Turn-around strategies for classroom and school management in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Education has been seen as an indispensable process of cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. However, there have been a drastic fall in the standard of education in Ekiti state known as ''fountain of knowledge'' and Nigeria at large. The way and manner in which the school as well as the classrooms are being managed determines the quality of students produced in the school system. This exploratory paper therefore examines the trends in the finance of education sector as well as the strategies for turning around classrooms and school management in Ekiti state. Some recommendations were made which include democratizing decision making in the school by involving staff and students in decisions concerning them in the schools, prevention of social conflict by being cordial with leaders of the school community.

Keywords: Classroom management, school management, turnaround strategies

Education is an indispensable process of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development and as a matter of cultural compulsion, the Nigerian child needs socialization for peace and progress to be experienced in our community (Ruiz, Cortés, and Gómez, 2014). Thus, education is a fundamental human right. Education is associated with numerous individual and collective benefits in terms of improving opportunities and increasing the well-being of the individual and groups. Even in the so-called advanced countries of the world, education is considered as the master key to rapid social, political, and economic development. There is a strong faith in education to catalyse development, which is demonstrated by the proportion of the annual public and private expenditure devoted to the education sector. Table 1 shows the trend of allocation of fund to education generally and secondary education in Ekiti State from 2003 to 2012.

Table 1. Trend of Ekiti State Government Budgetary Allocation to Education, 2003 – 2012

Year	Ekiti State Budget	General Allocation to Education	% Allocation
2003	13,269,992,200	541,083,600	4.1
2004	14,392,252,356	521,405,000	3.6
2005	14,847,994,950	398,776,565	2.6
2006	16,994,368,770	539,436,000	3.2
2007	20,954,415,902	487,485,000	2.3
2008	26,196,908,339.68	1,318,135,382	5
2009	28,748,422,607	5,725,639,000	19.9
2010	32,429,568,700	4,750,658,290	14.6
2011	58,200,000,000	7,526,635,500	12.9
2012	69,930,000,000	1,049,575,232	15

Source: Ekiti State Ministry of Education (2012), Ministry of Finance (2008).

Table 1show that the State devoted between 5% and 19.9% of her annual resources to Education between 2003 and 2012. Several factors have affected sustainable development in Nigeria. Some of such factors are population explosion, bad culture, low scientific and technological development, high rate of poverty, social exclusion, social conflicts, mismanagement of National economy, bad governance leading to political instability and poor educational development. Data showing the recent trends in the world development suggests that a sixth of the world population produced 78 % of goods and services and received 78% of the world's income while three fifth of the world's people received 6 % of the world's income (World Bank 2000). Actually, the entire African continent is rated as third world and countries therein including Nigeria are classified as less developed nations, ranking among the 61 poorest countries in the world with per capital income less than $2.0 per day.

The basic characteristics of these less developed nations include high population growth rates, low level of urbanization, low life expectancy, high infant and maternal mortality rates, low literacy rates, national expenditure exceeding national income on the national budgets leading to deficits and huge foreign debts, low GDP and per capital income and a poor balance of trade. All these have led to the poverty syndrome on the continent.No doubt, this syndrome constitutes a major challenge of the present millennium.

The nations of the world have tried to put up a concerted effort to respond to this challenge in a variety of ways. Millennium Development Goals have been set and a number of poverty reduction strategies have been put in place to promote sustainable development. But, some of the gains of these strategies are being eroded owing to poor school and class Management.

Rationale for turn-around in classroom and school management in Ekiti State

Obviously, education plays a vital role in promoting sustainable human development.A good proportion of a person's growing years of childhood and adolescence are devoted to it and it is a major focus of parental care. In Nigeria, people are now asking questions concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of our schools. Such questions include: Do we actually provide quality education in our schools as to justify the quantum of money expended on the system? Are the learners mastering their learning? Are the school managers making the schools to be learner-friendly? How about the social and cultural barriers to completion of school in some areas? How about some ethnic and religious impediments to access? What can we do to turn the management of the classrooms and the schools around for greater effectiveness and efficiency?

