

IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION THROUGH QUALITATIVE INSPECTION

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Abstract

The success of any curriculum is determined by the extent to which the stated objectives have been achieved. Basically, secondary education in Nigeria is geared towards developing a child's intellectual capacity, his affective or attitudinal capacity and his psychomotor or manipulative skill capacity. To achieve this, one of the strategies was that of establishing efficient inspectorate services for monitoring and maintaining standards at all levels below the tertiary level. However, there are traces that the inspectorate division has not lived up to expectation as such the objectives of secondary education are, far from being achieved. This paper therefore, looked into the activities of inspectors' Vis - a - Vis secondary education. It examined the possibility of re - positioning secondary education using qualitative inspections in order to achieve overall goals of the system.

Introduction

Secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The broad goals of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and for higher education. (FRN, 2004). Secondary education is very crucial to the development of the nation. It is to prepare the young adult for purposeful organization of oneself, for achieving maximally ones potentials to be able to withstand the complexities of living in the environment. It is also meant to prepare young adults for further training and education, which would lead to the acquisition of some specialized skills needed in different specific operations within the society.

The strategy for achieving the objectives of secondary education in the National Policy on Education clearly but briefly stated that, there is provision of two - tier six year programme for secondary education, with the curriculum so diversified as to take into consideration the need for the development of the potentialities of the pupils. Also the provisions of opportunities for further education at the secondary level and the acquisition of technical as well as social skills to cope with modern technological age. There are traces however that the secondary education is not satisfactorily playing its role in achieving some of these goals such as providing self- discipline, honesty, raising a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect dignity of labour e.t.c. This is due to many decades of neglect of education in the area of proper inspection. Such can be observed from evidence of the evil of examination malpractices, which has become cancerous in the nation educational system. This paper discusses how effective inspection can help to reposition secondary education:

The Concept of Quality in Education

Quality may be seen as the level of excellence in performance. It can be measured by establishing an acceptable criteria and standard of good performance (Olaitan, Onyemachi, Nwachukwu, Igbo & Ekong, 1999). Such qualities according to Mosta (1997) can be measured by the criteria of merit which constitute the dimensions along which an individual, unit department, faculty, institution or system have to perform well in order to achieve over- all merit. Quality can therefore be measured by the performance of the products of senior secondary schools and colleges, that is, by the extent to which the training or education received from the institutions enables the recipient think clearly, independently and analytically and to solve relevant societal problems in any given environment. Quality can also be measured by value. It can be measured by determining how far what the micro - society is producing benefits society in their environment, and in determining how the products can be self-employed and useful to the macro - society. In Nigeria, however, the resort to paper qualification as employment criteria may not match performance on the job. This frequent use of paper qualification as basis for excellence and performance has relegated the secondary education to that of malpractice.

If secondary education is therefore to achieve the purpose for which it is established in Nigeria, there is the dire need for something positive - raising the quality of inspectors. At this point, it will be necessary to look more closely at the expected role of secondary education.

Secondary Education and Expected role - Performance

The National Policy on Education (2004:18) clearly revealed what secondary education ought to achieve. Thus the broad objectives are as follows:

a. Preparation for useful living.

b. preparation for higher education

In specific terms, secondary education shall: -

a. Provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background.

b. Offer diversified curriculum to cater- for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;'

c. Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub - professional grade e.t.c.

d. Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;

e. Inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence;

f. Foster national unity with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence;

g. Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens.

h. Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

The question that readily comes to mind is how far have those objectives been achieved? How can we reconcile items 'e' and 'g' with the issue of examination malpractices which has become a cankerworm in Nigeria today? Of all the level of education, the secondary school system seems to be worst - hit with this cancerous disease (examination malpractice). What exactly is the problem? Could it be that the expectation from the nation in relation to secondary education is too high or what?

