



Management of Basic Schools in Nigeria: A call for School Consultanship

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ABSTRACT

Since 1999, Nigeria has made some progress in improving basic education outcomes. However, large numbers of children remain out of school, particularly in the north, and the quality of students' learning and teaching still remains a major concern everywhere. Nigeria's basic education system often suffers from weak monitoring systems, fiscal stress, basic governance challenges, and overlapping responsibilities across government departments, and flaws in teacher management. The private sector that seems to be the answer to government's failure in the system is also challenged with poor management, high cost, unqualified teachers, and poor adaptation to the curriculum or Universal Basic Education (UBE) policies. These and many more issues have crippled the system; causing many stakeholders to lose faith with both private and public basic schools to achieve the aims and goals of the universal basic education. However, basic schools are still springing up in all nook and crannies of the country. Hence, the study proposes the official use of school consultants in the administration of basic schools. Thus, the study examined the concept of education; Universal Basic Education; the goals and objectives of Basic Education in Nigeria as well as the concept of Consultanship. The study also gave an insight on the types of consultation; competency areas of educational consultants; their duties in a basic school; and also the qualities and skills of a consultant. More interesting, the study also discussed government partnership with educational consultants and the role of school management in ensuring success when partnering with educational consultants. Conclusion and recommendations were also given in the study.

Keywords: Educational Management, Basic Education, Private Schools, School Consultanship, Nigerian Basic Schools

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1. INTRODUCTION

All over the world today, education has been the basis for development; as it is believed that education offers the way out of series of problems plaguing nations and individuals. The reason for this, according to Adegbemile (2011), is that education helps to produce the quality and quantity of



human resources required for the economy's growth using the right mix of inputs. In agreement, Charas (2015) asserted that education plays a prominent role in educating and training of future leaders; as well as serving as a tool for developing high-level technical capacities that underpin economic sustenance and development. Education, which has often been described as the most important aspect of human development, holds the key to a successful living (Bambi, 2020). Thus, education serves as a vital instrument for both individual and societal growth. This is why there has been a lot of emphasis, particularly in recent times, for all citizens of the world to have access to basic education of good quality. Consequentially, this has led to the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The programme in Nigeria is aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty (Universal Basic Education Commission, UBEC, 2013). The expectation on the programme is that free education would be given to learners of varied background; at the lower levels of education in order to avoid wastage of talents.

According to Oduwaiye and Bakwai (2017), basic education refers to the type of education given in the first level of education; although the meaning of basic education changes from country to country. In the past, basic education in Nigeria was equated with six years of primary schooling. Currently, basic education entails the primary education stage and three years of junior secondary school. It embraces formal and non-formal education including education of the marginalized groups within the Nigerian society. Over the past years, basic education in Nigeria has experienced mixed performance. On the positive side, school enrolment has increased while gender disparity in primary education has been reduced significantly in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets in Nigeria. Despite the country's clear commitment to basic education and significant progress in some areas, Nigeria's basic education sector still faces many hurdles including stagnating trends in teachers' quality, low learning outcomes, and persistent inequalities in access. More worrying is that, there is an acute shortage of infrastructures in most basic schools; the ratio of pupils to teachers has also doubled or tripled in some schools; along with poor attendance, teachers' attrition and various security problems (Iwu & Iwu, 2013). The late payment of teachers' salary has also contributed to these challenges.

Babalola and Adedeji (2009) asserted that three decades of exclusive government ownership, control and management of education had been attended by unprecedented failures. These failures have been characterized by poorly trained teachers, poor teaching, poor technology and underfunding (George, Olayiwola, Adewole & Osabuohien, 2013). Some primary schools do not even have enough classrooms and furniture to the extent that classes are held under shades of trees, some pupils carry home their benches and desks, bringing them to school every morning (Olaniyan & Obadara, 2008). The instructional materials needed to aid teaching-learning activities are not available. The out-of-school rate for children aged 6 – 14 increased from 24 to 30 percent between 2010 and 2013, with a high incidence rate in the northern states (95% in 2013), mainly affecting children from the poorest quintiles and rural areas (World Bank Group, 2015). Disturbingly, is that completion rates and basic 6 examination pass rates in public schools show large variations across zones while the literacy rates among basic 4 to 6 pupils are generally low across states in the country. Teachers also, are no longer committed to their jobs because they are not well paid compare to other professions. As public education became increasingly ineffective and inefficient, in the late 20th century; private provision of education became inevitable.



