

RATIONALE FOR KEEPING A COMPREHENSIVE UP TO DATE INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL INPUTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS IN NIGERIA

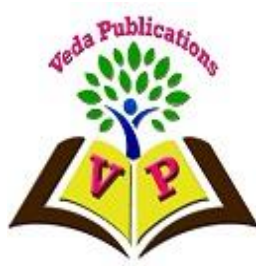
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Abstract



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Inventory management is the application of systematic approach using educational inputs to control the quality and quantity of information required towards achieving peak performance by educational instructors and which eventually translates into better academic performance of students. These educational inputs are therefore essential tools that could assist educational instructors to function maximally. However, most studies on the link between educational inputs and job performance have always been on the impact of availability of educational inputs without much attention on the management of these educational inputs. The study investigated the rationale for keeping a comprehensive up to date inventory of educational inputs. The study concluded that there exist educational inputs inventory problems in Nigeria education system because there are evident components and these could be curbed effectively by the adoption of the right management options

Keywords: *Inventory, Educational Inputs, Information, Effective Management, School Head, Educational Instructors, Stakeholders, School System.*

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Introduction

Information is every organisation's most basic and essential asset, in common with any other business asset, recorded information requires effective management. Effective management of information allows fast, accurate and reliable access to records, ensuring the timely destruction of redundant information and the identification and protection of vital and historically important records.

Inventory ensures that information can be accessed easily, can be destroyed routinely when no longer needed, and enables organisations not only to function on a day to day basis, but also to fulfil legal and financial requirements. It serves as an important resource for future decision making. Inventory refers to a set of activities required for systematically controlling the creation, distribution, use, maintenance and disposition of recorded information maintained as evidence of organisational activities. Inventory is synonymous to list, catalogue, directory, record, register, checklist, roster, file, log, archive, account, description or statement.

School inventory are official documents, books and files containing essential and crucial information of actions and events which are kept and preserved in the school for utilization and retrieval of information when needed. Such documents are usually kept by principal, teachers, counsellors or administrative staff (Ayinde, 2005; Weggant, 2005). The purpose of inventory in the school is to ensure that accurate and proper records are activity collected and preserved for future use and matters that will promote efficiency and effectiveness of the school system are kept.

School inventory is very pertinent for management effectiveness of the school. It is not enough to just keep records, how records are kept and used is essential for management effectiveness. The essence of record keeping is to enable the management or educators make effective decision and formulate relevant policies. Any educational system that refuses to attach importance to proper and comprehensive up to date inventory would find it difficult to achieve its educational goals. It is the records of the past events or activities which were preserved that are used by administrators for planning and control of the present programmes or activities.

To this end, the management of academic and administrative affairs of schools traditionally falls within the purview of school administrators. Unerringly, formal education in Nigeria is rapidly changing and technically tailored towards meeting certain set goals, such as “education for all” (Nwagwu, 1984; 1987; Oyewale, Ajadi & Fasanmi 2016; Agun, 2017). The requirements of these various goals from the school managers are centred on the advancement of teaching and learning through the implementation of performance-based management, which is led by a management team, with the school head at the centre of it all. Given this important task, the school head, as a matter of fact, must understand the role of school managers to effectively manage not only staff but also the educational inputs inform of school physical plant facility to meet the overall objectives of the school system.

To fulfill educational objectives, educational inputs such as school physical plant facilities are required and should be central to the extent that educational instructors, students and other school personnel will enjoy their stay and perform their duties effectively, made possible by the administrator’s leadership ingenuity and proficiency. The school curriculum would be meaningful and functional if the required facilities are provided in adequate quantities at appropriate times and maintained properly. The realization of the importance of educational facilities has informed the demand in the choice of schools that parents/guardians send their children/wards to in Nigeria (Ajayi & Oyewale, 2017; Oyewale, Ajayi & Ariyo, 2018).

