

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FACILITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The study examined the challenges encountered by school principals in the management and maintenance of school facilities and measures to be adopted to enhance maintenance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State. Survey research design was adopted in the conduct of the study. Two research questions guided the study. A sample of 180 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling technique from a population of 261 Principals. A researcher developed questionnaire was used to collect data. Mean scores were used for data analysis. The findings of the study include; inadequate time for supervision, poor power supply, negative attitudes of the staff, large student population, poor record keeping, inadequate training of the staff, poor funding among others were the challenges encountered by school principals in the management and maintenance of school facilities. Measures to be adopted to enhance maintenance of the school facilities identified include; erosion control, regular supervision, keeping inventories of material resources and proper waste management. Based on the findings, recommendations made include; increased funding, regular supervision, motivation of teachers and training of personals on maintenance techniques.

Keywords: Management, Maintenance, School facilities and Challenges

Introduction

Education plays vital role in the sustainable development of any nation. It has been identified as veritable instrument for socio-economic, cultural and political transformation. Education therefore should be a top priority in the nation's developmental agenda. It is the key to the acquisition of appropriate skills for the development of physical, mental and social abilities which help an individual to be useful and contribute fruitfully to the society. National policy on education (2013) stipulated among other things that secondary education in Nigeria should provide high quality training and equip students to live effective life in the society. These objectives of secondary education however cannot be achieved without adequate human and material resources. Apart from human resources, adequate attention to school physical facilities or school plant is needed to enhance effective teaching and learning activities in schools.

School plant include all the resources that define the learning environment of the school. Mgbodile (2014), defined school plant as the physical expression of the school programmes and activities. School plants can be categorized into: landscape, security, laboratory, electric, sports, water, transport, instructional and building facilities (Yusuf, 2013).

School physical facilities require a constant programme of maintenance. Campbell (2010), pointed out that equipment wear out and must be replaced. Paints deteriorate and must be replaced. Roofs eventually leak and require repairs. Vehicles break down and they must be repaired. A lot more other examples could be given. Most maintenance jobs require skilled craftsmen including plumbers, painters, electricians, masons, roofers and many other skilled and non-skilled workers.

The objective of school plant management and maintenance is to keep school facilities in the conditions that will meet the requirements of the educational programmes. In order to achieve the objectives of school facilities' maintenance, Corbally (2012) suggests that maintenance should include painting, repairs, replacement of damaged chairs etc. The first step in maintaining physical facilities in schools should be to ensure that there is periodic and systematic checks of facilities in order to identify areas that need repair.

Management is the process of utilizing human and material resources to achieve specified goals and objectives. Babarinde (2002) opines that management is the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts and it is accomplished by performing the function of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling of the day to day running of an organization. Maintenance of school facilities is the keeping of the school facilities as near their original state conditions to meet the requirements of the educational programmes, (Ofojebe, 2013).

Obi (2016) observed that the range of material resources available in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria have increased in the recent times. The Principals confirmed that the state government assisted the schools to procure more material resources and renovated some facilities to enhance teaching and learning activities. The great boost given to school plant in the state has resulted in improved academic achievements of secondary school students in national examinations.

However, availability and application of these facilities to teaching and learning activities can only be sustained through adequate management and maintenance culture. Lack of maintenance culture has been one of the issues plaguing Nigeria as a nation. It seems to be permeating nooks and crannies of the system. At the school level also, the school Principals seem to be facing challenges of adequate management and maintenance of school plants. Such challenges may include poor quality of materials supplied, lack of skilled workmen, effect of harsh weather, theft, adequate materials for preservation, poor storage system, poor handling, lack of time for supervision, inadequate funding.

Principals of schools as primary leaders in the school building, are saddled with interwoven responsibilities which require managerial strategies to enhance effectiveness towards achieving educational goals. They are the executive heads of secondary schools in Nigeria. Their administrative functions include; implementation of educational programmes at the school level, management of human and material resources, keep school records, manage funds, supervise facilities and create conducive environment for

teaching and learning activities. The management and maintenance of the school plant should be part of the regular administrative functions of the school heads. It is an important duty that should not be overlooked because much capital has been invested in the procurement by the government and the school to some extent. Maintenance of the school facilities is also necessary for the health of the staff and students who use them. Maintenance strategies to be adopted by the school would depend on many factors such as; school location, weather conditions, soil factors, rate of usage and human resources. Strategies such as regular inspection, use of preventive chemicals, adequate storage system, use of cleaners, technicians, refurbishing of damaged facilities could be useful in the maintenance of school facilities.

