QUALITY CONTROL IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Early childhood education is referred to as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. The importance of early childhood education made the federal government to state that it shall promote the training of qualified pre-primary school teachers in adequate number, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum, supervise and control the quality of such institutions, and establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools. The underlying principle here is that early childhood schools should be able to provide quality early childhood education to all those who can benefit from it. This study noted that the school administrators should be those within and should be individuals who place quality control above other things in what they do within and outside the school environment. Quality control on the other hand, deals with the proactive or preventive means of ensuring quality inputs, teaching learning processes, the outcome and the academic achievement of children. The study concluded that headmasters who are saddled with these responsibilities should be ready to effectively manage the school system for which they are assigned. Although the school system is faced with some challenges such as inadequate funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate and low quality teachers, indiscipline of teachers and caregivers, inappropriate curriculum, etc, the headmasters should play a better role in spite of these challenges. It was recommended that school headmasters should be knowledgeable and possess the needed administrative skills that are necessary in achieving the school objectives.

KEYWORDS: Quality control, Administration, Early childhood, Headmasters

INTRODUCTION
Early childhood education is referred to as the education given in an educational institution prior to a child entering the primary school. The importance of early childhood education made the federal government to state that government shall promote the training of qualified pre-primary school teachers in adequate number, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum, supervise and control the quality of such institutions, and establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools. The underlying principle here is that early childhood schools should be able to provide quality early childhood education to all those who can benefit from it (Ogunnu, 2010).
However, it appears that early childhood education is not living up to expectations in discharging its obligations. Omorogie (2015) lamented on the products of early childhood school system who can neither perform up to expectation nor move into primary schools on merit, without parental influence or forgery.

It must be stressed that education cannot be an instrument par excellence for achieving national development when early childhood education is not effectively managed to accomplish its aims and objectives. In the administration of early childhood education, the headmaster is central. He is the man at the helms of affairs who receives all praises (in terms of success) and blames (in terms of failures). According to Ibukun (2016), the job of the school headmaster in Nigeria has progressively become more complex and highly hazardous. In order to cope with the ever-rising challenges of the school system, the school headmaster must be ready to see himself as a change agent. According to Ajayi (2013) and Omoregie (2010), early childhood education in Nigeria is riddled with crises of various dimensions and magnitudes all of which combine to suggest that the system is at cross roads. It is against this background that this paper examined the concept of output of early childhood schools from three domains of learning (cognitive, affective and psychomotor), the problems militating against effective administration of early childhood education and the roles of headmasters in meeting the goals of the school system.

QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

It is imperative to have quality in the mind of the administrators at all times. Quality tends to put the school at the level that is mostly accepted by the society and it builds confidence in children and parents. The school administrator should be an individual that places quality control above other things in what they do within and outside the school environment (Ejermedoghene, 2014). Quality control deals with the proactive or preventive means of ensuring quality inputs, teaching/learning processes, the outcome and academic achievement of children (Akudo, 2004; Babalola in Ejeromedoghene, 2014). Quality control is aimed at getting things done right at the first time and every time.

Increasing demands for accountability in early childhood educational institutions makes it imperative for schools to fulfil their obligations to the clients by improving and sustaining quality education (Ajayi, 2004; Madumere-Obike, 2004). This is probably in line with the view of Babalola (2004) that quality management is aimed at preventing quality problems and ensuring that only conforming products reach the children. Also, Tony and Mariane (2000) opined that schools should recognize that continuous improvement is essential if they are to survive and prosper. This is based on the fact that the pre-eminent principle for quality
management is not control but improvement (Yusuf & Alabi, 2012). It is therefore imperative for quality educational management to be set as a principle and rule that will guide the school and on no account should the principles and rules of educational management quality be compromised by school administrators (Ejermedoghene, 2014).

**Headmaster’s Leadership Quality in Early Childhood Education**

It is expected that early childhood education should be under the leadership of the headmaster. The headmaster should possess good leadership skills that will enable the school to attain its national goals and objectives. Quality is highly required from the leader which will make him establish his authority and have a firm grip on the activities in the school amongst teachers and children.

The headmaster’s effective leadership is considered to be an important element in school functioning. It is the key to success in creating a vibrant and an innovative environment to achieve excellent teaching and learning (Ekundayo, 2010). The headmaster as head, is accountable for the success or failure of the school. For the school to achieve its goals, teachers must be disciplined and committed to their duties and have positive attitudes to their jobs. At all times, the headmaster should provide disciplinary control over the behaviour of teachers for higher level performance. The headmaster is the head of the school management team. He should understand the different roles of the school management and should function according to the school objectives as clearly stated in the school organogram. These roles include assessment of staff and outcomes of teachers in the schools to meet national goals.

**Quality of Outputs from Nigerian Early Childhood Schools**

Childhood education in Nigeria which stands as the first layer foundation of education before the primary school is very important as the foundation to equip children with the quality knowledge desired to make the educational system very attractive. Omoniyi (2014) discussed quality of output from nursery schools using the cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain in order to assess the expected learning behaviour to be carried out in totality and thereby knowing the outcome of learning behaviour. According to Omoniyi (2014), these domains are very important in the assessment of children.

