

Strategies for Effective Coordinating and Stimulating of Staff in Secondary School Management

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ABSTRACT

There were two challenges to the management of secondary schools the Northern Senatorial Zone of Adamawa State which the paper identified. They are coordinating activities and stimulating staff for optimum performance. Two purposes of the study were outlined. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. The area of the study was the Northern Senatorial Zone of Adamawa. The Zone comprised 5 Local Government Areas, namely, Mubi North, Mubi South, Maiha, Michika and Madagali. A structured questionnaire, developed by the researcher and validated by 3 experts in educational management, was pilot tested on 22 respondents using the test re-test method of estimating reliability. The two tests were separated by a space of 2 weeks. The two results were correlated and the Pearson r was 0.87. The instrument was then administered on a sample of 474 respondents, made up of 302 teachers and 172 administrators. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The study has found that regular supervision of staff and students, as well as workshops and laboratories, participation of staff in policy and decision-making, creating a line structure and promoting communication are methods or strategies for coordinating school activities. The study also found that coordination among various units in the school is also a vital strategy for effective public school management. Other findings of the study are that delegation of responsibility, promotion of staff; prompt staff development and appreciation of skills and abilities are methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance. Yet other methods are award for excellence, guiding teachers and involvement of staff in decision making for greater performance. To enhance school administrators' management skills, the study recommended among others, government needs to provide a conducive school environment so that administrators can functionally utilize their knowledge and skills. Government needs to train administrators in order for them to improve their management skills and knowledge. The society needs to support the administrators especially in the area of enforcement of discipline in schools. Teachers need to stand by the administrators, for together, they are able to achieve, to a large extent, the aims of the schools.

INTRODUCTION

The word education has been viewed from various perspectives by various authors. In the words of Aliu (2001), education refers to the method by which a society transmits

from one generation to the next generation its knowledge, culture and values. Aliu added that for the individual, education refers to the process by which a person learns facts, acquires skills and develops abilities and attitudes necessary for the workplace.

Secondary education, according to the National Policy in Education (FRN, 2004) is the education given to individuals after their graduation from the primary school. According to Kazaure (2006), the aims of secondary education are as follows: requisite accessibility to higher education, training in different fields at sub-professional levels, desire to excel and be self reliant and technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development, among others. In order to archive the objectives of secondary education, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) stated that government would regulate the establishment of schools, supervise and inspect the schools regularly with a view to ensuring that the schools follow the benchmark curriculum. To ensure the efficient instruction of students therefore, the secondary schools are managed by school administrators who are generally called principals. According to Nzeako (2005), principals are at the centre of secondary school management in Nigeria for translating the broad educational objectives to concrete behavioural activities.

The term management has been defined in several ways by several authors. Oloko (2001:131) defined management as “the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts and it is accomplished by performing the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling.” Management can be fined as the utilization of human and material resources for the achievement of the goals of an organization. As applied to the school, it can be seen as the effective use of resources for the achievement of the goals of the school. According to Knezevich in Udoh and Akpa (2007), educational management is a social process for creating, stimulating, controlling and unifying human and material resources towards the achievement of predetermined goals. Secondary school management therefore, refers to the process of managing, controlling, supervising and organizing human and material resources towards the achievement of the goals of the school.

One fundamental problem in secondary school management is that of coordinating activities for achieving better results. The second problem hinges on stimulating staff for optimum performance. Often times, the school administrator needs to work hard so as to achieve the goals of the school. However, his success and that of the school depends on the cooperated efforts he gets from his subordinates in the execution of their assigned responsibilities (Nwuzor, 1982). Consequently, the school administrator must ensure there is a good working relationship between him and his subordinates. In coordinating, he harmonizes in a uniform programme of educational service, all the elements, the persons, materials and ideas, knowledge and principles and to interweave elements as to achieve a common objective and a single effect (Kochhar, 2002:6).

Communication is seen as a vital tool for ensuring good coordination of activities between school administrators and workers in the school. According to Nwuzor (1982: 29), communication “helps those who are in control to make their thinking, decisions,

and actions known to those who are variously involved”. Any gap in communication between management and staff and between management and students creates problems that are linked to rumour mongering, deliberate lies and distortion of facts (Ipaye, 1999). Unfortunately however, many administrators do not know how to communicate with their staff. This situation demoralizes teachers (Eregie & Ogiamen (2002). Okoro (2006: 85) provided a line structure indicating hierarchy of authority in a typical school. This is shown in Fig. 1.

