



TEACHERS' ACADEMIC ROLES, TEXTBOOK SELECTION AND SCHOOL-PUBLIC RELATIONS TRIPARTITE TASKS IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION



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Abstract

The paper examined teacher's academic roles, textbook selection and school-public relation functions of any academic department. The paper considered these three function as vital tasks in school administration. The selection of textbooks requires a methodically thought-out criteria and theoretical framework that can aid effective instruction and school administration. The selection of textbooks should transcend all emotions and fallacies. Academic and curricular scope rather than political and economic considerations should form part of administration. No institute can exist in isolation of others. The fact is that the school is a social institution, which must be funded by the community. As a result, the school ought to move to the public for its continued existence. The resources a school needs can only be provided by the community to which the school belongs. The paper articulated a position on the title under discussion and x-rayed the ramifications of the trend, constraints and concerns of the subject matter.

Introduction

Academic departments have two functions- teaching and non-teaching roles. The roles academic departments play can be classified into academic and pastoral or custodian. The academic functions can be defined as those responsibilities that are directly related to classroom instruction. The custodial functions cover duties that protect the welfare of the staff and students and ensure discipline and good relationship in the school. These divisions are not mutually exclusive, as there exist some overlap of academic and pastoral functions. The purpose of separating them is to make functional analysis easier. The academic functions of a department are many and varied. To fully appreciate the enormity of non-teaching or custodian roles of an academic department, a delineation of the academic function is necessary. According to Ndu (1992), and Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1992), these function are seen as the department:

- Joins the chief executive in formulating and implementing school policies which may include setting standards of academic achievement and teachers' professional conduct.
- Helps in planning the school curriculum, advising on the syllabus of work for various classes and different subjects.
- Assists the chief executive in the assignment of teachers to subjects based on qualifications, experience and competence.
- Plans the school timetable and makes sure that there are no conflicts of time or in the use of classrooms, laboratories and the library.



- Advising the teachers in their departments on different methods of teaching their subjects, giving orientation to new staff and students in addition to giving demonstration lessons.
- Assists teachers in choosing and using appropriate instructional materials, including textbooks.
- Holds periodic meetings with teachers in their department in order to discuss their teaching problems and effectiveness as well as student's academic performance.
- Arranges and assists in conducting examinations, the grading of scripts and the compilation of examination result.
- writes reports on staff and students on behalf of the chief executive or for the attention and necessary action of the latter.
- Compiles and keeps academic records of both staff and students in the department.

The Non-Teaching or Custodian Functions of Academic Department

Some writes (Emenyonu 1994, Igwe 1997, and Ukeje 1992) have theorized on the functions an academic department ought to carry out. These authors agree with Nwagwu (1989) that a department has the following non-teaching or custodial functions to perform:

- General supervision of the work of students and teachers in the department
- Provisions of guidance and counseling for the staff and students. Attending to organizational matters and ensuring proper discipline and good conduct among staff and students. holding meetings, interviews or discussions with parents on the academic progress and problems of the their children as well as the students personal needs and conduct.
- Setting interpersonal conflicts, which may be between teachers, students or teacher and students.
- Taking care of sick students, and ensuring that academic work does not suffer
- Helping to publicize the program, progress and problem of the department in order to obtain public moral and material supports from the community.
- Protecting school plants and facilities in the department.
- Providing strong leadership
- Maintaining discipline and order
- Coordinating departmental students' association activities

Engaging in follow-up activities.

The non-teaching or pastoral functions of a department are aimed at providing a favorable environment for the pursuit of academic affairs of the school. These functions therefore centre on the general welfare of the staff and students in the department.

Efficient Textbooks Selection – A Complication Issue in School Administration

The selection of textbooks for teachers and learners is an important function of the department. Textbook is an important curriculum material. Thus, in Tyler's curriculum planning model, the next question after the educational purposes is the questions – "What educational experiences or contents can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?"

(Urevbu 1999:20). Educational planners and administrators recognize that textbooks constitute the most valuable instruction tools in the hands of a teacher. Textbooks are a part of the learning experiences, which can make learner contemplate, question, think, judge and discuss curricula contents and experiences. Presently there seems to be consistently unscientific methods in selecting textbooks. Many of the books are not regularly updated to meet current demands, environment and technology. Identifying the qualities that make a text easy or hard to read is a problem of great social importance. This is what makes the selection of textbooks a not too easy text before any educational administrator. There are credible issues, trends and constraints in textbook selection. Howbeit, textbooks have been useful if well selected and utilized as a source or material for curriculum planning and for the teachers to give his knowledge some leverage towards teaching his students.