**The cognitive domain:** This domain includes those objectives which deal with recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual activities. Osunde (2018) posited that the cognitive outcome deals with acquisition of knowledge. Acquisition of knowledge is demonstrated at six levels which include: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. According to Osunde (2018) and Bandele (2002), the instrument for assessing behaviour in the cognitive domain is class test/examinations. It has however been
observed that nursery schools in Nigeria are not doing well in this domain. Ajayi (2002) and Adeyemi (2008) have shown at different times the extent of poor performance of children in their final examinations in primary schools. This is a pointer to the fact that all is not well with children’s attainment in the cognitive domain.

**The affective domain:** The affective domain includes objectives which describe changes of interests, attitudes, values and the development of appreciation and adequate adjustment. Under affective domain comes pupils’ attitudes, feelings, emotions, opinions, interest, values, beliefs, reactions, motivation, social relations, habits (Osunde, 2018). Personal experience has however shown that personality traits like honesty, hard work, punctuality, self-denial and self-discipline which are necessary conditions for effective citizenship have disappeared in nursery schools. Children these days appear to be lazy, dishonest and always search for short-cuts to success.

**The psychomotor domain:** This deals with motor activities. Some examples of psychomotor behaviours include writing smoothly and legibly, speaking fluently, drawing maps accurately, models, ability to manipulate laboratory equipment and use them effectively, maintaining farm tools, to weave and make baskets, perform a dance step accurately and so on (Osunde, 2014). The author posited that skill assessment requires some form of performance testing under a controlled condition. The test will require the children to perform some tasks. It has also been observed that very few graduates of early childhood schools these days can communicate effectively or exhibit evidence of good and solid education. It appears that children have poor mastery of English language, lack basic technical skills, oral and written. All these point to the fact that the early childhood education system is in a state of despair. Osunde (2014) argued that the behaviour under the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains should form the bases for the teaching and learning process and subsequently assessment. The result of the assessment should be utilized in taking decisions on each learner. The basis for this is that education aims at moulding and developing the individual in his totality. Bandele (2012) also posited that the combination of the three domains of learning makes the recipient of the education live a fulfilled life and contribute meaningfully to the society he lives in. However, early childhood education system seems to have failed in discharging its responsibilities because of the perceived problems that bedevil the system.

**Challenges of Early Childhood Education**

There is no gain saying the fact that early childhood education is unique in the educational development of a child, being the child’s first-hand education experience. The knowledge, skills, values, and traits which a child requires at this stage will complement those
that will be acquired at the primary level and when these are combined will prepare such a child for primary education. An examination of early childhood education in Nigeria reveals some challenges; among them are:

Inadequate Funds: The importance of adequate funding in early childhood education cannot be overstated. No organization can carry out its functions effectively without adequate financial resources. According to Obe (2009), without adequate funding, achieving standards in education at any level will be tantamount to a mirage. Money is important in schools because it is used to construct buildings, purchase needed equipment, pay staff salaries and allowances, maintain the plants and keep the services going. Statistics from Central Bank of Nigeria (2017) revealed that between 2000 and 2017, allocation to education sector by Federal Government in Nigeria was not more than 14% of the annual budget, which was low compared to the allocation of countries like Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Angola, Sierra Leone, South Africa, all in Sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations Development Programme, 2017).

Inadequate Facilities: School facilities are the material resources that enhance effective teaching and learning in schools. Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2005) posited that educational facilities are those things which enable a skillful teacher to achieve a level of instructional effectiveness that far exceeds what is possible when they are not provided. The state of infrastructural decay in many early childhood schools in Nigeria is a manifestation of poor funding. Ahmed (2003) revealed that in most of the nation’s early childhood schools, teaching and learning take place under a most unconducive environment as they lack the basic materials. This hinders the fulfilment of educational objectives.

Inadequate and Low-Quality Teachers: Teachers are foundation on which the educational system rests (Achimugu, 2005). Apart from the children, teachers are the largest and most crucial inputs of the educational system who influence to a great extent, the quality of educational output (Fadipe, 2003). In the National Policy on Education (2004), it is stated that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. In spite of the role of teachers in the system, issues of inadequacy and low-quality teachers at the early childhood education stage in Nigeria are prevalent (Moja, 2000; Omorege, 2005; Federal Ministry of Education, 2003; CBN, 2017). The report of the road map for Nigerian education sector by the Federal Ministry of Education (2009), specifically revealed that there was a shortfall of 28,014 teachers in primary schools, 581 teachers in junior secondary schools and 39,023 teachers in senior secondary schools in Nigeria as at then. Obanya in Wasagu (2006) also reported the findings of a study of early childhood education in four states in Nigeria (Enugu, Kaduna, Lagos, and Rivers) as follows:
1. There were shortfalls in the supply of nursery and primary school teachers in the four states.

2. The shortfall affected every subject taught at the nursery and primary school level.

3. Mother tongues (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) were also characterized by inadequate teachers.

