

Teacher Education in Nigeria: Challenges to Educational Administrators in the 21st Century

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Abstract: This study conducts a comprehensive assessment of the role of educational administrators in Nigeria in view of the dynamism of the constantly changing political and economic landscape. The study presents information and recommendations on how teachers training and continuous professional development can be positively influenced by the school administrators which has posed as challenges to educational administrators in the 21st century. This is because teachers are very important in the overall development of any nation through their impact the educational system. It is obvious that teacher education is a process for continues updating of teacher's knowledge, skills and interest in their chosen field. Hence, it is a challenge for educational administrators to play several roles in teacher education in Nigeria.

Key words: Administrators, teacher education, Nigerian schools system, professional, development, knowledge

INTRODUCTION

The school system in Nigeria is often influenced by the constant changes that are occurring within the political institutions. The ability of the stakeholders and actors within the educational system to adapt to the organizational changes has attracted attention in the last decade. Currently, there is controversy as to the nature, pattern and methods of training teachers in the country. At the centre of the controversy is the confusion over the role of the educational administrators in secondary schools.

Teaching involves the use of wide body of knowledge about the subject being taught. Teachers at all levels of the educational system are very important in the overall development of any nation. Teachers' education is the process which nurtures prospective teachers and updates qualified teachers' knowledge and skills in the form of continuous professional development. It is on this basis that the educational administrators play several roles in teacher education in Nigeria. The terms, teachers training in this study is used interchangeably with teachers education. Teachers' education revolves around the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skills required in the performance of effective duties in the classrooms and in other social gatherings including churches. Teachers' education is often divided into three stages namely:

- Initial teacher training
- The induction process involving the training and supports of the trainees during the 1st few years of teaching or the 1st year in a particular school
- Teacher development or continuing performing development and intensive process for practicing teachers

The previous processes and stages of professional development of teachers constitute the concept of teacher training and/or teacher education. In fact, there has been a long standing and ongoing debate about the most appropriate term to describe teacher education and educational administrators. This is due to the fact that teaching involves the use of wide body of knowledge about the subject being taught and another set of knowledge about the most effective ways to teach that subject to students at any level of the education system in the country.

The teacher stands out as one the most important factors determining the quality of education and its contributions to national development. At every level people who go to school look on the teacher for the acquisition of the necessary skills to enable them become what they want to be. Thus, students often look on the personal qualities, their educational qualities and professional competence which are rewarding to the learners. It is on this note that the role of educational administrators in assisting teachers to help students

achieve the objective of instructions in their various fields of endeavor stands paramount and a challenge in the 21st century. How should the teacher present himself in order to get his message across? How can he communicate effectively in the class? Under what kind of environment can the message get across? What pedagogical approaches are effective? These among other question are of interest not only to students and teachers but also to school administrators (Onuoha, 1975).

Accordingly, the principal is regarded as the chief executive of the school who is responsible for all that happens in the school (Nakpodia, 2006). As the chief executive, the principal assigns duties to those who could perform the duties though all responsibilities still resides in him as the accounting officer. It is in this regard that Babayemi noted that the position of the principal as involving the control of human and material resources of the school. The position of the principal in the school is so important to the extent that the school cannot exist without that position. Babayemi further noted that the principal is the supervisory manager; school climate developer and change facilitator. Akpa opined that the principal is a human resources manager and a liaison and public relations officer as well as an instructional leader. Obemeata describes the principal as a manger, administrator, an exemplary leader, a counsellor, a public officer, a building contractor, a nurse and even a messenger.