Educational inputs inform of physical plant facilities are materials designed to serve specific purposes. In the school system, there are multiplicity of educational inputs, which facilitates teaching and learning. They are used to; provide diversity of thoughts, illustrate concepts, provide opportunity for firsthand experience, and protect the individual and also provide comfort. Also, they may be used for; experimentation and demonstration, scientific investigation and discovery, observation and inquiry, as well as development of scientific attitudes and skills.

From the above, educational inputs are materials resources that enhance teaching and learning thereby making the process meaningful and purposeful (Asiyai, 2012; Onyekwere & Ubong, 2019). They are synonymous with educational facilities, school material resources, school plant and facilities. These educational inputs are further classified into four broad categories namely: instructional materials, welfare/health facilities, physical facilities,

recreational facilities and infrastructural facilities. Instructional materials includes: books, pamphlets, games, maps, textbooks, musical scores, notebooks. Instructional materials can also include manipulative items for in-class lessons such as protractors, safety goggles, T-squares, blocks, chalk, models, pencils, rulers and art supplies and visual and audio-visual aids.

Physical facilities for education such as all material resources that are needed to impart formal education. It may include: land, building, furniture, lab and library. The facilities also includes furnishings, materials and supplies, equipment and information technology, as well as various aspects of the building grounds, namely, athletic fields, playgrounds, areas for outdoor learning, and vehicular access and parking, basketball courts, athletic fields, a football field, a cricket pitch, badminton volleyball and tennis courts and a playground with synthetic track. Recreational facilities such as: playing fields, tennis and basketball courts, amusement parks, skating rinks, recreation centers, and golf courses and bicycle paths. Welfare and health facilities such as clinic, health centres, restaurant/cafeteria, convenience/toilets. Infrastructural facilities such as water, school plant, electricity, mechanical, plumbing, telecommunications, security, fire suppression systems, information technology and building ground, vehicular access and parking (Oyewale, Ajadi & Fasanmi 2016; Oyewale, Ajibade & Faleti, 2019; Onyekwere & Ubong, 2019).

Therefore, keeping a comprehensive and up to date inventory of these educational inputs is an integral part of the overall management of the school. No doubt, the actualization of the goals and objectives of education requires the provision, maximum utilization and appropriate management of these facilities. Educational inputs management is a process that ensures that buildings and other technical systems, the operations of an organization are properly cared for and recorded up to date for easy evaluation processes. Hence, educational inputs inventory reflects on the application of scientific methods in the planning, organizing, decision-making, co-ordination and controlling supports of the physical environment of learning for the actualization of the educational goals and objectives.

Effective educational inputs inventory enables school administrators to succeed in carrying out the educational goals, through utilization of his leadership skills. The leadership skills includes: planning (deciding how to accomplish the organization's goals); organizing (doing the necessary preparation); staffing (filling positions with the right people); directing

(motivating staff so that goals are achieved); controlling (guiding the organization in the proper direction); and decision making (which underlies everything the manager accomplishes). The competent school head chooses a time frame that fits the planning agenda, and develops strategies to monitor progress. Meetings should be well-planned, and time management strategies should be applied in order to achieve appropriate delegation of tasks. Leadership is a basic part of management, and loyalty and respect are gained through merit.

The unsatisfactory performance often experienced in schools by students and educational programmes is always attributed to lack of basic infrastructure, lack of adequate and accurate statistics, inadequate funding, embezzlement, bureaucratic bottleneck and poor attitude to work. Generally, the administrator's responsibility in the management of educational facilities entails bringing together individuals as a group that will control, coordinate and articulate activities to achieve tangible and holistic learning for the overall benefit of the society (Ukeje, 2000; Agun, 2017). The school management team headed by the headmaster at primary school stage, the principal at secondary school level, the rector at polytechnic, the provost at college of education and vice chancellor at the university level must develop, support and equip staff with knowledge and required skills of educational inputs inventory to respond positively to the ever changing phenomenon of education to meet contemporary societal challenges.

