

TOWARDS ENSURING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS BY PRINCIPALS IN ENUGU STATE.

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Abstract

The role of secondary education in achieving Nigeria's National Development goals cannot be over emphasized. However, it is only qualitative secondary education that can play this role by fostering the worth and development of the individual for each individual's sake and for the general development of the society. This study unveils the vital role of personnel management in ensuring quality assurance in the secondary school system. Concepts of secondary school, principalship, quality assurance and personnel management were discussed in perspective. Effective personnel management by principals was portrayed as a major guarantor of quality assurance in secondary schools. Consequently, it was recommended among other things that principals of secondary schools be retrained on effective personnel management strategies.

Keywords: principalship, secondary school, personnel management, Quality Assurance, Enugu State.

Introduction

Education is a tool with which people, using the human ability to respond to, and interact with the environment, pass on from generation to generation, those aspects of their culture and values which they consider to be worthwhile. It remains an undisputable fact that no society or nation can rise above its educational level. Okeke (2013) averred that, education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives, in other words, it is a process for transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both. The Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes the importance of education in attaining her national objectives.

Consequently, Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on; the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen; the full integration of the individual into the community; and the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). From the foregoing, it is clear that the Nigerian nation believes that education is an instrument "par excellence" for achieving national development as it, (education) fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake and for the general development of the society.

However, it is only qualitative and functional education that can achieve all these laudable objectives. Qualitative and functional education can only be grantee through effective quality assurance in the system. Quality assurance (QA) is part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled.

Simply put, quality assurance is a way of preventing mistakes or defects in a system. No doubt, quality assurance in secondary schools hinges to a great extent of principals' ingenuity in managing school personnel effectively, (Harrison, 2011). This study therefore is a deliberate effort to portray personnel management as a Key to Quality Assurance in secondary schools with particular reference to Enugu state.

Concept of Secondary School

Secondary school is an educational institution meant for children over eleven (11) years old. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before tertiary stage. The broad goals of secondary education is to prepare the individuals for useful living within the society; and for higher education. Secondary education lasts for six years given in two stages; a junior secondary school stage and a senior secondary stage. Each stage lasts for three years'. The secondary education level occupies an important and critical position in the setup of the educational system as a transitional stage between basic and tertiary education. Ideally, the secondary school are to cater for the needs and training of middle level technicians and semi-skilled workers, (Alam, 2009).

The secondary school education is expected to provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religion or ethnic background. Secondary school should offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles. It should Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades. Secondary schools is expected to develop and promote Nigeria languages, art and culture in the context of our cultural heritage. It should inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence. Foster national unity with emphases on the common ties that unit us in our diversity. Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the view and feelings of others. Respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under Nigeria's broad national goals and live as good citizens. Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development, (FRN, 2013).

The junior secondary school is both pre-vocational and academic. Students who complete junior secondary school are streamed into the following; the senior secondary school; the technical college; out-of-school vocational training centre; and an apprenticeship. The streaming is based on the result of test to determine the academic ability, attitude and vocational interest and capability. The senior secondary school is expected to be comprehensive with a core curriculum designed to broaden students knowledge, skills and outlook. Transition from secondary education to tertiary education is done through the appropriate selection mechanisms such as joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) which oversees the setting, marking and release of examination scores(results) for admission into tertiary institutions. From the forgoing, it is obvious that secondary education is a very crucial level of education that cannot be ruled out in a child's life. To achieve the broad aims and specific objectives of secondary education, school principals should try as much as they can to manage their personnel both efficiently and effectively. These will motivate the workers to increase productivity to and ensure quality assurance in the system.

Concept of Principalship

Ikechi (2011) averred that the concept of principalship can best be understood with reference to who a teacher is. Ikechi argued that since principals are made from among high ranking teachers, the definition of the term principal must stem from the definition of a teacher. In discussing the concept of principalship in this work, therefore, the definition of a teacher is of utmost usefulness. Rex (2011) defined a teacher as one who is involved in the guidance of pupils through planned activities to enable them acquire valuable skills while reflecting on their experiences. Davidson (2011), defined a teacher as a person who helps someone to learn. Udoh (2012), posited that a teacher is one actively involved in a systematic, rational and organized process of transmitting knowledge and skills in accordance with professional ethics and principles. As Ikechi (2011) stated, it is from high ranking teachers in secondary schools that principals are selected. Ikechi then defined a principal as a teacher promoted to a management position and given the task of being in charge of a secondary school.