Private schools according to Eze (2010) are those schools that are not administered by local, state or national government which retain the right to select their staff and are funded in whole or part by charging their students, tuition fee rather than with public funds. Schools established by the missionaries, individuals and voluntary organizations belong to this group (Tofi & Onuminya, 2019). Although, in some countries 'private schools' are entirely or mostly funded by the central authority, but they are run privately through Private Public Partnership (PPP). In other countries 'private schools' are entirely or mostly funded and managed privately. In Nigeria, the curriculum is the only part that private schools feel obliged to follow, in order to prepare their students to pass in the national examinations, even though (from the researcher's experience) there is no proper government control over private schools for the full adaptation of the UBE curriculum.

Parents however are increasingly sending children to low-fee private schools because of proximity to their home and perceived better educational quality. Other reasons include teachers' perceived dedication to work; the high level of discipline among teachers and pupils; the early opportunity to train a child; good physical facilities; and the use of English Language as the method of instruction (Onuka, 2008). Cost did not deter parents from enrolling their wards or children once the above factors were present. Although, there is very little actual evidence of the quality of teaching/learning on offer in low-fee private schools (beyond the fact that teachers are more often in the classroom), the limited survey data do indeed suggest that learning outcomes are at least as good if not better on average than in public schools, although they are still low (Humphreys & Crawford, 2015).

However, from the above mentioned categories, the curriculum is the only part that private schools feel obliged to follow, in order to prepare their students to pass in the national examinations. While there is no doubt that the private sector has contributed significantly to the growth of the education sector in Nigeria, it is also a reality that there have been some challenges along the way. The efficiency and effectiveness of private schools across Nigeria is marred by the lack of accreditation and high tuition (Efanga & Idante, 2014). Also, most private schools especially the low-fees; often employ mostly unqualified teachers while some even pay the qualified teachers peanuts as salaries. Owing to the fact that there is a high rate of unemployment in the country; they therefore offer cheaper salary, which makes it easier to fire these teachers for poor performance. Some private schools even deduct their staffs' salary as they deem fit based on simplest of excuses such as low students' grades.

Another challenge with private schools is that some low-fee private schools generally complete the primary curriculum in five years (Härmä, 2011); thereby creating gap in a child's education. Moreover, government frequently does not have capacity for effective supervision of either public or private schools. As a result, many private schools operate without formal registration or with limited enforcement mechanisms, enabling children to flow through the school system without acquiring the necessary literacy and numeracy skills (World Bank Group, 2015). Similarly, some private schools have been found to engage in provision of fake or lower standard certificates, contributing to the production of low skills workforce and low learning outcomes.

Evidently, there exist crises in basic schools (both private and public schools) in Nigeria. Regrettably, much of the crisis is traceable to poor management in both sectors. The term 'management' has been defined in various ways. Musaaazi, (1982) defined it as a social process concerned with



identifying, maintaining, motivating, controlling and unifying formally and informally organized human and material resources within a social system. Adeyemi (2009) explained educational management as the process of providing leadership within an educational system in the way of coordinating activities and making decisions that would lead to the attainment of the school's objectives, which are effective teaching and learning. In the context of this study, educational management is conceptualized to mean a deliberate and systematic process of making plans to source, assemble, allocate and use resources to achieve the aims and objectives of the educational system.

The school management team, which refers to the top school officers such as the principal, vice-principal and the heads of departments have the responsibility to plan, organize, lead and implement school policies; as well as evaluate staff performance in the teaching-learning process within the school (Kanelechi & Omotere, 2013). They therefore perform the same functions which are; resource, programme planning and policy making; provision and maintenance of funds and facilities; obtaining and development of personnel; improvement of instructional programmes; student personnel services and maintenance of effective interrelationships with the community. The school manager along with his team has the onerous task of leading efficiently and effectively in the development and management of the school resources to achieve the school's goals and objectives. But unfortunately, with the current state of basic education in both private and public schools in the country, the efficiency of these managers in the discharge of their duties is questionable.

