

THE IMPACT OF MENTORING ON PRIMARY SCHOOL HEAD TEACHERS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study is on impact of mentoring among primary school head teachers. A descriptive design was used, thirty-five (35) Head Teachers were purposively selected in six (6) different local governments in the State. The Head Teachers received a training for nine months within three years, on the effectiveness of better planning and the importance of professional leadership in the administration of primary schools with emphasis on the formulation and utilization of School Development Plan (SDP). A questionnaire was used to collect data. The researcher and with the help of research assistants, visited each Head Teacher in their schools to ascertain the effectiveness of his planning and to observe his kind of professional leadership. The findings indicate that, mentoring has great impact in changing the planning processes of the head teachers and in improving their professional leadership style for effective school management.

Keywords: Mentoring, Head Teacher, School development plan, Leadership

Introduction

Salis (2017) define Mentors as veteran teachers who help beginners learn the philosophy, cultural values and established sets of behaviours expected by the schools where they are employed. Mentors are teachers who have been in the teaching profession for a reasonable number of years, having all the required skills and technicalities in teaching. They provide excellent opportunities for assisting beginning teachers in areas of high need such as locating instructional materials, managing instructional time, planning and organizing instruction, and using varied teaching methods (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007).

Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson (2009) pointed out that since the 1980s many countries have seen a massive increase in the number of formal programmes of school-based mentoring for teachers. In Australia for example, Devos (2010), stated that under the Victorian 'Induction and Mentoring of Beginning Teachers' policy, new graduates are provisionally registered for a period of 12 months during which time (if employed in a school) they are required to participate in the Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRT) Program. In this program, the new teacher is mentored by a more experienced teacher in their school. In order to seek full registration as a teacher (and stay in employment) PRTs are required to present evidence of their competence against eight Standards of Professional Practice at the conclusion of the 12 months' period. The Standards are grouped under three headings Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement.

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Several studies indicated that regular mentoring programs encourages and motivate teachers by improving their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills in teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In line with this, Veenman (2014) pointed a reason of teacher mentoring in education as to encourage the retention of newly and recently qualified teachers in the profession, notably through attempting to mitigate the well-documented phenomenon of ‘reality shock’ experienced by many beginning teachers.

If the beginning teachers are properly mentored they will have sense of belonging and confidence to face whatever challenges in their teaching job, this will improve their teaching skills and the ability to put in their best. McIntyre & Hagger (2010) added that a wide range of benefits of mentoring for teachers, including reduced feelings of isolation, increased confidence and self-esteem, professional growth, and improved self-reflection and problem-solving capacities. The benefits of mentoring programs are substantial for both teachers and the head teachers, creating a structure that allows teachers learn better on the strategies of teaching and head teachers learn the administrative skills to work with teachers which will ultimately benefit the students and the overall organization will be stronger because of the increased capacity of teachers and mentors (Huling, 2001).

Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer (2000) conducted a cross-sectional analysis of 228 teachers with three or fewer years of experience, half of the teachers had mentors. They discovered that the benefits of mentoring were greatest during the initial years of teaching. Mentored teachers were discovered to be more productive, more active and more beneficial to the improvement of students’ academic achievements. Janice, Donald & Suzanna (2007) are with the opinion that, schools should develop mentoring programmes for teachers and the school administrators to help them develop skills that will be useful in their teaching and make them see teaching as a profession which will help in developing their zeal in teaching. They further suggested development of on line programmes were teachers will be learning skills and technicalities of teaching from expert in education.

Mentoring has many advantages to the mentee or learners, the mentor and the organization. To the mentee, it helps to know the culture and political set up of their organization, develop skills, have access to resources and have increase clarity of goals and lower the attrition rates of new teachers. The advantages that accrue to the mentor include getting assistance in tasks to be done, increased satisfaction, increased motivation as well as assisting personal development. The institution also benefits, as there is increase productivity, more effective management and faster induction of new colleagues (Sweeny, 2001; and Salis, 2017).

Objectives

The research work has the following objectives:

1. To examine if there is improvement in better planning among head teachers in primary schools.
2. To find out the impact of mentoring on professional leadership of head teachers in their schools.

Methodology

A descriptive survey was adopted in conducting the study. Thirty-five (35) Head Teachers were purposively selected in six (6) different local governments in the State. The Head Teachers received a training for nine months within three years, on the effectiveness of better planning and the importance of professional leadership in the administration of primary schools with emphasis on the formulation and utilization of School Development Plan (SDP). During the training, the head teachers learnt how to develop, utilize, and evaluate their SDP. They also learnt technicalities on how to promote learning in their respective schools, using different strategies. A Data collection tool was designed by the researcher and with the help of research assistants, each Head Teacher was visited in their schools to ascertain the effectiveness of his planning and to observe his kind of professional leadership. The results were tabulated and analyzed using percentage.

