
CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR AND SUPERVISOR OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Vocational Education is the education which equips individual with the task and affective skills for vocation in the world of work. Though there are many types of administrators and supervisors, vocational education can only be practicable if it has effective administrators and supervisors. Therefore, effective administrators and supervisors must possess the following characteristics; ability to communicate, adequate educational preparation and experience, curiosity to learn, ability to get with and direct people, regards for individual in working with the colleagues creating a conducive climate for instruction, proper planning and preparation, modesty and friendliness, tact in dealing with people and issues, sound and constructive practice and initiating and maintenance of effective communication system.

KEYWORDS: Vocational education, effective administration, effective supervision, and characteristics.

Introduction

Vocational education is an important component of general education and has specific and pre-stated objectives and goals that have to be achieved. Vocational education can be seen as an occupation-oriented educational programme directed towards making the recipients skillful and efficient in their role performance in a chosen occupational area. For vocational skills to be established in a person, interest and a willingness to enter into learning vocational skills must be present. Therefore, vocational education is an instrument designed to develop occupational skills in individuals for productive living in a changing society.

In the light of the above, these are possible through effective administration and supervision, which are guided by a set of principles, goals, and objectives. This paper highlights the characteristics of effective administration and supervision in vocational education. Also to be considered the concepts of administration and supervision, effective administration in vocational education, effective supervision in vocational education, and the goals/objectives of vocational education.

Concept of Administration and Supervision

Management is simply the planning, organising, controlling, and evaluating of available resources in order to actualize set goals. It is also the use of finance, the sharing of responsibility, and the allocation of infrastructure and resources to produce a dependable output. Therefore, management formulates policies in an organization or institution to achieve certain set goals. Administration and supervision are subsumed under management. That is,

the ability to harmonize, bring together both human and material resources, coordinate, and manage so as to achieve a set of achievable goals or objectives.

Administration and supervision can be described as a process of formally making provisions to change behaviour and improve learning. According to Mbipom (2007), administration and supervision include administrative, counselling, supervisory, and student-behavior aspects. It is also the process of improving instruction by working with people who are working with people. Mbipom further stated that it is a process of stimulating growth and a means of helping teachers to help themselves. Akpan (2004) maintained that administration is that part of management process which is concerned with the translation and execution of the procedures by which programmes are laid down and communicated, and the progress of activities is regulated and checked against target and plans. Thus, administration is the overall determination of policies, the setting of objectives, the identification of general purposes, and the laying out of a broad programme and major project.

As applied to the field of education, Nwachukwu (1988) in Usoro and Usoro (2014) viewed administration as a systematic arrangement of human and material resources and programmes that are available for education and carefully using them systematically within defined guidelines or policies to achieve educational goals. Denga (1986) in Usoro and Usoro (2014) opined that educational administration covers all the activities of the public, the school board, the pupils and students, the school staff, parent-teacher associations, the rules and regulations, as well as school policies that undergird the school organization, and all members of the school administrative team. Therefore, vocational education administration is the process of harnessing available resources (people, materials, equipment, infrastructure, and programmes) for the purpose of achieving the objectives of vocational education.

According to Nkang (2002), supervision is that aspect of the management process carried out by first line managers (supervisors, foremen, heads of department, vice principals, principals, platoon commanders, and coaches) with the intention of inspiring action in subordinates and guiding those actions towards the accomplishment of desirable and predetermined goals. It may be seen as a form of control in which the supervisor, having assigned tasks to subordinates in line with the objectives of the organization, inspires the latter to action and then monitors and checks those actions to ensure that they are performed according to instructions and plans, taking every necessary step to assist the worker in making appropriate progress towards the realization of pre-stated objectives.

Akpan (2001) opined that, traditionally, an inspector (who is a supervisor) is perceived as an officer who visits schools to report on how the school manager and their staff maintain discipline, teach, keep school records, and behave towards their pupils and the public. His major work, therefore, is to search for faults and police the teacher. In the traditional concept of inspection, a teacher could be corrected in front of the students. The inspectors have little or no time with the teacher. The principals were not informed of his visit, but this was seen as a threat to the teachers' jobs.

Modern supervision has it that in addition to requiring the inspector to access and report on the efficiency of an institution, they also offer all possible assistance to teachers in maintaining educational progress. Presently, an inspector supervises, assess and reports on the arrangements for the training of teachers. He also assists teachers in the selection and use

of text books and materials in planning and organising their lessons, in the organisation of inter curricula activities, and by informing them about recent research and new teaching methods. Therefore, modern supervision (inspection) in schools is directly related to the administration of education.

