

## **Improving School Safety Climate in Public Schools through Supervision at 1<sup>ST</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tiers of Nigerian Educational System**

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**Abstract:** *Every work environment serves as conduit to realizing set out organizational objectives and goals. There are numerous limitations and potentialities in every environment which enables it act as motivating or demotivating factors to achieving set out targets. School organization as a knowledge building industry requires favourable working environment to attain educational goals. Efficient and effective teaching and learning can only be done in safe setting. The current deplorable states of public schools environment call for school safety concern. The school environment must be capable to provide avenues for development and growth of its members for safe transmission of societal acceptable values. Improving School safety climate facilitates achieving academic performance through eliminating hazards that may encumber teaching and learning process like school facilities and behaviours. This paper descriptively analyzes the viable roles supervision can play as management and administrative process to improving school safety climate in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tiers of public school system in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Public School, School Safety Climate, Supervision.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Nigeria Educational System has administrative Three - Tiers (primary, secondary and tertiary). The Revised National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) defines specifically their aims, goals and roles in the overall development of the Educational system. Each level plays distinct but continuous role aimed at training and developing manpower structures and needs of the nation. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tiers are basic education levels although classified according to ages of recipients, purpose, durations, grades and administrative process.

The important roles they play as foundation levels for tertiary education prompt the need to efficiently and effectively manage and administer educational resources in meeting the National goals on Education. This leads to several unanswered questions mostly: whether any nation's education can develop without basic education development? If affirmative why the constant degeneration of the entire system at these levels? Put differently school environment is required to offer enabling conditions to achieving educational goals. Based on the importance of safe environment, National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013 Section 2:33) emphasizes that Government shall provide the following services for basic education level (school libraries, school health services, guidance and counseling, educational resource centres, laboratories and workshops). This is imperative even though available resources are tiny, it enables achieving educational goals through the right persons, places and conditions. As school varies, their environments vary from size, quantity and quality of infrastructure and instructional facilities, personnel and community relationships all these affect school safety climate.

The school as a formal organizational system has various resources interrelating and interacting together enabling group goal achievement. The school environment must be designed to accomplishing its academic purpose. Environment fostering enabling conditions to operate appreciates this interplay of resources if managed and administered rightly. Imperatively students, teaching and non-teaching staff, Communities, Ministry of Education are all stakeholders whose actions, interests and efforts create desirable work environment. Similarly, their inactions can result to undesirable work environment. Good school leadership promotes positive Safety Climate for the growth of the school. In line with National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013, Section 9:127) on school environment, Ugwulashi (2016) asserts that Education cannot grow when managerial and administrative leadership cannot initiate safe environments for teaching and learning.

The conditions in public schools are clear that only good collaboration can improve school safety climate. Education is an indispensable and valued commodity that private and public enterprises efforts are required. As Education is a fundamental human right of every child according to Igbuzor (2006) in Adeyemi; Oribabor and Adeyemi (2012) that right should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human. Adeyemi, et al (2102) in this way see education as the best legacy a country can give to her citizens. The purpose of education is the development of individuals and society on the right perspective for national development. This must start by developing the basic educational levels, making it safe as a place for viable knowledge transfer and acquisitions.

Importantly, good educational system must pass through safe processes. To getting it right, school supervision is the right tool to ensuring safe environment for teaching and learning. Supervision is a good determination to efficiently and effectively synergize physical, cultural, socioeconomic, political and other differences affecting school environment improvement. Inadequate supervision of school has resulted to poor situations abound everywhere. Although difficult to substantiate that Educational Authorities neither visit nor follow up with recommendations. There is need for continuous supervisory practice in these basic educational levels. Stakeholders inactions to contribute in ensuring safe school environment have become big sabotage to educational development.

The role of Supervisors, Community or Government should be to act in time as Ugwulashi (2011) points that all resources to meeting quality education at the 1<sup>st</sup> level which applies to the 2<sup>nd</sup> level must be just-in-time to achieving quality education delivery. Prompt supervisory process is panacea to curbing hazards affecting school safety climate. Collaborative effort by stakeholders to building safe environment for school activity is proper way to curb associated hazards in schools. Increasing supervisory practices for quality delivery service in education can create satisfaction to both the teachers and learners. Thus, this paper looks at supervision of school not only on improving instructional capacities but an instrumental factor to facilitating School Safety Climate in Nigeria 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tiers educational levels for quality school service delivery.