From the table, it has been indicated that, 162 head teachers out of 210 involved the School based management committee (SBMC) in the self-evaluation of the current school development plan (SDP). 81.9% has their SDP written since the start of the school year. 162 of the head teachers representing 77.1% indicated that more than two current SDP activities are related to raising achievements in their various schools. While 62.3% of the head teachers used more than three activities on their current SDP, over 80% have their cash book kept up to date. About 69.5% of the head teachers are using their SDP effectively. 80.9% of the head teachers regularly evaluate their school development plan to improve the needed areas. Out of the 210 head teachers, 141 which is 67.1% are using school development plan inclusively.

Some local governments are lagging behind in some areas of better planning. For example, the above table shows that only 9 out of the 35 teachers in Mashegu local government are using their school development plan effectively. Almost all the local governments recorded more than 60% in using more than three activities on their current SDP, except for Rafi local government who has only 20% which is not encouraging. Mariga local government has a perfect achievement in keeping their cash book records up-to-date, all the 35 (100%) head teachers have their cash book records kept with all the school transactions up-to-date, while Agaie, Mashegu, Munya and Rafi local governments are with more than 80% each. Only Gbako local government is with 65%.

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Findings of the study Table 1: Better Planning in Primary Schools

S/N	LGA	No. of HTs met	Selfevaluation for the current SDP involved the SBMC	Development Plans written since the start of the school year	More than two current SDP activities are related to raising achievement	Using more than three activities on the current SDP	Cash book is up to date	Using a School Development Plan effectively	Evaluating the drafted School Development Plan regularly	Using a School Development Plan inclusively
1	Agaie	35	21 (60.0%)	22 (62.9%)	22 (62.9%)	23 (65.7%)	29 (82.9%)	32 (91.4%)	25 (71.4%)	25 (71.4%)
2	Gbako	35	23 (65.7%)	33 (94.3%)	32 (91.4%)	30 (85.7%)	23 (65.7%)	30 (85.7%)	27 (77.1%)	28 (80.0%)
3	Mariga	35	32 (91.4%)	29 (82.8%)	29 (82.8%)	26 (74.3%)	35 (100%)	30 (85.7%)	34 (97.1%)	31 (88.6%)
4	Mashegu	35	28 (80.0%)	29 (82.8%)	27 (77.1%)	21 (60.0%)	30 (85.7%)	09 (25.7%)	29 (82.8%)	16 (45.7%)
5	Munya	35	27 (77.1%)	28 (80.0%)	28 (80.0%)	24 (68.5%)	28 (80.0%)	25 (71.4%)	23 (65.7%)	21 (60.0%)
6	Rafi	35	31 (88.6%)	31 (88.6%)	24 (68.6%)	07 (20.0%)	32 (91.4%)	20 (57.1%)	32 (91.4%)	20 (57.1%)
TOTAL		210	162 (77.1%)	172 (81.9%)	162 (77.1%)	131 (62.3%)	177 (84.2%)	146 (69.5%)	170 (80.9%)	141 (67.1%)

Table 2: Professional Leadership

S/N	LGA	No. of HTs met	Carried out ten or more lesson observations and gave feedback	Held more than one professional development meetings	More than half of the lessons begin and end on time	Having more than one strategy for promoting teacher attendance	operating effectively within the stated guide	having more than one strategy for promoting attendance by all pupils	working inclusively
1	Agaie	35	23 (65.7%)	23 (65.7%)	26 (74.3%)	14 (40.0%)	30 (85.7%)	25 (71.4%)	28 (80.0%)
2	Gbako	35	22 (62.9%)	22 (62.9%)	27 (77.1%)	29 (82.9%)	25 (71.4%)	21 (60.0%)	26 (74.3%)
3	Mariga	35	20 (57.1%)	32 (91.4%)	32 (91.4%)	28 (80.0%)	28 (80.0%)	31 (88.6%)	29 (82.9%)
4	Mashegu	35	03 (8.6%)	30 (85.7%)	30 (85.7%)	27 (77.1%)	21 (60.0%)	30 (85.7%)	02 (5.7%)
5	Munya	35	14 (40.0%)	26 (74.3%)	26 (74.3%)	23 (65.7%)	16 (45.7%)	21 (60.0%)	20 (57.1%)
6	Rafi	35	09 (25.7%)	31 (88.6%)	24 (68.6%)	28 (80.0%)	25 (71.4%)	29 (82.9%)	25 (71.4%)
TOTAL		210	91 (43.3%)	164 (78.1%)	165 (78.5%)	149 (70.9%)	145 (69.0%)	157 (74.7%)	130 (61.9%)

