

PERCEPTION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ABOUT SUPERVISION EXERCISE IN NIGERIA PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In this paper, the author examined the perception of primary school teachers about supervision exercise in Nigerian primary schools. The sample comprised 1258 (581 men, 677 women) classroom teachers who were randomly selected from 81 primary schools in Akinyele, Ona-Ara, and Ibadan South East Local Government Education Authorities, Oyo State, Nigeria. A questionnaire titled "Supervision and Quality of Instruction in Primary Schools" was administered on the sample. Frequency counts, percentages, and independent sample t - test were used to analyse the data. Results showed that fairly large sizes of the respondents were favourably disposed to supervision exercise in primary schools. Male teachers were more favourably disposed to supervision exercise than female teachers. However, generally the respondents were of the opinion that effective supervision is necessary in order to enhance the quality of instruction and to maintain standard in primary schools. The findings suggest the need for the government at all levels to strengthen supervision exercise in primary schools.

Keywords: Supervision exercise, Instruction, Primary Schools, Quality of Instruction.

Introduction

School inspection in Nigeria is as old as the school system of western type of education. It started in the missionary schools and was made a government concern in 1882. Over the years, public officers with varying status from the Ministry of Education, and Local Education Authorities have been inspecting schools. However, in the recent times, the concept of inspection which was seen as occasion when the school was examined and evaluated as a place of learning has been replaced by that of supervision. Although the term inspection

still exists in practice, the emphasis now is more in the area of supervision. Rather than having inspectors, the nomenclature in action and deeds has been changed to supervisors.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes the importance of supervision exercise in maintaining quality of instruction in the school system. This suggests the reason for devoting section 12:107a, 115-119 of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN) 2004) to issues relating to quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instruction in schools. According to the Nigerian policy on education, supervision exercise is for the maintenance of minimum standards in the school system.

Literature (e.g. Ebeimer, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Marshall, 2005; National Teachers' Institute [NTI], 2001; Ogunmodede, 2007; Ugochuckwu, 2001) has shown that effective supervision has the potential of helping in the maintenance of minimum standards of education in schools. For example, according to Marshall (2005), supervision of instruction is fundamental to ensuring that pupils are taught consistently and effectively that the established curriculum is introduced without major gaps and that each individual teacher within the school system has been performing the duties for which he or she was scheduled. Also, Ebeimer (2003) said that supervision of instruction is essential in the school system because it helps to encourage each individual teacher to work effectively towards achieving the objectives for which the institution is established. More importantly, according to NTI (2001), it helps to ensure that teachers receive the support they need to develop and enhance their professional skills in a serene environment. Put succinctly, supervision is a consciously planned programme for the improvement of teaching and learning activities in schools

In Nigeria, the authority to supervise primary schools is vested in Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) in collaboration with Federal Inspectorate Service Unit of Federal Ministry of Education and State Ministry of Education (See Section 116 of National Policy on Education, FGN, 2004 for more details). In Oyo State, as in all states in Nigeria, each local government education authority (LGEA) has a number of supervisors who monitor and oversee the maintenance of quality of schools' teaching

and learning processes. These supervisors were classroom teachers with minimum of ten years experience before they were drafted to LGEA to serve in the monitoring of teaching-learning processes in schools.

According to Nigeria's National Teachers Institute (NTI) (2000), the essential features of school supervision exercise being conducted by LGEA supervisors at the primary school level centres on monitoring: (i) the use of teaching aids and equipment, (ii) the timetable that the teacher uses, (iii) how well the teachers prepare for their lessons, (iv) the effective use of diaries, scheme of work, and teachers' movement book, (v) the method of teaching whether the teacher takes note of the dull, average and bright pupils in his or her class and (vi) the pupils' workbooks and notebooks. All these activities, according to NTI (2000), are to ensure that quality of education being provided at the primary school level is at the standard set by the Federal and the States' Ministries of Education.

Although some studies (e.g. Ebeimer, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Marshall, 2005; Mpofu, 2007; Ogunmodede, 2007; Ugochuckwu, 2001) have established a high and positive relationship between supervision exercise in schools and quality of instruction, some studies (e.g. Acheson, 1987; Adebola, 2001; Fraser, 1980) found that teachers and head teachers do not see supervisors as setting enough academic standards in schools. For example, in her study, Ogunmodede (2007) found that inspectors' advice and recommendations affect teachers' performance. Teachers, as a result of supervision exercise, tend to put in more effort than before. According to Ogunmodede supervision tend to impact positively on the provision of instructional materials and facilities. Similarly, in her study, Mpofu (2007) found that teachers showed positive attitude towards supervision exercise. Mpofu stated further that teachers were of the opinion that supervision exercise will help them in their teaching if it is done in the proper way.