## **II. Concept of school safety climate**

Problems confronting educational system are multifarious, indeed crisis from one point to another with series of depreciations occurring from quality, quantity, inadequate financing, welfare packages and professional development amongst others. The poor management of public schools especially at the two lower levels has been problem resulting to many unsafe situations. Ugwulashi (2015) maintains that the recent demand worldwide has been on fervent researches on how school should operate and findings have been poor management of public schools, but good supervisory practices in place is best way for continual improvement. In the face of these problems it becomes challenging on how school safety climate can be assured without proper managerial and administrative practices. Supervision is a good management and administrative tool to effectively correct these anomalies just-in-time.

Despite various governments' commitment to education, the quality of schools has declined tremendously, thereby giving successive government's serious concern (Adeyemi, et.al 2012). As unfortunate as school physical conditions today all these inadequacies support the assertion that for educational management to be effective according to Jones (1998), the changing nature of the context in which management takes place must be studied to provide new insights and new knowledge about managerial practices at the workplace (applicable to school organization).

Sharing along these views, Adeyinka (2012) adds that the greatest problem of educational development all over the world is that of responsibility and control; this has also affected Nigerian public school system greatly as facilities and behaviours are consistently decaying without good control. Overpoliticisation of education sector, poor funding and subsequent misappropriation of funds meant to develop education without corresponding accountability have pushed the system into frustrating stage that children study under varying unsafe conditions:-dilapidated structures, leaking roofs and cracked walls, no laboratory, damaged apparatuses, desks, chairs, doors, windows and open spaces in most public primary and secondary schools today. Worst hit are rural suburbs where most children sit on bare floor learning while teachers sit on windows, no decent teaching and learning environment. This has provoked eventual dilapidation of human resources as most teachers no longer accept postings into these remote areas.

Similarly, headmasters and principals as internal Supervisors are incapacitated by these numerous conditions. The Inspectorate divisions of the Education Ministries also are unable to identify and proffer ways to tackle these sorry states at primary and secondary school levels becoming big challenge to assuring safety at these levels. Empowering school administrators (Headmasters/ Principals) as direct supervisors is one easy way to promote school safety climate for continual improvement. This will make them own full responsibility thereby introducing effective competition in creating viable environment among school administrators. Unsafe environmental conditions cannot assure safety of human and material resources for improved academic system.

## **III. Concept of Supervision**

Contending works on school supervision basically aim at improving instructional processes to realizing educational objectives and goals. The teachers are at the centre of supervisory focus mainly on improvement of teaching methodologies. It is a major factor for quality education service delivery as emphasized on the National Policy on education (FRN, 2013 section 9 (148).

Supervision as an overseeing process provides an opportunity for stimulating growth and helping teachers improve on the job. In essence supervision is a continual improvement approach to creating favourable conditions that facilitates teaching and learning process. Therefore supervisory responsibility of school

Managers and Administrators is sacrosanct to ensuring that teaching principles and practices are delivered according to the current trends of society in safe condition and manner.

Supervision facilitates professional development, an instrumental tool to building confidence, self-development and contribution towards positive realization of organizational goals. From this, supervision involves overseeing the work of teachers and providing continual improvement methods for proper academic performance. The big question is can school improvement occur on unsafe conditions and manner? Obviously an enabling condition must exist (safety climate) - an important factor describing total school climate.

#### **IV. Supervision and School Safety Climate**

Supervision in school is important for good administrative purposes. The problems in educational institutions are enormous that constant internal and external supervision and follow up processes is necessary as to avert physical conditions affecting effective teaching and learning. In this circumstance, Onasanya (2011) sees supervision creating confidence in incompetent teachers as well as helps teacher in school management. This collaborate the fact that school administrative success can only be effective by creating safe condition and manner.

This paper sees supervision as above instructional improvement but all aspects of quality assurance methods to improving educational development through teaching and learning in safe environment. Appropriate supervisory practice helps to ensuring safe environment for overall academic activities by identifying hazards capable of hindering educational goal achievement.

School Safety climate simply is safeness in school environment characterized by good educational facilities, administrative, staff and students behaviours, and community relationships amongst other variables (Ugwulashi, 2014). As practical as this assertion, quality teaching and learning activities cannot function in unsafe situations; there is need for positive safety climate mostly at these tiers of educational system lacking these quality assurance methods (Ugwulashi, 2011) due to inappropriate supervisory practices.

