

THE NEW ROLES OF SCHOOL MANAGERS IN MANAGING EDUCATIONAL CHANGES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Education in Nigeria is rapidly changing and technically tailored towards meeting certain goals such as the Education for All (EFA, 2015) and the Nigeria Vision 20:2020. The requirements of these various national goals from the school managers are centered on the advancement of teaching and learning through the implementation of performance based-management. The School Management Team (Principal, Deputy Principals, and HODs) need to understand the new roles of school managers in managing the changes in Nigerian schools.

This study investigated the emerging roles that members of the School Management Team play in their efforts to manage the on-going educational changes in schools. Since the present educational system in Nigeria is characterized by a variety of changes, school managers are not only expected to understand these changes but also to be able to manage them effectively. The study discussed the concept of change in Nigerian educational system. Some of the common challenges faced by SMTs in the implementation of the new education policies were discussed.

Empirical research was conducted in four randomly selected schools in Abia State. Questionnaire was constructed to gather data from members of SMTs on the challenges facing SMTs in implementing educational policies. The research findings revealed that the present school managers find it difficult to meet the new managerial expectations that are brought about by the transforming educational environment. Recommendations were made for the retraining of School Management Teams to help them execute their expected managerial roles in meeting the nation's national goals.

Keywords: Management, School Managers, School Management Team, Nigeria

Introduction

A lot of changes have occurred in Nigerian education system since 1999. These changes require school managers to study, implement and assess teaching-learning outcomes, while at the same time providing performance based reports to the Ministry of Education. Prior to 1999, the traditional roles of school managers were mainly centered on the management of school facility, direction and supervision of teachers, and building positive school-community relations (Hauwa, 2012: 189-191). However, these roles have expanded under the new democratic dispensation most of which are measurable. Today, the school management team (Principal, Deputy Principals and Heads of Departments) is entrusted with measuring teaching outcome in schools to meet national goals; retraining of staff on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to meet specific time based national objectives; and effective management of underfunded public schools based on the directions of tough political leaders who mostly coin their manifestoes around free education.

Research suggests that democracy altered the traditional roles of school management team (SMT) in Nigeria. According to Odiya and Omofonmwan (2007: 81-86) transition from a military government to a democratic one demanded that Nigeria strive for proper reintegration into the world economy. This made the government to embark upon various reforms that can put the nation on the right course. Education, being the major driver of human development, was targeted to develop the needed manpower for national development (FGN, 2004: 4). This technically expanded the roles of the School Management Team to become more accountable for their managerial duties. The guiding question therefore is: Do School Management Teams perceive themselves to be effective in discharging their new roles in the changing educational system?

Conceptualising the School Management Team

Before now, the general notion of school management among teachers in secondary schools was entirely based on one individual, the principal - who planned everything for the school. Several workshops organized by the All Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPPS) clearly states that the management of school should not rely on one individual but should be a collective effort of the School Management Team.

The School Management Team therefore represents the school's management structure which is responsible for implementing the education policies of the country in their schools. The new education system in Nigeria

requires principals of schools to establish the school management teams that will assist in the management of the schools.

In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003: 1123), school management team refers to staff members who are occupying senior or top management positions at an institution. This implies that the SMTs are decision makers in the school system. This is supported by Westhuizen (2005:5) who sees the school management team as consisting of different components with the aim of providing effective education according to educational needs of a specific target group.

It must be noted that the concept of School Management Team is recognised by the recent Education Reform Acts (2007) in different names: School Based Management Committee and School Management Organisation. While School Based Management Committee are mostly established in all basic and secondary schools through the encouragement of the Quality Assurance Department (Education Reform Acts, 2007:13), School Management Organisation is meant for Unity Schools in Nigeria and is actually a corporate body registered under the Companies and Allied Matters Act as a Private Company Limited by guarantee (Education Reform Acts, 2007:72).

Unfortunately, despite the recognition of the School management Team by the Ministry of Education, many school teachers and even administrators still believe that the concept implies how the school principal manages the school facilities, staff, community relations and the students. For this presentation, school management team refers to top school officers such as the principal, vice-principal and the heads of departments who plan, organize, lead and implement performance based teaching-learning processes within a school.

