the teaching- learning process. The fact remains that the success of an educational programme especially in the achievement of effective learning depends largely on the job performance of the teachers. The ugly situation of poor performance of public secondary school students in Nigeria perhaps requires intensive instructional supervision towards attaining school goals and objectives. The primary objective of instructional supervision is therefore to ensure that teaching and learning proceed under adequate condition and yield the desired results. The importance of instructional supervision on the achievement of effective learning in today's educational system can consequently not be over-emphasized especially at the secondary school level which is perceived to be a vital step for career decisions. Obilade (1997) apparently shared this view when she asserts that the importance of supervision in our schools cannot be over- emphasized especially at this period when there is a growing concern about the falling standards of education and the low quality of education in our schools.

It is important to note that if the Nigerian secondary level of education is to be functional, productive and students' performance improved, greater attention must be focused on the ways teachers perform their instructional duties. Ogunrinde (2004) noted that the ultimate goal of the subject teacher in our secondary school is to prepare and present his students to pass well both at internal and external examinations. He opined that "we have observed with dismay, the perfunctory and gradual deterioration of the attainment of this goal over the years". Several problems militate against the realization of these goals. One of these may be attributed to the falling measures of instructional methods and supervision in our public schools.

Ibukun (1990) noted that supervision is necessary in education to ensure effective learning. In the school context, supervision is the process of observation, discussion and decision-making by principals and inspectors of education to improving teaching/learning situations for students. Ukpore (2004) opined that instructional supervision has to do with the coordination of different tasks by autonomous and delegated authority and ensuring that personal consideration are excluded from official business as much as possible and that, there is fairness in the treatment of the clients all with a

view to facilitating the attainment of goals for which the school is set up. Hence, the school instructional supervisor is an Education auditor whose major responsibilities include making the school productive through a system of operational guidance on the major critical areas of the education process and to arrest the incidence of wastage in the school process.

In Nigeria, there has been a critical analysis of what instructional supervision should be. Omoregie (2002) saw instructional supervision as an internal process (micro-inspection). He opined that micro inspection concerns itself with regular resources utilization and process in a school and the maintenance of lines of action that promote effective learning. Thus, Ezedi (2002) said that instructional supervision strategies in the school organizational framework should analytically examine the following variables closely on the regular basis.

- (i) Teacher Service: Regularity/punctuality, weekly lesson preparation, coverage of work schedules and documentation of pupils' work.
- (ii) Pupils learning effort: Regularity and punctuality of classes, completion of assignments, achievements and conduct scores.
- (iii) Curriculum benefits: Adequacy of textbooks and their uses, relevance of continuous assessment and guidance counseling in the school system.
- (iv) School facilities: Adequate sanitation and maintenance of accommodation facilities (classrooms, laboratories, library, halls, offices etc) equipment and supplies.

In practice therefore, the principal and his deputies are the obvious 'micro inspectors' (supervisors) that undertake the above supervision exercise while the external supervision 'macro-inspection' is the exclusive role of the inspectorate section of the Ministry of Education.

In the educational circle, most authors see instructional supervision as a process to improve the learning opportunities for students. According to Harris (1995), supervision is directed towards both maintaining and improving the teaching-learning process of the school. In the words of Rettig (2000), supervision is an organized behaviour system for the purpose improving the learning situation of children. Shantz and Ward (2000) considered instructional supervision as that aspect of educational management, which has to do with providing assistance in the development of better teaching-learning situation.

The Principal as an Instructional Supervisor

The role of the principal as an instructional supervisor has now more than ever before become very crucial on the issue of instructional improvement towards effective learning in Nigeria secondary schools. The National Policy on Education (2004) in Nigeria recognizes the need to ensure quality control through regular inspection and continuous supervision of instruction and other services if the laudable national educational objectives are to be meaningfully achieved.

Odiba (1995) opined that the title of principal is an appropriate designation for the chief executive of a single school. This however, does not mean that his responsibility is limited to a particular building but rather to an organizational segment for a programme, a level of instruction, or a group of grades housed in one building complex or two or more buildings substantially distant from each other.

The modern approach to supervision has given the principal a greater responsibility which imposes upon him the duties of planning, organizing, coordinating, supervising, directing and controlling the quality of the various activities necessary to accomplish the goals of the organization.