The need for teacher education: Teacher education is policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school, the church and the local and wider unity. Although, ideally it should be conceived of and organized as a seamless continuum, teacher education is often divided into these stages:

- Initial teacher training (a pre-service hour before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher)
- Induction the process of providing training and support during the 1st few years of teaching or the 1st year in a particular school
- Teacher development or Continuing Performing Development (CPD) (and intensive process for practicing teachers)

There is a longstanding and ongoing debate about the most appropriate term to describe these activities. The term teacher training (which may give the impression that the activity involves training staff to undertake relatively routine tasks) seems to be losing ground to teacher education (with its connotation of preparing staff for a

professional role as a reflective practitioner). The objective of Nigerian teacher education should emphasize 21st century the training of highly motivated, conscientious and successful classroom teachers for all educational levels. It should encourage in potential teachers, a spirit of improving creativity, nationalism and belongingness. It should help the prospective teacher to live into the social life of home and community provide him with intellectual and professional backgrounds adequate for his assignments, provide the teacher who by his training and discipline will be adaptable to the changing roles of education in society. In fact, the Nigerian teacher education in the 21st century should produce knowledgeable programme and effective teachers who can inspire children to learn. These objectives are to be obtained with the efforts of the educational administration who is saddled with various responsibilities of managing the human, financial and material resources of the school.

Since, the 1st teacher training college was established by the Church Missionary Society in 1859, teacher education continues to be the very to educational development in the country and elsewhere, it must be noted that without an adequate trained teaching cadre Nigeria cannot hope to expand her educational facilities. This level of training continues to get considerable attention and support from the federal and state government. Most teachers are trained at government expense and many should receive allowances while in training by the 21st century as it was in the past. Indeed teacher education continues to be the most heavily subsidised level of education in Nigeria. Therefore, the educational administrator should possess some qualities and principles and there should be basis for their selection for them to perform their role creditably in the school system.

At the head of leadership in teacher education in Nigeria is the principal who administers the school with other teaching and non-teaching staff. Accordingly, the principal is regarded as the chief executive of the school and is responsible for all that happens in the school. As the chief executive, the principal assigns duties to those who could perform the duties though, all responsibilities still reside in him as the accounting officer. It is in this regard that Bele (1996) views principalship as involving the control of human and material resources of the school. The position of the principal in the school is so germane to the extent that the school cannot exist without that position. Bele further sees the principal as the supervisor manager, school climate developer and change facilitator. Earlier, Fagbulu (1972) sees the principal as a human resource manager, a liaison and public relation officer as well as an instructional leader.

The educational administrators and Nigerian educational system: Educational administrators are senior persons in teacher education such as the school head who come closest to the people who are responsible for overall school system. In any sense, some claims made on educational administrator would sound inferior but it is a fact that educational administrators are rarely supermen but they do represent an experience other than any man could achieve men. In teacher education, the school head such as the principal is regarded as the educational administrator in the secondary school system and he is the key person in the administrative organization. The principal is appointed as a result of such friction and seniority. It is his duty to oversee the proper running of the school in terms of staff and student welfare, development and implementation of educational programmes, provision of proper instruction, school-community relations, discipline and proper keeping of school records. Other duties include students' admissions, proper documentation of school finances and the creation of a conducive atmosphere.

The search for an appropriate educational system and educational administrators that restructured the Nigerian mind and imbue it with that germ of self actualization in politics, social, economic, educational and cultural values experience a break through only in 1977 when the new national policy of education was formulated now revised in 2004 based on the 6-3 to 3-4 system of the American decentralized educational system. The process of transmitting the new national policy of education into practical reality has not been easy as the country is faced with the characteristic problems of development. Indeed it is not much of a surprise that the situation is so for a country which was discovered, invaded, subjected, governed then educated, converted and assisted at the same time being discriminated against like most other African countries (Gordon, 1955).

The national policy on the educational system in Nigeria is government way of realizing that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool. No policy on education however can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation that is to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble and democratic nation and for a free and democratic society.

Nigerian law requires compulsory education for all students between the ages of 6 and 15 years. Students in primary and secondary school attend three equally divided sessions from January through December with about a month vacation between sessions. In 1982, Nigeria switched to the American system of six primary, three junior secondary and three senior secondary school

grades but the rigid examination system remained. To qualify for entry into Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS) and higher education, nationwide examinations are held each year. Because exam scores determine a student's future educational choices, schools tend to stress memorization of facts rather than creative problem solving. There are not enough senior secondary schools in Nigeria so most students who finish JSS go into the workforce.

