

Leadership Roles of School Administrators and Challenges Ahead in Post-Primary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

Leadership has today become a very complex phenomenon because of the complexity of industrial, social or political organization, globalization and technological advancement especially in information technology. Research on effective schools points to the crucial role leaders play in establishing and monitoring quality schools for all students. This paper examines the various leadership roles of School Administrator, common problems and challenges in meeting schools' expectations. Finally, the paper recommends that the vice principal as a matter of fact should take up or assist the principal in discharging these roles for effective teaching and learning.

Introduction

The issue of leadership is very centre to management especially human resources developments and application. The art of leadership is as old as age itself, and covers all aspect of life may it be simple one unit or extended family, social and religious organization, business, small or large industrial firms, politics etc.

Research evidence and benefit of practice have shown that there are many ways approaching the subject, leadership. Lord Seift, in Ronald Egwuonwu (2000) says "...leadership is the moral and intellectual ability to visualize and work for what is better for the company and its employees..." The most vital thing the leader does is to create team spirit around him and near him, not in a school boy sense, but in realistic terms of mature adults. The function of leadership pervades all organizations. A good leader therefore is one who is capable of persuading others to move enthusiastically towards the achievement of group goals.

Ade (2003) defined leadership as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinated in an effort to reach organizational objectives. In this definition "voluntary" is the operative word indicating that effective leadership does not connote the use of absolute power or authority alone. Indeed, successful leaders need to back up any authority and power rested in them with their personal attributes and social skills.

Fapojuwo (2002) sees leadership as the ability to guide, conduct, direct or influence the followership for the purpose of achieving common goals or task the leader thus possess the ability to influence others to achieve result.

Leadership is concerned with the execution of those policies and decisions which help to direct the activities of an organization towards its specific goals. Leadership is a status of dominance and

prestige acquired by ability to control, initiate or set the pattern of behaviour for others. The school administrator is essentially a leader of the staff and students of the school.

Roles in the other hand are defined as expectations (role expectations) nominative right and duties prescribed through job titles and descriptions in work manuals; and the way people actually behave in these positions depend partly on the way they think they are expected to behave (role perception) and also on how people actually expect him to behave (role expectation).

Some years ago, principals were asked to become “Instructional leaders” exercising firm control by setting goals, maintaining discipline and evaluating results. Today they are encouraged to be facilitative leaders by building teams, creating networks and “governing from the centre”.

Murphy and Lynn (2003) observe that the metaphors of school leadership have changed frequently over the years; no sooner have school leaders assimilated one recommended approach than, they are seemingly urged to move in a different direction.

Role of School Administrator

The leadership role of school administrator is demonstrated in all aspects of the general duties of the school administration. Leadership has to do with the initiation, organization, motivation and direction of the actions of the members of a group in a specific situation towards the achievement of the objectives of group. These roles must concern with the quality of instruction as well as the students’ welfare, the moral and spiritual tone of the school and the maintaining of discipline.

The Institute of Educational Leadership (2000) after citing a long list of the principal’s traditional managerial responsibilities went on to add, principals today must also serve as a leaders for students learning. They must know academic content and pedagogical techniques. They must work with teachers to strengthen skills. They must collect, analyze and use data in ways that fuel excellence. They must rally students, teachers, parents, local and health and family service agencies, youth development group, local businesses and other community residents and partners around the common goal of raising student performance. And they have the leadership skills and knowledge to exercise the authority to pursue these strategies.

(1) Planning and Policy Making

Planning is the first and perhaps the most important role of a school principal. The essence of planning is to prepare for and predict future events. Planning goes beyond attempting to attain stated organizational objectives. It involves the development of strategy and procedure for effective realization of the entire plan. It entails determination of control, direction and methods of accomplishing the overall organizational objectives. It involves the establishment of objectives, strategies to achieve the objectives and a step by step determination of the activities and resources necessary to achieve them.

Planning is a blue print for action. It is done to avoid waste of money and other resources. There is always a need for both in long run and short-run. Postponement of planning is very dangerous because failure to plan gives rise to ineffectiveness undirected action and waste of resources. Good plan is a precondition for better results.

Planning is said to be pervasive and primary. Its pervasiveness originates from the fact that it is necessary for performing other key management functions – organizing, directing, staffing and controlling. Planning helps to identify the organization’s philosophy policies programmes procedures practices and problem.

On policy making, the school administrator contributes in different capacities and at different levels in the system in the formulation of policies for specific aspects of the educational and school systems. The school administrator also help in the interpretation and implementation of educational policies at the state; local and school levels.

