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Supervision of Services: The Rot of School Libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper discusses supervision of services as the rot of public secondary school libraries in Nigeria. The concept of supervision of services, its upshot in public secondary schools system and the various supervision strategies that when applied could place the libraries in public secondary schools on a better pedestal were examined. The paper concludes that as the 21st century public secondary schools are expected to be productive in a dynamic and changing global village, the libraries must have their services well supervised for the attainment of functionality and utility.

Introduction

Secondary school is the bridge between the primary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria and the world over. As Ekundayo (2010) puts it, it is as a result of the importance of the secondary school that the federal government of Nigeria stated the broad aims of secondary school as the preparation for useful living within the society and for higher education. Noting here, that the crux of the system is to be able to provide quality secondary education to all those who can benefit from it. Ekundayo further argued that it appears, however, that the secondary schools are not living up to expectations in discharging their obligations.

To this ugly trend, Omoregie (2005) laments that the products of today's secondary schools can neither usefully live in the society nor move into higher institution without their parents' aid or forgery, indulge in examination malpractices or cut corners, among other things. It is pertinent to observe therefore, that education at all levels cannot be an instrument per excellence for achieving national development if, among other factors, libraries are not effectively managed and supervised to accomplish their aims and objectives. Hence, the issue of management and supervision is identified as very crucial to the proper development of secondary schools.

Management as a concept has been defined severally in different facets and ramifications, depending on the context or usage. Essien (2003) asserts that management is a process. Management serves as a tool of utmost importance to the successful execution of managerial tasks and the attainment of goals and objectives. He also stated that management is a vehicle through which actions are carried out and as such, to a large measure, determines the effectiveness with which major decisions are made, policies formulated and practices are followed and implemented. To this end, Nwaoku (2005) sees management as that which includes planning activities, which aims at the fulfillment of the goals of the organization concerned. It is concerned with the performance of executive duties, the carrying out of policies and decisions to fulfill a purpose or purposes.

From an educational view point, Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (2014) states that management as a process involves planning, organizing, directing and controlling the activities of an institution by utilizing human and material resources so as to effectively and efficiently accomplish functions of

teaching, extension works and research. Based on this premise, the source gave the following as the objectives of school management. These are:

- Achievement of the institution objectives;
- Improving planning, organizing and implementing of the institutions activities and processes;
- Creating, maintaining and enhancing a good public image of the institution;
- Appropriate utilization of human resources, that is, teaching, non-teaching staff and students;
- Facilitating optimum utilization of infrastructural facilities;
- Preventing duplication of work;
- Enhancing job satisfaction;
- Creating and maintaining a congenial school climate;
- Management of interpersonal conflicts;
- Management of stress and effective use of time; and
- Interpersonal communication improvement.

The researchers strongly believe at this juncture that all these lofty management processes in schools can only be achieved in an atmosphere of effective supervision by all stakeholders, especially in the secondary school libraries.

Supervision and the Secondary Schools

A careful assessment of the secondary school system in Nigeria reveals that poor supervision is one of the problems bedeviling the system, which has been hindering the system from achieving its lofty goals.

Supervision as a concept has been defined differently by scholars and within the context of their profession. However, the present researchers believe that for supervision to be understood and applied within the school system, and further accomplish the goals, it becomes imperative to see supervision from a counseling perspective.

Thus, Bernard and Goodyear (1998) defined supervision as an intervention that is provided by a senior member(s) of a profession (senior academic librarians) to a junior member(s) and students of that same profession (libraries). This relationship, the authors argued, is evaluative, extends over time and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the junior member(s), monitoring the quality of professional services (teaching/services) offered to the clients and serves as a **gatekeeper** of those who are to enter the particular profession.

Ekundayo (2010) adds that the effective service delivery and maintenance of standards in the school system, and by extension the libraries, are enhanced through regular internal and external supervision. In another development, Akubue (2004) states that supervision is the phase of administration that sees to the improvement of instruction. It tries to control what is taught, who is taught and the impact of what is taught to the learner. It is also the improvement of every phase of educational programme such as the organization of the programme of studies, the revision of the curricula, the instructional procedures, the students activity programmes and the non-instructional activities of the staff members, especially in the school libraries.

The Upshot of Poor Supervision of Services in Secondary School Libraries

The quality of Nigeria's secondary school system has been under strong doubt, criticisms and rejection. Scholars such as Ajayi (2002), Omoregie (2005) and Egwuasi and Egwuasi (2010) are of the position that secondary education in Nigeria is riddled with crises of various dimensions and facets, all of which combine to put the system in an ugly situation. The present researchers strongly believe that an aspect of the school, which has been so neglected and which has the capacity of salvaging this ugly trend is the school library. To this end, Manga (2013) avers that the library plays a vital role in empowering our students in their learning and to become lifelong learners. It is in the library that information literacy skills are taught.

It is against this backdrop that this section of the paper identifies poor supervision of services as the rot of the secondary school libraries in Nigeria. Poor supervision is seen as that which has affected negatively the libraries in our secondary schools. Observations have shown in recent times that most public secondary school managements, for obvious reasons best known to them, lack the basic supervisory roles and techniques, or are not interested in the well being of the students, the libraries and the schools at large. In congruence, Oyewole and Ehinola (2014) posits that the fact remains that the success of an educational programme especially in the achievement of effective teaching and learning depends largely on job performance of teachers and others involved in one service delivery or the other, and that, this ugly situation of poor performance of public secondary school students in Nigeria, perhaps requires intensive supervision (in libraries) towards the attainment of schools goals and objectives.

From the above, it is another clear indication of the unfortunate and sorry state of the Nigerian public secondary school system. As the authors conclude, if the Nigerian secondary level of education is to be functional, productive and students' performance improved, greater attention must be focused on the ways teachers (teachers librarians and non-teaching librarians) perform their instructional duties and guidance in the classrooms and most importantly in the libraries. Achieving these goals, the person or group of persons involved in the supervision in schools can only accomplish their tasks if and only when the supervision of instructions strategies as postulated by Ezedi (2002) are adhered to analytically on regular basis. These include:

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

The last strategy, as postulated by Ezedi (2002), is of paramount importance to this discourse. Hence, Etuk (2010) argues that every secondary school in Nigeria requires a well equipped library to enhance effective teaching and learning process. As confirmed by the National Policy on Education (2004), libraries are one of the most important educational services; proprietors of schools shall provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards. They shall also provide for training librarians and library assistance for this service.

It is interesting to further reveal here that even when both public and private secondary schools in Nigeria are seen to have libraries, whether well-equipped or not, there is still the problem of service delivery, which is as a result of poor supervisory roles played by the librarians.

Conclusions

The 21st century secondary school in Nigeria is expected to be productive in a dynamic and changing global village. The functionality and utility can only be achievable when the school libraries are well positioned through adequate supervision of all its services to the patrons. The paper also revealed that it is the responsibilities of the training librarians and library assistants to ensure these services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

- Academic librarians should be posted to all secondary school libraries in Nigeria in order to put their professional skills to bear.
- In schools where this cannot be possible, principals, vice-principals and teachers should be trained in order to acquire skeletal library skills and strategies for supervision in libraries.
- A closer, regular and more continuous supervision of the students in and outside the libraries must be carried out.
- The schools must provide libraries for the building of a reading culture in the students.
- The schools management must create enabling environments and periods for the use of libraries in the day-to-day teaching and learning.

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