Certain federal and state agencies plan and carry out special education programs. Teachers receive training to teach in these programs. Mostly, though the government encourages integration of special education students into the regular schools. The ministry of social development, youth and sports also runs centers throughout the nation to help train people with special needs.

There are three major categories of higher or tertiary education. One is postsecondary which is non-university level training in technical and vocational fields. Students receive certificates of training for completing work-oriented courses. The second type of higher education institution consists of higher technical but non-university level programs offered at technical colleges, polytechnics and colleges of education. They usually offer a variety of options for students that lead to a National Diploma (ND) for 2 years of study or a Higher National Diploma (HND) for 4 years of study. The 3rd type of tertiary institution is the degree-granting institution offering bachelor's and higher degrees.

About two-thirds of the universities are federally owned and a majority of the others are state-owned. There are 13 federally owned and 14 state-owned polytechnic colleges. Unlike primary and secondary schools, the institutions of higher education normally follow a 15 weeks semester system, running from October to mid July.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The following are some of the characteristics of a good educational administrator

Professional: This would be the biggest characteristics. A man/woman not giving to playing favorites, listening to the staff but not necessarily doing every little request, backing the teachers up on parent conferences but giving constructive criticism when the parent leaves, caring more about the academics of the students rather than what clothes the teachers wear (unless, it is inappropriate).

Be a leader: Most principals are so caught up in their meetings that they forgot they are the leaders in the

building. A principal should remember what it is like to be a teacher; must give leadership to the teachers, students and staff always visiting the classrooms.

A good principal: A good principal is one who is supportive, creative, considerate administrators; always willing to help out answer questions. Visit teachers' room regularly and offer advice or compliments. Data-driven, helping teachers understand the numbers and finds best practice methods to improve the members.

Diagnostic skill: According to Graham (1982), one of such characteristics is the diagnostics skill which is very important for managing situations as they arise.

BASIS FOR THE SELECTION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

There are certain conditions in terms of personal characteristics which a school administrator must possess in order to be considered. According to Graham (1982), one of such characteristics is the diagnostic skill which is very important for managing situations as they arise, some of the characteristics which should be considered in the selection of school administrators include the following:

Teaching experience: Teaching experience in the practical sense is one important factor that is considered in the selection of school administrators. The school as a formal organization encourages this by ensuring that the very senior teachers are appointed as school administrators. Experience as a factor in appointing school administrators cannot be over emphasized. This is because in climbing the seniority ladder, the teacher would have been a form master, mistress, may be a house-master/mistress, gamesmaster/mistress or a vice principal. After going through these various positions, the individual would have acquired enough experience to be able to lead other people. The essence of the experience acquired is to help in the development of leadership thrust which according to Olele (1995) is concerned with developing leadership qualities and team work.

Intelligence: As school administrator is supposed to be a leader and manager of people and situations for this reason, it is necessary for the school administrator to possess a level of intelligence that is at least above average. According to Aderounmu and Ehiemetalor (1985) there is however, no definite correlation between high test scores and ability to be a good school administrator. It is however, obvious that a school administrator with a low

intelligence quotient, all things being equal is more likely to have leadership problems than one with a high intelligence quotient.

Objectivity: A school administrator is supposed to be objective in handling issues at all times. This is because it helps to enhance the father or mother figure that the position is supposed to represent. Furthermore, it will help to give the staff and students a sense of belonging.

Use of language: The school administrator is supposed to be able to communicate both verbally and in writing in a very clear manner so as to read people and be read clearly for the avoidance of ambiguity. This is because unnecessary problems could arise as a result of such unclear language being used to address issues that concern staff, students and the community.

