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Competencies Required by Primary School Supervisors: Basis for a Sustainable Universal Basic Education Programme (Pp. 393-406)

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Abstract

The study was a descriptive survey design aimed at identifying the competencies supervisors of instruction require for a sustainable Universal Basic Education in primary schools in Anambra State. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The study was carried out in Onitsha Education Zone, specifically, in all the Public Primary Schools in the three Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) in the Zone. 105 Head teachers and 51 Supervisors from the Monitoring and Evaluation Department of the LGEAs formed the population of the study. The instrument used was a questionnaire that comprised two parts. Part A sought information on personal data of respondents. Part B elicited information on the competencies instruction supervisors require for effective supervision. Mean, Percentage and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions and t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 levels of significance. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

Introduction

Primary education is the foundation stone on which other levels of education are built. No wonder the recent Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme launched on the 30th Day of September 1999 for a sustainable education in Nigeria had its bedrock on Primary Education. UBE according to Nwana (2000) is the foundational education or bottom-line education upon

which every other education whether formal, informal or non-formal can be built and without which any educational structure erected will not have chances of success. The UBE was borne out of the desire to broaden access to quality and affordable basic education aimed at equipping the individual child with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable him to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as to stimulate him to contribute to national development, political consciousness and national integration. UBE is a laudable programme through which the government hopes to guarantee basic education for her citizenry. Government therefore established the inspectorate services to:

1. Set, maintain and improve standard in all aspects of the school.
2. Ensure uniform standard and quality control of instructional activities in schools through continuous supervision (FRN, 2004).

Government succinctly stated the goals and responsibilities of the inspectorate services in the National Policy on Education, but however, left out the competencies required by the supervisors to carry out the services efficiently in the schools where the UBE programmes are implemented. In the words of Nwangwu (2008), most of the people that perform the functions of supervision are not trained. Thus, it is no wonder that most times, these supervisors visit the schools because government mandated that schools should be supervised without knowing exactly what and how to supervise in the schools, thereby jeopardizing the aims of supervision. Consequently, Ofuafo (2005) stated that an unclear purpose and poor personal and professional qualities of supervisors adversely affect the process of supervision. Also, Ogunsanya (2006) opined that absence of a strong system of supervision poses a serious threat to the survival of the educational system.

Supervision is not fault finding. It is a process of giving guidance, assistance sharing of ideas to all those involved in the process of teaching and learning. However, in the opinion of Nwaogu, (1980), if Instructional supervision is the process of working with people who are working with pupils to bring about improvement in instruction, then it is very important that an instruction supervisor must be selected based on his/her competence and professional knowledge in the art of instruction so as to be able to influence, facilitate,

direct, and motivate the teachers efficiently and effectively to improve teaching and learning satisfactorily.

The importance of supervision of instruction in the nations' education systems today, especially the primary education system, cannot be over emphasized. It is imperative for professional growth of teachers and is a vital tool for quality control in the education system. This is because as a result of technological development, educational delivery is confronted with many changes and challenges especially in the area of instructional delivery. Accordingly, Odigbo (1999) and Asuru, (2007)) noted that supervision should aim at improving the quality of instruction and the quality of learning outcome and ensuring schools acquaint individual children with such knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them live meaningful and fulfilling lives, contribute to the development of the society; provision of inputs, enhancement of processes and ultimately improving output. Supervision of instruction as well should aim at improving both the quantity and quality of primary education programmes in order that the schools turn out self-reliant individuals, especially now that education is shifting emphasis to self-reliance.

Sustenance of UBE programmes depends on effective and consistent supervision by dedicated and competent supervisors, who would help to identify areas of strengths and weakness in the process of teaching and learning such that new efforts can be initiated as a way of improving the programmes (Eno, 2006). In order to meet the inevitable challenges and tasks of the twenty first century Nigeria, the UBE programme needs instruction supervisors that must possess and develop characteristics that will enable them to consistently affirm a constructive action that leads to the growth of the teacher, the improvement of instruction, self improvement and consequently a sustainable UBE programme. For a sustainable UBE programme, supervision should unequivocally aim at improving teaching and learning so that the right knowledge and appropriate skills and attitudes are imparted to the learners thereby, guaranteeing quality education for national development.