Successful School-Public Relations- A Critical Cog in School Administration

The school has public relations roles. It does not exist in isolation but forms part of the wider society in which it is structured to help control and guide the behaviour of its members. The most



important function of the school is the transmission of knowledge, attitude, values, skills beliefs, mores and norms that are culturally relevant or current to be strengthened through the curriculum, as a balance of opinion curriculum experts is more in favour of encouraging the study of certain aspects of the community life in the school curriculum- for instance, the study of history, citizenship, geography, culture and the school religion. Also, working in partnership, the school compound is fenced, erosion is controlled, dilapidated building is renovated and halls, dormitories, classroom blocks, libraries and laboratories are built.

To achieve these points, academic departments rise beyond the democratic or transactional leadership style and utilize the situational in their relationships with community and as they:
Attend various meetings on behalf of the school especially where delegation is not possible
Encourage Inspectors and Board of Governors to meet and communicates with parents and,
Involve parents in the work of the school.

According to Ukeje; Akabogu and Ndu (1992), the school achieves these relations through certain agents: Parent-Teachers Association, organizing conferences, through reports and bulletin and organizing public entertainments (plays, concerts, exhibition, demonstration, symposia and the mass media). By the activities of these media, the community provides some physical facilities from the community may include the provision of church halls, water supply, hospitals, on the other hand, provides for the community its classrooms, halls for adult education and a wide variety of human and physical resources that should be tapped for the enrichment of the community life. This partnership is seen when speakers (from the community) with specific competence are asked to address the student body.

Schools located in the urban areas seem to benefit more from the bounty of the PTA. By their cosmopolitan nature, urban areas are dominated by enlightened citizens who know and appreciate the value of teaching resources and are thus ready to cooperate with the schools in providing effective resources. Okoye (2000) investigated the role of PTA in secondary schools administration in Anambra State and reported that the respondents perceive regular financial support, provision of school furniture and the award of prizes and scholarships as the major roles of the PTA. The public and the school collectively influence and shape the behaviour of the youth. For this reason, both the school and the community should realized the need for cooperation and mutual understanding. After all, the child in the school is the asset of the community.

Textbooks Selection and School-Public Relations Functions; Issues in Juxtaposition

Critics of textbook selection in our school argue that political rather than academic consideration underpinned the motives for selecting textbooks. The proponents of this view hold that the choice and selection of textbooks are influenced by diverse political groups – Government decision-making leadership, politicians, professionals, subject associations, trade unions and publishers who use undue influence to force in the selection of a particular textbook. The result is that no credible, valid and reliable criteria are used. What is usually paramount is the winner takes all strategy.

Political considerations are not likely to produce a good textbook on the desks of students. Economic and academic considerations are necessary. The question to ask from the economic viewpoint is –Should all students be made to have all the available textbooks at the present rising prices? Of course, the answer is simple- no parent in the present rising present socio-economic milieus can afford to place on his ward's table all the available textbooks in a given range of subject areas. The way out is through appropriate selection process. According to Nwakoby (1997), in the selection process, academic considerations should override political and economic justifications. According to her, this is necessary because:

Production quality has deteriorated

Publishers hardly revise their texts when advised and it becomes important that texts when advised and it becomes important that texts are closely scrutinized for content, currency and editing flaws.



Panel reports have continued to show preference for study guides and examination aids even when these are specifically disqualified as textbooks.

Some panels submit reports that it becomes necessary to repeat their work.

Again, the use of textbooks for planning a curriculum has been variously criticized for limiting the use of the curriculum. According to Olaitan and Ali (1997:29) “the use of textbooks often reduces the use of the curriculum because some teachers will never go beyond areas of the book dealing with the curriculum contents”. Others hold the view that the use of textbook makes some teachers lazier because they will never prepare their lesson outside what the book contains. Thus, the selection of textbooks ‘kills’ the resourcefulness of teachers and the ability to read wider for knowledge and skills. Another school of thought posits that because textbooks are costly and will soon become obsolete and the calling for a change, selecting a particular book is not necessary. This is common among books dealing with science and technology.