According to Dull (2003), the modern concept of instructional supervision therefore, expects the principal to play the following roles:

- (i) Visit classroom regularly to observe teachers.
- (ii) Organize conference with teachers collectively and individually to discuss ways of improving instruction for effective learning.
- (iii) Teach demonstration lessons.
- (iv) Organize induction courses for newly posted and recruited teachers.
- (v) Ensure that instructional goals are achieved.
- (vi) Ensure that instructional materials are available.
- (vii) Help teachers with classroom management.
- (viii) Inculcate in students the idea that they have understanding potential for achievement.
- (ix) Evaluate teachers' effort in relation to the schools pre-determined objectives.
- (x) Motivate and lead teacher into professional maturity.

In view of the above roles, it is pertinent to reiterate that the principal in Nigeria has to be charged not to allow himself to be bogged down by administration as to neglect the supervision of instruction in the classrooms. Hedges (2002) described supervision as the most important responsibility of the principal. Similarly, Dull (2003) asserted that the prime justification of the position of principals in the schools is to give leadership in teaching and learning process. Ogunrinde (2004) opined that one of the most important statutory duties of the principal is to supervise his staff. He should occasionally visit teachers and inspect their work on duty. This is one of the strategies to achieve effective learning by the students.

The different views of the people listed above emphasize the role of the school principal as a supervisor of instruction. In performing his administrative function, he coordinates the activities of both tutorial and non-tutorial staff, controls the available physical plants and other facilities to improve teaching-learning processes or the instructional programme of the school.

Relevance of Instructional Supervision in Effective Learning in Nigerian Schools

Supervision of instruction plays an important role in effective learning and it is the tool with which educational objectives are achieved. Sergiovanni and Sharratt (1983) advocated a renewed interest in supervision because of the

necessity for re-ordering or re-shaping present strategies for improving the quality of educational service as a result of declining productivity, accountability, teacher surpluses, and smaller budgets for education.

Ogunsaju (1983) opined that the primary purpose of supervision in Nigerian schools is to improve instructional programme. He identified three categories of teachers to whom supervisory assistance should be directed. They are:

- (a) New teachers, (who are fresh from school and so need encouragement and support in their new profession in order to achieve the stated goals).
- (b) Old teachers (who attempt to resist change because they have been used to certain styles of teaching, hence, they consider change as a threat).
- (c) Incompetent teachers (because of their shallow knowledge of subject matter, poor classroom organization, ineffective use of language, etc).

According to Kyte (2001), the main purpose of supervision is to offer guidance to the teacher so that he can be competent in self-analysis, self-criticism and self improvement.

This is instructive to Nigerian secondary schools as many teachers are young graduates who have not acquired enough skills and experience to stand on their own. They need to be guided and assisted in the classroom situation for effective learning.

On the purpose of school supervision, Ojelabi (1981) opined that supervision provides a basis for an effective dissemination of concrete and constructive educational advice and ideas to ensure minimum desirable standards so as to provide equal opportunity for children. Supervision also stimulates desirable educational practices and provides a basis for action by the teachers, head teachers, inspectors and other officials. Ojelabi, however gave the following as types of inspection carried out in Nigerian schools: routine visits, administrative visits, special visits, follow-up visits, sampling and survey visits, visits for opening of new schools, assessment visits and full inspection.

Instructional supervision is a vital organizational subsystem for enhancing teacher and student performance in Nigerian schools. It clarifies school goals, improves the values of the teachers and ensures good quality teaching and learning.

Knoll (1997), observed that instructional supervision provides opportunity to gain information about a wide range of teaching skills. Information gathered during classroom observation may be used for different purposes by supervisors. The common purpose of observation according to Bourisaw (1998) is to collect the necessary data to make accurate evaluative ratings. Guidance and support should be part of the instructional supervision that teachers receive. Sygenta (2002) suggested that emotional support is important for teachers; but like classroom management, it is less needed than help in obtaining resources and materials or in applying a given teaching strategy. Coupled with observation, guidance and support, giving feedback to the teacher is one aspect of instructional supervision that makes a difference.