The educational profile of Ekiti State also indicates that in 2008, the State had 773 public primary schools with 7,086 classrooms, 219,712 students and 9,856 teachers 82% of who were qualified. At the secondary level of education, there were 210 schools, 2,289 classrooms, 43,927 students of Junior Secondary schools, 40,257 students of Senior Secondary schools and 4,778 teachers. The figure of the output of the system revealed clearly that in the year 2008, a total of 21,439 students sat the West African School Certificate Examination but only 1,515 candidates or 7.07% passed five subjects including English Language and Mathematics at credit level (FGN, 2009). This scenario surely calls for an urgent turn-around.

The objectives of this paper therefore include;discussing the modern concept of school and classroom management with a view to highlighting the implications of some modern management techniques to the performance of managerial functions and suggesting some possible turn-around strategies that would promote school effectiveness and efficiency in Ekiti State.

Concepts of classroom and school management

The school is an organization and a social system(Parsons, and Halsey, 2014). It is a collection of human beings who have come together to be organized and who are able and willing to contribute action towards the achievement of prescribed common goals. Educational institutions are organizations in the sense that they are a collection of human beings (students, teachers and non teaching staff) who are able and willing to contribute actions towards the achievement of certain set goals of the institutions (Durosaro, 2012). Management could be that aspect of the organization that ensures goal setting, coordination of work performance and evaluation of goal achievement is usually referred to as the management. Management could be a group of people carrying out these roles just mentioned or it could equally refer to the process of performing the roles. Management in education can be viewed as an art since the managers do their work by getting other people to do theirs (Durosaro, 2002). It could also be viewed as a science since it involves a systematic study of theories, principles and practices in modern time.

As a field of study, it could have a multi-disciplinary dimension such as Managerial Philosophy, Managerial Psychology, Sociology of Management and Economics of Management (Muff, Dyllick, Drewell, North,

Shrivastava, and Haertle, 2013). Managers in any organization are the essential, distinct, leading and live-wire group of the organization. Management is applicable to all human organizations, hence the concepts of business management, industrial management, hospital management, health management and school management. The term management is derived from the verb to manage which simply means to run, organize, or control. In a generic sense, management could be defined as the process of mobilization, organizing and utilizing all the human and material resources in a particular organization in such a way as to achieve the goals of such organization to the maximum (Adesina, 1981).

Management is what you do when you are planning, programming, directing, regulating, financing, staffing, equipping, controlling [personnel, output and time], conducting meetings and communicating with others in an organization to ensure achievement of set goals. Management could be perceived as providing leadership in any enterprise. It could also be viewed as that aspect of the organization that catalyses cooperation and co-ordination in a working environment. Where the organization involved is a school, we talk of school Management. School Management can also be seen as defining and delegating responsibilities and authority, as well as, establishing relationships for the purpose of enabling people to work effectively together for school goal achievement (Obi, 2003).

Theoretically, management in school could be dichotomized into planning and school administration. School planning can be defined as the preparation of some sets of decision on the educational enterprise that you want to implement in future towards the achievement of your goals. Planning the school could be viewed as a process of establishing priorities for future actions on the educational enterprise in an attempt to solve some problems that stem from the existence of scarce resources (Longe, 2003). Planning for the school is a process of obtaining and analyzing data and from empirical base providing information to decision maker on how well the school is accomplishing its goals.

The term school management is the implementation of decisions or plans made towards achieving organizing people, communicating ideas to others on progress of work, regulating activities of members, motivating members towards implementing plans for achieving set goals of the school.However, it is necessary to mention that this dichotomy of school Management into planning and administration exists only in theory(Emmer,Sabornie, Evertson, and Weinstein, 2013). In practice, the school manager must combine the two for maximum effectiveness and efficiency.Also, school Management involves strategic planning, innovation, initiating change, creativity, problems–solving, and decision making. It also involves actively seeking out alternatives, reformulating goals and priorities, redeploying resources, renegotiating, resolving conflicts, dynamic and resourceful leadership, diplomacy, statesmanship and a high degree of risk taking as well as entrepreneurship (Richman and Farmer, 1977).