Udoh (2012) held that the principal is the administrative head of a secondary school. The principal leads the management team of a secondary school. The principal should be regarded as an administrator and by extension the school administrator can be regarded as a leader. Udoh explained that this is because the administrator (principal) performs certain functions that make the school to be effective. Such functions involve planning, organizing, directing and controlling. Amusan (2012), hinted that principalship involves identification of the vision, mission, strategies and objectives of secondary school well in advance and provision of means of accomplishing them. The principal undertakes short, medium and long term planning as a foundation range planning.

Moreso, Amusan (2012) stated that principalship involves the control of human and materials resources of the secondary school. Amusan contended that since the principals sits at the helm of affairs or the top of the management or administrative ladder of the secondary school, the principal should be seen as a leader, the executive head, supervisor, manager, school climate developer, change facilitator and the Chief Servant. Evidently, one of the most frequently discussed aspects of principalship is leadership. Kreks (2010), defined a leader as a person who shows the way and influences someone else to think in a particular way. This implies that a leader knows the way, shows the way, goes the way and influences other people to do same.

Kreks further defined principalship as the mobilization of group efforts towards the achievement of stated goals in a secondary school. Principalship, thus, is the capacity to coordinate many and often conflicting social energies in the secondary school, so perfectly that they can operate as a unit. Adeleke (2011), collaborated this with the definition of principalship as effective coordination of resources and people's efforts for the achievement of the goals of secondary education.

Shehu (2012) opined that principalship entails ability to manage or economize scarcely available resources through careful control, regulation or supervision of all activities in the secondary school. Principals' activities include overseeing and monitoring enrolment of students, attraction of best staff, conducting teaching, learning and research as well as graduating secondary school students in an effective and efficient manner. In the course of carrying out his duties, a principal may wish to lead by giving information, suggesting alternative courses of actions and trying to stimulate self direction in the people he leads. In this case, the principal is said to adopt a participatory leadership technique or a democratic leadership style.

Contrarily, Amusan, (2012), stated that when a principal sees constructive and objective criticism as a threat, and fails to give the people he leads a chance to make input to decision making, the principal is said to be autocratic. A third type is where a principal primarily supplies the materials for decision making and grants his subordinates unrestricted freedom to make decision. Here, the principal is qualified as a care-free or laiz-afair leader. Shehu therefore advised that effective and efficient principalship demands sticking a fruitful or productive balance. Democracy and autocracy can be balanced in such a way that rule and order are maintained. The works goes on, the workers are happy and the organizational goals are attained.

Dunga (2011) recommended that any principal who will succeed must pay more attention to personnel management. This is because personnel management is all about human resources development. Human resource no doubt, is the most essential of all the resources for development in any organization, most especially an organization such as secondary school whose raw materials are humans. Frankly, when human resource is put in place in any organization, all other resources can be substantially harnessed. Dunga further asserted that the ultimate goal of secondary school is human development. When a secondary school staff or personnel is developed, the ultimate beneficiary is the student. It therefore follows that when the principal, through good personnel management practices develops the staff, the students will reap maximum benefits from it. This is the crux of quality assurance.

From the foregoing, the advice of Uji (2011) is very useful to all secondary school principals. Uji submitted that principals should not restrict themselves to overseeing or inspecting and monitoring workloads, equipment, finances, materials, people, time, etc. rather the principal should have a wider picture of the school. As an administrator or a manager, the principal should be visionary. Summarily, personnel management practices in secondary schools should constitute major training hints for principalship. Because principalship is hinged on managing persons (staff and students), who in turn help in managing other resources or materials for effective quality assurance.

Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance (QA) according to Ituma (2010) is a way of preventing mistakes or defects in manufactured products and avoiding problems when delivering solutions or services to customers. It is a part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. This defect prevention in quality assurance differs subtly from defect detection and rejection in quality control, and has been referred to as a shift left as it focuses on quality earlier in the process. The terms quality assurance and quality control are often used interchangeably to refer to ways of ensuring the quality of a service or product.

Quality assurance comprises administrative and procedural activities implemented in a quality system so that requirements and goals for a product, service or activity will be fulfilled. It is the systematic measurement, comparison with a standard, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop that confers error prevention. This can be contrasted with quality control, which is focused on process output. Quality assurance includes two principles: "Fit for purpose" (the product should be suitable for the intended purpose); and "right first time" (mistakes should be eliminated). QA includes management of the quality of raw materials, assemblies, products and components, services related to production, and management, production and inspection processes. Suitable quality is determined by product users, clients or customers, not by society in general. It is not related to cost, and adjectives or descriptors such as high and poor are not applicable. For example, a

low priced product may be viewed as having high quality because it is disposable, whereas another may be viewed as having poor quality because it is not disposable.