In his study, Acheson (1987) found that teachers resent or even fear being supervised because of the history of supervision, which has always been biased towards evaluation or inspection. Acheson (1987) stated further that teachers' anxieties are almost universally aroused when a supervisor comes to classroom as a rater or if the purpose of the supervisors' visits is unknown. Teachers can be inhibited by the

presence of the supervisor in the classroom. Some teachers feel that they will not do their best if a stranger is in the classroom, especially education officers who come in once in a while to the unsuspecting teacher. However, there are teachers who can go on with their work as if there is no visitor in the classroom.

In a study of supervisory behaviour and teacher satisfaction by Fraser (1980), several teachers indicated that they experienced anxiety, uneasiness or resentment due the presence of a supervisor in their classroom. However, according to Cogan (1973), some teachers may experience a kind of productive stimulation deriving from implicit communication with a colleague and the gratifying opportunity to teach in the presence of a knowledgeable professional whose praise would be a genuine reward. Thus, teachers can be constrained or liberated, and a few remain unaffected.

Statement of the Problem

Despite that the intention of Federal Government of Nigeria for instituting supervision exercise in the school system (especially at the primary school level) is for the maintenance of the quality of teaching and learning, some studies have found that teachers resent or even fear being supervised. More importantly, research reports show that some teachers feel they will not be able to do their best in the class whenever the supervisor is in the class. However, some other studies pointed out that teachers showed positive attitude about supervision exercise. The conflicting research reports on the teachers' perception about supervision exercise call for more extensive studies on the perception of teachers about supervision exercise in Nigerian primary schools.

On the basis of the conflicting reports on supervision exercise in schools, this study sought to determine the following: Has the supervision exercise being carried out by LGEA supervisors enhanced the quality of instruction in primary schools? Has supervision exercise in primary encouraged individual teacher to work effectively towards achieving the objectives of primary school education? Has supervision exercise in primary schools ensured that each individual teacher within the school system performs the duties for which he or she was scheduled? What is the perception of classroom teachers about the operations of supervisory exercise being carried out by the LGEA

supervisors in the primary school system? How often do teachers prefer to be supervised? Are teachers' functions inhibited by the LGEA supervisor's presence or not? Are teachers satisfied with the current supervision practices being carried out by the LGEA supervisors? Should teachers get advance notification of classroom visits by the supervisors?

Research Questions

Specifically, in this study the researcher sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the general pattern of perception of the classroom teachers about supervision exercise in primary schools?
2. Is there any significant difference in the perception of the male classroom teachers and female classroom teachers about supervision exercise in primary schools?

The views expressed by these classroom teachers provide opportunity for the major stakeholders (classroom teachers, head teachers, LGEA supervisors, and the officials of the States' and Federal Ministries of Education) in primary school education to reflect on how supervision exercise being carried out by LGEA supervisors has fared. These views will help the State and Federal Ministries of Education to decide on how to strengthen supervision exercise in primary schools.

Method

Participants: The sample comprised 1258 (581 men, 677 women) classroom teachers drawn from Akinyele, Ona-Ara and Ibadan South East Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) of Oyo State, Nigeria. They were randomly drawn from 81 primary schools from the three LGEAs. The ages of the classroom teachers ranged between 24 and 51 years ($M = 28$, $SD = 2.26$). The teaching experience of the classroom teachers ranged between 5 and 21 years. All the participants hold the Nigerian National Certificate in Education, which is the minimum certificate for teaching at the primary school level in Nigeria.

Material: One instrument was used. This was a questionnaire titled "Supervision and Quality of Instruction in Primary Schools" (SQIPS). It was developed by the researcher. It was used to assess the perception of the classroom teachers who were sampled in this study. It consisted of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A sought response on demographic data, while Sections B and C sought the perception of the respondents on supervision exercise in primary schools. Section consisted of 15 items and each was placed on a 4-point response format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). All the items were positively stated. Items were scored as SA = 4, A = 3; D = 2, and SD = 1 (See appendix 1 for the questionnaire). Construct validity was ensured through factor analysis which yielded three components. This showed that all the items hanged together. The Cronbach Alpha was 0.89. Section C consisted of 10 items which was placed on a 2-point response format of Yes or No. However, to every response in this section, the teachers were requested to provide reasons for the option ticked.