Given the notoriety of “handouts” in our educational system, one wonders whether publishing and selecting appropriate textbooks are not necessary. Most handout material are “experimental materials” that have not received final refinement and acceptance. Under this circumstance, textbooks are better than a handout or no material at all. The real issue then is given the paucity of foreign and domestic textbooks, is there any need for textbook selection? No matter the direction of thought, schooling entails reading, reading presupposes the use of textbooks, and the use of textbooks is dependent on articulate selection of textbooks. What then are the criteria, the guideposts and the trends?

Like the selection of textbooks, the school-public relation is important. Arguments are raging on the necessity for school-community partnership. For instance, a school of thought feels that schools should be autonomous in management, control and funding while another school feels that the schools cannot do it alone. To the latter, a partnership is necessary. It is also held that the school does not need the partnership of religious bodies to maintain discipline, curb secret cult, promote excellence and students’ performance. On the other side, schools owned by religious organization feel that government intervention is not necessary since government has no business with training people in morality and behaviour. On the contrary, some people believe that only government can effectively fund schools, provide adequate quantity and quality of teachers, build classrooms, provide machines, equipment and facilities as education is a social service. Teachers are questioning the relevance of their association with parents even as neither of the two asks for it. They see the association as unnecessary and an outfit for making some parents richer and more powerful.

The question is- can’t the school teach the contents of the curriculum without regard to the community? Must its public influence what the school does? Again, do these public have the same orientation as the school? The truth is that the school and the community live in a symbiotic and complementary manner. For instance, while the school prepares and allocates people to positions in the society, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) provides effective link between the home and the school, gives moral and financial support to the school, and helps the school to achieve high standards and excellence in academic and discipline issues.

One school of thought posits that given the increasing cost of education, explosion of students enrolment, the cost of maintaining staff and students; and that given the influence of indiscipline and technology, a school-community relation is appropriate (Obi, 2000:112). The understanding here is that a cooperative effort by the school and community is more likely to achieve positive results. After all, the school is a social institution and according to Igwe (1997) education is the united concern of a people for the right upbringing of its children and the improvement of its national life. However, education is never free, somebody always has to pay for it.

Textbooks Selection and School-Public Relations Functions: The Concern and the Reality

The selection of textbooks in our schools, today, lacks any laid principles as books are used without regard to content, relevance, the age and class of learners. The result is that no effective teaching and learning is taking place. Often, economic considerations rather than academic objectives over-ride the choice of textbooks. Teachers are more concerned with textbooks that can give them the maximum profit-the quality of the book is not important. Again, Government imposes textbooks on schools



irrespective of quality and relevance. Political and other considerations are put in place in recommending textbooks. Thus, the mere fact that one has some relationship with the decision makers makes his book relevant and appropriate for use. Any quality textbook should have relevance and bearing with curriculum. With economic, political and other mundane considerations, one wonders whether the curriculum is ever taken into account.

Again, many teachers in an attempt to publish and not perish print anything in the name of textbook. Such books lack the thoroughness, the pedagogy, the professional and academic input characteristic of good textbooks. Handouts are the order of the day in most academic institutions. Teachers write and sell anything in the name of handouts. There are guidelines for writing effective handout

A handout is not and cannot be a textbook. In most institutions, the heads are not in control of the selection of textbooks. There is no organized and scientific method of selection of textbooks hence many books may be in use at the same time in the same class. The choice of textbooks should consider the implication of cost and appropriateness.

Another important concern in the selection of textbooks is the absence of books with local background and content. Most textbooks in our schools have foreign or exotic background and relevance, hence effective teaching and learning is hardly achieved. As these books are imported, the costs are enormous, sometimes above what the average Nigerian can afford. The consequence is that not many can buy and not many can learn. Even those who can buy, learn about foreign countries and their background and little of our socio-cultural setting. The selection of textbooks must develop credible criteria- these are: relevance, coverage of syllabus, children's age and background, currency of content, style of presentation, production quality and efficient editing and cost. The selection of textbooks is neither a political factor nor an economic consideration.