Indiscipline of Children: Children are expected to display high-level moral etiquette to show that they are from good homes. The behaviour of a child outside reflects the situation in his/her home. A good child is expected to obey the school rules and regulations and be committed to academics being the main duty in the school. This is where parental roles are expected to come in. What can be noticed in nursery schools these days are cases of indiscipline such as lateness to school, crying always, wearing of assorted dresses apart from the school uniforms, abandoning their foods to eat their mates’ food (Achimugu, (2005).

Inappropriate Curriculum: Curriculum has been defined as the experiences and activities (co-curricular) provided under the auspices of the school to bring about a change in the learner in the desired direction (Ngwu, 2008). The idea of having a curriculum for education in Nigeria’s educational system dates back to the year 1969 when a national curriculum conference was inaugurated, sequel to public criticisms of the educational system inherited from the colonial governments (Ogunnu, 2000). Since that time, the curriculum of education has been undergoing review and improvements but the curriculum is still laden with shortcomings and has been a subject of criticisms (Akpan, 2008; Ukpai & Okoro, 2011; Balogun, 2009). Arguments against early childhood curriculum in Nigeria have been that it is overloaded, content driven, not adequately relevant, fails to give regards to vocational training as a major component of a child’s development, irrelevant to the needs of the society, too wide in scope, does not take care of teachers’ qualification and training as well as laying too much emphasis on the intellectual development of the child.

**The Role of the School Headmaster**

The role of the headmaster covers many different areas including leadership, teachers’ evaluation, children discipline, and several others. Being an effective headmaster is hard work and it is time consuming. A good headmaster is balanced in all his roles and works hard to ensure that he is doing what he feels is best for all constituents involved in the school system. By implication, the headmaster of the school is the planner, director, controller, coordinator, organizer, adviser and problem-solver. The headmaster is the person on whose shoulder rests the entire administration, success or failure of the school. The headmaster identifies and sets goals and objectives for the school, which of course must be in line with the national objectives,
analyses tasks and shares responsibilities to the staff according to their specializations and experiences.

According to Ekundayo, (2010) the following are the duties and roles of headmasters in early childhood schools in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the school:

Management of the School Finance: The headmaster is the chief executive and accounting officer who is entrusted with the responsibility of controlling the revenue accruing from the school and ensuring judicious utilization of PTA levy. In order to raise funds to complement the efforts of the government, the headmaster can establish a very good rapport with the Parents Teachers Association, Board of Governors, Old Students’ Association and Non-Governmental Organizations.

Provision and Maintenance of Physical Facilities: Headmasters must be fully involved in the physical environment and other facilities around the school. Dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, abandoned projects, over-grown trees and lawns, dingy and dark buildings, etc, have demoralizing effects on people, especially adolescents (Obidoa, 2006). As a result, headmasters have the responsibilities of ensuring that these facilities are in good shape. Even with the meagre resources at their disposal, they have the responsibilities of providing teachers and other instructional staff with necessary resources for effective teaching (Babayemi, 2006).

Headmaster as a Motivator: Ajayi and Oni in Babayemi (2006) opined that a school headmaster must not only be trained in the act of administration but must be well acquainted with the principles that guide and control administrative processes. As the chief executive, the headmaster owes it a duty to modify the attitude of the staff and motivate them to put in their best at achieving educational goals through effective teaching-learning process because motivation enhances job performance (Ajayi & Oguntaye, 2003).

Headmaster as a Curriculum and Instructional Supervisor: The functions of the school headmaster as a supervisor include: Obtaining and making available for teachers all educational information, visiting classrooms often to observe teachers, inspecting teachers’ lesson notes and class registers, diaries and teaching aids and offering professional advice for their improvement.

Headmaster as a Change Facilitator: When it comes to efforts to improve the quality of the school, the headmaster is the critical person in making change to occur. According to Uyanga (2008), since a school is known to be an instrument of change and reforms in the society, the headmaster is said to be the pivot of such reforms and changes. This responsibility is very obligatory and headmasters are expected to display managerial skills in adapting to this change and effecting it in the school system. The headmaster is the key–supporting agent for change.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that:

1. Headmasters of early childhood schools should be knowledgeable and possess the needed administrative skills that are necessary in achieving the school objectives.
2. The school headmaster should exhibit his leadership role by assessing the quality of teaching and learning in his school.
3. The headmaster must be a professional teacher that has been involved in classroom teaching for several years.
4. The government should provide the basic amenities and infrastructural facilities needed for the growth of the school.
5. The headmaster should be a person of unquestionable character, who has never been involved in any financial fraud.
6. Only teachers who are specialists of early childhood education or specialists of psychology of education should be employed to teach at this level.

CONCLUSION

Early childhood is the bed-rock of the educational system before the primary school since it prepares children for primary schools. Hence, it is important to have a good administrator for the early childhood educational level. The headmaster who is saddled with this responsibility should be ready to effectively manage the school for which he is assigned. Although the quality of early childhood schools has been linked to some challenges such as inadequate funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate and low-quality teachers, indiscipline of students, inappropriate curriculum, the headmaster should play a better role in spite of these challenges.

REFERENCES