Experience shows that supervision of instruction is done only three times a year. It is not enough; it should to be a regular, continuous, co-cooperative and a professional exercise that covers all aspects of the life of a school in order to meet the individual needs of the teachers and other personnel in

order to achieve improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Okonkwo (1998) expected that the supervisory team should visit schools at least twice a term. Thus, Mkpa (1994), emphasized that supervision when regularly and properly carried out, will lead to the maximum development of the teacher, making him the most professionally efficient and effective teacher she is capable of becoming. In other words, supervision should be a more regular and a continuous exercise by competent supervisors to meet the teachers' needs and achieve improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. This position is in order because it would help teachers to become self directive that is, developing in them the necessary positive attitude, skills and information that will make them prepared to willingly contribute to the solution of educational and instructional problems and also provide a favourable setting for pupils learning.

Most unfortunately, personal observation showed that some of the supervisors are not trained in supervisory/observation skills and so, lack supervisory expertise to carryout the job. Also, it is not known whether induction or orientation course was organized for the inexperienced supervisors on instruction supervisory techniques on appointment. Consequently, the supervisors merely visit the schools to chat with the teachers, collect data and write reports instead of contributing logically, critically and clearly to the quality of teaching and learning situation. Some bump into schools to show supremacy to teachers and impose teaching methods on them and rarely have any improvement interaction with the teachers. As a result, some teachers resent supervision and regard supervisors as faultfinders hence, supervision of instruction became weak and ineffective and gradually degenerated to its present state of paralysis. This is in line with Udeinya (1989) findings that the supervisors in Anambra state, are generally untrained in observation skills, instructional techniques or instructional supervision strategies, but try to conduct formative evaluation to gather data that.... have little to do with actual classroom observation nor improvement of instruction. An inexperienced or ill-equipped supervisor may be mechanical in his interaction with the teachers. According to Ogunsaju (1983), the chaos and ineffectiveness that have now characterized the educational system have resulted from poor monitoring system and lack of adequate supervision and supervisors. No wonder Okonkwo (1998), asserted that inadequately prepared supervisory staff is a problem of supervision today and there is the need to establish a strong and adequate supervisory team to take care of schools in Nigeria.

In the light of these anomalies, the realization of the goals of instruction supervision may not be achieved. As a result, Ogunsaju (1983) warned, supervision should not be toyed with. It should be handled with all seriousness. Probably when supervisors are adequately informed or exposed to competences needed for effective supervision of instruction, there will be adequate and effective supervision and consequently, improved teaching and learning for a sustainable UBE programme.

A supervisor may be seen as a person formally designated by the school organization or school boards to interact with teachers in order to improve the quality of their teaching and learning of students. As perceived by Ogunsaju (1983), any professionally trained staff within the school system that can render advisory services for the purpose of academically improving both the teacher and the pupils can be called a supervisor. Suffice it to say that a school supervisor in his own capacity is regarded as a school leader expected to perform certain functions and to fulfill the expectations, aspirations, needs and demands of the society in which he/she operates (Igboeli, 2008).

To be successful in doing all these, the supervisor needs to possess certain qualities/competencies that will put him above those under his supervision. Competency on a particular job entails one having the skills/ability needed to do something well (Hornby, 2005). Supervision of instruction is a special job that needs persons with startling abilities/skills, to a necessary standard especially in teaching, competency on a particular job makes one an authority. Ogidigbo (2006) noted some competencies instruction supervisor is expected to possess. They are the ability to,

- i. relates cordially with all human beings in the schools ;
- ii. detects both weaknesses and strengths in the teaching process and proffer solutions to the weaknesses while reinforcing the strengths of the teachers;
- iii. relates instruction supervisory exercises to the achievement of education goals;
- iv. guides teachers to apply appropriate teaching methods and materials to realize set school objectives;

- v. thinks objectively and creatively;
- vi. builds self confidence; demonstrates leadership to foster leadership traits in the supervised;
- vii. inspires others;
- viii. analyzes educational information and reach good decisions; etc

Despite all the efforts of government to sustain education, through establishment of the inspectorate services and the supervisions being carried out in schools today, some teachers still lack devotion to duty. They are absent from schools without permission, are late to school, do not keep their school records and sometimes keep them improperly, and pupils continue to perform poorly both in internal/external examinations and are poor in communication ability.

However, it is obvious that in the face of these problems, primary education goals and standard may continue to deteriorate if nothing positive is done. Therefore, the author sets out to identify the competencies supervisors require for effective supervision of instruction for a sustainable UBE programme.

