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The Role of Head Teacher in Improvisation and Maintenance of School Plants

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Abstract

The conditions and situation of the physical and infrastructural facilities in the primary schools had marred the attainment of the goal of education for all. The present Primary Education Commission (UPEC) 1999/91 survey indicated that approximately 4.9% of Nigerian primary school have no building, while the survey equally shows that there is a short fall of 64.2% in pupils furniture and 62.5% in teachers' and non teaching furniture, nationwide. It also stressed further that equipment for teaching sciences, sports, Home Economics creative Arts were lacking in majority of the Primary Schools. Moreover, the above situations seem not to have improved in the recent times. Many of the primary school buildings are dilapidated, displaying no window panes or Shutters, no ceilings, plaster peel offs, broken floors and leaking roofs. Poor as these structures are, they are not even

adequate and thus two or more streams have to use the same dilapidated class in many cases. This has resulted into overcrowded classrooms with serious implications for teaching and learning in the primary schools in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the role of head teacher in improvisation and maintenance of school plants in primary schools.

Key words: Primary Education, Head Teacher, School Plants, Physical facilities and infrastructural facilities

Introduction

Primary education is the bedrock upon which other levels of education are built. By Implication, what-ever happens at this level can either make or mar the entire education sector of a nation. This may be why its administration in the areas of curriculum and resources management has attracted the attention of all local and international stakeholders such as PTA, School Basic Management Committee, NUT UNO, UN, UNICEF, UNESCO to mention a few. However, the main focus of the Nigerian Government is to use the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme to eradicate illiteracy and thus achieve the goal of education for all in live with JONTIEN conference of 1990.

The concept of school plant

The term school plant includes the site, the building and the equipment. It includes permanent and semi permanent structure as well as items such as machines, laboratory equipment the blackboard/chalkboard the learner and teacher tools. Enahwo and Eferakeya (1989) defined school plants as the entire physical infrastructural facilities provided in the school for the purpose of educating the child. Ojedele (1998) have a broader view of school plant as including the school site and all the structures that have been put in place to aid effective teaching and learning in the school system. In his own view Yusuf (2008) defined school plant as the space interpretation of the school curriculum. The curriculum cannot be implemented if the physical facilities required for teaching and learning are not available. Without school plant, the school cannot exist to this end, it becomes necessary to ensure that school plant is properly planned and maintained to facilitate the effectiveness of the school system.

Moreover, school plant refers to all non-consumable and durable physical and infrastructural facilities available in the school for teachers' and students

use in order to make teaching and learning effective and thus ensure the achievement of pre determined aims and objectives of education hence, the school plant includes the 'space' within the school premises which houses the basic systems and structures.

For Yusuf 2008 and Ajayi (2007), school plants comprise the following:

- (i) Machinery: It includes machines and tools used in the workshop, duplicating machines and so on.
- (ii) School site: This refers to the entire landscape on which the school's permanent and semi-permanent structures are built.
- (iii) Buildings: These include classroom blocks, administrative offices, libraries, workshops, laboratories, students, hostels, staff residential quarters, assembly halls, toilets dining hall and so on.
- (iv) Equipment: These consist of typewriters, photocopiers, computers, sporting equipment, laboratory equipment and workshop equipment.
- (v) Furniture: Desks and seats used in the classrooms office furniture, residential furniture and soon.
- (vi) Vehicles of various types and sizes.
- (vii) Books textbooks, periodicals and all library books.
- (viii) Electrical infrastructure: Air conditioners, electrical fans, generating sets and other electrical fittings.
- (ix) Water supply infrastructure: This involves deep wells, boreholes, water tanks and public water.
- (x) Accessories: These include playgrounds, lawns, parks garden and farm.

Issues of school plant maintenance

There are several issues confronting effective school plant maintenance in Nigeria School.

These include:

- (i) Enrolment explosion leading to excessive pressure on existing school facilities.

- (ii) Inadequate fund arising from economic recessions and competitions for funds by other sectors. Consequently, facilities are inadequate to cope with increased enrolment pressure. In addition, inadequate funds have not allowed for proper maintenance of available facilities.
- (iii) Inadequate and outright lack of experts (artisans) to handle and repair the 'modern' gadgets used in the school system.
- (iv) Over centralization of authority and duty: Many of the school heads do not delegate duties to their subordinates which leads to over centralization in the school system.
- (v) Non-challant attitude of school head, teachers and students to government property. There is overt lack of maintenance culture among Nigerians.