Experience however has shown that provision of school facilities do not necessarily amount to proper management and maintenance in the schools. There is the need therefore to have efficient maintenance system in the schools to ensure sustainability of school facilities. It is against this background that the study was designed to investigate the challenges school principals encounter in the management and maintenance of the school facilities in Anambra State, and to identify measures that can be adopted to achieve the desired goals.

Purpose of the Study

Purpose of the study, was to determine the challenges facing school principals in managing and maintaining school facilities in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Specifically the Study:

1. Identified the challenges encountered by school principals in the management and maintenance of the school physical facilities.
2. Examined measures that can be adopted to ensure maintenance of the school facilities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the challenges encountered by school principals in the management and maintenance of school facilities.
2. What measures can be adopted for effective management and maintenance of the school facilities

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. Nworgu 2015, defined survey design as a method of obtaining data, and describing the characteristics features or facts about a given population. The design was adopted because the study gathered opinions on challenges encountered by school principals in the management and maintenance of the school plant.

The population of the study comprised all the 261 principals in the 261 public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The state is located in the South East geographical area and it is divided into six education zones namely; Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha. The sample used for the study was 180 Principals selected using

stratified random sampling techniques. Stratification was based on location, in order to reflect the local government areas in each zone. 30 schools were selected from each zone giving a total of 180 principals.

The instrument for data collection was the researcher-developed questionnaire. Direct observation of the school facilities was also made in the selected schools. The instrument had three sections, A, B and C. Section “A” contained information on personal data of the respondents, section “B” had 18 items on the challenges encountered by school principals in the management and maintenance of the school plant while section C had 12 items on measures to be adopted to ensure maintenance of school facilities. The instrument has a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4 points), Agree (A = 3 point), Disagree (D = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1 points). The instrument was validated by three experts, two in Educational management and one in measurement and evaluation from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria. The corrections and modifications in content and language clarity made were incorporated in the final copies of the instrument used for the study.

The reliability of the instrument was established using 20 principals form Enugu State, Nigeria. The estimated internal consistency computed using cronbach Alpha was 0.80 which was considered high enough for the study. The instrument was administered to the respondents on a face to face personal contacts with the help of two research assistants. The research questions were answered using mean scores. An item with mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted while item with a mean score of less than 2.50 was rejected.

Results

Table 1: Mean (X) scores rating on the challenges limiting management and maintenance of school physical facilities by the principals.

| S/N | Item description | Mean | Decision |
|-----|--|------|----------|
| 1 | Supply of sub-standard materials by the government | 2.1 | Reject |
| 2 | Inadequate time for routine check | 3.2 | Accept |
| 3 | Inadequate power supply to the school | 3.56 | Accept |
| 4 | Poor morale of the staff towards maintenance culture | 2.62 | Accept |
| 5 | Inadequate space for storage of materials | 1.98 | Reject |
| 6 | Inadequate number of skilled workers for handling some materials | 2.52 | Accept |
| 7 | Inadequate funding | 3.46 | Accept |
| 8 | Harsh weather conditions | 1.76 | Reject |
| 9 | Non-availability of insulated storage facilities | 2.12 | Reject |
| 10 | Infestation of ants and rodents | 1.76 | Reject |
| 11 | Pressure on the usage of materials due to large student population | 2.78 | Accept |
| 12 | Lack of modern equipment | 2.40 | Reject |
| 13 | Improper handling of some materials by student | 3.42 | Accept |
| 14 | Non recruitment of personnel to the need areas | 2.58 | Accept |
| 15 | Negative activities of the community members | 1.68 | Reject |
| 16 | Poor location of the school due to politicization of education | 2.22 | Reject |
| 17 | Inadequate records of damages in the school | 2.65 | Accept |

- 18 Inadequate in-service training of the staff on maintenance techniques. 3.24 Accept

Findings from table 1 shows that items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 17 and 18 which fall between the ranges of 2.52 – 3.56 which is above the acceptance region of 2.50, indicated that all the items are accepted as challenges encountered in the management and maintenance of school facilities in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Table 1 also shows that items 1, 5, 8, 9, 10 and 12 had mean scores 1.76 – 2.40 and are below the acceptance level.