Purpose of the Study

The study identified the competencies supervisors of instruction require for effective supervision of instruction. Specifically, the researcher:

1. Identified the competences needed by supervisors for effective instructional supervision.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. *What competencies are needed for effective supervision of instruction by supervisors?*

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of supervisors and head teachers on the competences required for effective supervision of instruction by supervisors.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra state of Nigeria. Onitsha Education Zone comprised of three Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) namely Onitsha North, Onitsha South and Ogbaru. The population of the study consists all the 105 head teachers in the state owned primary schools and 51 supervisors from the Monitoring and Evaluation Department of the three LGEAs. There was no need for sampling since the researcher can conveniently reach the whole population.

A researcher-developed questionnaire comprising two parts was used for data collection. Part 1 sought information on personal data of respondents and to what extent orientation courses are organized for supervisors on appointment. Part 2 elicited information on the competencies required for instruction supervision and structured on four-point scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) Agreed (A), Disagree (D) And Strongly Disagree (SD). A score of 2.50 and above is accepted while any score below 2.50 is rejected.

To ensure validity of the questionnaire, four experts, two each from the departments of Educational Foundations and Measurement and Evaluation of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the chief desk officer, Monitoring and Evaluation, Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) assessed the questionnaire. Their comments were used to modify the final copy of the questionnaire used for the study. A pilot study was conducted to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered to ten head teachers and ten supervisors from Ogidi education zone of Anambra State. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument; a co-efficient alpha value of 0.83 was obtained. Thus the instrument was presumed reliable for data collection.

The researcher personally went to the respondents to administer copies of the questionnaires. The headmasters were met in their respective schools and the supervisors in their various LGEA offices. In each school and LGEA, the researcher waited for the respondents to fill-in the responses. The researcher was able to retrieve all the copies of the questionnaires distributed. For data

analysis, the research question was answered using Mean and Standard Deviation (SD), while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 significant levels.

Presentation of Results

Head teachers and the supervisors accepted 24 out of the 25 competences needed for effective instruction supervision by supervisors. As shown by their 2.50 and above mean rating

The result presented on table 2 revealed that the calculated t-value of 0.93 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 confidence levels. The null hypothesis was therefore, accepted. The decision is that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of head teachers and the supervisors on the competencies needed by supervisors for effective supervision of instruction.

Discussion of Findings

It is clear from the findings of this study that with the exception of one competence (item 19) on table 1, instruction supervisors require all the listed competencies for effective supervision of instruction and for the purpose of teacher development and improvement of instruction towards a sustainable UBE programme in the state. Respondents rated possession of teaching/professional experience highest among others. This is in line with Ozoka (2004), who quickly noted that in the face of changes in both content and methods of teaching today, supervisors of instruction must possess a high teaching qualification, at least a bachelor degree in supervision of education and at least 15 years experience as a teacher. Okonkwo (1998) also observed supervision as a highly professional exercise that requires those who are properly trained for it. If instruction of supervision is seen as a situation for interacting with teachers and teaching behaviour to facilitate the learning of students, supervisors no doubt, would be more effective when they are endowed with the mentioned competencies. Consequently, the supervisors would render co-operative, supportive and non-threatening services that are relevant for the improvement of classroom performance (Oguno, 2007). Teachers therefore, would welcome instruction supervision as opportunities to discuss their work and grow on the job. A competent supervisor would know what and how to observe in the instruction behavior and give assistance to the teachers. There is also no significant difference in the mean ratings of head teachers and the supervisors on the competences

required for effective supervision of instructions. The author thus, concludes that all the listed competencies except one are supervisory competencies, which instruction supervisors should possess. This finding confirmed the observation by Ogunu (2007) that almost all the head teachers and the supervisors are aware of the competencies supervisor require to sustain UBE, but disregarded them and tend to do as they like in schools. Hence, Modebelu (2008) reported that what supervisors observe during supervision is sycophantic. UBE programmes cannot be sustained unless competent and motivated supervisors carry out effective supervision of instruction. When competent supervisors, supervise education system, the teachers would have positive orientation towards teaching and its related activities, accept and appreciate changes and innovations, which may enhance their productivity. Competent supervisors generate ideas and information that may assist teachers to improve their performances within the context of UBE (Igwedimma, 2005).