Ten research assistants took part in the administration of the questionnaire. It took each respondent about 35 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The administration of the questionnaire took five working days in February, 2010. There was 100% rate of return. The data was analysed using frequency counts, mean and percentages. For the inferential statistics, t –test was used. In addition, Cohen's d was used to determine the effect size of teacher's gender on perception of supervision exercise. A probability level of 0.05 was adopted to account for Type I Error.

Results

The results are presented in the order in which the research question were posed.

Research Question One: What is the pattern of perception of classroom teachers about supervision exercise being carried out by the LGEA supervisors in primary schools?

Table 1 presents the frequency of occurrence and percentages of the pattern of response of the classroom teachers about supervision exercise.

Table 1: Pattern of perception of classroom teachers about supervision exercise

	Supervision exercise in primary schools	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	Engenders high quality teaching in the classroom.	285 (22.7)	573 (45.5)	336 (26.7)	64 (5.1)	2.86
2.	Encourages the use of teaching aids in the classroom.	255 (20.3)	635 (50.5)	306 (24.3)	62 (4.9)	2.86
3.	Encourages teachers to prepare adequately for their lessons.	284 (22.6)	542 (43.1)	309 (24.6)	123 (9.8)	2.79
4.	Brings about improved co-curricular activities in primary schools.	284 (22.6)	448 (35.6)	373 (29.7)	153 (12.2)	2.69
5.	Makes the teachers to be more conscious of their duties.	161 (12.8)	546 (43.4)	429 (34.1)	122 (9.7)	2.60
6.	Improves the academic achievement of pupils.	372 (29.6)	419 (33.3)	374 (29.7)	93 (7.4)	2.85
7.	Reduces the frequency of lateness among the teachers.	311 (24.7)	525 (41.7)	192 (15.3)	230 (18.3)	2.73
8.	Reduces the frequency of absenteeism among the teachers.	154 (12.2)	787 (62.6)	254 (20.2)	63 (5.0)	2.82
9.	Encourages teachers to write their lesson notes more frequently.	254 (20.2)	451 (35.9)	220 (17.5)	333 (26.4)	2.50
10.	Encourages teachers to be conversant with	193 (15.3)	552 (44.7)	250 (19.9)	263 (20.9)	2.54

	new techniques of teaching.					
11.	Makes the teachers to be more committed to the teaching profession.	220 (17.5)	726 (57.7)	312 (24.8)	---	2.93
12.	Helps in boosting the morale of teachers.	374 (29.7)	332 (26.4)	251 (20.0)	301 (23.9)	2.61
13.	Fosters cordial relationship between the teachers and the head teacher.	251 (20.0)	306 (24.3)	462 (36.7)	239 (19.0)	2.37
14.	Fosters cordial relationship between the teacher and the LGEA.	380 (30.2)	202 (16.1)	359 (28.5)	317 (25.2)	2.51

By collapsing strongly agree (SA) and agree (A) and taking 51.0% (i.e., a simple majority) as a bench mark, Table 1 shows that a fairly large size of the classroom teachers is favourably disposed to supervision exercise in primary schools. This observation is reflected in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. For example in item 1, out of 1258 respondents, 868 (68.2%) were of the opinion that supervision exercise engenders high quality teaching in the classroom while 400 (31.8%) were of the contrary opinion. However in items 13, 14, and 15, the percentage of respondents who were favourably disposed to supervision exercise was below the benchmark of 51%. For example in item 13, out of 1258 respondents 537 (44.3%) were of the opinion that supervision exercise in primary schools fosters cordial relationship between the teachers and the head teacher while 721 (55.7%) held contrary opinion. Table 1 also shows that the mean scores of the distribution of the items range between 2.37 and 2.93. Since the mid point of the responses is 2, the mean score value of each item also shows that the teachers are favorably disposed to supervision exercise in primary schools.