To understand and appreciate, the problems and the need for repositioning secondary education, the writer have decided to look at the results of senior school certificate examination (SSCE) May/June 1994 - 1996. This is because one major yardstick for measuring intellectual capacity of learners is examination. Though many argued that this is not the true test of knowledge, yet it stands out as one major yardstick used in Nigeria. In line with this yardstick, the writer has decided to pick about six subjects with emphasis on the various areas of capacity development for sample.

Table 1: Enrolment and Performance of Secondary School Students in Some Selected Subjects. SSCE May/June (1994 - 1996)

SUBJECT	YEAR	TOTAL SAT	PERCENTAGE		
			CREDIT & ABOVE	PASS	FAIL
English	1994	524294	14.2	30.5	55.3
	1995	466971	12.4	27.7	59.9
	1996	519667	11.33	24.03	64.62
Mathematics	1994	518116	16.1	41.5	42.4
	1995	462273	16.5	40.2	43.3
	1996	514342	10.01	37.07	52.90
Physics	1994	146000	14.7	27.7	57.6
	1995	120760	18.9	34.5	46.7
	1996	132768	12.75	30.42	56.82
Biology	1994	508384	11.4	27.3	61.3
	1995	453353	18.9	30.2	50.8
	1996	506628	15.95	25.19	58.84
History	1994	76262	24.5	15.3	60.2
	1995	58790	32.6	17.6	49.8
	1996	60837	26.88	15.99	57.11
Geography	1994	310227	34.3	18.0	47.7
	1995	279322	33.0	19.6	47.5
	1996	319918	26.72	16.72	65.54

SOURCE: WAEC STATISTICS.

A careful analysis of table 1 above is a confirmation of what this paper is trying to draw attention to. The result indicates general poor performance especially in the two core subjects (Maths & English). The situation has not changed till date. No wonder, candidates sometimes resorts to the ugly situation of examination malpractices to pass by all means. What are the quality control agents such as inspector or supervisors of education doing about this situation? The inspectors are the expected monitoring agents that should achieve minimum standard or can they claim they are not aware of the happenings in the secondary school system? Could it be that the results as exposed on table 1 is an indication of achievement? At this point, there is need to delve into the expected roles of inspectors.

Inspectors and Expected Goals; Plow Far?

The National Policy on Education clearly stated that government should establish efficient .inspectorate services at Federal, State and Local Government levels for monitoring and maintaining minimum standards at all levels of education below the tertiary level (FRN, 2004: 59). By law, it is the education inspectorate that is charged with the responsibility of school inspection. The primary responsibility of inspectors shall be: -

- a. Diffuse information about instructional materials and tested and effective teaching methods;
- b. Obtain information in respect of difficulties experienced by teachers in schools and institutions and further provide advisory solution through appropriate authorities
- c. Monitor and document the overall quality of education in schools and proffer practical and positive advice;
- d. Organize meetings with and workshops for the teachers when necessary with a view to improving their professional competence, and;
- e. Provide a strong sense of comradeship and professionalism among teachers. (FRN 2004:60).

The question now arises; how far have the inspectors achieve their goals in the system? It must be noted that to measure achievement involve analysing results of performance. The effectiveness of inspectors can best be measured from such. Inspection involve an activity by which

an individual or a group of individuals can advise and stimulate interest of teachers and pupils who are engaged in school programme with a view to helping them to improve teaching in educational institutions (Agusiobo and Olaitan, 1981). Therefore, inspection is deliberate in order to help head-teachers, teachers and students to improve the teaching and learning process. The individual involved in supervisory role, stimulates, advise and co-ordinate the activities of people within the system to ensure that the system goals are achieved.

One ugly sight anyone is bound to observe in the secondary schools environment is the loitering habit of students in a majority of schools in Nigeria. Students are found along the streets, at public kiosks, at the post offices e.t.c. Within the school premises, students are either floating around the compound, standing in clusters around the school hawkker, hibernating in the dormitories when they ought to be in the classroom. All these are signs that law and order has broken down in our secondary school. The worst symptom of indiscipline at this level is the issue of examination malpractices during both internal and external examination. Such are clear indication that the slogan of 'dignity in labour' is a thing of past. What exactly is the problem, why can't the inspectorate division provide the expected qualitative education? Perhaps a review of problems of inspectors in Nigeria might help in addressing the issue at hand.

