

# Supervision and Inspection of Adult Literacy Classes in Nigeria: An Overview

Abdulkarim Ishaq\*

Department of Continuing Education and Extension Services, University of Maiduguri, P.M.B 1069, Maiduguri,  
Borno State, Nigeria.

\* E-mail: [abdulkarim\\_ishaq@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:abdulkarim_ishaq@yahoo.co.uk)

## Abstract

It is indubitable to say that the roles of supervision and inspection of adult literacy classes cannot be over-emphasized. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines current issues in the supervision and inspection of adult literacy classes in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper discusses the term supervision and inspection in educational programmes, the roles of supervision and inspection in adult literacy classes, the problems of supervision and inspection in Nigeria. The paper concludes that supervision/inspection is done to ensure that things are done as planned to be carried out in an organization. Hence, adult literacy classes need adequate supervision and or inspection in order to identify the strength and weaknesses of the classes; be it in the area of personnel, material and funding and environmental. Recommendations were then proffered for improved practice.

**Keywords:** Supervision, Inspection, Adult Literacy, Classes, Inspectors, Supervisors

## 1. Introduction

The class as a social composition in an educational institution cannot function effectively if supervision of the entire system is defective. The term supervision is commonly used not only in the education sector but in every component of life. This is because it is a very important ingredient in a social system to ensure success in goal achievement. The epistemology of the word, is derived from the Latin word '*Supervidere*'. If the word is split into two, it makes literal meaning. 'super' mean 'over' and videre means "to watch or see". The word supervision can literally mean 'to over see'. This connotes hierarchy, meaning someone is set over another to watch his /her deeds. Against this background, Paul (2012) implied that educational supervision refers to an art of overseeing educators (instructors) and learners in all educational settings.

Supervision therefore refers to the art of watching over a literacy class with special attention to instructors' capability personality, the learners' comprehension and learning environment to ensure goal attainment in adult literacy programmes. Supervision according to Smith in [stateuniversity.com](http://stateuniversity.com) (2012) is in types; they are supportive, educational and administrative supervision. This classification was based on Kadushins' model of supervision. As far back as 1969 Robert GoldHammer in Smith (2005) proposed five stages of clinical supervision as cited below:

1. A pre- observation conference between supervisor and teacher concerning the elements of the lesson to be observed.
2. Classroom observation.
3. A supervisors' analysis of notes from the observation and planning for the rest post observation conference.
4. A post observation conference between supervisor and teacher.
5. A supervisors' analysis of the post observation conference.

Some practitioners in supervision however reduced the stages in three as follows:

- i) pre- observation conference.
- ii) The observation and
- iii) Post- observation conference.

## 2. The Role of Supervision in Adult Literacy Program

The roles of supervision can be perceived in different ways by different people. Some view the role of the supervisors as threat to their jobs, judges, fault finders, etc. but others see the supervisors as a guides, helpers, colleagues, etc. However, as diverse as these views are, the purpose of supervision makes it easier to identify the role of the supervisor. According to Starratt in [stateuniversity.com](http://stateuniversity.com) (2012) the following are the roles and responsibilities of supervisors:

1. Mentoring or providing for mentoring of new instructors to facilitate a supportive induction into the profession.
2. Bringing individual teachers up to minimum standards of effective teaching (quality assurance and maintenance functions of supervision).

3. Improving individual teachers' competencies, no matter how proficient they are deemed to be.
4. Working with groups of instructor's in collaborative effort to improve students learning.
5. Working with groups of instructor's to adapt the local curriculum to the needs and abilities of diverse groups of learners while at the same time bringing the local curriculum in line with state and national standard.
6. Relating instructor's efforts to improve their teaching to the larger goals of literacy centre's improvement in the service of quality learning for all adults. Other roles of supervisors includes:
  - i) Surveying the school environment for improvement.
  - ii) Resolving intra and inter school – community conflict.
  - iii) Giving some piece of advice to stake-holders of the literacy centre.

### **2.1 Roles of Inspection in Adult Literacy Class**

According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education (1981), the role of adult literacy centre inspection cannot be over-emphasized. This is because the inspector goes out to visit adult literacy centres in order to ensure that work is done accordingly and adult literacy centre rules are duly followed.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2000) the term inspection is derived from the verb 'inspect', which means to examine something closely; or to examine somebody/ something in order to detect the presence of something. This definition concurs with Enoh's (1992) assertion that the inspectorate division deals with the inspection of educational institution. He added that, inspection is done to maintain standards by professionals in various school disciplines. The role of adult literacy inspectorate division portrays the role of inspection in school management.