Effective Administration of Vocational Education

Administration is the coordination of human and material resources towards the attainment of pre-determined objectives (Akpan, 2001). Hornby (2006) sees the administrator as a person whose job is to manage and organize the public or business affairs of a company or an institution. According to Olaitan, Nwachukwu, Igbo, Onyemachi, and Ekong (1999), the administration of vocational and technical education involves the act of controlling and directing these programmes. Its needs are based on the achievement of the stated objectives of the programme. However, Roberts (1971) in Usoro and Usoro (2014) advocated that one of the most important goals of vocational education is to equip students with effective and functional knowledge and professional skills for self-employment or paid employment in the world of work. Therefore, the administration of vocational education is a service activity or tool through which the fundamental objective of the vocational education system can be more fully and efficiently realised.

Basically, an educational administrator deals with human beings at various levels. Whether we are talking of the principal and his/her students or the headmaster and the community, the administrator is all the time dealing with human beings and the way he/she relates with them makes a big difference. Educational administration as opined by Akpan (2001) is the bringing of persons and material resources together for effective and functional teaching and learning. Vocational education administration is also a service through which the fundamental objectives of the vocational system can be fully and efficiently realized. It equally involves planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling.

In the light of the foregoing observations, it can be deduced that effective administration of vocational education is the art and science of budgeting, planning, gathering, organising, coordinating students and instructors (teachers), learning materials, instructional strategies, school facilities, the community, implementation, accounting, evaluation, and even involving the government in a school system to attain its pre-determined goals.

Effective Supervision of Vocational Education

According to Hornby (2006), a supervisor is somebody kept in charge to ensure that everything is done correctly and safely. Kotirde and Yunos (2014) pointed out that the improvement of teaching and learning in schools is the general purpose of education. They further stated that the basic premise of supervision is that a teacher's instructional behaviour affects students' learning, and an examination of instructional behaviour can lead to improvements in both teaching and learning. According to Kotirde and Yunos (2014), effective school research identifies schooling practice and characteristics associated with measurement improvement in student achievement and excellence in student achievement.

Akpan (2001) also pointed out that supervision is viewed differently in a school system. To an instructor (teacher), supervision is a way of persuading learners to desist from undesirable behaviour and procedures in executing their functions. To the school administrator, supervision

is a channel for ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in work output. To parents and learners, supervision is a way of knowing the performance and efforts of the school in meeting the expectations of the people (sponsors).

However, the nature of the work done and the type of services rendered determine who a supervisor is. Oraemisi (1988) in Usoro, Usoro, and Akpan (2011) viewed a supervisor as a person formally designed by the organization to interact with teachers in the school system in order to improve the quality of learning of students.

In the light of the aforementioned, effective supervision of vocational education is perceived as a way of advising, refreshing, encouraging, stimulating, improving, and overseeing certain groups with the hope of seeking their cooperation for the supervisor's success in their supervisory task in vocational education. Supervisor is therefore quality-oriented service.

Vocational Education

Okoro (1999) defined vocational education as any form of education designed to prepare people for employment in recognised occupations. It provides the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupations. According to Osuala (2004), Vocational Education is a systematic learning experience that is designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled workers, technicians, and sub-professionals in recognised occupations. Furthermore, Rasinen (2000) viewed vocational education as an activity-oriented education involving the use of tools, equipment, and other materials to translate theory into practice.

According to the FRN (2013), "technical vocational education and training" (TVET) is a comprehensive term that refers to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. TVET is further understood to be:

- (i) an integral part of general education;
- (ii) a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- (iii) an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- (iv) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development;
- (v) a method of alleviating poverty.

In the light of the foregoing, any education which is necessary for effective employment in an occupation is vocational, while any education which is useful to an individual irrespective of his future life vocation is general education. General education is received for the general cultural development of the individual, and while it may be useful in several occupations, it is not normally an essential part of any particular occupation. Ogwo and Oranu (2006), examining the relationship between technical vocational education and general education curricula, found that vocational education programmes depend on general education to provide theoretical

explanations of scientific principles and general information about the environment. When viewed critically, Vocational Education is not only a sub-set but an important aspect of the entire educational effort to socialize an individual. Thus, it cannot be independent of the general education curriculum. The skilled worker needs to communicate effectively, receive adequate citizenship education, and know about the scientific laws governing his/her operations. No vocational educator can develop a curriculum or programme devoid of sound general education and expect it to succeed.