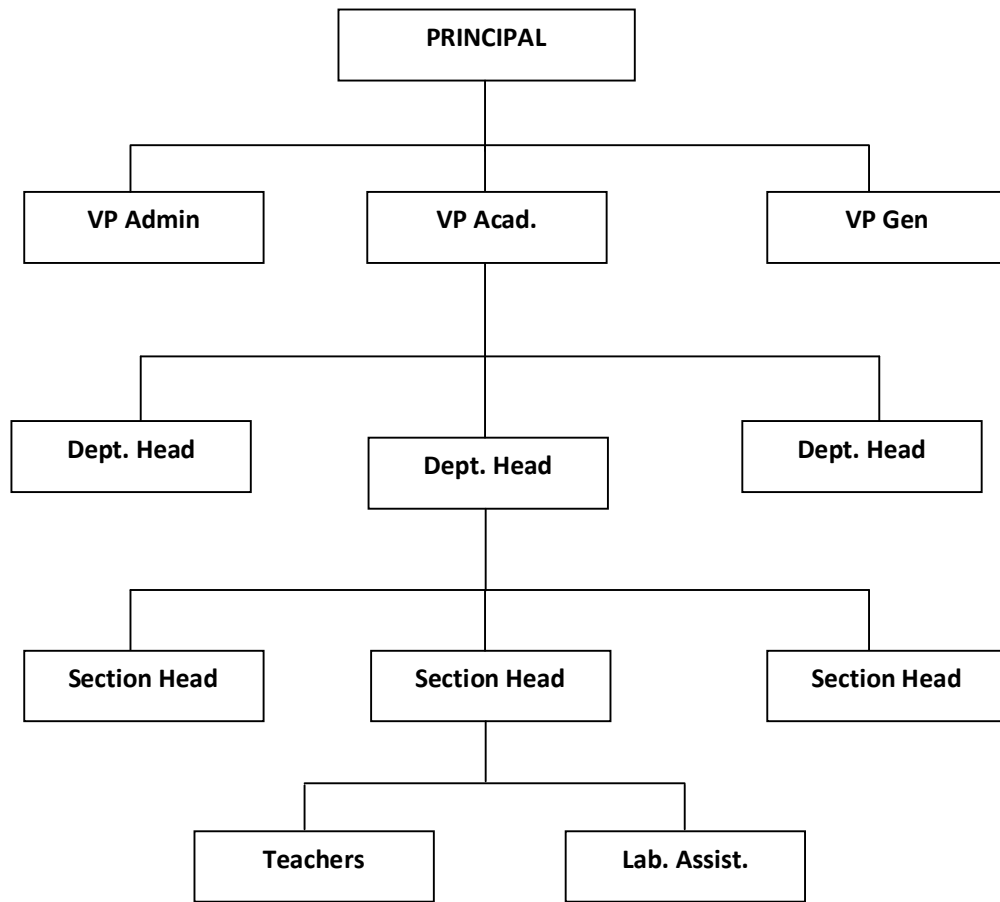


Fig. 1: Line structure of a typical public school (Okoro, 2006).

The line structure of Fig.1 demonstrates the way in which the school administrator (Principal) is able to coordinate activities in the school, as carried out by the various units and the positions occupied by members of staff. Teachers and laboratory assistants perform their duties and are accountable to the sectional heads, the sectional heads in turn report to the departmental heads. The departmental heads supervise the activities of the sectional heads and provide feedback to the vice principals. The vice principals are accountable to the principal and then assist the principal in areas of management, academics and general duties. The principal in turn reports to the regulatory body, that is the Post Primary Schools Management Board. It needs to be

stressed that school administrators are not likely to effectively coordinate activities of the various units without proper supervision. Obilade in Jagaba (1994) explained supervision to mean the behaviour that is formally provided by an organization for purpose of directly influencing teaching behaviour in such a way as to improve learning. According to Garuba (1997:12) "Supervision is an activity directed towards advancing the quality of the teaching/learning process by ensuring that the inputs to the system are subjected to constant review and monitoring". For proper coordination therefore, school administrators need to closely monitor the way units and departments carry out their assigned duties.