(2) Improving the Educational Programme

One of the important roles of the principal is that of improving the educational programme. The principal should provide a climate of efficiency, cooperation, service and stimulation within which the school programme, as it exists can operate most effectively. Also the school administrator should provide leadership and coordination in periodic and continuing evaluations of the effectiveness of the total school programme in meeting the needs of the students and lastly, the school Administrator should provide leadership and coordination in continuing revisions of the total school programme to meet the needs of the students.

This means that the principal will provide efficient schedules reasonable, workloads for employees, and the best utilization of available professional and material resources. The principal works with teachers in allocating children among classes to form the best learning groups. He endeavors to minimize unnecessary interruptions and inconveniences which interfere with the teaching-learning process. It must be noted that secondary schools has an extensive inter-school programme of athletics debate and similar activities. The principal must coordinate all these services and activities to provide maximum help to students and teachers.

(3) Provision and Maintenance of Fund and Facilities

This also referred to as school business administration is one of the most crucial roles of the school administrator. Though, most educational administrator have limited control over the source of funds for the schools, many of them, of course, influence the provision of funds and facilities by careful and studied budgetary system, accounting, reporting and effective negotiations. The school Administrators must ensure that the funds and facilities are effectively used and well maintained to achieve a desired goals and objectives.

It must be emphasized here that the school Budget is the central focus. Budget is a planning and a control tool that is a financial statement that deals with revenue. The schools Administrator have to prepare the Budget because a comprehensive Budget allows for maintenance of control – not merely assuming that expenditures are limited in total amount. The administrator must be prudent in making use of the fund provided.

(4) Selection and Developing Personnel

This role referred to as school personnel Administration. The ideal educational administrator identifies and indicates the staff needs of the school or educational system as well as the specific type of personnel needed to meet the needs. He also collaborates with the state and local school boards or Ministry of Education in making decisions related to the educational personnel. Having participated in the selection of the staff the principal should involve the staff in developing and operating the regular and proper personnel policies. The principal must not only be concerned with the professional problems of his staff, their personal problems are his concern also. The principal should realize that a member of staff who is saddened by some personal worry, say in his family is definitely not poised to produce the maximum and optimum work. The principal should see to it that new staff is properly oriented into the school system and its general way of doing things and that the old staff is given ample opportunity to produce his best. In the same way too the educational and personal needs of the students claim the greatest attention of the principal.

In a nutshell the school principal ensures proper employment, placement, motivation, development, welfare and professional growth of the staff under his administration.

(5) Curriculum Development

Another important role of a school Administrator is that of curriculum Development. Curriculum as the name indicates is not a record of what has happened but a plan for what will happen. It is concerned with what students will do in learning situation. It deals with the learning outcomes intended to be achieved through the experiences or opportunities the learner is expected to be exposed. The school curriculum is therefore, all the learning experiences or opportunities designed for the learner under the

auspices of the school. Curriculum development usually starts with the establishment of educational goals. Whoever owns and manages the school influences the curriculum because he designs it in such a way that it will satisfy some identified needs or purposes.

It is the needs of a particular society that determines what role education will serve in that community. Needs are not static they change from time to time and as a result a curriculum that was deemed adequate for a society at a particular time will fail to be adequate when the values and needs of the society change. The Administrator has the task of helping in the discernment of need as much as will it affects the Curriculum. Also, the Administrator should be aware of the basic curriculum theories so that he can adequately influence the determination of instructional goals and objectives, the selection and organization of subject matter (content) and the learning experiences.

(6) Instructional Improvement

School programme management constitutes one of the most important roles of the educational administrator. The ultimate goal of educational administration is the improvement of learning and learning opportunities. The school principal work with the classroom teachers students and supervisors in the selection of appropriate curricular or school activities, choice of subjects, textbooks, work scheduling, use of teaching aids and facilities teaching methods and methods of evaluating school and student progress.

(7) Student Personnel Services

This role also is very important in the schools. It involves the selection orientation placement guidance and counseling of students should constitute an important aspect of the educational administration. The ideal educational Administrator ensures that every student is given adequate opportunity and motivation to learn. The schools encourage extra-curricular activities (clubs games, student councils) as well as ensuring that adequate school health services, transportation boarding facilities (where applicable) moral and civic orientations discipline and adequate inter-personal relations are maintained.

(8) Managing the School

This is one of the most important roles of the school administrator. The principal must be able to define duties responsibilities power and authority in a manner that best realizes the purpose of the institution. He must develop an internal staff organization with clear lines of authority and responsibility. Also the school administrator must work with the staff to determine which supplies and facilities are needed for the best job. He also plans with the staff for effective use and maintenance of existing supplies and facilities.

(9) Maintenance of Effective Interrelationship with the Community and External Agencies

This role make it necessary that the principal must know the community, take an active part in the growth and improvement of the community and encourage the staff to do likewise. He also should facilitate community participation in the life of the school and provide for interpretation of the school to the community.