#### **V. Importance of Partnership in School Safety Management**

Establishing school safety climate involves lot of resources directly or indirectly. However partnership by all stakeholders is necessary to achieving it in any school. School alone cannot do this without the cooperation of other stakeholders since achieving safety is expensive. Although public school is owned by the government, private hand is required, as education is general commodity and no society or nation will see it collapse in their presence. The end of the school is the end of the society or nation because it is the foundation for development.

Definitely all stakeholders have great roles to play to accomplishing safe environment in the school for adequate teaching and learning. Individual and communal efforts can ease the burden on school where government effort is not immediate. Most public schools need individual and corporate support to making them sustainable today. Every school needs a serene environment (good classroom, laboratory, library, wash room, hostels, recreational centre etc.) that is being infrastructure and instructional safe for proper academic activities.

Equally on the importance of school partnership Vadohej, F.; Bilali, E.D, and Kroni, M. (2015), express that the partnership between the school and the community is provided to increase the quality of the school. This synergy is appropriate to harness resources for the procurement and maintenance of existing facilities in bad shapes for quality service delivery. Vadohej et al. (2015) advise that parents should be aware of the importance of their involvement in children's education. The involvement of stakeholders in school decision making process is a better way to facilitate school safety management in the face of dwindling economy. Apart from infrastructure and instructional facilities provision and maintenance it encourages security. School partnership promotes greater participation to initiating secured environment for effective and efficient teaching and learning activities.

#### **VI. Conditions affecting School Safety Climate**

Ugwulashi (2014) in this study identifies five hazard areas affecting school safety climate:

1. Educational facilities
2. Administrative behaviours
3. Staff behaviours
4. Students behaviours
5. School Community relationships.

It was ascertained that these hazards affect the performance of any Achievement – Oriented school. It explicably shows that school activities require safe (hazard free) environment for its operations as knowledge building industry. Obviously hazards immensely affect academic performance and need to be curbed.

Earlier highlighted on educational facilities too, Obiweluzor; Momoh and Ogbonnanya (2014), adduce that most schools lack the basic materials and or equipment for teaching such as text books, chalkboard, decent classroom for students, lack of facilities, bad roads, lack materials and resources for the supervisor to use. Furthermore, educational facilities must be available and safe to meeting the needs of the teachers and students for quality school service delivery. Hence, Akinsolu (2004) notes that successful implementation of educational curriculum can only be ensured by school facilities adequacy.

The conditions majority of public primary and secondary schools exist are demoralizing. It becomes questionable the type of knowledge children will acquire in absence of serene environment. Even in advanced societies no well-designed curriculum can be achieved in physically deformed state of classrooms, desks, chairs, tables, chalk board, dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, and reptile infested environment amongst other hazardous conditions. Good educational foundation cannot be laid under these implacable conditions. However, koroye (2016) asserts that the educational system is undoubtedly a system of production and could be viewed as a factory that requires men, money and material resources to aid production; hence, studying under deplorable conditions amply affect academic process leading to poor school performance.

Importantly, Maslow's needs hierarchy sees Safety need as key in human existence and necessary to be met. Consequently safety is an important need for school organizational development that cannot be ignored. School safety is essential in all ramifications for efficient and effective academic pursuit, because teaching and learning cannot take place in situations of fear and suppression. Through regular supervision this hazard invading school is physically identified and corrected just- in- time.

Further look at educational facilities in school, Ugwulashi (2014) points out that this hazard affecting School Safety Climate can be curbed for effective academic performance. It is due to improper internal and external supervisory practices that most schools facilities are in deteriorating conditions. Public school environments have degenerated much on infrastructure and instructional facilities that proactive actions need to be taken to save them since education is only instrument for achieving development and growth.

With continuous deterioration of educational facilities at these lower levels there is need for proper assessment, maintenance and quality improvement for educational goal achievement. Obviously school organization cannot survive without good classrooms, laboratories, libraries, equipment, books, recreational centre and even staff to manage the students amongst others. School physical environment affects teaching, learning and other extracurricular activities posing great effects on academic performance. Most school structures and facilities are inhabited by rodents, reptiles and other despicable characteristics unsafe for good teaching and learning. Based on this, Ahmed (2003) in Koroye (2016) notes that in most of the nation's secondary schools, teaching and learning take place under a most uncomfortable environment, lacking basic materials. Academic environment is motivational factor to achieving educational goals. School physical environment is one prominent aspect of school safety climate.