Conceptualising Educational Change in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Educational change is associated with education reforms in Nigeria. According to Medinat, Florence and Lasiele (2011: 2) the term reform implies that the existing status-quo in the Nigerian education sector is unsatisfactory. Reform therefore could be conceived as the improvement or amendment of what is wrong, undesirable or unsatisfactory in a system. In other words, change can be defined as a paradigm shift from one way of thinking or doing to another. According to Theron (2007:32) there are five steps in the change process beginning with diagnosis (which examines the weakness and strengths of existing policy), followed by planning (where education planners now use the data obtained during the diagnosis to seek alternatives), implementation (which actually leads to change), stabilisation (when the new policy becomes part of the school system after monitoring its implementation) and evaluation (to determine whether the school achieved the new policy aims).

The rapidly changing Nigerian political and socio-economic environments affects the education system. As the second tier of education, secondary education has become the ingredient for the formulation of national policies which when implemented, is expected to enhance growth and development (Francis, 2013: 72) . Hence, the Ministry of Education plan and direct educational policies to meet up with United Nations programmes on education; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on universal and equal education; and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy on quality education (Education Reform Act, 2007: 3).

Historically, since the introduction of western education in Nigeria in the 19th century, several educational ordinances and reforms have surfaced. An overview of the reforms are highlighted below:

1882 Education Ordinance: It was the first attempt by the British government to intervene in the education of West African territories that is Lagos, Gold Coast (now Ghana), Sierra, Leone and Gambia (Fabunmi, 2005: 2). It focused on annual evaluation of pupils, methods of granting teachers certificates, system of grant-in-aid, and the establishment of a General Board of Education with the power to establish local boards (Fabunmi, 2005: 2)..

1887 Education Ordinance: It was centered on Nigeria and was seen as the first effective effort made by the government to promote education in the country (Ezeali, 2003: 89-90).

1916 Education Ordinance, It targeted both rural and urban areas purposely to increase the number of literate Nigerians to meet the increasing demand for workforce. According to Fabunmi (2005: 2-3), the ordinance tried to reorganize the school system in Nigeria based on percentage i.e school discipline (30%), teaching staff (20%) periodical examination (40%) Buildings and equipment (10%).

1922 Phelps-Stokes Commission: It was geared towards the professionalisation of Nigerian education. Teachers registration was a pre-condition for teaching in any school while education was to be taken as a government business in the areas of financing, control and supervision of educational activities (Abiri, 2005).

1926 Education Ordinance: It relied on the 1925 memorandum outlined guidelines for operation in the colonial educational system. The 1926 Ordinance specified that there should be thorough supervision of schools while stating the functions and duties of supervisors or mission school inspectors.

The 1948 Education Ordinance: It decentralized educational administration by creating a Central Board of Education and four Regional Boards. It also recommended the establishment of Local Education Committees and Local Education Authorities.

The 1952 Education Ordinance: It helped in the to development of an education law for the country and laid the foundation for future Regional Educational Laws.

The Regional Education Laws: The Eastern, Western and Northern regions of Nigeria had independent educational laws such as Law of 1955 in Western Region, the Education Law of 1956 in Northern Region and the Lagos Education Ordinance in 1957.

The Ashby Report of 1959: It recommended the expansion and improvement of primary secondary and tertiary education in Nigeria. the upgrading of the University College at Ibadan to a full-fledged university and the establishment of three other universities at Nsukka, Ife and Zaria. It also recommended the establishment of University Commission to monitor the Universities of Ibadan, ife, Nsukka and Zaria in other to produce the post-independence high-level manpower needs of Nigeria.

The Education Edicts of 1966-1979: All the states of the federation promulgated edicts for the regulation of education, and its provision and management. Each state amended its education law when necessary. All the edicts had common features, such as state take-over of schools from individuals and voluntary agencies, establishment of school management boards and a unified teaching service.

The Education Laws of the School Republic (1979-1983): The drive to make education free at the basic level as well as take over the control of professional, technological and university education, the federal government enacted laws to this effect. The states were left to had total control of primary; post primary, technical, technological, university and other forms of education within their territories.

The Education Edicts of 1983-1999: Decrees were promulgated by the Federal Military Government to guide and regulate the conduct of education. Some of the decrees established standards for primary and secondary education while others prohibited the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) for participating in trade union activities.

