

Instructional Improvement of Secondary School Teachers through Effective Academic Supervision by the Vice-Principals

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Astract

Academic supervision and teachers' classroom instruction are two instructional activities which closely related with the intention of developing teachers to the required higher level of instructional competencies. Research questions and hypotheses were formulated to provide insight into the instructional improvement level of classroom teachers by the effective monitoring by the vice-principal. The role of vice-principal as instructional leaders is to influence the quality of secondary school education. The teachers' improvement level will be evaluated in mastery of subject matter, teaching skills, and use of teaching resources. From the internal academic supervision, there are three levels namely; the upper level (principals/vice-principals), middle level (head of departments) and the lower level (subject heads). From all indications, internal academic supervision is the sure best for improving the present quality and also maintaining higher standards because of its ease of access, cordial relationship to teachers for monitoring, correction and entrenchment of ideas and innovations. The implication of this paper is to be manifested in instructional practices which will facilitate students' learning status to improve to higher level of academic achievement which we all desired by all stakeholders in education.

Keywords: Instructional improvement, secondary school teachers, effective supervision, vice-principals and Nigeria

Introduction

The last ten to twelve years of educational performance and evaluation in Ogun State, Nigeria had witnessed a drastic down trend in the academic performance of secondary school students, dwindling image of teachers and academic and economic values of secondary education in its entirety.

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This could be due to a number of factors from the parents, students, Government educational policies, teachers highly accused, and Government's agency responsible for control, monitoring and supervision and economic recession and political instability. The most influential and impacting to the existing status is the supervision which hitherto had been the sole responsibility of external supervisors from the Governmental agencies such as inspectorate services of the ministry of education and teaching service commission but their effects were not reflected in the academic performance of students because of distance between them and teachers on the field, thus vice principals are academically and professionally qualified to effectively complement and further supervise classroom instruction for higher level performance. An effective vice principal will develop teachers, while an effectiveness in teaching will produce academically and economically good students that will be useful to themselves, parents, government and society at large.

Therefore, nature of academic supervision responsibility required from the vice-principals is to focus on the process of overseeing what the teachers teach, the medium of teaching, how the teaching is done and giving solutions to challenges. The processes encompass spending quite number of hours/periods on teachers' content of instruction, usage of teaching materials and demonstrate the expected practices that will improve academic achievement of students in examinations. This is because the most significant criteria or factor directly influencing the quality of the education a child receives is the quality of his teacher.

The principals and vice-principals have tailored their daily activities in schools to administrative supervision, leaving the academic supervision barely open to external supervisors whose efforts have no continuity and constancy, thereby academic achievements of students under the responsibility of teachers have continue to be declining. This has provided escape route for external supervisors to declare that they have played their own part, what is now left is for the teachers to do their own part.

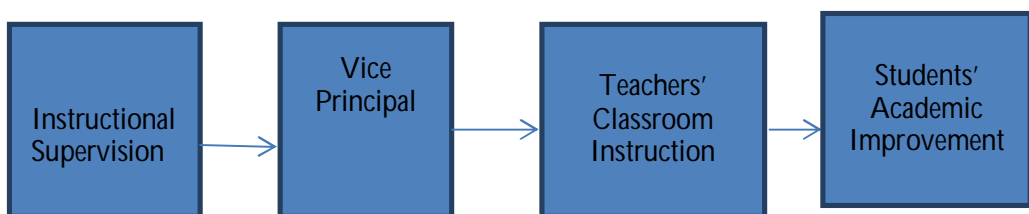
And to be practical, there is a wide gap between external supervisors and teachers, which the vice principals can academically and professionally filled as connectors and implementers between supervisors and teachers of which my paper want to fill the missing gap. A question requiring answer is "where does the vice-principal derive their positional role as instructional leader"?

The simple answer is that the teaching service 's teachers 'manual of Ogun State teaching service commission confers the position of principal as the instructional leader, academic and administrative heads. It further states that the vice principal is to assist principal in the day to day activities of the school and act in the absence of the principal. The principal is the headteacher, instructional supervisor, chief education officer, executor of instructional programme, teacher of teachers and curriculum director Nakpodia(2011)

Cawood&Gibbon (1990) opined academic supervision in terms of leadership aims at renewal of objectives, professional growth and educational improvements also; Gorton (1983) defined academic supervision as those activities engaged by individual, groups whose main purpose is the improvement of person, group or programme. I will end this introductory review with Beach&Reinhartz (2000) while emphasizing that supervisors should be mentors and friends in relationships to support teachers and provide support in a relaxed atmosphere for providing learning environment in the classroom.

Therefore, the various elements or constructs in the definitions above such as interactions,/relationship ,co-operative behaviours ,leaderships,mentors,support to teachers and improvement which the vice-principals can and will fill adequately and efficiently in this paper.Moreover,the content of this paper will focus on the following areas of academic supervision on mastery of subject matter, usage of teaching resources and teaching skills. The effectiveness of instructional supervision implies that a desired effect will be observed to take place as an improvement in the teachers' teaching process supervised by the vice-principals in secondary schools.