Enhancing school plant maintenance culture

The importance of proper, timely and adequate maintenance of school plant cannot be under estimated, in view of the huge cost of procurement of new materials. Maintenance of school plant involves, keeping grounds, buildings and equipment in their original condition of completeness or efficiency (Oluchukwu, 1998). School administrators must ensure proper maintenance of school plant in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning process. School plant maintenance refers to the keeping of school site, building and equipment in as near their original state of utility as possible (Olutola, 1981). Ajayi, (2007) Opined that school plant maintenance are all activities embarked upon with a view to sustaining the initial use value of the school plant. This involves sweeping of the floors and surroundings, dusting, mopping, scrubbing and washing of school plant showing of the lawns and playgrounds, repairs of facilities, pest control, fire prevention and safety. Stressing the need for school plant maintenance, Knezevich (1975) is of the view that the time it takes for a structure to become obsolete and out dated is a function of the quality of the original construction and material as well as the quality of housekeeping and maintenance.

In their different works Olagboye (1998) and Ajayi: (2007) identified five types of maintenance in the school system. These are:

- (i) Corrective maintenance: This is concerned with repairing faults on time. Repairs of electrical faults in the school building and

mechanical faults in generating sets and vehicles are examples of corrective maintenance.

- (ii) Preventive and predictive maintenance: This refers to maintenance carried out for the purpose of preventing break downs or situations which can put part of the plant out of use.
- (iii) Shut down maintenance: This involves the shutting down of a school plant or part of it in order to carryout maintenance work.
- (iv) Running maintenance: This is the maintenance carried on while the plant or a component of it is operating.
- (v) Break down maintenance: This focuses on rectifying breakdowns in any component of the school plant.

The role of head teachers

The role of head teachers in imbibing, promoting and sustaining maintenance culture in primary school cannot be under estimated. The obsolete and inadequate structures in Nigerian primary school need to be well kept and restored to optimum working condition if only to ensure the continuity or the system and make teaching and learning effective. The head teacher as the custodian of the school plant must ensure the proper utilization and maintenance of school plant in order to present loss of time, money and space. He has the responsibility of ensuring that school plants are well protected against fire outbreak, pest as well as thieves and kept in functioning conditions. In the view of Olagboye (1998), Ajayi (2007) and Yusuf (2008) school heads are to mobilize and motivate their staff and students to imbibe and internalize the maintenance culture. They added that school heads, through close supervision of the staff, students and members of the community, must ensure that:

- (a) Equipment and facilities to be serviced, repaired and overhauled are actually serviced, repaired and overhauled.
- (b) School properties should neither be misused nor converted into private property.
- (c) No component of the school plant must be illegally commercialized by individuals.

The school administrator should use some strategies for school plant maintenance, in order to ensure that all the school plants are in a functional

state throughout the year. Perhaps this is the reason why Fadipe (1998) and Ajayi (2007) suggested five-fold strategies that will make head teachers put school plants into functional state throughout the school year these are:

- (i) Psychological build up of staff and pupils: This involves inculcating in all members of the school community and spirit to use and handle the school plants with care.
- (ii) Periodic inspection and classification of damaged infrastructure. Pupils and teachers should be involved in this area since early detection of problems on school plant any of its components will save a lot of problems. The head teacher should engage in periodic inspection of school infrastructural facilities with a view of detaching damages, faults and deficiencies and rectifying them.
- (iii) Committee system approach: The head teacher can set up a number of committees which will be made up of some responsible teachers and students, to receive all complaints on damages, deterioration, faults and deficiencies in various aspects of school plants. In view of this a number of committees and sub-committees could be set up to handle maintenance and repair activities in the school system.
- (iv) Community participation approach: The members of the immediate community in which a school is established should be involved in the repairs and maintenance of school plant. Professional members of the community especially those who are PTA members should be actively involved in the maintenance of school plants of minimal cost.
- (v) Financing maintenance cost internally: The head teacher must be resourceful in generating fund internally within the limit of government's regulations, to maintain the school plant. In view of the fact that enough funds may not be made available to public school by the government for school plant maintenance, the head teacher should be aggressive in generating fund from the following internal sources of revenue, appeal to philanthropists to donate for repairs of school plants, appeal to old students to donate for maintenance and even replacement of school plants, sales of school agricultural and Arts products and charges for the use of school plants such as halls, sports, field and so on.

Conclusion

Inadequate school plants in schools to cope with increasing pupils' enrolment in primary schools calls for proper and timely maintenance of the available school plants. The head teachers can use their skills and expertise to improvise for school plants where necessary. Lack of relevant school plants can hinder effective and efficient teachings and learning process. To this end, Head teachers should therefore not only take proper care of the available school plants they should also strive hard to create, design and generate alternative materials and resources from their immediate environment to facilitate proper teaching and learning process in the primary schools.

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