The Education Laws of 1999-2004. Universalization of basic education as well as the inclulcation of the right socio-economic values were the hallmark of the Education laws of the 1999-2004. Emphasis were placed on the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Education Reform of 2007: Education was geared towards meeting specific national goals as well as matching up with the world economy. Timely reports on performance based school management was introduced and emphasis was placed on transforming schools though informationa and

communication technology (ICT). The Reform also consolidated the functions of the Universal Basic Education Commission and the Federal Inspectorate Service of the Federal Ministry of Education now under the name Basic and Secondary Education Commission. Efforts are also made to improve on technical education and promotion of mathematics centre for technological advancement before year 2020.

The relevance of this reforms to this paper is centered on how they have changed and expanded the roles of the school based management over the years. Since the time of the Christian missionaries up to 2007, education reforms in Nigeria have tranformed SMTs from mere curriculum implementers to strategic policy implementers.

New Roles of the School Management Team in Managing Educational Changes

According to Doe (2003:32), role refers to one's function, or to what a person is appointed to do, or expected to do. This definition agrees with the one given by Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2003:1021) which defines role as the function or position that somebody has or is expected to have in an organization, in society or relationship. (2003:1021)

The dynamism in Nigerian education system require school managers to consantly adopt new roles in implementing government policies on education. Overtime, the roles of the SMTs were centered around instructional leadership, improvement of teachers' capacity and students' academic performance (Olibie, 2010: 85-90). However, due to changes in school system, these basic roles have expanded to include:

- i. The management of the academic and administrative affairs of the school. The SMTs are expected to effectively manage the school by planning ahead and ensure that there are enough teachers to be assigned for classes, has a hold of the school time tabling of activities, procure teaching materials, and retrain the teachers for the task ahead;
- ii. The SMTs are expected to monior the performance of staff and learners of the school using the National Policy on Education as guidline. Staff are expected to contribute to the evaluation of individual in-service activities and of the overall staff development plan;
- iii. SMTs are to maintain the assets and other infrastructures of the school;
- iv. The school SMTs are not to task the learners for money but externarly source for funds from the community and alumni body to improve school facilities.
- v. SMTs are expected to provide continuous training and development of the teachers and non-academic staff particularly on ICT usage;
- vi. SMTs are expected to comply with the conditions of service for teachers and non academic staff set by the Ministry of Education. SMTs are to ensure that only qualified teachers are assigned to teach in the classrooms;

- vii. SMTs are expected to strictly implement the curriculum in line with guidelines of the Ministry of Education purposely to meet specific national goals.

Item	Vairables	Frequency	%
Age	30-40	10	14.7
	41-50	27	39.7
	51-55	24	35.3
	56+	3	4.4
	Missing	4	5.9
	Total		68
Gender	Male	31	45.6
	Female	31	45.6
	Missing	6	8.8
	Total	100	100
Academic Qualifications	N.C.E	11	16.1
	Bachelor's Degree	22	32.4
	PGDE	22	32.4
	Masters Degree	4	5.9
	Missing	9	13.2
	Total	68	100
Number of Years in service	01-04	6	8.8
	05-08	6	8.8
	09-13	44	64.8
	13+	6	8.8
	Missing	6	
	Total	68	100

In all, the school management team must develop, support and equip staff with knowledge and skills that will make them better educators. They are to manage the changing role of the school as the training hub for sustainable development. They are also to respond positively to the patterns of social change witnessed by learners as a result of direct influence of the media (i.e online social networks with reference to Facebook and 2GO) on their learning habits.

Also, the mandates of the federal and state governments are to be strategically managed to avoid conflict in school-government relations. The SMTs are not expected to be partisan but neutrally tactful in carrying out the mandates of the political leaders who uses education for political campaigns.

Field Work Results: Challenges Facing School Management Team

Empirical research was conducted in four randomly selected schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Questionnaire was constructed to gather information on the views of the members of SMTs on the challenges facing SMTs in

implementing educational policies. The population of the study involved principals, deputy principals and heads of departments in secondary schools in Abia. Bless and Higson Smith (2000:150) assert that population is the complete set of events, people or things to which the research findings are to be applied. The population consisted of 4 school principals and 64 members of school management teams who were mainly Deputy Principals and HODs. The total population was 68.