The major purpose of inspection is to collect a range of evidence, match the evidence against a statutory set of criteria and arrive at judgments known to the public. In Britain for instance, the role of inspection is to monitor the standards, quality, efficiency and ethos of the schools and to inform the government and the general public on these matter. MacGlynn and Stalker (1995) cited three reasons for conducting school inspection. They are:

1. *Report on the effectiveness of education in schools and other educational institutions and to recommend actions for improvement:* In education, supervision and inspection are carried out to enable the officers to observe in person, the happenings in the field of action. It is not enough to see those things but one should be able to raise a comprehensive report on the effectiveness of the programme. In adult literacy, a report form is used to take note of the things the supervisor or inspector observed in the literacy class. Where necessary, the officer concerned will make recommendations considered useful for improving on the existing programme.
2. *Evaluate the arrangement for assuring quality in schools:* During inspection of adult literacy classes, the officer concerned is to assess so as to evaluate the entire arrangement for ensuring quality in the centers/classes. This has to do with the regular attendance by learners and instructors, the topics expected to have been covered from inception of the programme to the date of inspection/supervision in order to identify the extent of quality achieved so far.
3. *Provide frank and objective advice to the higher education authorities and to ensure that educational initiatives are implemented effectively:* The supervisor serves as the eye of the Agency, so it is expected that, based on the facts gathered from the field, he/she should be ready to give frank and objective advise to the agency so as to ensure that, educational initiatives are well implemented.

From the above literature, it can be said that inspection is concerned mainly with maintenance and improvement of standards and quality of education and should be an integral part of a school improvement programme.

In Nigeria the role of inspection has been vested on the Federal Ministry of Education and State Ministries of Education in line with the provisions in the National Policy on Education (1981). According to the policy document, education inspectors of the ministry are responsible for inspecting schools in their jurisdiction. They are the officials of the ministry charged with the role of identifying and providing feedback on strength and weaknesses in educational institutions for improving the quality of education provided and the achievement of their learners.

In Kenya, inspectors were said to be classified into two (Olembo, Wanga & Karagu 1992). The first are the generalists' inspectors (charged with inspecting all areas of curriculum). The other category is the subject inspectors who have both general and specialized knowledge of the subject matter and recruited to offer advisory and consultancy services to teachers and to head teachers on teaching of the various subjects in schools.

From the above roles of both supervision and inspection spelt out in this paper, it can be seen that, going by the roles of the two functions, they intend to breed good and not evil. Yet over time so many shy away from the exercise; instructors and supervisors / inspectors alike. This could be probably as a result of the problems associated with supervision and inspection.

### **Problems of inspection**

Some problems of inspection according to Achayo and Githagui (2001) to include the following:

1. Unprofessional conduct of inspectors: the people serving as inspectors are either not professionals or they don't operate as professionals. The unprofessional conduct of the inspectors and supervisors often end up causing unhealthy relationship between the parties concerned. In some literacy centers, inspected instructors feel embarrassed by the intimidating approaches of the supervisors and the inspectors who shout at them in the presence of learners and the general public.
2. Attitudes and Commitment: Olembo et al (1992) observed that, many inspectors have negative attitudes towards supervision and inspection. Instructors also have negative attitudes towards supervision. This could be due to lack of job satisfaction and disappointment from the superiors. Some times it happens that a supervisor/inspector reports a case of nonchalant attitude from instructors for disciplinary action(s), however, the superiors may end up releasing the offender unpunished. This usually ends up in lost of personality by the supervisors and inspectors. The task of preparations for supervision make instructors to work hard to meet up with qualities required during supervision. So they tend to develop negative attitude towards supervision/inspection.
3. Feedback and follow up: Inadequate and lack of feedback on the report of inspection or supervision is one of the problems of supervision in education and adult literacy programmes in particular. This is because those supervised or inspected get frustrated as they wait for feedback and not find in the expected period. Sometimes it seems that most reports submitted are left unattended to by the higher authorities who destroy the image of the organization and officers in the field (Olembo, Wanga and Karagu 1992 & Samson 2009).
4. Lack of cooperation: Cooperation is a ligament of organization, it helps group of people work together, making each person contribute his quota of his service towards goal achievement. Yet this important ingredient is lacking between the inspectors and other components of the educational system. For instance, most literacy centre managers are not willing to cooperate with the inspectors as the task may reveal some skeletons in their cupboards. The localities where adult literacy centres are located are mostly not willing to accept or welcome inspectors in to their centres. They usually think the supervisors/inspectors are there to find fault and may close their centres. There is no cooperation between learners, instructors, non-instructors and inspectors due to tedious task of preparation for inspection. The inspectors and the ministry lack good cooperation due inadequate funding of supervision/inspection work. The local government authorities do not cooperate with the inspectors/supervisors this may seem to be due to serious power sharing between the local government areas and the inspectors/supervisors. Lack of incentives to inspectors by the relevant authorities also causes problems to the inspection/supervision process. The art of supervision and inspection should be a team work between the higher and the lower officers to enable the organization achieve its goals. But superiority and inferiority complex do affect team building in supervision/inspection of adult literacy classes in Nigeria (Masara (1987 & Samson 2009).
5. Pre service and in-service training: It was observed by Olembo et al (1992) that it sometimes new officers are given pre-service training i.e. induction course which help orient them in to the code of conducts of the new duty. Most supervisors and inspectors of adult literacy programme do not have chances of in-service training due to either sponsorship or financial related problems. Its has been long that a workshop for supervisors and inspectors of adult literacy programme was done in most states in Nigeria, the newly recruited staff have no enough knowledge while the old ones have retired with their skills leaving the field with neophytes.
6. Lack of inspectorate autonomy: According to Achayo and Githagui (2001) the inspectorate department is not autonomous therefore it encounters serious fund disbursement problems as it takes longer time for fund to be released to carry out an activity. Often time approvals for conducting inspection or supervision are not easily granted due to financial implication.
7. Transport: This encompasses lack of official vehicles in most of the area offices. in fact there are no motorcycles in the offices for that purpose in some States of the federation. And where inspectors are sacrificing to use their personal resources to inspect the classes, the fueling is a menace to their sacrifice. The roads to the communities where adult literacy classes are located are bad and therefore access becomes very difficult for supervisors/inspectors to reach. The literacy classes are usually located or spread across the state by local government areas, to inspect or supervise these classes, good transport equipments are needed to get there. It is observed by this author that, some Agencies do not have vehicles for supervision/inspection of their literacy centers in the local government area offices. Lack of these equipments affects regularity or adequacy of supervision or inspection. In deed where the roads are there, seasonal changes come with their difficulties to inspect a class. For instance in the rainy season, the roads