However, in order for school administrators to be effective in coordinating activities of departments and units, they need to have certain vital personal characteristics. These characteristics are good relationship with other people, willingness and eagerness to go on learning, sincerity and truthfulness, positive approach to criticism and sociability (Jagaba, 1994). Jagaba mentioned important techniques of supervision for effective coordination, among which are classroom visitation, workshop visitation and staff room (centre) visitation. By visiting a class, an administrator is able to know how students are doing in their academic work. By visiting a class, an administrator is able to promote good interaction between him and the students. In like manner, an administrator needs to visit teachers at work with students. This way, the administrator will be able to come to terms with how students perceive teachers to be. Poor coordination in school management leads to communication gap. According to Ipaye (1999), communication gap between management and staff and between the management and students creates problems because it leads to rumour mongering, deliberate lies, and distortion. Eregie and Ogiamen (2002:86) buttressed this point by stating that many inspectors and supervisors as well as school heads do not know how to communicate with their staff. Consequently, teachers are sometimes demoralized due to poor communication.

According to Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1998: 106) "what Fayol referred to as 'command' other have called it 'directing', other call it 'stimulating' or 'influencing', while others call it leadership. All these words connote the present day concept of making things to happen through other people". This shows that stimulating has come to be associated with commanding, directing, influencing and leadership. Leadership means "the act of influencing the activities of others, in a group towards goal setting and goal achievement" (Udoh, Akpa & Gang, 1990: 52). Directing, as stimulation, refers to organizational leadership, including making decisions and embodying them in specific and general orders and instructions for each member in an organization (Ukeje, Okorie & Nwagbara, 1992). Therefore, leadership, according to Aremu (2000), refers to the act of writing and stimulating followers towards the achievement of set goals. It refers to the process of influencing and directing a group towards the achievement of given objectives (Tella, 2002: 2). Commanding, according to Edem (1998) implies making members of staff to work. This means that school administrators must use their administrative principles and skills to make teachers and all other staff to perform their duties satisfactorily. This is able to lead to the realization of the goals of the school organization.

Motivation is an important aspect of school management. Motivation, according to Ejiiofor (1987) refers to the process whereby a superior officer influences subordinates to perform their duties satisfactorily. Consequently, according to Kochhar (2002), the modern term for directing or stimulating is motivation, defining it as the act of making the worker to cheerfully willing to do the job he is assigned to do. One way to do this is to involve the worker in decision policies and plans. The process whereby teachers are influenced positively to work for the achievement of the goals of the school is also referred to as motivation (Jen, 2002). According to Sharma (2007: 2), "motivation is the thing that leads to one persons working long and hard at a task, while the other one stops immediately at the start".

In public school management, it is acknowledged that teachers have been poorly motivated. This development has led to decline in performance in the system (Enemali, 2000). However, to boost staff morale toward optimum performance, Kochhar (2002) suggested the following administrative strategies: establishment of fair practices and administrative regulations, protecting staff against unfair criticism and encouraging staff to discuss their problems. Everald, Morris and Wilson (2004) added the following administrative strategies of motivation: caring for and about staff, praising achievement and delegating responsibility clearly. The strategies have the tendency to boost staff morale and then raise productivity. When productivity is low, the goals of the school will not be realized. Wiles in Okoro (2006:95) developed techniques for maintaining staff morale by school administrators. Some of the techniques are:

- 1) Take the lead in working for good salaries and working conditions of staff
- 2) Keep the staff informed of actions that are being taken in their behalf
- 3) Try to keep all teachers well supplied with up-to-date materials
- 4) Be willing to help teachers work out their difficulties with pupils, parents and other teachers
- 5) Work to increase the friendliness and group feeling in the staff
- 6) Respect and accept the special contributions of each member
- 7) Give staff members the opportunity to grow and advance
- 8) Promote from within the ranks when possible
- 9) Show confidence in the ability of the staff
- 10) Listen to the opinions and proposals of all staff members
- 11) Consult with teachers before action is taken that will affect them
- 12) Widen the participation of staff in policy-making
- 13) Disregard status lines in helping teachers of the school settle their arguments
- 14) Seek to decrease school regulations affecting private lives of teachers
- 15) Plan with staff members the way a job assignment is to be done

The techniques clearly show that school administrators are not working alone. They have various categories of staff. The staff needs to have a sense of group feeling. They need to be motivated as to perform. When taken into confidence, they are likely to perform satisfactorily.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. Find out the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results.
2. Find out the methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performances.

Research Questions

1. What are the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results?
2. What are the methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance?