The data above shows that the majority of the SMTs are clustered in the age category of 41- 50 (39.7%) and 51- 55 (35.3%). This implies that they've got a wealth of experience in teaching and management. This will be of great assistance in understanding the nature of the problems experienced by SMTs in implementing educational changes in Nigerian schools. Also, the gender frequency of 31 (45.6%) males and females show that gender equality is observed in this cluster. This implies that there is an equal representivity of males and females in the management of secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

On the academic qualification of the members of the SMTs, 11(16.2%) have Nigerian Certificate on Education, 22(32.4%) have Bachelors degree, 22(32.4%) have Post-Graduate Degree in Education and only 4(5.9%) have Masters Degree. There is no one with Doctoral degree. This shows that the system does not require a doctoral degree to be a qualified school manager. More importantly, large number of the respondents have first degree and are academically well equipped to deal with problems of management in their schools. So also, the number of years in service reveal that 64.8 % have worked in the school system between the years of 9 and 13, while 8.8% others have worked for more than 13 years. The frequency of table 1 will be used in analysing the data following this section.

The seriousness of the problems facing SMTs in implementing education policies in their school was to be analysed based on four point Likert Scale of 1 = not serious at all, 2 = not serious, 3 = serious, 4 = very serious. Rank ordering technique was used to determine its critical nature.

Table 2: Challenges Facing SMTs in Implementing Education Policies in Schools

As an SMT, i experience the following problems		Not Serious at all		Not Serious		Serious		Very serious		Missing	%	Mean Score	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%				
1	Quality Assurance Department does not monitor the increase in school	23	33.8	23	33.8	14	20.6	7	10.3	1	1.5	2.07	10

	population but only curriculum implementation												
2	Poor funding of schools from the government	12	17.6	16	32.5	17	25.0	18	26.5	5	7.4	2.65	2
3	Lack of training on implementing new education policies	11	16.2	21	30.9	26	38.2	10	14.7	0	0	2.51	3

Item 1: The majority of the SMTs 46 (67.6%) has indicated that they do not have problems at all or the problem is not serious. This percentage is derived from the 23 (33.8%) who have indicated that they don't have problems at all and the 23(33.8%) who have indicated that the problem is not serious. This is attributed to their experience in management and their qualifications in educational management. Another contributing factor is the position that they are holding at the school. It was indicated that all the SMT members were Principals, Deputy Principals and HODs, and as a result have met with several members of staff from the Quality Assurance Department whom they give feedback to on the running of the schools. Only 14 (20.6%) have indicated that they have serious problems particularly on the issue of overpopulation and 7(10.3%) have very serious problems which may be because of poor teacher-student ratio in the schools.

Item 2: This is a major challenge which constitute a very serious problem to the SMTs as 18 (26.5%) have indicated that they have very serious problems on it. In addition to this percentage, another 17(25%) have indicated that the problems are serious. The implication is that SMT members 35(51.5%) cannot effectively implement education policy because of poor funding from the government. The Ministry of Education should, therefore, help the schools in this regard. When the school receives funding, it facilitates the teaching-learning process. There are 12(17.7%) who do not have problems at all and 16(23.5%) who have indicated that the problems are not serious. This might be due to the community or alumni support these SMTs enjoy. In other words, SMTs who are having challenges in funding should leverage on the alumni body as well as the community to raise funds for the improvement of the school facilities.

Item 3: The majority of the SMT members 26 (38.2%) have indicated that they have a serious problem with regard to lack of training on implementing new education policies. There are also 10(14.7%) who have indicated that they've got a very serious problem in this issue. A total of 36(52.9%) have a problem with lack of training on implementing new education policies. This implies that SMTs must be trained so that they can

be in a position to assist teachers to develop skills that will help them to transfer training to the work situation. To attain the national goals set by the Federal government on Education for All by 2015 as well as becoming a top economy before year 2020, SMTs should be retrained in developing skills on implementing these goals in their schools. Only 11(16.2%) have indicated that they do not have problems at all, while 21(30.9%) have indicated that they do not have a serious problem with this issue.

Conclusion and Way Forward for School Management Team

The research findings revealed that the present school managers find it difficult to meet the new managerial expectations that are brought about by the transforming educational environment. The way forward therefore is to retrain school management teams not only on curriculum implementations but also other areas that affects their performance as school managers.

Based on the findings of the study, the government and other education stakeholders should work on retraining members of SMTs on seven major skills which are needed to drive the nation's education forward. These are Policy Implementation Skills; Fund Raising Skills, Technical Skills, Human Relations Skills, Curriculum Implementation Skills, Effective Communication Skills and ICT Skills.

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