The educational system as an open system and a social organization thrives on effective interrelationship within it and with its relevant publics. The school administrator endeavor to promote school-community relation through the participation of the school in community activities and projects. This could be achieved by means of organized visits to places of interest in the community. The administrator should maintain regular contact with some outside institutions, industries and educational bodies. The above roles revealed that the educational administrator is involved with the totality of the enterprises of education.

(10) Educational Evaluation

An important role a principal should play in a school setting is evaluating the result of teaching. The principal should arranged for all period of self-Evaluation of the school programme through commonly accepted survey guides, standardized test, results and action research projects. Evaluation of teaching result helps to measure students' ability and it's also used to diagnose students' weakness. Finally evaluation helps to measure the school activities that are whether the school is meeting the developmental and educational needs of the children.

(11) Reports

Rendering report is another role of the administrator. Periodically, he writes reports on his own performances and that of his staff, such report are accounts of their stewardship. He also writes reports of events happening in the school or official discussion. In all these reports the school administrator must be objective to intrude into reports.

(12) Record Keeping and Management

The keeping of records is one of the most important rules of the school administrator the principal from time to time important information is being demanded by educational authorities and other bodies from school administrators. These pieces of information either in form of data returns evaluation or reports are expected to be factual and reliable such information can be got from record keeping. Therefore record keeping is not only desirable it is also imperative to a school administrator. As a matter of fact a school administrator who fails to keep desirable record may only perform like a rambler who is purposeless and blind to the real essence of this job.

On the other hand records management is the application of systematic and scientific control of recorded information that is required for the operation of the school. Such control is exercised over the creation distribution utilization, retention storage retrieval protection preservation and final disposition of all types of records within the schools.

The aim of records management is to achieve the best retrieval and exploitation of the date held in these media and systems and incidentally to reduce the cost and improve the efficiency of record-making and record-keeping processes. And that a well organized records management programme saves a lot of money for the administration of the school.

Also that records management helps to control the quality and quantity of information that is created where in a manner that effectively serves the need of the school.

Finally an adequate records management programme coordinates and protects an institution's records sharpens the effectiveness of records as a management memory controls the times equipment and space allocated to records and helps to simplify intra-organizational communication problems.

(13) Principal Supervisory Leadership

Murphy and Amanda (2003) assert that, there is no question over the supervision of infrastructural facilities which they say is the most important role of a principal which he must play. School infrastructural facilities include classroom playgrounds, laboratories, libraries, workshops, instructional equipments and school buses. These facilities are provided by the government and communities. Indeed school plant is viewed as a controlled environment that facilitates the teaching-learning process while it protects the physical well being of students.

The principal can also enrich the classrooms in the simplest way using bulletin board with displays imaginatively put up to reinforce topics being taught at a particular time.

It is the responsibility of the school Administrator to manage these facilities. That is taking care of the buildings and ensuring that the facilities are fully utilized. He does not enrich the classroom only; the other environment must receive adequate attention too.

In a nutshell it must be emphasized here that without good buildings and clean environment the student's comfort will be affected and this can hinder the ability of the student to learn.

The Challenges Ahead

Having identified some of the roles of the school administrators on one hand, it becomes imperative on the other hand to highlight the new challenges with a view to getting our educational administrators prepared.

(a) Providing Focused Instructional Leadership

Jamentz (2002) notes that simply having a list of essential teaching skills is not enough "instructional leaders must internalize exemplars of effective classroom practice so that they can make accurate judgment about, and give useful feedback to, the teachers with whom they work".

(b) Result-oriented leaders

Among the factors responsible for the failure of the educational policies and programmes is leadership that lack managerial and administrative skills required to succeed. (Deborah 2002). These skills can only be acquired through learning and experience.

(c) Leading Change

School leaders are change agents. Systemic change is not well understood even by experts and school leaders have little training to prepare them for the challenge. For school administrator to succeed as a change agents additional training is required.

Recommendations and Conclusion

1. The roles of a school administrator are many in a school system. Therefore I recommend that the vice principals as well as the Heads of Department of each Department should take up or assist the principal in discharging these duties for effective teaching and learning.
2. In making decision in the school, the school administrator should involve the teachers and non-teaching staff, the students as well as the community through Parent-teachers Association.
3. In selection of personnel the principal must be consulted in the matter because they should be interested in getting the appropriate personnel they need and they should be well informed in preparing precise job specifications and job descriptions that well present their cases as clearly and convincingly as to guarantee the assignment of the suitable personnel they need.

In conclusion, the leadership roles of the school administrator are one of the marshaling resources – human material that classroom teachers require to perform effectively. Therefore an Administrator required being a good teacher, a change agent, an evaluator, a great disciplinarian and a lover of progress for effective teaching learning process.

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