Table 2 presents the response of the teachers to questions on the need or otherwise for the notification of the teachers before supervision; whether or not their performances were inhibited or

enhanced by the supervisor's presence; whether or not they were satisfied with the current supervision practices being carried out by the LGEA supervisors; and whether or not the teachers get advance notification of classroom visits by the supervisors.

Table 2: Distribution of teachers' response on perception of supervision exercise

Questions	Responses	
	Yes	No
1. Are your functions as a teacher inhibited by the presence of LGEA supervisor in the classroom?	919 (73.1)	339 (26.9)
2. Are you satisfied with the current supervision practices the LGEA supervisors?	381 (30.3)	877 (69.7)
3. Do you wish for advance notification before your class is supervised?	860 (68.4)	398 (31.6)
4. Do LGEA supervisors hold post instructional discussion, on lessons observed, with you?	722 (57.4)	536 (42.6)
5. Would you want post instructional discussion on the lesson observed by the LGEA supervisors?	737 (58.6)	521 (41.4)
6. Does supervision exercise by LGEA supervisor of any benefit to you?	969 (77.0)	289 (23.0)

In question 1 of section C on the questionnaire, as shown in Table 2, the teachers were asked to indicate whether their normal activities in the classroom are inhibited by the presence of the supervisor in the classroom or not. Table 2 shows that the majority of the teachers (73.1%) indicated that their normal activities are not inhibited by the supervisor's presence in the classroom. Analysis of the reasons given by the teachers who indicated that their normal activities in the classroom are not inhibited by the presence of the supervisor in the classroom showed that they see the supervisors as colleagues who have come to contribute their quota towards maintaining the standard of education at the primary school level. These teachers also said that they teach in the usual way and at times may even forget that the supervisor is there. These teachers also indicated that supervision of instruction is sometimes done for report and record purposes, so they must show confidence when the supervisor is in the classroom.

Teachers who indicated that their normal activities in the classroom are inhibited by the supervisor's presence in the classroom were very few. As Table 2 shows, about 27% are in this category. The

reasons given were that the supervisor is a visitor or intruder in the teacher's domain, therefore the teacher may be inhibited. The mere presence of a visitor may affect the teacher. Pupils might be affected by the presence of the supervisor and this may affect the pupils and the teacher's performance.

In question 2, the teachers were asked to indicate whether they were satisfied with the current practices of the LGEA supervisors during supervision exercise at their schools. Table 2 shows that a fairly large size (69.7%) of the teachers sampled indicated that they are not satisfied with the current practices of the LGEA supervisors. Analysis of the reasons given by the teachers centred on the bossy attitude of the teachers. Some teachers believe that some of the LGEA supervisors usually come to their schools to witchhunt, intimidate and harass teachers especially those who are not in their political camps.

In question 3, the teachers were asked to indicate whether they are to be notified in advance before their lessons are supervised. Table 2 shows that a fairly large size (68.4%) of the teachers sampled indicated that they wish to be notified before they are supervised. A major reason provided by the teachers who wanted advance notification before supervision exercise centred on the need for thorough preparation for their lessons. Those who did not want advance notification explained that notification made those processes a farce because they would do the best in that particular lesson only. By not being notified, the teacher can teach as usual and the supervisor would then comment on the teachers' weaknesses and improve the teaching-learning process.

In question 4, the teachers were asked to indicate whether or not the LGEA supervisors hold post - instructional discussion with them during supervision exercise. Table 2 shows that (57.4%) of the teachers sampled indicated that LGEA supervisors usually hold post - instructional discussion with them after the supervision exercise.

In question 5, the teachers were asked to indicate whether or not they would wish the LGEA supervisor to hold post - instructional discussion with them. Table 2 shows that (58.6%) of the teachers that were sampled indicated that they would wish that the LGEA supervisor hold post instructional discussion with them. The teachers who preferred the discussion indicated that post-instruction discussion with the supervisor helps the teacher to know his/her weak points while the

good points are highlighted. The teacher would also know how he/she fared during that lesson. Also, such a discussion would enable the teacher to defend his/her choice of method of instruction and certain activities done by the pupils. In addition, the teacher can also learn from the constructive criticism and advice from the supervisor during the discussion. Teachers who preferred not to have discussions with their supervisors said so because they think it is waste of time to discuss what had happened; some teachers said that the discussions were usually done to highlight the weaknesses of the teachers only.