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework of Processes of Instructional Supervision in Secondary Schools



Objectives of the Paper

1. To improve the quality of secondary school education through regular instructional supervision in the classroom.
2. To measure effectiveness of instructional supervision in relation to teachers level of instruction.
3. To find out the contribution of the frequency of vice principals' visitation to classrooms for instructional monitoring.
4. To find out if there is a relationship between vice principals and teachers in instructional improvement of secondary schools.
5. To ascertain if vice-principals have portfolio documents for professional growth of teachers.

Statement of Problem

Since the last ten years of academic achievement results of secondary school students released by the internal and external examination bodies in Ogun State, Nigeria has not been impressive. This has generated negative comments and poor evaluation on the part of teachers, education inspectors, recruitment agency for teachers and the government for not alive to their responsibility.

The state and federal government responded by conceiving and conceding to re-organise the inspectorate department so that education inspectors/external supervisors would be more effective in their duties to improve instructions in secondary schools FGN(2006).

The irregularity and low frequency of visitation to schools by education inspectors because of transportation challenges and low numbers of staff in their department makes the problem unresolved thus form the platform to look inward into the school site to find a connector who will continue from where external supervisors stops and serve as a bridge between education inspectors and teachers hence the reason underlying my resolve to conduct a study on the contributory role of vice-principal in ensuring instructional improvement of teaching workforce in secondary schools.

In addition to the above justification, is that the principals are surrounded with administrative and social matters justified their less concentration on academics but vice principals who sits endlessly in the office without any designated duties as some principals exclude their vices or deputies from administrative duties support the need for the principals to concede academic supervision to their vices while counter-supervise or demand for daily or weekly report of instructional duties in the schools. Instructional supervision is less monitored or not done at all in secondary schools because the external supervisors such as the education inspectors, zonal secretaries are not impacting positively over long period of time because their periods of visitations is low or extremely scanty.

In addition, the quality of supervision may be doubtful because most external supervisors are highly deficient in most subject mastery and professional competence, thus there is no guarantee for increased performance of teachers. This is in support of Ogunlabi (2008).

Among other reasons for improving instruction in schools is that large percentages of teaching workforce in most states in Nigeria are not professionally certified unlike in the developed countries where no one can teach in secondary schools except you are academically and professionally certified, as such there is another opportunity to learn required teaching methodology while on the job.

Most importantly, there is a missing gap in the implementation of policies, practices and instructional innovations between external supervisors and teachers as such vice principals would play a complimentary role to ensure effectiveness of best practices in the secondary school system.

Research Questions

This paper would attempt to provide answers to the following;

1. How is instructional supervision carried out in secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria?
2. How is effective supervision going to be carried out in secondary schools?
3. To what extent does vice principals monitoring/supervision of classroom teachers' instruction influence students' performance?

4. How should we improve instructional supervision by vice principals in secondary schools?

Significance of the Study

1. To ensure accountability and increased level of teachers instructions in the secondary school.
2. To encourage frequency of instructional supervision at the classroom level.
3. For achieving increased level of students' academic performance in school.
4. To establish co-operative attitudes in teachers toward academic supervision.
5. To achieve educational effectiveness and quality improvement.

Theoretical Construct: Theory of Student-Centred Accountability and Connection

A theory developed by Marzano (2003) and improved upon by Reeves (2004). The focus of this theory is emphasized on instructional leaders, instruction and students in order to improve teaching and learning processes. For fuller understanding of instructional supervision by supervisors, certain factors fundamental for coverage by this theory are instructional leaders, frequency of supervision, teaching skills, mastery of subject matter, curriculum, and instruction. Accountability of student centered learning cannot be achieved if there has not been effective input from teachers, and for the students centered to improve vice supervisors must visit classroom daily or regularly through observation and recognition of best practices.

Content

A supervisor is a person engaged in conducting instructional monitoring or supervision. Those persons are education inspectors, zone secretaries, principals, vice principals, head of staff, head of departments, subject heads, form co-coordinators/class co-ordinators. The concept of instructional supervision is a classroom based supervision conducted by external and internal supervision for the purpose of provision of guidance, support and continuous evaluation of teachers for improvement in teaching and learning process and professional development through collegial approach. (Beach & Reinhartz; 2000 & Tyagi, 2010).

Fullan(2007) stated why there is no effectiveness in supervision of instruction in classrooms is because principals and vice principals spend most school time in their offices managing facilities, resolving students' indiscipline, purchase of office and facilities materials thereby devoting less time or no time to instructional matters.

In a related development, Bloom et al(2003) echoed that principals and team of supervisors who receives coaching are more engaged in instructional leadership, spends more time on instructional issues, addressing those issues than those without any knowledge of coaching.

UNESCO (2007)&WORLD BANK,(2011),reported that there is a growing conviction that empowerment of school-site supervision can make school respond to needs of students. The monitoring of teachers is a guarantee for better qualities which is possible with co-operation between principals, and teachers including the vice principals. This author is of the view that with vice principals always available in classroom monitoring will ensure teachers ' usage of instructional time, check pupils books, give classwork and assignments which automatically discourages perpetual absentees and late comers.

