The Changing Role of School Leadership and Teacher Capacity Building in Teaching and Learning

Chinelo O. Duze

Department of Educational Administration & Policy Studies
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.

The changing role of school leadership in today’s global world and the challenging roles of the classroom teacher put a greater demand on teacher capacity building as the school’s core business is teaching and learning. The accomplishment of educational goals and objectives depends highly on teachers who are the prime movers in the implementation of curriculum and teaching/learning. To ensure teacher success and desired learning outcomes thus creating effective schools, the school principal has an enormous responsibility as his role as organization manager/administrator focusing largely on technical aspects is changing globally towards greater instructional leadership. The principal therefore, has a big opportunity to develop teacher capacity to thrive in teaching/learning reformation and innovation to attain current educational demands. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to highlight and emphasize the absolute need for continuous learning and development of principals and teachers to effectively and efficiently fulfill their roles in schools. This will be especially beneficial to school administrators, professional teachers, students, and other stakeholders in Education and Human Resources Development.

Keywords: teacher, development, principal, leadership role

INTRODUCTION
The main drivers of successful teaching and learning are teachers. Hence, quality teachers who can perform their responsibilities with great commitment are prerequisites for successful and excellent education. Quality curriculum implemented through effective instruction should ensure successful teaching and learning in schools. This requires that all activities and resources in schools should be optimized to ensure that teaching and learning are implemented effectively (Omar et al., 2011; Grigsby et al., 2010; Duze, 2009a; Hill, 1990; Porter and Brophy, 1988). Goodwin (2010) identified at least three new norms that are currently influencing the education system. The first, are classrooms that are becoming more and more diverse, almost regardless of location; the second, is that teachers can expect to work alongside colleagues who have not been recruited locally, or they themselves may be searching for regional or international teaching jobs; and the third, is that teachers will be instructing children who are not only diverse in culture, knowledge and skills but may enter the classroom with very unique and challenging needs. This puts a demand on teachers’ capacity to effectively handle the classrooms of today as well the roles of school principals as effective instructional leaders.

According to Omar et al., (2011), the role of teachers will continue to develop in tandem with the current developments in the world of education because education is a social phenomenon that is dynamic and often subjected to changes and innovations in the larger society. These changes and innovations are occurring in curriculum diversifications and pedagogic practices, and, for the educational system to survive and be equally current, it needs to keep in step with these. In this globalization era, marked by its borderless world through information and communication technology, this change becomes more prominent. These changes have created new needs in knowledge, science and technology, changed the trend and profile of students, and modified the role and function of schools making them more challenging than before. Indeed, the globalization era has changed the teaching profession landscape and this reality needs to be accepted not only by teachers and trainee teachers but also by all school administrators (Omar et al., 2011; Duze, 2009b). Consequently, today’s classroom environment and student and teacher behaviours are very different from what they used to be some decades back. The effect of rapid and continuous accessibility to technology and innovation has changed the learning needs of students the world over. This is further aggravated by various demands from parents and stakeholders who are seeking education excellence. This phenomenon demands that teachers are always alert and involved in the continuous development process to master the latest knowledge, skills and competencies required to match the emerging changes and innovations. It therefore becomes necessary that teachers must possess the ability and capability to handle these changes to ensure their roles and functions remain relevant in schools (Omar et al., 2011; Duze, 2009b; Stoll and Fink, 1996). With
the innovations and sophistications in information and communication technology in education, the need to continuously build and rebuild teacher capacity in teaching and learning becomes very pertinent.