Education in Nigeria is rapidly changing, as it is technically tailored towards meeting certain goals such as the Education for All (EFA, 2015) and the Nigeria Vision 20:2020. The requirements of these various national goals from school managers are centred on the advancement of teaching and learning through the implementation of information and communication technology (ICT), and performance based-management (Kanelechi & Omotere, 2013). Since the present educational system in Nigeria is characterized by a variety of changes especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic; where most schools are turning to online classes. School managers are not only expected to understand these changes but also to be able to manage them effectively. Against this backdrop, the society expects school managers to quickly adjust or adapt to the changes and innovates the school system as an attempt to achieve equilibrium. Consequently, pressure is going to mount everyday on school managers to improve on the quality of their schools' graduates to meet the global trend.

Since the quality of any educational institution is mostly assessed by the performance of the school's products (Bambi, 2020); such school system must be able to produce individual who is useful to himself, to his society and who will be prepared to meet up with global challenges (Oni, Jegede, Osisami, Ilo, Lawal & Fabine, 2016). The fact is that a greater percentage of the products of basic education cannot stand on their own, and contribute to the achievement of the national goals and objectives. In other words, our basic schools appear ineffective, as low quality products (school leavers) are often produced. This bothers on the leadership functions of school managers to impart positively on people they work with, so as to have successful pupils through giving quality education. Therefore, the study proposes the use of consultancy in management of basic education in Nigeria; as a way of achieving the set goals of the Universal Basic Education.



2. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

The concept of Education and Universal Basic Education are discussed below;

2.1 Concept of Education

The term 'education' is a very common and popular word that is uttered by everyone but understood by a very few in its right perspective. The concept of education has been used in a variety of contexts with different meanings. It appears to be as old as the human race; though, during the course of time its meaning and objectives have inevitably undergone certain changes. Let us try to explore the different meanings and viewpoints on education.

From early philosophers; Socrates referred education to mean the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man. Plato also stated education as the capacity to feel pleasure and pain at the right moment which develops in the body and in the soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection which he is capable of. To Aristotle, education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body that helps to develop man's faculty, especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty of which perfect happiness essentially consists of. John Dewey opined that education is the reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences. This view implies that the child already has acquired some experiences from his/her interaction with the environment. And education plays a role in reconstructing these experiences in the required direction in order to add meaning to those experiences.

From national icons; Mahatma Gandhi of India remarked that education is an all-round development drawing out of the best in the child's body, mind and spirit. He stated that literacy is not the end of education, and not even the beginning. It is only the means by which men and women can be educated. In his opinion, education should aim at developing self-reliance, where people learn to earn their livelihood. Nelson Mandela the great South African revolutionist commented that education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. In modern terms, Fabunmi (2005) stated that education is the foundation of every society and a basic tool for individual and national life. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) asserted that education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and other capabilities.

To Kpolovie (2012), education is the most powerful agent for social transformation, national stability, security, unity, and prosperity. Amirize and Ololube (2018) also posited that education is the key to all development process and produces the right skills and attitudes to move a nation forward (stressing the importance of education and the role of human resources development in a nation's developmental process). Hence, the concept of education in this study is explain as any form of learning that is directed towards the development of the mind and skill for the purpose of improving the individual to better his living and contributions to the society either in a formal or informal setting.



2.2 Concept of Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The term universal generally refers to something that exist everywhere or that involves everyone; while basic connotes the starting point or the foundation of an object or programme. In this regard, the universal basic education could be referred to as the education given to all children within a geographical location at the beginning of their life. It is an organized, multi-sect oral, community based education which consist of the acquisition of the skill of reading, written, numeracy, functional knowledge and generative basic education (Aliyu, 2015). According to United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, basic education is all forms of organized education and training, including to access to information to equip the individual to cope better with work and family responsibility and change the image of themselves (Igagbone & Olagunju, 2006). It is the education meant to meet the basic learning needs of children and youths. Oduwaiye and Bakwai (2017) opined that universal basic education is the type of education given in the first level of education in a country.