The scope of the content of this paper will cover mastery of subject matter, teaching materials and teaching skills which the vice principals will execute properly to ensure increase level in academic achievement in secondary schools.

Mastery Of Subject Matter

Kimberly (2009) stated that teachers must have sufficient knowledge in their areas of study. Therefore, effectiveness of teaching and learning can best be measured by teachers' level of teachers' capability in subject mastery which have direct impact and a good predictor of students learning. In like manner, Adegbile&Adeyemi (2008) confirmed that usage of highly knowledgeable in his area of specialization in low performance students will eventually be rewarding. Competency in subject matter/content in association with teaching skills, while teacher-student relationship are connecting variables that can improve academic achievement of secondary school students.

Teaching Resources

Instructional resources or teaching resources are instructional materials for conveying essential knowledge and skill of subject in school curriculum. Teaching resources suitable and available for use in secondary school's instructional process are books, workbooks, computer software, maps, wall charts, flip charts and academic libraries. In a research carried out by Popoola (1990) investigated the effects of instructional materials on the academic achievement of students in some secondary schools. He compared the West African Examinations Council results for five years and compared achievement of students in schools with inadequate teaching resources and found a significant difference in the achievement of the two sets of students.

The vice principals have a significant role to monitor usage and records of teaching resources in a pool or in school stores from school's purchase or produce teaching aids and shared among teachers for use in the classrooms. Every school should keep an inventory of available teaching aids by quantity and conditions for use. The teaching aids inventory should be able to show frequency usage of each resource on a weekly basis. It must be emphasized that teaching and learning materials are determinant of quality of education, thus it is essential for quality teaching materials to be made available to teachers and students in adequate quantity to support teaching and learning processes.

Teaching Skills

Reigner(2000)&Berry,B.(2011) reiterates that teachers needs to be curious,imaginative,interesting,friendly and hard working in order to be effective in the classroom, thereby creating a learning environment that results in enhancing learners disposition. Interesting teachers keep students alive, attentive and focused-based to hear and learn more from classroom instruction.

The nature of effective teaching skills is that the teacher should renew and innovate, and enlighten the minds of students so that linkage can be established between past, present and build positive hope by preparing them to build meaningful knowledge for correct application.

An effective teacher realize that students learn in a diverse ways hence, a skilled teacher should adjust lessons to reach all students, responding to multiples of learning in classroom in addition to usage of remediation and enhancement, responding to students need and getting students actively engaged in the lesson will increase rate of retention and reproduction .Therefore, effective teaching skills are essential to successful school outcomes resulting from instructional supervision by vice principals.

Researches and experiences had revealed that teachers' actions in their classroom especially teaching skills have twice impact on students' achievement as do school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality and community involvement Marzano (2003).

Challenges

1. The vice principal knowledge on the new instructional practices gained from attending conferences, seminars and training of external supervisors may be limiting.
2. Overburden of vice principals with some administrative duties of conducting examination, carrying out special duties as it is mandatory for vice principals to carry out instructions from the principals as his role is that of assistants.
4. There may not be absolute authority given to vice principals to back-up the academic responsibility in order to deal with erring teachers and ensure realization of goals and objectives of teaching.
5. There may be possibility of clash of interest of power between principals to absolutely hand over academic tasks to vice principals with power and authority as some teachers might play themselves in-between the two power personality of administering the school effectively.
- 6.. The vice principals' overzealousness for absolute power and decisions regarding instructional monitoring.

Conclusions

Teachers' effectiveness in classroom instruction in evaluated with their mastery of subject matter, teaching resources, teaching skills and school records have impacts on learners' academic achievement.

This is in agreement with Campbell, J.M. (2004) that teachers' level of instruction arising from instructional supervision under the office of vice principals will ensure effectiveness resulting in improved academic achievement of students in the secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Recommendations and Suggestions

1. vice principals should co-opt the most senior members of staff/head of staff as workload shared is half-solved to avoid stress and excess burdens, this will be a breeding ground for excellence and continuation of good value. More so that most senior members of staff will soon be assigned vice principal-ship position/duty –post.
2. Vice-principals should be given one or two periods per week in a lower class to serve as good role models so that instructions will be matched with action/activity.
3. Training should be given to vice principals on the nature, process, roles and limitations of academic responsibility in relation to principals (superior boss) and external supervisors from ministry of education, teaching service commission (regulating and supervising agencies). This can be a good avenue to deploy experienced supervisors on ad-hoc (short) and permanent position and use vice principals as resource-persons as those who perform such job are less ranked and equipped with fewer experiences on instructional level of teachers.
4. Vice principals can occasionally be part of supervision or inspection team as observer to further learn the rudiments of measuring scales and check-list for application in their various schools to ensure effective connection between external supervisors and teachers for effectiveness in academic activities for productiveness towards students in secondary schools/secondary education.
5. Let there be a policy in place to deploy experienced vice principals to the inspectorate department of the ministry of education to give required experiences to new and inexperienced education inspectors for stability and quality effectiveness of instructional supervision in schools.
6. There should be a policy statement for the vice principals to be given constitutional duties in the school with authority for effectiveness of work assigned and to also give good image to the office of vice principal.

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