Serving teachers usually undergo pre-service teacher training before recruitment. Such mandatory training for pre-service teachers is done by university faculties of education and schools/colleges of education. Pre-service training is an early teacher-preparation process in knowledge and skills that will become pre-requisites for a teaching career. The trainee-teacher must be able to translate and transform the theories, knowledge, and skills into practice on graduation. If he must remain current in the classroom, then his education must not end with the pre-service training (Omar et al. 2011). Undoubtedly, continuous learning and development is a necessary requirement for every individual teacher because teachers who fail to continue learning after their pre-service training will fail to fulfill their roles effectively. Their ability to synthesize content with pedagogy and technology to effectively generate current pedagogical-technological-content knowledge will definitely be limited. Also, their creativity would fade and teaching would become dull and boring while the demands for change in curriculum and teaching would not be fulfilled. They further argued that since teachers were more inclined towards using pedagogical reasoning and actions that are technical rather than reflective, the most unfortunate outcome would be that teachers become prisoners of their own experience. This is the tendency to repeat technically, year after year, the same experience, approach, knowledge and skills acquired and practiced at the beginning of their careers without reflecting and innovating their teaching methods based on current changes and developments (Omar et al., 2011). The result, according to them, is that these teachers would be unable to produce students who are creative, critical and innovative even when curricular changes had been made to match the demands of the day. The implication is that change in curriculum without corresponding change in the attitude of teachers who are implementers and assessors of curriculum would not bring about meaningful educational innovation (Omar et al., 2011; Duze, 2011; Stoll and Fink, 1996). Gordon (2009) posits that a negative attitude to change is a phenomenon dominant among teachers who are less involved in the process of continuous development while Shulmen (1987) emphasizes that serving teachers need continuous development in strategic knowledge to confront troublesome, ambiguous teaching situations and build wisdom of practice. In essence, continuous teacher development is a strategy to update and enhance teacher knowledge, skills and competencies and to sustain and improve commitment. This will in turn improve teaching and learning and enhance students’ success in schools. The question is, who is in the best position to handle this role and responsibility? Should this be handled by teachers through the practice of self-directed individual and/or group learning or should the role of school principals involve a paradigm shift from being largely an administrator/manager to being more of an instructional leader? It was in answering these questions that the issues of teacher leaders and establishment of continuous and effective teacher learning environment/culture through effective instructional leadership were explored.

The Changing Role of School Leadership

It is commonly said that the school principal wears many hats being manager, administrator, instructional leader and curriculum leader at different points in the day. His daily activity is a balancing act of having to juggle between these various roles. Often times, observers say that more attention is accorded to managerial and administrative tasks at the expense of instructional supervision. Instructional leadership as alleged was usually relegated to others lower in the hierarchy even though the core business of the school is teaching and learning. Thus for decades, debates have been on-going regarding the curriculum and instructional leadership roles of the principal. Parkay et al. (2010) posit that principal is the individual best positioned within the school to evaluate the curriculum and evaluation process. School leadership should change from being too focused on managerial duties to curriculum and instruction. Hellinger (2005) argues that the emphasis on technical aspect should be in balance with the instructional aspect and strictly requiring principals to be deeply engaged in the school instructional programmes to ensure that teachers implement effective teaching and learning. Jenkins (2009) warns that if principals are to take their role of instructional leadership seriously, they must free themselves from bureaucratic administrative tasks and direct their efforts more at improving teaching and learning through proactive instructional supervision.

The role of instructional leadership for school principals however, is a relatively new concept of the early 1980s which called for a shift of emphasis from principals being managers or administrators to instructional leaders. This shift was influenced largely by research which found that effective schools usually had principals who stressed the importance of instructional leadership (Carter and Klotz, 1990). Due to the current reforms in schools all over the globe, principals are held more accountable for student level of success making school leadership even more critical (Levine, 2005). While it is professionally agreed by most researchers that instructional leadership is critical in the realization of effective schools, it is however, seldom practiced (Stronge, 1988; Fullan, 1991; Phillips, 2003; Grigsby et al., 2010). For instance, Stronge
most principals, only one tenth was allocated to instructional leadership while Fullan (1991) and Flath (1989) gave some of the reasons for non-performance as lack of training, time constraint, too much paper work, and community perception regarding the role of school principals as more manager/administrator-inclined. Phillips (2003) observed that the trend was towards insisting that principals assume the prominent role of instructional leaders but noted it would be a formidable task convincing principals to relinquish their cherished image as manager-administrators and take on the role of mere instructional leaders. Generally, principals do not see themselves as instructional leaders and many believe that anything that has to do with teaching and learning is best assigned to teachers (Omar et al., 2011).