HYPOTHESIS

The following hypothesis was stated which was tested at 0.05 level of significance; There is no significant difference between the mean scores of administrators and teachers on the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The area of the study was the Northern Senatorial Zone of Adamawa State. The zone had 5 Local Governments, namely; Mubi North, Mubi South, Maiha, Michika and Madagali Local Governments. Adamawa State is located between altitude 8°N and 11°N. The population of the study was 1434 respondents, made up of 935 teachers and 497 (468 principals and vice principals, vice principals, 11 Ministry of Education officials, 7 Post Primary Schools Management Board officials and 11 Local Government inspectors). Stratified random sampling was adopted for the study. Again, using a sample of 40% (Akuezulo & Agu, 2003) 62 schools out of 156 secondary schools in the Northern Senatorial Zone were sampled. This gave the sample to be 572 respondents, made up of 374 teachers and 198 administrators. A structured questionnaire designed by the researcher collected data from respondents. Earlier, it was validated by 3 experts and then pilot-tested on 22 respondents using the test-retest method of estimating reliability. A 2-Week interval separated the first test and the second test. The two results were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The Pearson r was found to be 0.87. This shows that the reliability was strong positive (Olaitan & Ndomi, 2000).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 474 were valid copies of the structured questionnaire were retrieved from respondents. This number was made up of 302 copies for teachers and 172 copies for administrators. The valid copies constituted 82.9% of the number of questionnaire administered. Analyses of the results were done on the valid copies of the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for answering the research questions. As suggested by Spiegel in Omozokpia (2001), any means of respondents of 3.50 and above was considered agree, and any means of less than 3.50 was considered disagree. The results are presented in tables based on the research questions.

Research Question 1

What are the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results?

Table 1: Methods for Coordinating School Activities

S/N	TEST ITEMS	ADMIN (172)		TEACHERS (302)		\bar{X}_G	REMARKS
		\bar{X}_A	σ_A	\bar{X}_T	σ_T		
1.	Regular supervision of staff	4.11	1.03	3.93	1.71	4.02	Agree
2.	Regular supervision of students	4.17	1.67	4.21	1.01	4.19	Agree
3.	Supervision of workshop/lab	3.81	2.10	3.98	1.25	3.90	Agree
4.	Staff involvement in dec. making	3.97	1.52	3.13	2.71	3.55	Agree
5.	Staff involvement in policy making	4.12	1.25	3.09	2.63	3.61	Agree
6.	Creating a line structure	3.81	1.72	3.42	2.07	3.62	Agree
7.	Promotion of communication	3.97	1.16	3.32	2.13	3.65	Agree
8.	Ensuring sch. and home are related	3.81	2.11	3.29	2.01	3.55	Agree
9.	Coordination among various units	3.98	1.41	3.51	2.33	3.75	Agree
10.	Cordial relation b/w staff and admin	3.82	1.61	3.15	2.17	3.49	Disagree
11.	Recommending posting of teachers	4.23	1.11	4.12	1.24	4.18	Agree
12.	Checking staff morale	3.93	1.72	3.87	1.61	3.90	Agree

Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results are presented in Table 1. Respondents agreed on all items except item 39 as the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results. Their grand means ranged from 3.55 – 4.19. Some of the items are regular supervision of staff, participation of staff in policy making and coordination among various units. The only item respondents disagreed with has a grand mean of 3.49. It is the item on the cordial relationship between staff and administrators. The standard deviations vary from 1.03 to 2.71 among the administrators and the teachers.

Research Question 2

What are the methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance?

Table 2: Methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance

S/N	TEST ITEMS	ADMIN (172)			TEACHERS (302)		REMARKS
		\bar{X}_A	σ_A	\bar{X}_T	σ_T	\bar{X}_G	
13.	Delegation of responsibility	4.12	1.09	3.51	2.01	3.82	Agree
14.	Partners in progress	4.01	1.11	3.43	1.97	3.72	Agree
15.	Prompt payment of salaries	3.63	2.05	3.24	2.10	3.44	Disagree
16.	Promotion of staff	3.53	2.12	3.61	2.06	3.57	Agree
17.	Prompt staff development	3.63	2.03	3.72	2.23	3.68	Agree
18.	Appreciation of skills and abilities	4.13	1.25	3.21	2.11	3.67	Agree
19.	Effective communication	3.72	2.13	3.75	2.26	3.74	Agree
20.	Award for excellence	3.85	2.09	3.67	2.03	3.76	Agree
21.	Fairness	3.91	1.24	3.23	2.14	3.57	Agree
22.	Leadership by example	3.66	2.11	3.17	2.31	3.42	Disagree
23.	Guiding teachers	3.77	1.63	3.26	2.03	3.52	Agree
24.	Teacher welfare scheme	3.51	2.22	3.09	2.31	3.30	Disagree
25.	Participation of staff in dec. making	3.91	1.27	3.31	2.11	3.61	Agree
26.	A secure atmosphere	3.83	1.35	3.71	1.83	3.77	Agree