Problems Militating Against the Effective Inspection in the Schools

The complex nature of the educational industry, requires that certain people be employed to plan, organize, direct, control, report on and budget for the various activities and programmes geared towards the maximum utilization of the scarce resources of the system for the optimum achievement of organizational goals. These responsibilities according to Aderounmu and Ehiamentalor (1985) are primarily those of administrators and educational inspectors. Education industry depends very much on the quality of the leadership of the inspectors. The inspectors lack adequate training and orientation to provide this leadership quality. Many are not given the necessary on-the-job training and orientation to equip them with the skills and techniques they need to carry out their instructional supervisory functions. The inspectors do not understand what instructional supervision is all about. How then can they achieve their mission?

Inadequate provision of fund is another problem militating against effective inspection. Inadequacy of finance results in the inability of inspectors to travel out to resource centers or attend workshops, seminars and conferences to gain access to new developments in curriculum and instruction that could benefit the schools.

Inadequate time - most of the inspectors are so occupied with administrative functions that they hardly find time to visit schools and observe how the teachers are performing. The major means of communication usually is through memo writing.

Inadequate inspectors - the total numbers of inspectors to perform the pastoral and full general inspection seems very inadequate when compared to the number of schools. The effectiveness of inspectors in terms of interaction and communication with the teachers would be very low if one imagine the high number of teachers to the low number of inspectors available in our school system.

Yet the same inspectors ought to play the role of adviser, planning consultant e.t.c. It is therefore humanly impossible. What then can be done to improve on the quality of inspection.

Need for Qualitative Inspection: Way Forward

The basic function of inspectors is to improve the learning situation for children. Any person in a supervisory position who does not contribute to effective learning in the classroom cannot justify his/her existence. By law, it is the education inspectorate division that is charged with the responsibility of school inspection. For success to be achieved, the school administrator (principal) and inspectors from ministry of education must work hand in hand. Since the external inspectors cannot be in school for the day to day supervision, there must be proper delegation of authority. Inspectors could set up the following: (which the principal can monitor)

(1) Establishment of classroom-control record - class prefects can be authorized to record on a notebook the names of troublesome students who disturb the class activities and those that absent themselves from class work regularly. Separate note can also be made available to record teachers' attendance and non - attendance of their period. This is to check teachers' truancy. While the first list affecting students will be handed over to class master for onward transmission to appropriate authority, the second concerning teachers is submitted directly to the principal who is the eye of the Inspectors in the school. There should be stipulated punishment for each offence. It must be emphasised here that each teacher must be controlled by monitoring the actual work covered within a period. Such records as movement book stipulating teachers' whereabouts and lime book to regulate time for coming to school and absenteeism must be kept.

It is quite obvious that when teachers keep students busy by their presence in the class, students' sense of indiscipline will be reduced. Quintillion, a famous Roman educator as cited by Adiotomre (2004) noted that students in disciplinary actions results from teacher neglect and lack of discipline. He went further to stress that the teacher should try by the strictness of his discipline to control the behaviour of those who gather around him.

The principal must be firm and disciplined to help in all activities. He must see himself as a supervisor and be willing to move the school forward. There must be constant interaction between the principal and Inspector. It must be noted that the school principal must be firm and straightforward in order to discipline teachers. The work of the Inspector will be made easy if the principal plays a very active and positive role in the system. Students are generally very vigilant in a number of things that happen in the school. They observe personal qualities of their principal and tend to follow suit. So he must live by example.

The school can help in quality control by establishing loitering control committee. The essence of this group is to keep track of students who loiter about during classes, try to identify and hand them over to the disciplinary committee. For more effective result, the school can be zoned with each member of the committee attach to each zone. The members must be available all the time in their official post, which must remain secret. A replacement must be provided when there is need for it. The job seems tedious but could yield the needed result if diligently carried out.