In Britain, the Education Act of 1944 guaranteed every citizen education that would be appropriate to his age, aptitude and ability for both elementary education and some years of secondary education (Wokocha, 2001). Education remains free and compulsory in Britain today for children between the ages 5 – 15 years. In the United States of America, although detailed policy on educations varies from state to state, primary education is free and compulsory in public schools; while in Japan, primary education and the first three years of secondary education are currently free and compulsory (Aliyu, 2015). For African countries, the commitment to universal education is a lot more recent and has not been as consistent and coordinated as those of the developed countries for obvious social and economic reasons. However in Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) stated that the universal basic education is the education given to all children in the country between the ages of 0 – 15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (ECCDE) (0 – 4years); Pre-Primary Education (5years); Primary Education (6 – 12 years) and the Junior Secondary Education (13 – 15 years), which is compulsory and free for all children.

2.2.1 Goals and Objectives of Basic Education in Nigeria

According to the UBE implementation guideline, the goals of the Basic Education in Nigeria are to universalize access to basic education, provide a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time (UBEC, 2013). The specific objectives of the policy according to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) are to:

- i. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- ii. Provide free, compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age.
- iii. Reduce drastically drop-out rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.
- iv. Cater for drop-out and out of school children adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- v. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skill (as well as the ethical, moral and civic value) needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning (p. 4).



The goals of basic education in Nigeria are to;

- a) Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement;
- b) Develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities;
- c) Inculcate values and raise morally upright individual capable of independent thinking, and who appreciate the dignity of labour;
- d) Inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence, irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnic and socio-economic background, and;
- e) Provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity (p. 4 – 5).

3. THE CONCEPT OF CONSULTANTSHIP

Consultantship is a form of interpersonal relationship that involves problem solving in the context of the relationship. It involves the basic communication process of utilizing specialised knowledge (Erchul, 2003). Simply put, consultantship is the act of seeking consult from a specialist. The specialist here is known as the consultant. An educational consultant is an individual or organisation body that uses experience in learning, teaching, and assessment to help develop the curriculum, or work with school organisations and learners to identify and support their needs (Threlfall, 2018) especially during challenges, changes, reforms or restructuring. This work entails the provision of consultative and instructional services to teachers, counsellors and field staff or program personnel, school heads and owners in areas requiring specialized knowledge. They often act as a liaison and resource person to private and public agencies in relation to training matters.

In America and Europe, school systems that face a number of legislative, political and resource constraints often partner with consulting firms that are more flexible, agile and adaptive to change. The flexibility of these firms allows them to act across institutional domains (Jaquith & McLaughlin, 2009), making them particularly attractive to school systems interested in broadening their networks. Educational consultants are also attractive to schools because they can provide unbiased and objective opinions on management functions. As third parties, they have no vested interest in the process issues, no power to gain or lose; no territory to expand or contract, and no budget to increase or decrease (Block, 2011). Educational consultants can also enhance school system capacity by contributing a unique set of skills and resources that would otherwise be unavailable to the school community. More importantly, consulting organisations rely heavily on their credibility to generate and sustain their business. That is why, the individual characteristics and practices of consultants who operate within these organisations are critical to their success.

The work of an educational consultant is varied; a school consultant can be generalist, or can specialise in one particular area (Threlfall, 2018). They can work for big, medium or small schools, be self-employed or work as a freelancer. In some cases, education consultants do not necessarily always have direct contact with the learner, and often might work in a role that supports a basic school to deliver teaching and learning strategies or to fix systemic issues. It should also be noted that educational consultants can specialise in a particular form of education, such as: special needs; careers advice and support; subject specialism, e.g. enterprise education, early childhood and STEM;



the development of learning products; online or technical education support; examination preparation; teacher training and development; and national or international partnerships development. They however could lead a school project or provide information for clients without intervening in the decision-making process of the school (Qing, Pauline, Sharon & Robert, 2014).