Goals/Objectives of Vocational Education

According to the 2001 General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), vocational education is an integral part of every person's basic education in the form of initiation into technology, the world of work, and human values and standards of responsible citizenship. The FRN (2013), complying with UNESCO's recommendation, formulated the objectives of technical-vocational education and training (TVET) as follows:

1. provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce particularly at sub-profession levels.
2. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
3. provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
4. give training and imparting the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and economically self-reliant.
5. give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
6. enable young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

The above objectives may be expanded to include those provided by Osuala (2004) as follows:

- (a) prepare the learner for entry into employment and advance in his or her chosen career
- (b) meet manpower needs of society
- (c) increase the options available to each student
- (d) serve as a motivating force to enhance all types of learning
- (e) enable the learner to wisely select a career

According to Ogwo and Oranu (2006), the objective of Technical Vocational Education programme is to assist the individual to acquire the skills of applying scientific knowledge in

solving technology problems. Thus, the primary concern of vocational education programmes is the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge in people for gainful employment in the world of work and its attendant changes occasioned by the emerging technologies.

Skills Expected of an Effective Administrator and Supervisor in Vocational Education

Effective administrators and supervisors in vocational education are expected to have the following skills to enable them carryout their assigned task in their various organisations and institutions effectively. These skills identified by Hall (2007) include conceptual skills, technical skills, and human-relation skills.

1. Conceptual Skills

The administrators and supervisors of vocational education must have a different concept of the organisation or institution. He/she must be able to bring new ideas to change the system positively to increase productivity. The administrators and supervisors of vocational education must introduce different varieties of ideas on administration and supervision within the organisation's or institution's policy to enhance productivity. The administrator or supervisor must not leave the system the way he or she found it.

2. Technical Skills

Administrators and supervisors of vocational education are expected to know how to operate machines within their jurisdiction. It will be wrong to bring a Home Economics administrator or supervisor to a technical workshop where there are milling machines, lathe machines, drilling machines, shaping machines, grinding machines, etc. For effective administration and supervision, the administrators and supervisors of vocational education should at least know the basic functions and principles of each machine within their domain.

3. Human-relation Skills

Administrators and supervisors of vocational education must have the skill of relating with their subjects at any given situation. Owing to the fact that different individuals behave differently, the administrators or supervisors must have different skills in relating with their subjects. The particular human-relation skill that worked perfectly well for Mr. A might not work for Mr. B, hence he/she must have a variety of human-relation skills such as communication, award for best performance, empathy, stress management, and conflict resolution skills.

Characteristics of an Effective Administrator and Supervisor of Vocational Education

Peretomode (2001) stated that vocational education is a workshop-based education designed to equip individuals with cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and perceptual skills. The attainment of these skills is contingent upon the characteristics of effective administration and supervision in vocational education. Hence, Akpan (2001) identified eleven (11) characteristics of an effective vocational education administrator and supervisor as follows:

1. Ability to Communicate

Vocational education administration and supervision personnel should be able to communicate fluently, both orally and in writing. Any information should be complied

meaningfully, conveyed quickly and accurately, especially in this era of computer, internet and mobile phones. The dynamic, inquisitive teachers now want to be told why things are done one way and not another. Without the communication skill, the administrator or supervisor cannot explain directives and convince workers to follow them. In addition, administrators and supervisors are required to possess the power to effectively code and decode information as well as establish and maintain upward communication channels.

2. Adequate Educational Preparation and Experience

Administrative and supervisory candidates must have knowledge about the different components of vocational education. These components include: the teaching methods, research techniques, curriculum development, curricular activities and evaluation processes (Akpan, 2003). It is also required of vocational education administrative/supervisory personnel to have teaching experience in all programmes offered in the system. Their knowledge and experience are apt to assist them in organizing curriculum offerings and preparing instructors.

3. Curiosity to Learn

An administrator and supervisor must be interested in learning more and must constantly seek information about current happenings in their field and in the community they serve. They should set high performance standards for themselves and expect a similar quality of work from the staff. The personnel must be willing and eager to accept responsibility and assume the obligations that go with the job. He or she must keep abreast of new developments in the principles and practices of administration and supervision.