Lastly, in question 6, the teachers were asked to indicate whether supervision exercise being carried out by the LGEA supervisors was of any help to them. Twenty three per cent of the teachers who responded said it was not of any help to them because they were experienced as teachers and the supervisor could be less experienced. These teachers also said that they did not want supervision if it was done for record purposes only. They would not benefit from such supervisory activities. However, a considerable number of the teachers (77.0%) indicated that supervision of instruction is of great help to them because methods of instruction are improved, weaknesses are pointed out and good points highlighted. Also, it makes a teacher more resourceful, more competent and confident, more professional whilst simultaneously the learning process is improved at large.

Research Question Two: Is there any significant difference in the perception of male classroom teachers and female classroom teachers about supervision exercise in primary schools?

To answer this research question, the teachers' response to the items in the questionnaire was converted to summated rating scale. Table 2 presents the male and female classroom teachers' mean scores in the questionnaire which was administered on them. The table also shows the t - value and the effect size of gender on the perception of the teachers about supervision exercise in primary schools.

Table 2: Mean Score and t- test of classroom perception of supervision exercise

Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	T	P value	Cohen's d
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Male Teachers	581	43.57	6.94	1256	8.91	.000***	.50
Female Teachers	677	39.96	7.41				

Note: *** $p < .001$

From Table 2, on the average, male teachers had better perception of supervision exercise (Mean = 43.57; SD = 6.94) than their female colleagues (Mean = 39.96; SD = 7.41). The difference in the mean scores of the contrasting groups of pupils was statistically significant $t(1256) = 6.96$; $p < 0.05$. The effect size of .50 is moderate (see Cohen 1988).

Discussion

The findings of this study are in consonance with the results of Marshall (2005) and Ogunmodede (2007). These researchers found that major stakeholders in education were of the opinion that supervision of instruction activities in the school system is fundamental to ensuring that students are taught consistently and effectively that the established curriculum is introduced without major gaps, and that teachers receive the support they need to develop and enhance their professional skills. As the findings of this study suggest, classroom teachers who were sampled in this study were of the opinion that supervision exercise provided a means for ensuring that major content and skills in the curriculum were covered in each classroom at a pace appropriate for the educational level of the pupils. It also improves the academic standard of the pupils.

Although, the respondents were generally of the opinion that supervision is fundamental to ensuring the quality of instruction in schools, there was also the opinion that supervision exercise does not foster cordial relationship between the class teachers and LGEA supervisors, as well as between class teachers and head teachers. This was also observed by Adebola (2001) and Ugochuckwu (20001) who found that teachers, and head teachers do not see supervisors or inspectors as setting enough academic standards in schools and that inspectors sometimes present themselves as boss and fault finders.

The bossy attitude of the supervisors is likely responsible for the perception that teacher have about them. This is likely the reason why teachers were of the opinion that supervision exercise

has not fostered cordial relationship between the teachers and the LGEA supervisors.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the findings of this study, supervision exercise is necessary in order to enhance the quality of instruction in primary schools and more importantly to maintain standard in schools. It therefore implies that its tempo must not be allowed to wane. Government needs to sustain the supervision exercise in primary schools.

The findings of this study suggest that government at all levels should strengthen supervision exercise in schools. In order to strengthen supervision exercise and engender mutual confidence among the major stakeholders, all efforts must be geared towards the following: One, supervision exercise should be seen as a joint process among the classroom teachers, head teachers and LGEA supervisors. It should involve a lot of discussion and exchange of ideas among the major stakeholders, i.e. the teachers, the headmaster and the LGEA supervisors to find out which method works better. Two, supervision exercise should be based on human relations principle rather than the traditional master versus servant attitude. Three, supervision exercise should be seen as a way of boosting the moral of the teachers in doing what they do well and in correcting what they do not do well. The implication of this is that LGEA supervisors, the class teachers and the school head teachers must find ways of building mutual trust and love among themselves and more importantly see themselves as partners in progress. Opportunities for exchange of ideas among the teachers, the LGEA supervisor and between the head teachers and supervisors should be widened.

No matter how laudable the goals of supervision are, the environment in which the supervision takes place must be conducive for the exercise. More importantly, the stakeholders, i.e. the head teachers, class teachers and the LGEA supervisors, must be ready to accept the challenges associated with supervision in order to realize the objectives of the National Policy on Education.

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