Grigsby et al., (2010) found that the level of change in instructional leadership experiences had not been fully achieved even though there had been an increase in the accountability for principals. Only elementary school principals in their study provided evidence about more contemporary philosophies of leadership in curriculum and instruction and exhibited a better balance of managerial and instructional leadership at this level. Middle school principals were slow in moving in that direction while high school principals were not fully into the mode of instructional leadership (Omar et al., 2011). This not-withstanding, instructional leadership has come to stay with increasing importance placed on academic standards and the need for schools to be accountable.

**Instructional Leadership and Teacher Continuous Development**

Instructional leadership differs from that of a school administrator or manager in different ways. They are those actions that a principal takes or delegates to others with keen commitment to promote growth in student learning. He makes instructional quality the top priority of the school and endeavours to bring that vision to realization. School principals who pride themselves as administrators/managers are too preoccupied in dealing with strictly administrative/managerial duties compared to principals who are instructional leaders (Flath, 1989). Instructional leadership role involves setting clear goals, allocating resources to instruction, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers (Lashway, 2002). Blase and Blase (2000) expressed instructional leadership in specific behaviours such as making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling effective instruction, soliciting opinions, supporting collaboration, providing professional development opportunities, and giving praise for effective teaching. It involves much deeper concern in the core technology of teaching and learning, carries more sophisticated views of professional development, and emphasizes the use of data in making decisions (Deborah, 2002). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2001) defines instructional leadership as leading learning communities. In their view, instructional leaders have six roles: making student and adult learning the priority; setting high expectation for performance; gearing content and instruction to standard; creating culture of continuous learning for adult; using multiple sources of data to access learning; and activating the community's support for school success. Here, teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, work together to solve problem, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn. They operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies or in isolation and people in a learning community own the problem and become agents of its solution (NAESP, 2001).

Thus, as an instructional leader, the principal is the pivotal point within the school who affects the quality of individual teacher instruction, the height of student achievement, and the degree of efficiency in school functioning. Therefore, commitment and application of instructional leadership will enable principals to successfully develop teacher capacity in aspects of teaching and learning. Important in doing this is building teacher leadership and creating continuous learning culture.

**Building Teacher Leadership**

The term ‘teacher leadership’ refers to skills demonstrated by classroom teachers who not only teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere (Danielson, 2006). Teacher leadership drives other teachers to increase performance, especially in teaching and learning because teachers do have expert and reference power (but not legitimate power like the principal) that can influence their other colleagues to positive attitudes towards work. Teacher leaders are not assigned formal positions but earned leadership by working to improve instruction, sharing their knowledge with staff and the community to build the instructional capacity of the school. Teacher leadership can have significant impact on school improvement efforts (Austen, 2010). Crowther et al. (2002) developed a teacher leadership model that consists of six main functions as follows: convey conviction about a better world; strive for authenticity in their teaching, learning, and assessment practices; facilitate communities of learning through organization-wide process; confront barriers in the school's culture and structures; translate ideas into sustainable system of action; nature a culture of success. Danielson (2006) noted that teacher leadership involves the following practices: the use of evidence and data in making
decisions; seeing opportunities and initiatives; moving other people to achieve shared aims; organize resources; and taking action; supervising improvements and changing the approaches when the situation changes; retain other people's commitment; and contribute to organizational learning. This list of practices is closely related to teacher capacity development and is a great contribution to schools in achieving especially the aims of curriculum and teaching (Omar et al., 2011).

One of the most consistent research findings of effective leadership in schools is that authority to lead is not located in the person of the leader but can be diffused within the school in-between and among staff (Mulford, 2003; Day et al, 2000; Carter and Klotz, 1990). Mulford (2003) observed a growing understanding that leadership is embedded in various organizational contexts within school communities, not centrally vested on a person or an office. Literature also reveals that where decision making is perceived by teachers in secondary school as collegial, cooperative and consultative and providing adequate opportunities for participation, it will be more likely to lead to positive student perceptions about their school and teachers as well as perception about relationships and their own performance than where decision making is more top-down, executive, or does not foster widespread teacher involvement (Duze, 2011; Omar et al., 2011). In the context of principal leadership therefore, the aspect of distributing the leadership role to teachers and other members of the school organization, should be viewed positively and encouraged. For instance, teachers have credibility to identify and analyze issues in the classroom in teaching and learning. Therefore, in aspects of teaching and learning where teachers are leaders in the classroom, it is only reasonable for principals to intensify the teacher role to lead. In the teacher capacity building context, teacher leaders can play an important role in assisting principals implement instructional leadership. These inputs could be information and data that could be used in decision-making to ensure that decisions are relevant and appropriate in schools (Omar et al., 2011; Blase and Blase, 2000; Smylie and Conyers, 1991; Glickman, 1990; Richardson et al., 1989).