Awareness: One of the problems that some leaders face is the problem of being concerned with the routine of doing their jobs in an unimaginative manner with a total lack of appreciation or what they can do to become better managers and leaders. To take care of this problem among school administrators, a good school administrator should be aware of the various factors that make for leadership effectiveness and according to Koontz of the way in which styles are contingent on a range of situational considerations.

Empathy: School administrators should have empathy which is the imaginative project or a person's consciousness into another person. This deals with putting oneself in the place of another person in terms feelings, prejudices and values. This is not an easy attribute to develop because as on the part of the leader could be wrong. In spite of this shortcoming, an insight into the feelings of a subordinate would allow the administrator to deal better and in a more understanding way with the subordinates.

Honesty: A school administrator should be honest with both the employers, staff and students. They help to avoid a situation where the school administrator pretends to know it all. Situations that arise from this is one in which the staff in particular would isolate themselves and let the school administrator make all his mistakes knowing fully well that questions from higher authorities would be asked eventually.

Track record: Apart from experience, the track record of the intended school administrator as a classroom teacher, form master, games master, house master and vice

principal should be taken into consideration in appointing school administrators. Virtues such as human relations, punctuality and comportment should be considered along side track record. These are some of the basic attributes which should be taken into consideration in the appointment of school administrators. This is because these school administrators constitute an important link between the agencies that provide education and the beneficiaries in particular and the society in general.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

According to Aderounmu and Ehiamezor (1985), the functions which the principal has to perform in teacher education are numerous and diverse. Some of the functions include the following:

Development and implementation of the educational programme: This is broken down into two categories which are:

- Structuring of the school for purpose of instruction
- Curriculum development

For effective teaching and learning to take place in a school, a conducive atmosphere which is devoid of confusion must be created. One of the ways by which the principal can do this is by clearly identifying positions and roles and acquainting the position occupants with their roles the relationship that is supposed to exist between role occupants. For example, departments based on subjects can be created with heads of department appointed to oversee the running of the departments. The principal assign responsibilities to the heads of department and gives them the relevant powers with which to carry out such assigned responsibilities.

On the other hand, the principal is seen to be playing the role of the team leader in relation to curriculum development. He plays his role by way of serving as a guide to the various teachers either directly or in conjunction with the heads of department in terms of helping to identify relevant goals to the community, planning and selecting relevant learning experiences, helping to implement programme improvement and evaluating programme changes.

Development of teaching staff:

- The principal carries out the function of staff development by identifying and indicating the staff needs of the school. This deals with the qualifications and areas of specialization of existing vacancies and how the collected statistics can serve

as a basis for their recruitments or making representations to the appropriate body in charge of employment matters

- The 2nd way by which the principal carries out development of staff is through orientation of new members of staff to the school system which includes staff, students and the community. The essence of this is to help to make the breaking in period of the new employee less traumatic
- The principal directly or indirectly assigns the new staff to his initial position. Subsequently, the new staff may be assigned to other roles where there will be optimal utilization of his experience and talents
- The principal can also conduct a programme of staff improvement through classroom observations and other forms of evaluation
- The basis for this is to be able to identify areas of strength and weakness on the part of the teachers
- Based on observations by the principal, activities such as in-service training can be recommend. Staff could also be encouraged to join professional associations
- The principal through the maintenance of good human relations with staff could motivate them both to learn and put in their best on the job

Student relations function:

- Since, the school cannot exist without students, the 1st relation the principal has with students is to ensure that the students who are granted admission meet the government guidelines or those set aside by the overseeing body in charge of the school
- The principal should endeavour to group the students accordingly for the purposes of instruction. This move would normally help to save time that would be judiciously used for the provision of instructions
- The principal should also address the issue of students' transfer which could either be intra or inter state. The principal should decide whether there is a vacancy in the class to which the transfer is being sought what therefore, the transfer could possibly be
- The principal, through the form masters or mistresses as the case may be should ensure that students who are repeating are adequately catered for
- The principal should take note of all the students who are withdrawing from the school for what ever reasons. The students' records should be subsequently updated to reflect such withdrawals and the reasons for withdrawal