3.1 Types of Consultation

As previously discussed, consultation is simply the sharing of knowledge, wisdom and experience. The consultant therefore puts special knowledge and experience to work, and provide an important service, by sharing his wisdom and expertise with others. This may be through;

1. **Internal Consultation:** this is referred to as non-profit consultation as it generally described working as a consultant without the expectation of receiving any payment or additional compensation. This may be done by the individual or firm without some type of formal contract or agreement for consultation services. For instance. A consultant may render a free service to his colleague, friend or family member based on their relationship. Another instance is also a school consultant rendering school advice to a parent concerning the choice of a school or behavioural management of the child. In other words, this type of consultation is more informal in nature and might not require a written contract, goal or report. It is also more common than an external consultation.
2. **External Consultation:** this is regarded as the formal working relationship between a consultant and the client with the expectation of receiving payment or other forms of compensation. This arrangement involves some type of formal contract for consultation services but may not be required. This type of consultation is more formal in nature and would involve writing a contract, goals and report. Other forms of external consulting are;
 - a. **Strategic consulting;** which aims at identifying the overall direction, goals and strategies of a company or organization within its specific industry sector.
 - b. **Management consulting;** focuses on how an organization can achieve its stated goals through choosing and implementing strategies, enhancing and streamlining operations, and improving information technology.
 - c. **Information technology (IT) consulting;** focuses on the applications of technology to help an organization become more efficient and achieve its goals.
 - d. **Industry specific consulting;** focuses on an industry's special concerns, but may involve any or all the other aspects of consulting described above.

Nowadays, there are new and different types of consulting firms. Consultants are used for training, personal coaching and team building. There are also consultants for marketing, for fundraising, and, of course, for campaigning. But it should be noted that a consultant is more likely to serve as an internal consultant first before venturing into external consultation. This will assist him to hone his consulting skills before venturing into the real world of consultation.

3.2 Competency Areas of Educational Consultants

Consultative work in a school involves providing assistance to teachers, faculty, curriculum supervisors, education/departmental administrators, deans, local education agencies, and educational programs/projects at the state and local levels, in the development, implementation, and evaluation of education programs/projects. Hence, consultants must be competent in the following areas;



S/N	Competency	Definition
1.	Consultation/Advising	Ability to provide advice and counsel. Ability to understand client programs, organization and culture.
2.	Knowledge-Professional	Knowledge of and professional skills in specific area(s) and keeps current with developments and trends in areas(s) of expertise.
3.	Analytical Thinking	Ability to identify issues and obtain relevant information. Ability to relate and compare data from different sources, and identify alternative solutions.
4.	Communication	Ability to communicate information to individuals or groups; and deliver presentations suited to the characteristics and needs of the audience. Ability to clearly and concisely convey information orally or in writing to individuals or groups to ensure that they understand the information and the message. Ability to listen and respond appropriately to others.
5.	Training	Ability to lead and guide others to develop new skills or knowledge that will enhance their work. Ability to design, develop and/or deliver training programs.
6.	Research	Ability to review and study relevant information from various sources to develop new information and identify primary and secondary authorities to validate.

Source: Tucker (2017), p. 3

3.3 Duties of an Educational Consultant in a School

According to Qing et al. (2014), consultants are often regarded as an advocate for schools; technical expert; trainer or educator; collaborator; identifier of alternatives; fact finder; process specialist and reflector. They however can perform any of the listed duties in a school organisation whether public or private school;

1. Develop positive learning environments for students.
2. Designs and conducts in-service training sessions for teachers and management in areas of expertise.
3. Provides direction and guidance to teachers and management in the planning, development and implementation of effective programs.
4. May assess school training needs and provide consultation to management regarding the availability of training resources.
5. May develop, coordinate and deliver orientation packages for newly recruited school personnel.
6. Ensure positive outcomes for all students.
7. Maintain and manage records, reports and documentation.
8. Create and initiate accurate special education classes.
9. Coordinates workshops or conferences on specialty topics using expert resource people.



10. Designs and prepares programs by selecting appropriate content, determining format and arranging for material and human resources.
11. Acts as a resource to management, teachers, private and public agencies regarding educational methods, visual and audio teaching aids, program planning, etc.
12. Researches latest professional training concepts in specific fields and provides courses to ensure that staff may effectively apply new technology.
13. May act as a consultant to other educational programs in related fields.
14. Serves on school committees as required.