Prior to the extensive division of labor and mechanization resulting from the Industrial Revolution, it was possible for workers to control the quality of their own products. The Industrial Revolution led to a system in which large groups of people performing a specialized type of work were grouped together under the supervision of a foreman who was appointed to control the quality of work manufactured, (Rex, 2011).

Mogul (2011) added that during the time of the First World War, manufacturing processes typically became more complex with larger numbers of workers being supervised. This period saw the widespread introduction of mass production and piece work, which created problems as workmen could now earn more money by the production of extra products, which in turn occasionally led to poor quality workmanship being passed on to the assembly lines. To counter bad workmanship, full-time inspectors were introduced to identify, quarantine and ideally correct product quality failures. Mogul stated that quality control by inspection in the 1920s and 1930s led to the growth of quality inspection functions, separately organized from production and large enough to be headed by superintendents. The systematic approach to quality started in industrial manufacturing during the 1930s, mostly in the U.S., when some attention was given to the cost of scrap and rework. The impact of mass production required during the Second World War made it necessary to introduce an improved form of quality control known as Statistical Quality Control, or SQC. Some of the initial work for SQC is credited to Walter A. Shewhart of Bell Labs, starting with his famous one-page memorandum of 1924.

Harrison (2011) submitted that SQC includes the concept that every production piece cannot be fully inspected into acceptable and non-acceptable batches. By extending the inspection phase and making inspection organizations more efficient, it provides inspectors with control tools such as sampling and control charts, even where 100 percent inspection is not practicable. Standard statistical techniques allow the producer to sample and test a certain proportion of the products for quality to achieve the desired level of confidence in the quality of the entire batch or production run. In the period following World War II, many countries' manufacturing capabilities that had been destroyed during the war were rebuilt. General Douglas MacArthur oversaw the re-building of Japan.

During this time, General MacArthur involved two key individuals in the development of modern quality concepts: W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran. Both individuals promoted the collaborative concepts of quality to Japanese business and technical groups, and these groups utilized these concepts in the redevelopment of the Japanese economy. Although there were many individuals trying to lead United States industries towards a more comprehensive approach to quality, the U.S. continued to apply the Quality Control (QC) concepts of inspection and sampling to remove defective product from production lines, essentially ignoring advances in QA for decades.

A valuable process to perform on a whole consumer product is failure testing or stress testing. In mechanical terms this is the operation of a product until it fails, often under stresses such as increasing vibration, temperature, and humidity. This exposes many unanticipated weaknesses in a product, and the data use approaches to drive engineering and manufacturing process improvements. Often quite simple changes can dramatically improve product service, such as changing to mold-resistant paint or adding lock-washer placement to the training for new assembly personnel.

According to Upe (2012) statistical control is based on analyses of objective and subjective data. Many organizations use statistical process control as a tool in any quality improvement effort to track quality data. Any product can be statistically charted as long as they have a common cause variance or special cause variance to track. Walter Shewart of Bell Telephone Laboratories recognized that when a product is made, data can be taken from scrutinized areas of a sample lot of the part and statistical variances are then analyzed and charted. Control can then be implemented on the part in the form of rework or scrap, or control can be implemented on the process that made the part, ideally eliminating the defect before more parts can be made like it.

Upe asserted that the quality of products is dependent upon that of the participating constituents, some of which are sustainable and effectively controlled while others are not. The processes (s) which are managed with QA pertain to Total Quality Management. If the specification does not reflect the true quality requirements, the product's quality cannot be guaranteed. For instance, the parameters for a pressure vessel should cover not only the material and dimensions but operating, environmental, safety, reliability and maintainability requirements. From the above it is obvious that efficient and effective quality assurance involves proper management of the workers who will perform the quality jobs. In the secondary school system, the workers are the teachers and other non-teaching staff while the principals (managers) play the supervisory role.

Concept of Personnel Management

Dunga (2011) defined personnel management as the process concerned with the procurement, development, compensation, integration and maintenance of the personnel of an organization for the purpose of contributing towards the accomplishment of that organization's major goals or objectives. Dunga further described personnel management as the planning, organizing, directing and controlling of the performance of those operative functions. Dick (2013) described personnel management as the activities of recruitment and employment; manpower planning, employee training and management, development, organization planning, organization development, wages and salary administration, health and safety (at work), benefits and services, union management relations and personnel research.

According to Amusan (2012), personnel management is that field of management which has to do with planning, organizing and controlling various operative activities of procuring, developing, maintaining and utilizing a labour force in order that the objective and interest for which the organization is established are attained as effectively and economically as possible and the objectives and interests of all levels of personnel and community are served to the highest degree. Erkson (2014) added that personnel management is a part- of management which is concerned with people at work and their relationships within an enterprise. Zeph contended that personnel management is both a responsibility of all those who manage people as well as a description of the work of those who are employed as specialist.