Teacher leadership is not only about contributing to the decision making process in schools but can also lead other teachers in the same school or otherwise to achieve desired instructional objectives. Teacher leaders also form excellent net-workings with other teachers and experts in certain fields. Studies showed that teacher leadership generally helps teachers in performing their duties especially those that are related to instruction. Teacher leaders' ability to act as agent of change in parallel leadership with their principals has been found effective. Principals that establish focused goals to meet the immediate needs of the reform, and clearly communicate those goals to the teacher leaders, enable the teacher leaders to effectively implement the goals to the remainder of the staff (Omar et al., 2011; Austen, 2010; Bernd, 1992).

However, an observed handicap in teacher leadership is often based on the traditional view where teachers' work was seen as passive and must wait for directives and guidance from the higher authorities before proceeding. As a result, the curriculum was designed by experts whereas teachers only implement them. Moreover, teachers do not appear to have their own directions but instead hope that the principal would provide one for them. From the teacher leadership's point of view, teaching is regarded as professional work where teachers are assisted in the implementation (Omar et al., 2011). Teacher leaders need to make autonomous decisions and actions that support student learning. School leadership especially the principal should provide trust and support to teacher leaders to enable them carry out their duties effectively (Zepeda et al., 2003). Barth (2001) emphasized that to tap the potential of teacher leaders, the profession needs to invent, expand, and honour a variety of opportunities for teacher leadership so that there will be more choices than being 'either' a principal or a teacher. He argued that if more widespread teacher leadership is to be attained in schools, educators will also have to explore multiple conception of the teacher's role today as team leader and teacher, as teacher researcher, and as master teacher. Omar et al. (2011) reported that Malaysia had taken a step further in this respect by recognizing the teacher leaders with a 'promotion position' known as Guru Cemerlang (Excellent Teacher). In Nigeria, the teacher is yet to be afforded the honour he should deserve.

Creating Continuous Learning Culture

Teacher learning should not happen, and as a matter of fact, does not happen as a one-off event anywhere in the world. As long as the teacher teaches in the classroom, learning for him actually goes on either consciously or unconsciously not with the myriads of experiences gained from learners from different homes, different societal status, different environments, and different cultures. It is only an insensitive teacher that would not learn one specific new thing about classroom management and child care or support any point in the school term. However, it cannot be denied that specific programmes for teacher development such as in-service courses, workshops, and seminars are important. The problem is that attendance may not be meaningful if the school environment/culture does not assist in strengthening the knowledge and skills obtained. This is so because professional learning culture that exists in schools enables knowledge and
skills to be shared and developed. But the unfortunate thing is that in practice, professional learning culture in school context does not happen as expected (Omar et al., 2011). This is where the role of the principal as an instructional leader becomes very important.

Fullan (2008) noted that professional learning communities were being implemented superficially giving the educators involved a false sense of progress, while the deeper cultural changes required for school improvement were not being tackled. According to him, learning is the work itself, not workshops and courses and strategic retreats. Learning is also not school improvement plans or individual leadership development but rather a maxim precisely about the need to address day-to-day cultural changes. This is to say that money spent on sending teachers for further training and courses would be wasted if the school environment does not support and strengthen the learning obtained. He stressed that it is largely through sharing activities that knowledge and skills gained by teachers in courses and workshops can be disseminated to benefit other teachers and schools. To ensure that learning communities exist and develop in schools, it becomes expedient to build close relationships and collaborations among teachers. This should be one major undertaking in the principal’s role as an instructional leader. Furthermore, the attitude of cooperation and helping each other on personal issues usually observed among teachers should also extend a great deal to career and professional concerns. In Nigeria, the congeniality among teachers as a result of neglect by government is so high that capturing the potentials will be greatly beneficial in creating and developing professional learning communities.