MacFarland (1979) viewed school management as a process by which the school managers in education create, direct, maintained and operate purposive organizations through coordinated and cooperative human efforts. This view of MacFarland implies four key issues. These are that school management is not formulae of fixed patterns. A second implication of MacFarlands view is that school Management activities are continuous. Another implication is that school management must support change and flexibility in the organisation and managerial action directs and controls the nature, extent and pace of
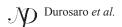
activities in the school. Management of the school involves the art of bringing ends and means together through a purposeful action of planning, organising, directing, communicating, and controlling of scarce human and material resources to achieve the school goals.

Bakken, Holt and Zundel (2013); Resser (1973) summed up all the views of school management as the process of utilising physical and human resources available in the school to achieve the goals of the school through cooperative effort of planning, organising, staffing, directing, and controlling. Therefore, as school heads and managers of the system, we owe the responsibilities to:

➢ Set or identify the set objectives of our schools,

➢ Formulate plans to achieve the objectives,

➢ Identify the activities to be performed,

➢ Organise the activities into groups,

➢ Staff the activities with the right people,

➢ Initiate work activities and structures,

➢ Provide fund and other incentives to stimulate productivity,

➢ Set up controls and measures of achievement of objectives and

➢ Take remedial actions if goals are not achieved to the maximum.

Now, it is also very crucial to point out that there are some basic functions that the school managers must perform. These functions include:

➢ Management of curriculum and instruction, which is the most vital function of a school manager. In most cases, the curriculum design is nationalised and prepared by experts. But the school managers must ensure the provision of instructional facilities such as teacher, classrooms, laboratories, workshops, sporting facilities and other lobby spaces for both staff and students. It is the duty of the school managers to continually review the contents of the subject curriculum to ensure they are in line with the current global changes. Curriculum management also involves monitoring teaching, subject allocation, time allocation, classroom allocation, as well as, provision of teaching aids.

➢ Pupil personnel management which involves the admission, orientation, and accommodation of students as well as, taking care of their health, sporting, and safety needs.

➢ Staff personnel management demands ensuring that competent teachers and non teaching staff be recruited, maintained, developed, rewarded, promoted, disciplined and retired at the end of

tenure. At the primary and secondary education levels some of these are taken care of by some agencies of the Ministry of education.

➢ Management of physical facilities is another vital function of the school manager. Physical facilities refer to buildings, equipment, transport, teaching aids, sporting facilities, water, electricity, and health facilities. These facilities need to be planned, procured, used and maintained. A good school must imbibe a regular maintenance culture.

➢ Management of school fund is also an important function of the school manager. The school receives fund and also expend some fund on her activities which must be accounted for by the school Principal or Head teacher. Ordinarily, every school manager is expected to prepare an annual budget to guide their use of fund. There are school inspectors whose job is to control expenditure and ensure accountability for fund.

➢ There are some other routine functions performed by the school manager. These include decision making on actions to take towards goal achievement. There are routine actions of school problem solving as well as, choice among alternative actions, which engages the school manager daily. Moreover, the school manager has to organise the school by sharing out functions and major roles to staff as individual and groups. The school manager must also co-ordinate work in the school to ensure harmony among units and Departments in achieving the school goals. Reporting is also a vital routine function of the school manager. The school manager must report to the proprietor, Ministry of Education and public on the use of human and material resources, as well as, on the performances of the students and staff.

The concept of classroom management refers to the process of establishing and maintaining a conducive environment for mastery of learning and attainment of educational goals in a classroom (Hayes, 2013; Johnson and Bany, 1970). The process of classroom management involves 5 stages, pre-class preparation and planning, classroom organization and co-ordination, communication and interactions in the classroom, maintain classroom control and discipline.