Table 2

Measures to be adopted to ensure maintenance of school facilities

| S/N | Item description | Mean | Decision |
|-----|---|------|----------|
| 1 | Planting trees to check erosion | 2.95 | Accept |
| 2 | Keeping inventories of school facilities | 3.12 | Accept |
| 3 | Regular inspection of school facilities | 3.25 | Accept |
| 4 | Maintaining registers for damages and repairs | 3.22 | Accept |
| 5 | Training personals on specific maintenance techniques | 2.78 | Accept |
| 6 | Regular sweeping and cleaning | 3.00 | Accept |
| 7 | Routine cutting of grasses | 3.26 | Accept |
| 8 | Proper waste management in the school | 3.45 | Accept |
| 9 | Routine fumigation to control pests | 3.61 | Accept |
| 10 | Installing fire extinguisher gadgets | 3.61 | Accept |
| 11 | Regular checks on the school vehicles | 3.46 | Accept |
| 12 | Time table for repairs of damaged facilities | 3.22 | Accept |

Table 2 revealed that items 1 – 12 with mean ratings ranging from 2.78 – 3.61 are above the acceptance region, indicating that all the measures were considered important in the maintenance of school facilities by the Principals.

Discussion

Findings of the study shows that the major challenges encountered by school principals in Anambra State, Nigeria include: inadequate time for routine check and supervision on the facilities, poor power supply, negative attitudes of the staff towards maintenance culture, inadequate funding, large student population, inadequate number of skilled workers, improper handling of the facilities by students, non- recruitment of personals in the need areas, inadequate records of damages in the school and inadequate on-the job training of the staff on maintenance techniques. This implies that the administrative stress on the school principals allows little or no room for regular supervision and routine check on the school facilities, which is in line with the observations of Ayodele (2002). Lack of motivation which usually results in low teachers' morale is a militating factor toward effective maintenance of school facilities. Lack of motivation of teachers has negative influence on teachers' job performance Okonkwo (2013).

Inadequate power supply is a challenge militating against management and maintenance of school facilities as indicated in table 1. Consequently, preservation and storage of consumables for practical lessons in schools would be difficult. Poor funding also is a limiting factor. The finding justified the position of Obi (2018) who noted that

insufficient funding to schools possess serious challenge to school administration in Anambra state. It was also observed that large student population exert pressure on the limited facilities which would lead to frequent need for repairs. Other factors observed to be militating against effective maintenance of school facilities include: improper handling of the facilities by the students, inadequate number of skilled workers, poor records of damages in the school non-recruitment of personals and inadequate training of the staff on maintenance techniques. The study also identified that; lack of storage facilities, harsh weather, infestation of pests, lack of modern equipment and supply of substandard materials do not constitute a challenge in the maintenance of school facilities. Measures accepted by Principals to be adopted in the maintenance of school facilities include: planting of trees to check erosion, keeping inventories of facilities, regular inspection, keeping registers for damages and repairs, training personals on maintenance techniques, regular cleaning, proper waste management, routine fumigation, installation of fire extinguisher and regular check on school vehicles. This finding is in line with the recommendation of Tanner (2009) who noted that the quality of education that the children receive bears direct relevance to the overall atmosphere in which the learning takes place. In addition keeping the inventories of school facilities will afford the Principals and Inspectors the basis for objective evaluation. Campbell (2010) rightly posited that poorly kept records provide a distorted and misleading picture of a school.

Conclusion

As a result of the present economic meltdown in the country, adequate number and types of basic school facilities cannot be provided in the schools, it is therefore imperative that school administrators should imbibe and propagate good maintenance culture to achieve the desired goals. Essentially application of measures such as; control of erosion, proper waste management, routine fumigation and regular cleaning among others will enhance management and maintenance of school facilities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. The government should increase allocation of financial resources to the schools to encourage improved maintenance of the school facilities.
2. The government and the school management should encourage the training of personnel in specific maintenance techniques.
3. The school heads should adopt regular supervision of schools' human and material resources to reduce damages and apply measures that enhance effective management and maintenance of material resources.
4. Teachers and students should be adequately motivated to key into the program of effective management and maintenance of the school facilities.

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