- In schools that provide boarding facilities, the principal should monitor the admission into the boarding section as well as the welfare of the boarders
- The principal should also ensure that the academic records of all students who have completed their course in the school are safely and properly stored. This is to make for easy retrieval when the need arises

Community relations function:

- The principal should base on his training and interaction find out and articulate the perceived educational needs and expectations of the immediate community
- For the development of good human relation, the principal should endeavour to participate in communal activities to which he is invited
- The principal should maintain a good channel of communication with the parents teachers association for purposes of getting new ideas, remaining sensitive to the feelings of parents and acquainting parents and guardians with the problems of the school

Financial function:

- The principal should ensure that financial provisions are made for the running of his school in the annual budget
- The principal should in conjunction with the bursar ensure that school funds are spent according to the budget in a prudent manner
- In places where fees are paid, the principal should be bribed by the bursar on the amount of money that is collected and for what purpose. In addition, steps should be taken to ensure that proper records of receipts and expenses are kept

GROOMING OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

School administrators are expected to possess and display certain attributes that reflect the way and manner that their various schools are run. It is however, necessary to highlight some of the vital areas in which school administrators as leaders have to be groomed as part of their training and preparation. Some of the vital areas are as follows:

Human relations: Some knowledge of psychology and sociology are necessary for the prospective school administrator since, the job will be bringing administrator in constant touch with people from various strata of society.

Planning: The school administrator deals with both human and material resources. For this reason, it is necessary to be able to plan effectively. This makes it necessary for the school administrator to know where and how to collect and collate information with which effective planning can be carried out. Without this, the school administrator will not look articulate in office.

Decision making: The school administrator should know how to take decisions that will be of the best benefit to the school and the staff generally. The school administrator should be able to identify problems, collect information, seek alternative source of solving the problem, choose the best alternative and appraise the choice. By so doing, the administrator will always be in charge of situations as they arise.

Organizing: The school administrator should be taught to be a good organizer. This is because situations are usually easier to manage in an organized set up. If things begin to go wrong either with staff, finances or students, the school administrator would be able to know immediately.

Delegation of authority: The school administrator as a trainer of subordinates should be taught, based on management principles to delegate specific duties at times to subordinate and give them the full powers to carry out such duties. The essence of this is two-fold.

The 1st is to reduce the work load of the school administrator so to have time to attend to some other official matters. The 2nd is to provide some training for subordinates while the administrator act as a guide.

Discipline: The school administrator should be taught the various disciplinary procedures and when to apply them. By being taught, the administrator will know when and how to relate to his staff and students. The employers of the school administrator would also be saved some legal complications which could arise as a result of error of judgment on the part of the school administrator.

Staff appraisal: The school administrator should be taught the principle of objectivity, particularly as it relates to writing staff reports. This is important because of the effect it could have on motivation, morale and apathy on the part of the teachers.

Effective communication: The school administrator should be taught effective communication skills. This is concerned with both relating to government, staff, students, parents and the general public. It is important

for the school administrator to communicate effectively for the sake of the public image of the school. It is necessary for the school administrator to be trained in the acquisition of these discussed attributes. This is because it is only after this training that such administrators can be expected to perform and be judged accordingly.

CONCLUSION

In formal organisations, administrators owe their authorities to the position and role and not primarily to their own talents. This is because historically, the school principals as educational administrators have tended to associate themselves psychologically with classroom teachers rather than to think of themselves as a distinctive administrative group. Principals' orientation towards teacher education had its logical roots in the classroom since many principals were appointed to positions after long years of service as classroom teachers. Researchers need to have a detailed analysis of what administrators are doing on a day-to-day basis to fulfil their mandated responsibilities. There is little doubt that some principals are evading some responsibilities as a result of competing pressures such as the increased involvement of outside agencies. The various teachers' training programmes requires assessment as to determining whether they are reflecting the changes in educational policy and school governance. This is important given the number of administrators that retires yearly (Macmillan *et al.*, 2001).

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