The pre-class management of the classroom refers to the actions taken by the teacher before entering the class to deliver the lessons. These activities include choosing topic to teach, reading to keep abreast of the topic to teach, preparation of lesson plan, selection of teaching aids, and determination of how students will be evaluated for proper feedback(Prochnow, and Macfarlane,2011). Most schools have the approved syllabi for all the subjects which teachers simply consult. Teachers are advised to read far ahead and wider above their students to avoid embarrassment from students since this is a knowledge driven world and students are more exposed to global information at home. Teachers are advised to go to classes armed with some theoretical bases of what they intend to teach. Theories like Ausubel prior knowledge theory, Bruners theory of learning by discovery, Gagnes theory of learning, hierarchy and Piagets cognitive theory could guide the teachers in choosing methodologies (Popoola, 2000).

An important aspect of the pre-class planning is selection of teaching aids. Such teaching aids like charts, pictures, maps, models and real objects should be assembled before the teacher enters the classroom. Part of the pre-class preparation is the dressing of the teacher. The teacher should not dress provocatively or distractively to class. The use of heeled shoes that could make noise while going around class or flowing Agbada that could need the attention of a male teacher while teaching should be avoided.

The classroom organisation and co-ordination are very crucial to students mastery of learning. The teacher should ensure the classroom is tidy, safe, friendly, and well arranged to facilitate learning. The classroom should be well ventilated and illuminated. The sitting arrangement should consider the type of subject, the height and sight of students and the amount of movement by the students during the lesson. Also, the teacher should be friendly, caring, cheerful, fair in all interactions with the students. A good teacher would know the students by names, groupings, ability and disability.

Another important aspect of classroom management is the communication in the classroom. Communication simply refers to the process by which messages are transmitted from one person to another. Communication has taken place only when a message passed had been received and understood by the receiver and the required response had been given or exhibited. For instance, if the students hear the teacher but did not understand or comprehend what has been said, then there is no communication. For perfect communication to take place, there are some elements that must be in the process. These elements include a sender (teacher), encoding, message media, decoding, receiver (students), response, or feedback to the sender.

Communication could be impaired by interference or noise (Kotler and Armstrong, 1987). In the education process, aside the teacher and the pupils, two other crucial elements in a classroom communication are the message and the media. The message is the subject matter while the medium is the channel of communicating. The medium can be verbal, written, body language, charts, films, slides, or photographs or even a combination of these. Encoding is the process of putting the message into words or other symbols while decoding is the process of giving meaning to the message. Response simply refers to the reaction of the receiver to the message.

Noise could create distortion of communication likewise the use of words that are difficult for the receiver (students) to understand. Also talking too fast or too slowly or use of speech mannerism or slang may affect student's understanding of lessons taught. Communication in the class is not a one-way issue. The teacher must learn to listen more to the students by prompting them to talk, using questions.

Maintaining classroom control and discipline is another very important aspect of class management (Kurt, 2014). Obviously the classroom must contain students of various background who must exhibit various traits of behaviour and deviancies like disturbing other students, quarrelling, disobeying teachers instructions, lateness to class, talking to others at wrong time, eating or drinking during the lessons, etc. The teacher must take control always calling the students to order promptly and applying sanctions where necessary. The best approach to classroom control is for the teacher to make the lesson interesting and participatory. However, children are naturally restless and very curious hence the teacher should

handle their control and discipline with understanding. It is advisable that teachers use more of verbal reproach and negative reinforcement than corporal punishment.

Strategies for turning around School and Classroom management

Since there is a need to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of schools in Ekiti State, the following strategies are suggested to help turn the management of the schools around. A vital strategy to adopt in turning the school management around is to ensure regular staff development. There is a need to expose all the school managers in the State to formal training in school management. Since a good number of the Principals and Head teachers did not study Educational Management in the universities, there is a need to retrain them. Educational Management is both an art and a science. It has some theories and fundamental principles to be followed to achieve better result in schools. A good turn-around strategy is to first train and retrain all the school Principal and Head teachers in the art and science of management through workshops, seminars and conferences. This will expose these managers to the modern techniques and principles of management.