In this vein, Barth (1990) opined that relations and associations in schools should be viewed from two perspectives – congeniality and collegiality. According to him, congeniality involves the personal aspect while collegiality emphasizes the professional aspect. Congeniality refers to the friendly human relationship that exists among teachers and is characterized by the loyalty, trust, and easy conversation that result from the development of a closely-knit social group. On the other hand, Collegiality refers to the existence of high levels of collaboration among teachers and between teachers and principals and is characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversations about teaching and learning (Omar et al., 2011). In Nigeria, the latter could be said to be lacking because most school principals have been found to be autocratic in their leadership. This is so in many other developing countries (Duze, 2011; Nduka, 2006). However, relationships and associations in the form of congeniality globally have generally long existed among teachers. What needs to be assertively promoted globally for the purpose of professional learning culture is collegiality. Therefore, a paradigm shift in principals’ role as greater instructional leader as well as a change paradigm in relations are needed and should be reinforced among teachers and principals in all countries.

The principal as instructional leader can determine the strength and weakness of teachers and provide the necessary guidance (Glickman, 1990). Furthermore, teachers can also strengthen self-directed learning besides reinforcing the value of sharing of knowledge and information. Through this collaboration, the value of trust can be established and inculcated. When trust exists in the professional aspect, more challenging activities can be implemented including peer assessment, peer supervision, peer evaluation and other activities. Hence, through guidance by the principal, self-directed learning among teachers and the contributions of colleagues, the school can establish a sustainable learning community (Omar et al., 2011). Besides, knowledge sharing is central to the success of all knowledge management strategies. Research shows that this practice is flourishing in informal organizations whereas its benefits are also needed in formal organizations like the school (Chaudry, 2005). Some studies also suggest that a system for capturing and codification of knowledge should be put in place to transform tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge for common and wider use (Chaudry, 2005).

In this vein, Omar et al. (2011) advised that the contributions of experienced teachers to various innovations in teaching and learning should not be allowed to die with their retirement from schools. According to them, all experiences, innovations and best practices which constitute tacit knowledge will definitely be taken away with them resulting in a gross loss to the next generations of teachers and to their schools. It is the principal’s responsibility therefore through effective instructional leadership, to establish an environment/culture where an effective system of knowledge sharing takes place. This effort will not become a reality if collegiality does not exist strongly among academic staff members (Omar et al., 2011)

CONCLUSION

The teacher’s role is becoming more challenging in this era of globalization. The expectation of parents and other stakeholders towards school achievements has also increased. Innovation in teaching and learning is therefore a must. These changes place demand on the school principal in today’s global world towards teacher capacity building as the school’s core business is teaching and learning and the teacher, the engine-driver. The accomplishment of school aims and objectives depends highly on teachers being the prime movers in the
implementation of curriculum and teaching/learning. To ensure teacher success and desired learning outcomes the school principal has a big responsibility. Effective school leaders have been rated as those who emphasize the importance of instructional leadership and carry it out. Instructional leadership is therefore a sine qua non to teacher capacity building and thus, realization of effective schools. The principal therefore, has an enormous opportunity to develop teacher capacity to thrive in teaching and learning reformation and innovation to attain current educational demands. His role as organization manager/administrator focusing largely on technical aspects needs a paradigm shift towards greater focus on human development aspects as an instructional leader.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

From this discourse, the creating of continuous learning and knowledge sharing culture is one of the strategies to enhance teacher capacity that can be achieved through effective instructional leadership. Furthermore, establishing teacher leadership is a strategy that can enhance learning and knowledge sharing effectively and efficiently. Therefore relevant programmes for aspiring and serving school teachers and leaders should be structured and put in place. Such training and development programmes will eventually foster and contribute to effective school leadership in any country. It is suggested that the programmes be made compulsory for all cadres of teachers in both public and private schools towards supporting the development of effective teachers and leaders.

**REFERENCES**