Effective management of school inventory requires knowledge, skill and expertise in handling different facets of the school system. This calls on the ability of the school head to set required objectives, supervise facilities usage, formulate plans for procurement and ensure actual management and supervision of available educational inputs to attain set goals of the school system. The headmaster, principal, rector, provost or vice chancellor as the manager of the school organization therefore has the onerous task of mobilizing available human resource to ensure a proper running of the school (Awe, 2000; Osakwe.2011; Block, 2011; Usen, Udofia & Offiong, 2012).

Characteristics of Educational Inputs Inventory

Educational inputs inventory are valued only if they satisfy the following conditions:

1. **Inventory must be complete:** documents will be complete if they are kept regularly. If they are not, the information will be incomplete. Such information may therefore be unreliable.
2. **Inventory must be honestly kept:** Information must not be distorted, that is, documents must be honest representation of facts. Events must be recorded as they occur and in their perspective.
3. **Inventory must be retrievable:** documents that cannot be recalled will not serve a useful purpose to anyone. Retrieval of records must be easy so as to save time.
4. **Inventory must be usable:** documents are kept for the purpose of future usage. There is no sense in keeping useless records.
5. **Inventory must be original:** documents that are kept should be backed up by original documents where necessary. Such documents include invoices, bills and cheque counterfoils.

On the other hand, the guiding principles of educational inputs inventory are to ensure that information is available when and where it is needed, in an organised and efficient manner and in a well maintained environment. Schools must ensure that the physical facility inventory is:

Authentic: It must be possible to prove that educational inputs inventory are what they purport to be and the purpose to which they are created, by keeping a record of their management through time. Where information is later added to an existing document within a record, the added information must be signed and dated. With electronic records, changes and additions must be identified through audit trails.

Accurate: educational inputs inventory must accurately reflect transactions that they document.

Complete: educational inputs inventory must be sufficient in content, context and structure to reconstruct the relevant activities and transactions that they document.

Effective: Records must be maintained for specific purposes and the information contained in the records must meet those purposes. Records will be identified and linked to the business process to which they are related.

Secure: educational inputs inventory must be securely maintained to prevent unauthorized access, alteration, damage or removal. They must be stored in a secure environment, the degree of security reflecting the sensitivity and importance of the contents. Where educational inputs inventory are migrated across changes in technology, the evidence preserved must remain authentic and accurate (Ololube, 2011; 2012; 2013; Rose & Nwachukwu, 2015).

Importance of Educational Inputs Inventory

Educational inputs inventory are very important in schools because they serve as sources of reliable information about the teachers, students and the school generally. It is a very important aspect of school administration; it serves school administrators not only to carry out management function of planning, organizing, staffing, controlling, reporting and directing but also help solve knotty educational problems (Agun, 2017; Hanior, Achor & Gire, 2018).

Therefore, educational inputs inventory are particularly important for the following reasons:

1. They keep the Government and the Society informed on the need or otherwise of further investment in education and the direction and dimension of such investment. It gives the Government and the society the feedback as they whether the investment on education is productive or not productive. If it is productive, the Government and the society would be encouraged to do more and if it is not productive, they would try to see what caused its unproductivity and proffer solution to it.
2. Educational inputs inform of school physical facility like attendance register can save a school from litigation connected with the law of liability. This implies that the learner may hold the school liable for any injury sustained, inflicted on or otherwise during school hour.
3. Nigeria, being a country with the problems of certificate racketeering, school inventory is useful in solving cases of forged certificates and testimonials brought before the courts by learners and schools. Research has shown how people forge certificate in

order to get to certain posts or positions. With proper records in schools and all other institutions, such would not happen and if it does, it would be detected on time.

4. In these days of awareness, parents and guardians need school inventory to provide effective monitoring of the education of their children and wards. School records help parents and guardians to know more their wards educationally; it provides the platform for parents and guardians to monitor their wards effectively.

5. The school inventories are important sources of statistics for educational planning and administration particularly in the area of decision making.