3.4 Qualities and Skills of an Educational Consultant

Generally, an educational consultant must at least possess a Master's degree in Education specifically educational management, psychology and early childhood education will be more relevant in a basic school. Educational consultant must have knowledge, experience and credibility in the specific work for which the consulting organisation is sought. The consultant/consulting firm must also possess good understanding of business matters and good knowledge of educational techniques with the ability to plan, co-ordinate and instruct training sessions. Other skills and qualities relevant to the work of an educational consultant are;

- a) a passion for education
- b) good planning and organising skills
- c) a willingness to keep up to date with modern teaching and learning strategies
- d) an ability to meet tight deadlines
- e) an ability to communicate ideas
- f) an ability to build trust and establish relationships
- g) excellent interpersonal skills
- h) ability to work in diverse range of environments
- i) problem-solving skills
- j) considerable knowledge of visual and audio instructional aids and the ability to employ such devices effectively
- k) ability to maintain effective work relationships with public and private agencies and
- l) physically capable of performing the duties assigned

4. THE NEED FOR PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP WITH EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS

Due to decaying conditions in the present universal basic education programme in Nigeria. Public school leaders are facing various clamours for improved performances in basic schools. Private school owners are no exception to these. In response to resource constraints and greater accountability standards, many school systems will have to turn to outside organisations to help facilitate systemic improvements. Additional motivations for private schools to engage in this partnership may include a desire to deliver higher-quality services in order to remain competitive in the market. It should be noted that educational consultants have been around for some time, but it wasn't until 1976 in the United States, that educational consultants collaborated and were recognized for the assistance they provide to both parents and schools (Bozak, 2001).



With the help of a consultant, parents in the United States are shown the best school options and students can be referred to suitable schools in a timely manner. This collaboration also sees the United States government giving a competitive grant program called “Race to the Top” incentive partnerships; with a growing number of organisations thus emerging to provide consulting support to school leaders in pursuit of comprehensive school improvement. Similar initiatives for partnering with educational consultants can be seen around the globe. In the United Kingdom, for example, the new Research Councils, UK (RCUK) issued a national funding call, ‘to create a structured and strategic mechanism for Higher Education Institutions to work in partnership with secondary schools’ (RCUK, 2012). Similarly, the Australian Government, State and territory governments have entered into several consultancy partnerships; which encourage school systems to engage with higher education providers and to form external partnerships with parents, businesses and local communities (Australian Government Department of Education, 2013). In Czech Republic, the duty of every educational consultant, in accordance with Government Regulation No. 72/2005, is to be able to provide social support and rapid response in a crisis situation (Juklová, 2014). The foregoing shows that these governments have recognise the important role of consultants in school management.

Although in Nigeria, educational consultants have existed in various forms; and are often engaged in private schools, for the purpose of school start-up; management; innovation; examination consulting etc. they are however not as prominent as other consultants in engineering, IT and constructing fields. In 2018, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) of Nigeria advertised and engaged the services of educational consultants in monitoring and evaluating state universal basic education projects; conduct capacity building workshops and training for teachers in basic education sub-sector; monitor the performance of federal teachers scheme (FTS) participants on zonal basis; assessment of learning achievement of pupils of basic education schools and creation of statistical database on basic education. This shows the place of school consultancy in assisting government agencies to attain their organisational goals. Therefore, private and public basic school management team should also utilize this opportunity to partner with educational consultants for easy attainment of their school’s goals and objectives.

5. THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS

For a successful partnership between a school management team and the consultant/consulting firm; the management team have some role to play. The school leadership, capabilities, structures and staff are some of the determinants, that influence the school management team’s role in ensuring that the skill and expertise of the consultant results in good productivity ((Levin, Datnow & Carrier 2012; Sanders, 2012). Bussey, Welch and Mohammed (2013) however highlighted the followings as key to a successful partnership between school management and consultants;

1. **Leadership capacity:** The school management team must be committed to the improvement and achievement of consultancy. The capability of the leaders must include the ability to manage change within the school, including ability to repeatedly and consistently communicate reason and strategy for change to staff at all levels of the organisation.
2. **Trusting relationships:** The school management team and staff must be willing to trust in the management skills of the consultant, to help restructure or innovate the school towards the achievement of school goals and objectives.