Behaviour plays significant role in organizational total life. School personnel behaviours demonstrate in totality organizational type and derivable achievements the organization can offer its people. In otherwords the characters of school personnel depict the rating of the school whether in positive or negative dimensions. The quality of Administrative, staff, students behaviours and school - community relations to great extent are contributory factors to school safety climate. Safe school environment involves good behaviour to reassuring academic activities and retention of personnel. Eventually poor behaviour towards school personnel affects school performance. Lack of motivation is a safety factor leading to varying characteristics in schools.

In school organization, poor behaviours emanating from students, staff, administrators and community cumulatively affect smooth school operations; if not checked result to demonstrations, strike, cultism, and truancy. The dangers appear obvious as school identified as facing these challenges can be deserted as unsafe for academic pursuit. Importantly, positive school safety climate prevents some on-the-bubble behaviours due to good leadership, relationship and collective ownership of the school. In nutshell, school and all stakeholders have great role to play to stop geometric increase of unsafe conditions and behaviours affecting school safety climate. Constant internal and external supervision can mitigate these unsafe conditions faced today and make school a convenient place for transmission of culture from generation to generation.

## **VII. Supervision and Improvement of School Safety Climate**

The role of school Administrators as heads of the school is reinforced by collective and concerted efforts of students, staff and community (Stakeholders). The synergy brings about easy accomplishment of school objectives and goals. Good supervision enables effective implementation of task and progress evaluation. No meaningful planning; organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating and budgeting of resources without proper supervision. Achievement is a measure of success achieved at any time which supervision drives. Supervision improves School Safety Climate when administrators and managers are in conformity and able to identify and manage common problems affecting academic environment to include:-

- Quantity and quality of human resources

- Infrastructure and instructional resources
- Maintenance requirements
- School climate structure (Academic, Social, Political, Economic, Safety etc.)
- Behaviours in school environment (Administrator–Staff- Students relationship)
- Roles and responsibilities
- Probity and accountability
- Time management
- School/Government/ Community relationships etc.

These outcomes with distinct potentials and limitations can create safe or unsafe conditions if not proactively managed to promoting conducive academic environment. However, achieving societal needs will be difficult if poor safety climate continues to exist in the school system. The school environment is a good measure to understanding the success school can achieve. At these lower educational systems supervisory abilities are lack. School Administrators at these levels require training to understanding how supervisory roles can improve safety at school.

Even though, school supervision simply is an interactive process to improving teaching activity, poor teaching methodology is hazardous. Under present circumstance of technological challenges it is beyond improving instructions but creating conducive conditions for academic activities to thrive. There must be an optimum safety level for school resource management to achieve academic feat. Supervision internally and externally removes obstacles in the school work environment thus, promoting a safe culture for sustainable academic pursuit.

In nutshell, proper supervision can save the system if schools authorities are adequately empowered in this direction. To achieve success the school must be provided opportunity of healthy environment through effective supervision. Healthy environment results due to adequacy of resources as well as effective supervisory practices. Therefore regular supervision promotes school quality contributing to educational institutions achieving stated objectives and goals in a safe manner and condition.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

The present situation educational system finds itself is deplorable. Public schools are in near extinction because of inappropriate supervision of schools internally and externally stem by limited human, material and financial resources. Today academic activities are done under varying sorry states quite unsafe. School requires safety for its operation which cannot be compromised to assuring quality education service delivery. As Vadohejet. al (2015) further view there is need of partnership between the school and the community to increase the quality of the school. This we call School – Stakeholders Partnership. Schools have to create conditions for partnership in decision making to tap external resources to develop itself.

Parents need to understand the effect of unsafe environment on teaching and learning process and the impact on educational development of the children’s education. Especially supporting provision of educational facilities will enhance good academic environment, hence improved performance. Safety in school is a means but not an end in itself because teaching and learning must be done in safe manner for quality delivery service in the education industry (Ugwulashi, 2014b). Encouraging supervision in school helps nip these problems leading to degradation before it becomes national disaster to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> levels educational system.

### **IX. Recommendations**

The following amongst others are recommended to ensuring school safety climate:

1. To maintain highest standards of Health Safety and Environment in every school.
2. Carry out periodic inspections and audits of school facilities
3. To follow up inspections and audit reports by the education authorities.
4. To train administrators and managers on school safety management system
5. Encourage continuous improvement of school safety climate through supervision.
6. To ensure hazards emanating from educational facilities, administrative, staff, students and community behaviours are properly controlled (Ugwulashi, 2014).
7. To provide fund for maintenance and improvement of facilities.
8. To carry out awareness campaigns on school safety to schools.

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