More so, Udoh (2012) described personnel management as manpower management which involves planning and directing, the application, development, and utilization of human resources in employment. In other words, Udoh posited that personnel management is a method of developing the potentialities of employees so that they (the employees) get maximum satisfaction out of their work and give their best effort to the organization. Adeniola (2012) submitted that personnel management is that part of management process which is primarily concerned with the human constituents of an organization. Hence, Adeniola posited

that personnel management involves the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of the procurement, development, compensation, integration and maintenance of the individual organizational and societal objectives.

Further-more, Kuntu (2013) defined personnel management as that part of management function which is concerned with people at work and their relationship within an organization or enterprise. Kuntu held that the aim of personnel management is to bring together and develop into an effective organization the men and women who make up an enterprise and, having regard to well-being of an individual and of working groups, to enable them make their best contribution to its success. Tiz (2013) averred that personnel management is that part of the management process that is primarily concerned with human relationship within an organization. The objective of personnel management, according to Tiz, is the maintenance of those relationships on a basis which by consideration of the well-being of the individual, enables all those engaged in the undertaking to make their maximum personal contribution in the effective working of the undertaking.

Still on the objectives of personnel management, Samuelson (2013) classified them into two, namely, general objectives and specific objectives. The general objectives involve the basic philosophy of top management towards the labour force engaged on the work and its underlying conviction as to the importance of the people in the organization. Samuelson listed three most important objectives as follows;

- i) Maximum individual development: The employer should always be careful in developing the personality of each individual. Each individual differs in nature and therefore, management should recognize their individual ability and make use of such ability in an effective manner.
- ii) Desirable working relationship between employer and employees: It is the main objective of personnel management to have a desirable working relationship between employer and employees so that they may cooperate with the management.
- iii) Effective moulding of human resources as contrasted with physical resources: man is the only active factor of production which engages the other factors of production to work.

Tambo (2012) outlined the specific objectives of personnel management to include; selection of right type and number of persons required by the organization, proper orientation and introduction of new employees to the organization and their jobs, suitable training facilities for better job performance and to prepare the man to accept the challenge of higher job, provision of better working conditions and other facilities such as medical facilities, to give a good impression to the man who is leaving the organization and maintaining good relationship with employees. Dunga (2011) hinted that personnel management involves two categories of practices or functions, namely; managerial and operative. Basic managerial functions include planning, organizing, motivating and controlling. These are common to all managers including personnel managers. The planning function of a personnel manager pertains to the steps taken in determining a course of action. This involves developing a personnel programme and specifying what and how operative practices are to be performed. After plans have been developed, the personnel manager must establish a plan to carry them out. This practice or function, therefore, calls for groupings of personnel activities, assignment of different group of activities to different individuals, delegation of authority to carry them out and provision for coordination of authority relationships horizontally and vertically in the organization structure.

Dunga explained that motivation involves guiding and supervising the personnel. Personnel management must inculcate in the workers a keen appreciation of the organizational policies. He must guide them towards improved performance and motivate them to work with zeal and confidence. Control involves measuring performance, correcting negative deviations and assuring the accomplishment of plans. Through direct observation, direct supervision, as well as report, records and audit, personnel management assures itself that its practices are being carried out in accordance with the plans.

Samuelson (2013) listed personnel management practices or functions as recruitments, selection, training and development, job evaluation with salaries/wages, formulation of manpower policies, Provision of data for planning and decision making; co-ordination of performance appraisals, promotion of relations, personnel research, health and safety administration, as well as administration of discipline. Samuelson further hinted that the basic element of personnel management can broadly be grouped into six viz:

1. Recruitment and selection of staff
2. Staff training and development
3. Job evaluation, performance appraisal and promotions
4. Wages and salary administration
5. Staff welfare and
6. Industrial relations

From the foregoing, it is clear that when these elements of personnel management are properly fixed, quality assurance is guaranteed.

Conclusion

Since personnel management is concerned with the procurement, development, compensation, integration, discipline, welfare and maintenance of the personnel of an organization, the researcher in this study deems it fit to conclude that efficient and effective personnel management by secondary school principals is capable of ensuring quality assurance in the school system. This is because the major purpose of effective personnel management is to elicit employees' maximum contribution towards the accomplishment of the organization's goals and objectives.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the conclusion reached in this study, the researcher recommends as follows;

1. Principals of secondary schools in Enugu state should be trained and retrained on adopting profitable personnel management strategies to ensure quality assurance in their schools.
2. Enugu state government should institute annual awards for principals who maintain cordial industrial relation in their schools.

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