3. **Structural alignment:** This refers to the ability of the school management team to learn and integrate new information resulting from the consulting partnership towards achieving its goals.
4. **Role expectations:** In order to effectively champion change in the school, the management team must clearly define what is expected of the consultant/consulting firm.
5. **Project management:** Ability to systematically move project along by ensuring clear benchmarks and timeline are adhered to, creating and using communication protocols between the consultant and school leaders as well as staff
6. **Locus of accountability:** The school management team must also clearly state the degree to which accountability for success of the partnership with the consultant. The degree to which incentives that reward strong partnership performance or consequences for failing to meet responsibilities of partnership must also be stated.
7. **Focus on building school system capacity:** There must also be a degree to which there is shared understanding that a primary purpose of the partnership is to build school system capacity for systemic improvement.

6. CONCLUSION

Educational consultants are individuals or organisational body that uses experience in learning, teaching, and assessment to help develop the curriculum, or work with school organisations and learners to identify and support their need in order to achieve the school goals and objectives. These individual(s) provides consultative and instructional services to teachers, counsellors and other staff or program personnel, school heads and owners in areas requiring specialized knowledge. Their qualities and skills often include good educational background, passion for the development of education, planning skill, interpersonal skill and problem-solving skill. Also, the study revealed that educational consultants have been collaborating with various national governments such as the United States, United Kingdom and Australia to help facilitate school improvements.

Although in Nigeria, educational consultants are sometimes engaged in the start-up and training of teachers in private basic schools; but their service has generally been sparingly. Even thou, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) recently engage the services of some educational consultants in monitoring and evaluating state universal basic education projects and performance of federal teachers scheme (FTS) participants on zonal basis; as well as to conduct capacity building workshops and training for teachers in basic education sub-sector; and to create statistical database on basic education.

Educational consultants can still offer much more than this. Some of these services include; developing positive learning environments; design and conduct in-service training for school staff; provide direction and guidance to both management and staff; orientate newly recruited staff; and also help to inculcate more technology into the learning process. Hence, private and public basic school management team will not only benefit educational knowledge from these experts; they will also be driving their schools towards the achievement of the Universal basic education goals in Nigeria especially in the current pandemic year, where most school activities have gone on the web.



7. RECOMMENDATION

In considering the role that educational consultants can play in enhancing the quality of both private and public schools' products in Nigeria and the success therein, the following are thus recommended:

1. Government should be willing to engage the services of educational consultants in the running of the day to day affairs of public basic schools.
2. The Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria needs to engage the services of consultants in monitoring the academic accreditation system in basic schools, especially in order to avoid the practice of academic fraud of school certificates.
3. The school management team of a private or public basic school must first be willing to engage the services of a school consultant in their school; and as such set up the necessary mechanisms that can aid their effectiveness.
4. The service of a well experienced and qualified educational consultant should be contracted to help develop, restructure or renovate basic schools in Nigeria, especially in the North-eastern part of the country; where insurgent activities have crippled most basic schools, towards school improvements.
5. Educational consultants can serve as watch dogs to State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) on issues such as teachers' absenteeism, class attendance, school monitoring and inspection, and follow up on program efficiency etc.
6. There is a need for a national body to be set up for the administration, control, management and regulation of all the activities of educational consultants in the country.
7. Educational consultants needs to be current on trends in management techniques that can revitalize basic education system in the country
8. Educational consultants or consulting firms are also encouraged to advertise more often their services either through social media or mass media in order to get more patronage.
9. There is also a need for a national contract agreement between educational consultants and schools that will define the role, expectation, success criteria, fees, duration and termination process of the consulting agreement between consultants and school management, in order to avoid disagreement between the various parties.
10. There should also be mutual trust between the intending school management and the consultant/consulting firm.
11. Lastly, any individual or group of individuals willing to venture into consulting business should ensure that they are upright and trustworthy in all their dealings, in order not to soil the good name of "Educational Consultant".



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