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Universal Basic Education Board should recruit trained and professional instruction supervisors who have the knowledge and capabilities to improve teaching and learning to supervise instruction for a sustainable UBE programme implementation.
2. Universal Basic Education Boards should deviate from the system being used in the selection and appointment of schools' supervisors. They should adopt a system whereby the would-be supervisors should undergo interview exercises (both oral and written) in order to ascertain whether they possess the necessary competencies needed for efficient and effective supervision of schools.
3. On appointment, Universal Basic Education Boards would organize necessary pre-supervision orientation programme for the new supervisors, which should guide them in their new positions.
4. Supervisors already on the job should be refreshed through seminars and in service training to keep abreast of research and advances in education and

as well inculcate in them the current supervisory skills and the right competencies for effective supervision of instruction if UBE is to survive.

5. Particular attention should be paid to the area of effective instruction supervision because a continued poor supervision of instruction in our educational systems will adversely affect the UBE programme. Government should appoint a body of experienced supervisors to control the activities of the supervisors in the LGEAs to make them more active.

Conclusion

Since supervision of instruction focuses on improving teaching and learning /instruction, Nigeria needs qualified and capable supervisors. Equipping the supervisors with necessary competences needed for instructional supervision could empower the supervisors and make them self-confident supervisors, whose ultimate purposes would be to support and promote pupils, growth and learning; encourage and develop teachers on the job and help to create conducive conditions for effective teaching and learning for a sustainable UBE programme in Anambra State. It is the view of the author that competency on a particular job makes one an authority in that area, hence it is imperative that the supervisors of instruction should be people with adequate knowledge and skills necessary effective supervision of instruction.

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Table 2: *t-test comparison of the mean ratings of head teachers and supervisors on the competences needed by supervisors for effective supervision of instruction*

Respondents	No	X	SD	Df	t-calculated	t-critical	Decision
Supervisors	51	2.84	0.96	154	0.93	1.96	Ho ₁
Head teachers	105	2.87	0.99				Accepted

Table1: Mean Scores of subjects on the Competences needed for effective instructional supervision by supervisors.

Nos	Competences	Head Teachers			Supervisors		
		X	SD	Dec.	x	SD	Dec.
1	Has considerable years of experience as a teacher	3.38	0.78	A	3.39	0.80	A
2	Ability to proffer positive advice/solution to school/teachers problems	2.93	0.94	A	2.93	0.91	A
3	Ability to detect both weaknesses and strengths in the teaching process	2.78	1.07	A	3.13	0.78	A
4	Ability to direct and guide teachers in order to make instruction effective	2.69	1.03	A	3.03	1.57	A
5	Demonstrates interest in children	3.14	0.81	A	3.13	0.78	A
6	Has good command of the English language	2.63	1.54	A	2.60	1.51	A
7	Is patient and reliable	3.14	0.81	A	3.03	1.57	A
8	Ability to exhibit great expertise and enthusiasm about what he is doing	2.69	1.03	A	2.53	0.91	A
9	Is resourceful	2.85	0.98	A	2.80	1.69	A
10	Ability to build confidence and trust in teachers	2.84	1.62	A	2.94	1.43	A
11	Ability to relate cordially with all human beings in the school.	3.13	0.86	A	3.12	0.84	A
12	Demonstrates team spirit	3.14	0.81	A	3.12	0.84	A
13	Exhibits a feeling of self-confidence	2.93	0.94	A	2.85	0.98	A

14	Ability to appraise teachers' works	3.12	0.84	A	3.14	0.81	A
15	Demonstrates leadership trait	2.67	0.94	A	2.68	0.78	A
16	Is approachable and a motivating factor	3.35	0.65	A	3.27	0.89	A
17	Ability to think objectively and creatively	3.12	1.07	A	3.09	0.91	A
18	Is conversant with the society and its needs.	2.85	0.98	A	2.93	0.94	A
19	Accepts responsibility for his/her actions/decisions.	2.43	1.05	N.A	2.41	1.03	N.A.
20	Exhibits willingness to go on learning.	2.93	0.94	A	2.88	1.00	A
21	Ability to maintain a relaxed atmosphere that will encourage effective teaching and learning.	3.12	0.84	A	3.09	1.01	A
22	Ability to keep abreast of development in instructional teaching	3.13	0.80	A	3.00	1.50	A
23	Ability to make helpful suggestions to teachers in areas of their job.	3.35	0.65	A	3.18	0.68	A
24	Ability to understand the complexity involved in human behaviors	3.27	0.89	A	3.12	0.84	A
25	Ability to apply teaching methods and materials to realize set school set objectives	3.37	0.77	A	3.12	0.84	A

A = Accepted. N.A.= Not Accepted