4. Ability to get along with, and direct people

It is pertinent to note that irrespective of the status, rank, and academic qualifications of administrators and supervisors, the ability to get along with staff, students, parents, and other persons in the school community is of paramount importance. Although many find it difficult, it is very necessary to adjust their methods and attitudes to keep pace with ever-changing school and community environments. Their own attitudes, behaviours and awareness of how others feel contribute immensely to the success of administration and supervision.

5. Regards for Individuals in Working with the Colleagues

The functions of vocational education administrators and supervisors should be governed by the values teachers are seeking to inculcate in students. There should be freedom of speech, respect for individual views, and the rule of the majority where collective decisions must be made. In a situation where controversy arises from discussion, the personnel should know when and how to take the initiative in transforming group thinking and decision into actions.

6. Ability to Create a Conducive Climate for Instruction

In the administration and supervision of vocational education, teachers are professional colleagues, frequently having similar training and experiences. Therefore, the teachers are entitled, to some extent, the freedom and discretion in the use of educational methods. For administrators and supervisors to earn the respect and confidence of staff, they must, of necessity, enter into a give-and-take relationship with co-workers and even with students. The

give-and-take relationship between administrators, staff, and students creates a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning.

7. Proper Planning and Preparation

The ability of the administrator and supervisor to plan and prepare events in the system helps prevent problems from developing in a school system. A good administrator of vocational education cannot do without this characteristic. A conducive organizational or school climate thrives on proper planning and preparation of the system's activities that underlie the desired outcome.

8. Modesty and Friendliness

Administrative and supervisory personnel in Vocational Education should be modest and friendly individuals. They should show themselves to be trustworthy by being sensitive to their needs and feelings. They should be individuals with whom the staff and members of the school community feel free to discuss both professional and personal problems. Modest and friendly personnel cause the attainment of effective administration.

9. Tact in dealing with people and issues

During classroom visits, vocational education administrators and supervisors frequently detect signs of deteriorating class morale and other issues. Behaviours may be detrimental to instructional and educational progress. With tactical sharing and observation with the instructor, both can cooperatively plan to prevent the anticipated difficulties or devise procedures to solve problems involving both the teacher and the student. A tactful approach to solving the problem may not cause hard feelings among the parties involved. If a teacher is observed to lack self-confidence, he or she may be tactfully interviewed. This approach may result in self-analysis and subsequent solution to the problem. Tactfulness in dealing with staff and issues is a very valuable characteristic for administrators and supervisors to process.

10. Sound and Constructive Practices

Vocational education administration should develop, nurture and sustain sound and constructive practices among the students, instructors and the entire school system. The personnel should realize that the instructors cannot achieve perfection in education, but they can adopt the strategy for improving professional effectiveness through enforcing strengths and persuading growth. The intention of the administrator or supervisor and teachers' instructions should be focused on achieving the best for the institution. Fault-finding tactics does not deserve any place in the administrative and supervisory processes. There should be speedy growth in the administrative process to improve upon what has already been accomplished.

11. Ability to Initiate and Maintain Effective Communication System

Initiation and maintenance of an effective communication system are characteristics of vocational education administration and supervision. It permits the free flow of information needed for the smooth running of the school. The importance of this characteristic of easy transfer or circulation of information by the system cannot be underestimated in the quest for achieving pre-determined goals on which the institution was founded.

Conclusion

Ineffective administration and supervision of vocational education programme is inimical to the attainment of high quality graduate prepared for the world of work. Hence, effective administration and supervision personnel are very relevant to the smooth and productive running of a vocational education programme. Therefore, in appointing vocational education administrative and supervisory personnel, the possession of the effective characteristics together with academic qualifications must be taken into consideration.

Recommendations

Sequel to this write-up, the author hereby proffers the following recommendations:

1. Only individuals with sound and constructive knowledge of vocational education should be engaged as administrators and supervisors by the government and proprietors of schools.
2. Government and proprietors of schools should only employ administrators and supervisors who has the interest and willingness to direct and execute the vocational programme for optimum achievement of the school and society.
3. All employers should only engage administrators and supervisors who are democratic technocrats, ready to accept corrections and criticisms for self-adjustment and better performance.
4. Employers should only engage administrators and supervisors who are research-oriented individuals, ready to investigate new knowledge and relevant skills required by the labour market. A good research project by the administrator or supervisor should be used as a basis for promotion by their employers.

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