Another useful strategy for turning around the management of schools in Ekiti State is to ensure adequate school supervision. This strategy would require that the Inspectorate Division or Quality Assurance Agency of the Ministry of Education embark on more frequent visits to the schools. The use of peer review mechanism could also be adopted here by way of making some experience school heads in conjunction with some school community members carry out some of the school visitation in their locality. This strategy would afford the Principals opportunities to compare notes and exchange best practices.

Moreover, one turn-around strategy for school management in Osun State is to ensure that the schools are supplied with the required modern information communication technology facilities. This would enable the managers to adopt electronic record management rather than the outdated manual filing and processing of school records. Schools can also be connected to internet and globalise. These will surely impact on teaching and learning in the schools.

Also, the school management in Ekiti State can witness a turn-around if all the school managers imbibe the planned plant maintenance culture. This would require the Principal and Head teachers to prepare periodic maintenance schedule for all the school plants and funds should be made available for carrying out the maintenance as at when due. This would improve the lifespan and the utility rates of the school plants.

Further, a strategy for turning around the management of schools in Ekiti State is to ensure the School-based Management Committee system is adopted and entrenched. This will allow for increased community participation in the management of the schools. Communities would have the feel of ownership of schools and would be committed to the care, funding, and supervision of the schools.

A turn-around in the management of schools can be experienced too, if the school maintains a cordial school-community relationship. The school could rely on the community support by also making the

school facilities like football field, library, water facilities, halls and even classrooms available to the community (when free) and providing some extension services to the community in the areas of adult literacy, arts and agriculture

In similar vein, a turn-around in the class management can be experienced in Ekiti State if teachers ensure mastery of subject matter and prepare their lessons adequately. Classrooms are usually rowdy when the teacher is not making the lesson interesting and participatory. To promote effective teaching, there is a need for constant teacher development in modern teaching methodologies and use of audio-visual aids. The modern trend in class management is to make teaching and learning very interactive.

In addition, a turn-around in class management can be achieved if the classrooms are furnished with the modern teaching and learning facilities like computers, internet, projectors, public address systems, and smart boards and screens. Even in modern classrooms, finger printing machines are used while entering classrooms in the morning and when closing instead of roll calling.

The sitting arrangement in the class could be a major turn-around in class management. Instead of the old regimental type of arranging the students in rows, the students can be made to seat in clusters round tables or the whole class arranged in circle or semi circle. The traditional fashion of teacher sitting in front like a platoon commander is being replaced with the mobile teacher who moves round the class to interact with each student in the process of teaching. At best, the teacher's table and chair can be placed by the side. The arrangement of students 'seats and desks must be such that will allow ample space for lobby and teacher to students , as well as, student to student movements in the class.

Moreover, a good strategy to turn the class management around is to make the class student-friendly by providing conducive environment for learning. The teacher could organise the students in tutorial groups. This strategy will require dividing the class into many groups and sharing out tasks that will allow students to discover knowledge through experimentation and play methods. This strategy would allow for parental involvement. The teacher could give homework that would involve students seeking answers to the questions from their parents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

No doubt, schools in Ekiti State require proper management for the school goals to be achieved to the optimum. The Principal or Head teacher is the macro-level manager of the school while the class teacher is the micro-level or classroom manager. These two must adopt leadership styles that would promote the success of the school or class. Management involves achieving the school goals through making others contribute positive actions. Owing to the peculiarities of the school, there are some basic functions that a manager must perform. These include the functions of planning, organising, co-ordinating, directing, staffing, budgeting, and reporting on the school. Other functions, peculiar to school and classroom management include, management of curriculum and instruction, personnel management, financial and physical resources management.

To achieve a turn-around in the management of schools and classes in Ekiti State, the Principal and Head teachers should:

➢ Democratise decision making by involving staff and students in decisions concerning them in the schools.

➢ Adopt humane approach in management of staff and students,

➢ Ensure transparency in financial dealings,

➢ Avoid double standards,

➢ Prevent social conflict by being cordial with leaders of the school community,

➢ Always focus on the school goals and plan actions in advance, since failure to plan is planning to fail and

➢ Work and pray with the aim of lifting the school to world class.

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