Shantz and Ward (2000) observed that for teachers to improve instructional delivery, they rely on feedback given to them by supervisors. Constructive criticism and guidance giving by supervising teachers are important in helping teachers develop their teaching proficiency and consequently achieving effective learning on the part of the students. Rettig (2000) noted that instructional activities foster teacher motivation, inspiration, trust, and help to improve teaching performance. As a result, it may be reasonable to expect a positive relationship to exist certain aspects of instructional supervision and effective learning.

Fritz and Miller (2001) maintained that the old concept and meaning of supervision vary from the present due to differing methods and processes adopted by those who were involved in the art of supervising. They stressed that the aim of supervision throughout history is the improvement of instruction. In the same vein, Ajayi (1997) identified school inspection as an effort towards improving instruction. He however stressed that greater emphasis be placed on the mode of supervision in which in the past portrayed the inspector as a fault-finder, a dreaded being and unwanted guest in the schools. Today, he maintains that the term instructional supervision is more often used than inspection when more emphasis is now placed on helping the school and the teachers in particular to achieve the major objective of setting up the school system, which is the enhancement of teaching and learning.

In Nigeria, supervision of instruction in schools helps the supervisor to identify the capabilities of recruited teachers and ways of improving on the performance of incompetent teachers. It is a guide in determining whether a teacher should be transferred, promoted, retained or dismissed from the school system. Through effective supervision of instruction, there will be a guide for staff development which will ensure that each teacher within the school system performs his duties under his schedule. It will also help in improving teacher's effectiveness in the classroom to ensure that he contributes maximally to the attainment of effective learning.

Considering the rationale for supervision, it is a popular view held by a cross-section of the society that because government generally provides funds for running education, it is in this vein accountable to parents and the public for the nature and quality of education so provided. The need for accountability and control of educational standard provided justifies the existence of school supervisors. Supervisors therefore exist as quality control agents for the purpose of quality enhancement in teaching-learning

process. Ogunsaju (1983: 15) wrote on the need for instructional supervision in Nigerian schools. These include:

- To know the performance of teachers recruited in the system.
- To determine whether a teacher should be transferred, retained, promoted or dismissed.
- To improve the incompetent teachers.
- To discover special liabilities or qualities possessed by the teachers in the schools.
- To provide guide for staff development.
- To know the effectiveness of classroom management by the teachers.
- To know the direction of the school.
- To assess the tone of the school and identify some of its most urgent needs.

Effective instructional supervision is therefore inevitable in Nigerian educational system. It makes the coordination of all activities within the school system possible and improves the teaching-learning situation.

Based on the discussion above, the place of instructional supervision towards ensuring the achievement of effective learning in our schools cannot be over emphasized. It can therefore be said that just as the industrial manager reinforces employee's behaviours that lead to increased production, profits and services, an instructional supervisor reinforces teachers job performance associated with higher learning achievements by students. The teachers constitute a major input in the achievements of effective learning in the school system. Teachers can influence students' values, knowledge and skills, instructional supervision can influence teachers' commitment to work which will in turn influence students' academic achievement to some extent.

Conclusion

The role of the principal, vice-principals and head of departments as instructional supervisors therefore cannot be more crucial to the issue of instructional improvement towards effective learning in Nigerian secondary schools than now that inspectors are not actively involved in matters related to instructional improvement in schools. A closer, regular and continuous supervision rather than snappy, unscheduled and partial inspection of schools is what is urgently needed, especially now that a lot of changes have been introduced into the school curriculum. It follows then that, the instructional supervisory techniques such as demonstration teaching, classroom visitation and observation, workshop, seminars, conference with teachers and orientation for newly posted and recruited teachers could be utilized by the instructional supervisors for effective teaching-learning process in Nigerian secondary schools.

Recommendations

In view of the relevance of instructional supervision towards achieving effective teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Instructional supervisors should know where the teacher is in his work and what he is doing. Study his lesson notes and instructional materials in advance of the visit to classroom.
2. A closer, regular and continuous supervision of teachers in schools should be encouraged rather than snappy and unscheduled visits.
3. Instructional supervisors should take notes of the observation by recording exactly the activities of both the pupils and the teacher and make suggestions for further improvement.
4. Teachers should be encouraged to take a tape recording of his teaching during the supervision process for the purpose of play-back and analyze it.
5. The instructional supervision techniques such as demonstration teaching, classroom visitation and observation, workshops, seminars and conference with teachers should be utilized by instructional supervisors for effective teaching and learning process.

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