It must be suggested here that for re-positioning and re-focusing of our secondary schools, the Inspectors must set aside time every month for both schedule and unscheduled visits to schools. This will involve proper planning and implementation. A situation where inspection is done through correspondence, (G S M) etc. must either be modified for effectiveness or discarded. Inspection should not be tied to investigation or special cases alone. In fact, a good inspector must create time during the first week of resumption to discuss/with staff on school programmes, problems and probable solution. To succeed therefore, different Inspectors must be attached to different locations and school. This can be re - shuffled from time to time.

To avoid reinforcing un-necessary divisions and status level, the Inspectors should see that all staff members feel responsible for the operation of the school, inter-group communication should be encouraged and all schools events should include all staff members. During deliberation at times, representatives of students could be involved.. The more students feel the school is theirs by being involved in the fate of the school, the more pride they have in being part of the school, the fewer there will be disruptions or irresponsible behaviours and the easier will be the teacher's job.

One other area to critically review by the school administrator (Principal) and Inspector is the curriculum and instruction. Curriculum concerns everything the child is exposed to in the school. Inspectors must ensure a variety of teaching methods. There is need for enhancing curriculum and instruction. Problems that can escalate in disciplinary actions in school through broadly conceived curriculum without appropriate processes or variety or diversity of learning experiences, or where students do not understand the content and where students are not challenged to do their best must be avoided. Teachers must be encouraged and supervised to diagnose students' strengths and needs and plan learning experiences accordingly. Curriculum should be adjusted to maximize individual learning.

Inspectors through the ministry of education should plan school activities to address the teaching of self-discipline. There should be an inner-conviction, and appreciation of the slogan "dignity in labour" to enable students work independently to acquire certificate. Schools must.

provide experience that allow students to learn appropriate behaviour in a variety of contexts through field-trips, assemblies, special guest speakers and attendance at public lectures etc

Re-positioning of the secondary education also involve improving the physical appearance and the organisational structure of the school. Inspectors must insist on creation of visible signs that tell students that they are welcome and belong to the school; promote multi-cultural education workshop to promote their brotherhood and ensure that physical facilities are not permitted to deteriorate. This is in consonance with Makpodia (2000) that advised that school environment need to be beautiful but not necessarily monumental in nature. It is no wonder then that the present commissioner for education in Delta State- Dr. (Mrs.) Veronica Ogbuagu encouraged schools to plant flower and maintain clean environment to stimulate effective teaching and learning. Inspectors can motivate schools by giving award of "Best school of the year" to the neatest school.

Facilities are required to build affection, values, commitment, positive emotions and socio-interactive sensitivity in learner. (Osahon, 1998). Hence, the governor of Delta State declared that the government vision for education is to create a secure and well equipped learning environment which capture the best of our yesterday, rebuilds our today and takes advantage of new technologies for delivering a better tomorrow to all our children. Continuing, he said, the strategy embarked upon is to rebuild the schools, secure the learning environment, train, retrain and motivate the teachers and support staff and provide the required learning aids, including science equipment, computers and other facilities (Ibori, 2002). The inspector in Delta State for example, can take advantage of this declaration and ensure that necessary requirement for conducive teaching and learning are provided and fully utilized to achieve educational goals.

For success, the inspectors must have certain qualities such as follows;

- He must be honest, knowledgeable and of high moral standard.
- He must be firm, just, fair, with plenty of initiative and dedication to duty.
- He must be alert and agile.

- *His compartment must be compatible with a commanding personality to be able to inspire confidence and respect.*
- *He must be tactful, and mature. He must be up-to-date in educational matters*
- *He must also have the fear of God to operate indiscriminately.*

Conclusion

Re-positioning secondary education for better performance through qualitative Inspections requires that all hands must be on deck. The inspectors need both the principal and teachers' co-operation for success to be recorded: There is need for re-orientation of staff and students, curriculum and instruction must be enhanced in an embracing and stimulating environment. There is also need for resourceful and competent principal and inspectors to be in charge. These circumstances will help in achieving educational goals in the secondary system.

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