PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

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Psychological Principles and School Organization

Introduction

In this chapter, school administration and organization will be examined. There will be focus on aspects of behaviour of the personnel involved in school organization and how these behaviours affect the organization of the school. Types of organizational structures are reviewed while leadership styles of the central figure in the school, pupil and staff administration and organization are also explored.

School administration and organization

As the role of the school in the society increased, it became clear that a number of services and responsibilities will have to be developed to enhance learning and teaching. Through administration, efforts of people are coordinated to achieve the goals of the school. School administration and school organization are two interrelated phases in the process of facilitating teaching and learning.

School administration: This is a process concerned with creating, maintaining and unifying the energies within an educational institution toward the realization of the predetermined objectives of the school. The administrator fulfils such demands by executing policies related to organizing, allocating and co-ordinating human and material resources with the organization, being mindful of the purposes of education. Administration implies authority and responsibility.

School Organization: This is basically concerned with making arrangements to enable the school to realize its purpose. Organization is necessary because imperfections may appear in existing arrangements, original purposes may become modified or extended, conditions may change and new techniques may be discovered, in the school setting.

In the general literature on administration, the types of formal organizational structure usually described include the following: radial, spatial, scaler, line and staff.

(a) *Radial structure:* In this type of structure, the chief executive occupies the central position, while all departments have equal authority and similar responsibility. When there are conflicting

views, the central executive often makes the decision. In a higher institution of learning, the Dean could be the central executive for the heads of departments who share equal and similar responsibilities. The radial structure is often called "spherical" or "circular" structure of organization.

(b) *Spatial structure:* This form of organization deals more with the location of functions or where control is centralized or located. In this type of structure, there is usually the arguments for centralizing or decentralizing functions, say in an agency. Decentralization may be necessary sometimes to effect efficiency of function.

Do we centralize control in the state school board for example and decentralize functions in the various local school boards? Usually, the central office retains general supervisory and administrative responsibility while special services may be decentralized into branch offices.

(c) *Scalar structure:* In this type of organization, the duties to be performed are graded according to degrees of authority and responsibility. Individuals or positions are arranged in a hierarchy according to degree of responsibility and authority they possess and use. For instance, in an educational organizational chart. The Permanent Secretary may indicate a higher authority, followed by the Deputy Permanent Secretary on the administrative arm or the Chief Inspector of Education on the professional arm.

(d) *Line and staff structure:* In the line structure, the organization is divided according to authority from top to bottom or vice-versa. Traditionally, line personnel give commands or orders in the organization while the staff personnel are usually concerned with services quality, coordination, control and so on. On the other hand, the staff structure is division of organization according to functions performed. For instance, academic and non-academic staff, could be a division according to functions performed.

It must be pointed out that none of the organizational structures so far described may be found intact in a given educational enterprise. Elements of all the structures discussed may exist in one school system. It also appears that educational organizations are more likely to follow scaler, line and staff structures of organizations compared to spatial and radial structures of organization.

Psychological principles

For the effective administration and organization of the school, some psychological principles must be taken into consideration. The central figure in the school has to interact with the staff and students. It becomes essential that each party co-operates with the other, for the

effective running of the school. The head, as the central figure in the school must see his role as a co-ordinator in the sense of "first among equals". He needs to co-ordinate with both the instructional and the non-instructional staff, the pupils and the parents. Central to the success of the central figure is his leadership style, his ability to delegate authority. He must be prudent and ensure justice and flexibility in his administration.

Leadership style

The leader has to be democratic rather than being authoritarian in his style. The head, as the central figure, should try to balance issues emerging in his administration and organization. He should be directing, influencing and controlling. He needs to influence others in the school system to do what has to be done. The school principal should be able to communicate his ideas and messages across to the school staff and students. He must possess supervisory skills and should be able to evaluate whether a job is well-done or not.

Delegation of authority

It is humanly impossible for one single person to handle all the business in the school. The head cannot by himself see to the collection of fees, purchase of books by students and so on. He has to delegate authority. The head cannot centralize everything in his office because his abilities are limited even if he has the best intentions for the school. He may not get efficiency and effectiveness in what he does, hence, he needs to delegate authority. Sometimes a committee might be set up to handle special problems within the school. When authority is delegated to another, the leader should let the person carry out the duties assigned without much interference. The leader should back-up the authority that is delegated to others but must also make sure that people to whom authority is delegated do not go outside the policies evolved to guide them. Accountability or feed-back must be made to whoever delegates authority. For instance, if someone attends a meeting on behalf of the principal, he needs to report to him.