Table above shows that only 91 (43.3%) head teachers are carrying ten or more lesson observations and give the required feedback to the teachers they observed. 78.1% of the head teachers hold more than one professional development meetings to discuss issues concerning the progress and prospects of their schools. 165 out of the 210 head teachers ensure that more than half of the lessons in their respective schools begins and end on time. A reasonable number of 79.9% has been recorded on the head teachers' ability of having more than one strategy for promoting teachers' attendance. 69% of the head teachers are operating effectively within the stated guide. 157 of the head teachers are having more than one strategy for promoting attendance of pupils in their various schools. 61.9% of the head teachers are working inclusively with both their teachers and pupils in the school.

Discussion of Findings

The schools that received the mentoring training are improving in their classroom practices and in the academic support available to teachers. Head teachers understanding and knowledge of what is happening in the classrooms and how to support teachers to improve have given them a new perspective on their leadership role. As the objectives of the research, was to assess the utilization of the acquired skills by head teachers on better planning and professional leadership so that they can support teachers in their various schools, the results of the findings have significantly shows a positive result in almost all the areas.

In the six Local government areas, the researcher found progress being made in all the assessment areas. However, in terms of using more than three activities on the SDP, all Local governments were above average while Rafi had a particularly low score of 20% as against the average. Mariga local government presented an overwhelming result of 100% in terms of cash book update. All the transactions made at the school were kept and receipts, bank transactions cheques were provided for the researcher to see, almost all the entries of the monies in and outside the school since the beginning of the school term to the end are efficiently recorded. Although, all the remaining schools did wonderfully well in terms of their financial transactions, but there are little discrepancies in some records as observed. Aminu (2018) opined that, having knowledge of financial records will help the school administrator handle financial transactions of his school effectively.

One major area that has been improved is, using the school development plan effectively. Prior to the mentoring programme, many head teachers have no idea on how to draft their SDP not to talk of using it effectively. But after the mentoring programme, almost all head teachers in the selected local governments have done significantly well in using the school development plan effectively. Agaie being the highest with 91.4% of their head teachers who utilises the SDP in accordance with the stated standard of the mentoring training received. It is then glaring that mentoring programme has a great impact in changing the attitudes and performance of head teachers in the selected local governments areas, hence, it can be observed from the findings that after receiving the mentoring training all the head teachers have exhibited a positive change on using the SDP effectively. Alice (2018) discovered that, if teachers are mentored on an activity or programme, there is the likely possibility of them performing better than those who do not received the said training or programme. Obviously, the mentoring programme has significant impact on head teachers in better planning in Niger state primary schools, as all the indices indicated a significant percentage as shown under the total in table 1.

Another area of remarkable achievements of the mentoring programme was the professional leadership. Although, majority of the head teachers despite the training received, are not doing well in carrying out lesson observations in their respective schools. Out of the 210 head teachers, only 91 carried out more than ten lesson observations and provide feedback to their teachers in every session. 78.1% of the head teachers hold more than one professional development meetings with their teachers. The essence of the professional development meeting is to discuss issues concerning the teaching and learning activities of the school, teachers will also through the forum make observations and request for the required materials that will facilitate their teaching exercise.

78.5% of the head teachers are ensuring that more than half of the lessons are beginning and ending on time. They usually do so by coming to school on time, conduct assembly as expected and allow the teachers to be in their various classes within the regulated time. They also visit the classes to make sure that teachers are teaching and managing their time in accordance with the

rules and regulations. About 79.9% of the head teachers utilises the knowledge acquired during the mentoring training to promote teacher attendance. Majority of the head teachers usually design an attendance register for the teachers to sign, this regulate their movement and improve their attendance in the schools. Other strategies include; an award to the most punctual teacher, promotion to those teachers who are always regular in the school and giving some school appointments to the teachers in order motivate them and to encourage others.

Conclusion

The mentoring exercise provided valuable insight into the implementation of the acquired leadership skills by Head teachers of the selected schools in Niger State. The result presents a picture of changing stakeholder attitudes and practices that should improve school effectiveness despite the numerous challenges and constraints facing the transformation process. The exercise was a very important strategy for gathering information required as evidence to support the vital role of the Head teachers as the academic leader of his/her school. This is not only important to the researcher but critical to the government's effort in searching for ways to reform education and make schools more effective.

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