6. They enable supervisors and inspectors of education to assess the performance of teachers in the school. They also enable auditor to check in detail the financial transactions of schools in order to prevent financial fraud. Teachers oriented school physical facility like time book, students academic performance, staff attendance register, health record book enable supervisors and inspector of education to know how prominent the teachers are, how regular and punctual the teachers are (which is part of teachers effectiveness) and how qualified the teachers are, even looking at the students' academic performance, it will help the supervisors and inspectors to know how the teachers are performing. It will also give the auditor the opportunity to know maybe there is financial misappropriation in the school.

7. School inventory are used by education and social science researchers to advance knowledge through research. School records give room for more research institutions to provide more knowledge and manpower in terms of research in order to increase productivity of education.

Problems and Challenges of Educational Inputs Inventory

In Nigeria, getting accurate and reliable data has been a long teething problem Awe, (2000); Agenyi, (2013); Adebayo, (2014); Agbaje (1982) as cited by Agun (2017); Hanior, Achor and Gire, (2018) pointed out that Nigeria has been muddling without facts and figures in schools. Factors like poor statistical system, incompetent teachers, ill equipped and ill-supplied facilities are products of poor record keeping of the school system. Among the problems facing physical plant facility inventory in schools are:

Transfer and Retirement of Officers: When an officer/school head with a particular schedule of duty is transferred from one office or school to another without an immediate replacement with a competent officer, a gap is created. There is likely to be distortion in the flow of information and record management of physical plant facilities. In some cases, transferred officers may not prepare adequate handing over of records and other matters still pending. This lapse may apparently constitute a problem for the new officer who is now assigned as a replacement.

Inadequate Storage Space: This hampers effective educational inputs management. It is common place to see files in piles from the floor up the walls in many offices because of lack of space. Adequate provision is not usually made for storing files in some offices and schools.

Undurable and Bulky Materials for Records: Files used for keeping educational inputs inventory are usually made from inferior materials such as cardboard. Within a short period of handling the files, they begin to wear out. If such files are not replaced, materials or records in them can get lost. Also, planks susceptible to termite attack are often used as file racks, shelves and cupboards. These get damaged easily and result in dislocation of records.

Carelessness of Officers Handling the Records: Findings have shown that, at the school level, both the school heads and teachers do not keep educational inputs inventory accurately. The most abused is the attendance register. They do not keep their diaries and record of workbook up-to-date. In some cases, when students withdraw or drop out from the school/class, teachers continue to mark them present.

Inexperienced Officers: Newly recruited officers who are left unindicted tend to gamble with movement of documents and files. Such officers can place documents into wrong files or cabinets. At times the inexperienced officer may not be aware of the importance and urgency of a document thereby putting it in an irrelevant file.

Involvement of Manual Operations in Inventory Management: Manual operation of educational inputs inventory can lead to misplacement of file or loss of vital documents by unscrupulous officers. Officers often times feel hesitant to carry files from one office to another because of laziness or bulkiness and undurability of the files; hence, information may not get to the right place at the appropriate time.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there exist educational inputs inventory problems in Nigeria education system because there are evident components and these could be curbed effectively by the adoption of the right management options. The study therefore provided information on the importance of inventory management in promoting educational instructors job performance.

Recommendation

- School administrators should imbibe the culture and practice of keeping regular inventory of educational inputs such as students enrolment list and the activities or events that go on in the school so that if the need arises for its use in future it will be easily ascertained without any stress and doubt. There should be proper inventory of every educational input in the schools by the school managers.
- The Federal and State Ministry of Education should organise training, workshops and seminars on inventory management to enhance proper management of educational inputs and smooth running of the school effectively. That is professionally trained staff should be employed over time and existing staff be sent for necessary training through in-service training programmes. In addition, induction programmes for fresh staff, full computerization of educational inputs and provision of institutions' filing manual are encouraged.
- Government and Non- Governmental Organization (NGO) should combined forces to organize public awareness in order to sensitize school administrators and instructors on the values and roles of educational inventory in order to achieve better understanding of their responsibilities particularly in terms of resource management and performance evaluation, in order to reduce role conflicts among members.

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