Also, school-community relation is an important function of any worthwhile academic environment. This is because the school benefits from such relationship in terms of resources. Religious groups and civic organizations like the age grades, clubs and associations, parents and similar fraternities help the school to provide effective discipline as well as needed resources. Any school without effective relationship with the community stands to loose. Again, the school cannot maintain discipline without the input of the parents and guardians of the students under its care. The church is known to instill moral and ethical behavior among the youths and any school, which does not relate with the church, may not have its students sound in character and learning.

The rate of indiscipline in our schools may not be unconnected with the take-over of schools by government which provided for minimal school-community relations. The result is what we see- cultism, truancy, absenteeism, corruption, and general indiscipline in the school. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981), education is an expressive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of Government for a successful implementation of the educational programmes. Thus, the financing of education is a joint responsibility of the Federal, State and Local Governments. In this connection, the policy continues, government welcomes and encourages the participation of local communities, individuals and other organization. Many schools do not engage the required skills in relating with their public and thus loose all the benefits building of sports fields, provision of accommodation, provision of resource persons, the donation of trophies and award of scholarship to staff and students.

Constraints to Effective Textbook Selection and Scholar-Public-Relations Function

The selection of textbooks is a major responsibility which has not received due attention. The problem is that in some professional areas, there are no sufficient books to select from. The result is that what is available is adopted without questions. Added to this is the high cost of publication. An author who is in the white-collar job needs to save for any years before publishing. Even with the "publish or perish syndrome" it is still not easy for many lecturers to publish. Those who co-author books find it difficult to get the fund and resource materials needed for publication.

There is absence of workshops and seminar on how to select textbooks. This situation is compounded by the instability of official policy statement on book selection procedure. Again, even



where the textbooks are available, those who select the textbooks in a specialized area may have nothing to do with the area or are themselves not authors. When non-authors select books, the effect is obvious-grace show of emotionality, ignorance and lack of competence. There is absence of workable criteria for selecting textbooks in Nigerian schools.

Akin to the issues surrounding the selection of textbooks in our schools, are the problems of school-public-relation. Not all schools appreciate the potentials of school-community relations. The outcome is that such school live in isolation of its publics. One identifiable constraint in school-community relation is the leadership qualities which manifest in the achievement of a school. Usually, a head of an institution without modern leadership traits and styles may not harness the giants of school-community relations. A leader who lacks effective human relations values cannot attract the community. Even where was on before his tenure, such relation diminish with time.

Again, local politics, hostile attitudes, indifference or lack of cooperation on the part of the teaching staff and the publics can affect the relationship with the school. Again, parents perceive the preparation and equipment of students for upward social mobility and access to the world of work as the main function of the school. Thus, they object to school teaching the students what they (the parent) know already. As a result farming and local craft, which they practice and know, do not require emphases on the curriculum. This can account for the low enrolment of students in Agriculture and some local craft related courses in schools. Another constraint arises from the composition and attitude of school teachers in general. In many big urban centers the teachers may come from different tribes and language groups. In such situations, the no-indigenous teacher may well be respected but not regarded as “one of us” and will thus be at a disadvantage in trying to forge close link between his school and the community.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The selection of textbooks is an essential academic responsibility. A number of criteria are involved and differing according to area of specialization. As a result, proper planning and efficient execution are needed if quality textbooks should be selected. At times, academic considerations should override economic and political factors. Also, the age of the learner, the suitability of the book, the appropriateness of language, use of cultural background and the interest of the learner should be paramount in the consideration of a textbook. There should be a mutual interplay of the roles of authors, publishers and schools in choosing a textbook. To reduce the paucity of books, government and organizations should get interested in sponsoring book publications in addition to significantly subsidizing the cost of publishing books. The need for regular workshop and seminar on textbook publication and selection is over-due.

The school is an institution created by society for its own continual existence. Hence, the school does not exist in isolation but form part of the wider society in which it is located. The purpose of school-community relations is not only for growth but also for the solution of incidental problems. The schools and community benefits from such partnership in terms of provision of physical facilities, making economic contributions, providing general services and help, teaching and research, knowledge and cultural aspect.

Irrespective of the school setting, every leader has to coordinate community efforts in pursuing the school’s primary goals and as such must relevant decisions, in initiating ideas, in inspiring the community to act and in understanding and analyzing problem associated with school-community relations and findings solutions to them. In doing so the head of instruction, ought to radiate some leadership qualities – technical skills, traits of personality and the ability to work with people and make people feel important.

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