Prudence : This implies the ability to employ caution, care, judgement and skill in the management of practical affairs. The leaders in an organization must use foresight, give consideration to contingencies, and have the capacity to use wisdom as the outgrowth of experience. Prudence means 'curbing one's heart', and using ones head. It indicates knowing what to say, when to say it, how to say it, and to what audience it should be said. On the long run the aim is to achieve maximum results for education. The head of an organization can even be prudent

economically, budgeting the best for any money spent on behalf of the school. This does not mean buying the cheapest without regard to quality. The head of an organization must employ prudence as a selector rather than as a prohibitor. His prudence must not delve too much into the past in a rapidly changing society. Prudence must not be employed by him for selfish purposes at the expense of the greater good of the society.

Justice: The principle of justice as a psychological principle is concerned with how one deals with every person in the organization. There has to be fairness to everyone. The principle of equality must operate in the organization, where there is no sex or religious discrimination. In taking any decision, the whole facts must be considered, and when there are competing alternatives, judgement must be based on priority principle. Promotions, examinations, approval of leave etc. must be fair.

Flexibility: Stability, adaptability and flexibility are basic principles in school administration. Stability implies firmness. Policies, when laid down in the organization, must be adhered to by members. If changes are to be made, they should not affect fundamentals, if the specifics are affected. If there are prescribed punishments for violations of school rules, the rules must not change from week to week or when a favourite is involved. Inconsistency must be avoided. The principle of adaptability implies that one should employ the best judgement in order to apply say a given policy to an organization. Adaptability is closely linked with flexibility, which indicates that you are not just going to insist on the letters of the word. Conclusions and decisions may be tentative until all data and evidences are in. If, for instance, the State School Board indicates the need for agricultural farms in our schools, the agricultural projects should be adapted to suit respective localities. Perhaps each school will look into crops that are better suited for the weather conditions prevailing in the locality before deciding which crops to plant.

Staff-personnel organization

Personnel are involved in any administration, personnel are needed to run many aspects of an organization, many personnel are needed to run the school in order to provide students with intellectual and moral development. Efficient personnel policy is the cornerstone of an effective administration and organization. There must be defined institutional objectives and goals. Each member of the organization should then strive to contribute to the effective realization of the goals.

Pupil organization

The pupils make the school. The school as an organization must have guidelines for admission as many pupils usually compete for the limited vacancy in the school. Admission of pupils may be restricted to a particular geographical zone as it is now done presently, to ensure that pupils attend schools in the neighbourhood. In a mixed school, perhaps, balance will be ensured with reference to sex of the pupils. In some cases admission could be based on a certain level of performance of pupils. Classification of pupils in the school could be homogeneous or heterogeneous. That is, pupils could be grouped together if they share similar characteristics, age and so on.

In some cases, many characteristics could be taken into consideration in grouping. Educationists who favour heterogeneous grouping, argue that opportunities are provided to pupils of one particular characteristics to learn from pupils of other characteristics. Taking achievement for example, grouping pupils of different achievement levels could make both the average and the below average pupils gain tremendously from their association with the above average pupils. Educationists who support homogeneous grouping, in this instance would prefer a situation where the achievement level of each student or group of students is recognized and then the children are guided to learn, so that they do not lose by being grouped, say with slow learners or low achievers. Whichever grouping is adopted, the child's ability, aptitude and emotions should be taken into consideration.

The school as an organization

All organizations are characterized by goals or purposes. The school as an organization has a structure which has to be kept in balance and adapted to goals. Within the school also, is a social system of people with different abilities that must be co-ordinated. The school like any organization must have a line of communication, between the principal and staff or students and vice-versa. Authority has to be distributed in the system, one should know who is responsible to whom. The school as an organization is likely to encounter some cultural environmental constraints, a sort of impediment in the success of the school. This could be social or political. Such constraints must be identified and tackled to ensure the achievement of the school goals. The school like any organization may experience informal organization within the school, people could form an informal group because they belong to the same religion, because they attended the same university or because they come from the same geographical area. It is important for the head of the organization to be aware of such groupings as they can affect decisions or could be used to arrive at decisions.

Summary

Efforts of people must be co-ordinated to achieve the goals of the school. General organizational structure may be radial, spatial, scalar or line and staff. It is possible to have an organization incorporating a mixture of these structures.

Some psychological principles have implications for school organization. The leadership style employed by the head could affect the stability of the organization. The central figure in the school as an example of an organization, may need to delegate authority to other personnel in the school to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. He has to be prudent and show fairness in his relationships to others in the school. He has to demonstrate firmness but at the same time show flexibility and adaptability.

Efficient organization of the staff and pupils in the school will lead to an effective school organization. The characteristics of an organization are also visible in the school. The head of the school should thus be aware of them.

Follow-Up activities

1.   What is the relationship between school administration and school organization?

2.   Discuss some of the general organizational structures that you know.

3.   Identify and discuss some of the psychological principles that may affect school organization.

Out-of-class activity

Draw the organizational chart for a Ministry of Education that you know.

References for further reading

Fafunwa, A. B. *History of Education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974.

Obanya, P. A. I. *Education and the Nigerian Society*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1981.