In Table 2, respondents agree on 11 out of the 14 items presented. The 11 items show that they are the methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance and include delegation of responsibility, effective communication and a secure atmosphere. Their grand means ranged from 3.52 – 3.82. Respondents however, disagree on 3 items, that is, items 44, 51 and 53 with grand means of 3.44, 3.42 and 3.30 respectively. This means respondents do not consider them as methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance. The items are prompt payment of salaries, leadership by example and teacher welfare scheme. The standard deviations vary from 1.09 to 2.31 among the administrators and teachers.

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of administrators and teachers on the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results.

Table 3: t-Test of Difference Between Mean Scores of Administrators and Teachers on the Strategies for Coordinating School Activities.

Respondent Category	MEAN	SD	N	df	SE	t-cal	t-crit	DEC
Administrators	3.98	0.26	12	22	0.72	1.20	2.07	Accept
Teachers	3.85	0.29	12					

Table 3 is the result obtained when hypothesis 1 was tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The t-cal is 1.20 against the t-crit of 2.07. Since t-cal is lower than t-crit, the result shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of administrators and teachers on the methods for coordinating school activities for achieving better results. The null hypothesis, H_{01} , is therefore, accepted. The study has found in Table 1 that regular supervision of staff and students, as well as workshops and laboratories, participation of staff in policy and decision-making, creating a line structure and promoting communication are methods or strategies for coordinating school activities. Coordination among various units in the school is also a vital strategy for effective public school management. This finding in Table 1 is in line with the view of Nwuzor (1982) who says that in coordinating, communication is vital tool for ensuring good coordination of activities between school administrators and workers. The finding of the study agrees with Garuba (1997) who stresses that supervision in a school is necessary for advancing the quality of the teaching and learning process by constantly subjecting the system to reviews and monitoring. The school administrator creates structures, assigns tasks and provides resources in the school. By creating a line structure, the administrator has created a hierarchy of authority in the school (Okeke, 1986).

The finding in Table 2 answered research question 2 and shows that delegation of responsibility, promotion of staff, prompt staff development and appreciation of skills and abilities are methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance. Other methods are award for excellence, guiding teachers and involvement of staff in decision making for greater performance. This finding is in line with the view of Kochhar (2002) who says that the modern term for stimulating means motivation and that the term means providing the atmosphere to make workers to be cheerfully willing to do their work. According to Jen (2002) stimulating as motivation refers to the situation whereby teachers are influenced positively to work for the achievement of the goals of a school. However, the finding of the study disagrees with Tella (2002) who explained stimulating to include leadership by example. The finding also agrees with Everal, Morris and Wilson (2004) who said that stimulating deals with the administrative strategies of motivation, caring for and about staff, praising achievement and delegating responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Management of schools is a very serious task that is both demanding and tasking. In the Northern Senatorial Zone of Adamawa State, the problem of coordinating activities and then stimulating staff has been of serious concern to all stakeholders in the education business. Poor communication between the administrator and poor motivation of staff especially teachers as created a lot of disaffection among teachers. The study therefore, investigated the mechanisms for the effective management of secondary schools in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Adamawa State. A structured questionnaire collected and analyzed data on the methods for coordinating activities and as well on the methods for motivation of staff. Mean and standard deviation answered the two research questions. Using a cut off mean of 3.50 for accepting items as valid, findings revealed among others, that regular supervision of staff and students, as well as workshops and laboratories, participation of staff in policy and decision-making are coordinating mechanisms for effective management of secondary schools. The study also found that delegation of responsibility, promotion of staff, prompt staff development and appreciation of skills and abilities of staff, award for excellence, are methods for stimulating staff towards optimum performance.

Administrators of secondary schools in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Adamawa State are not likely to perform satisfactorily in their management efforts if they are not given the necessary support. In view of this, government needs to train administrators in order for them to improve their management skills and knowledge. The society needs to support the administrators especially in the area of enforcement of discipline in schools. Teachers need to stand by the administrators for together, they are able to achieve, to a large extent, the aims of the schools.

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