to the remote communities where most of the illiterates are found are difficult to go by, therefore hindering adequate supervision/inspection of the literacy classes (Mwanzia, 1985; Samson 2009).

8. Poor planning of inspection: A lot of times, inspection and supervision are not well planned for. Both the supervisors / inspectors and the field officers i.e. instructors do not usually plan well for the activity which ends up resulting in failure to achieve the overall goal of supervision / inspection in education (Olembo et al 1992 and Samson 2009).
9. Cost of inspection: This covers inadequate budget allocation and budget implementation, no inspection allowances paid to inspectors, lack of reporting equipments, stationery, cabinet for safe keeping of documents. The task of going round different centres cannot be easily done without cost implication. For instance, the cost of transportation and payment of Non-Accountable Transport Allowance (NATA) to the inspectors/ supervisors are not done due to poor funding of education in general and inspectorate department in particular. In the midst of the present tide, budget allocation to education expending to this activity faces difficulty in funding the unit (Samson, 2009).
10. Inspectors' recruitment, selection and deployment: It was observed by this author that the recent recruitment, selection and deployment of inspectors and supervisors are not done well in some parts of Nigeria. Some times junior staff are placed as inspectors or supervisors to oversee the work of senior officers instead of the seniors overseeing the juniors. The problem of respect for the persons inspecting are often lacking as an atmosphere of rivalry burst forth among them hinder good supervision. Personnel being a backbone to every institution are in adequate in the inspectorate offices. Where there are, most of them are untrained in the skills of inspection and less or inexperienced in educational strategies. There are cases of inordinate posting and promotions into the office of inspectors. A task meant to be carried out by well experienced educationists' is now done by neophytes which results in to serious setback and deforming the inspectorate image. The un-lucrative nature of the inspectorate field makes people to shy away from serving in the office as inspectors. Cases exist of inordinate appointment of people into offices as inspectors and supervisors of adult literacy programmes. Those appointed are either not experienced in the field of adult educational management or not grown to the senior rank in service (Samson 2009; Achayo & Githagui 2001).
11. Mis-use of inspection reports: It was observed by Samson (2009) that very often in practice report of inspection and supervision is mis-used for personal reasons. The report developed out of objective purposes are often treated with suspicious mindset. He exposed that, tribal and religious inclinations, regionalization and zonalizations in states and the nation at large contributes to misuse of inspection report in education. Corrupt practices among authorities in offices is also a cause to the misuse of inspection reports, in some cases officers are called and shown reports raised on them to get favour and gift from the offenders (Samson 2009).
12. Inadequate resources: Material resources such as papers, pens card board papers, cabinets, furniture, etc Samson (2009) said are highly inadequate in most offices of the inspectors and supervisors in most states in Nigeria. There are no printing materials in most of the offices, so typing reports for the office are done in Computer business centers, a situation affecting confidentiality.
13. Inspection report writing: According to Samson (2009) the process of writing inspection report is tasking due to difficult situation of inadequate writing materials, lack of comfortable seats, record keeping and above all the attitudes of the higher authority on the reports.
14. Time constraints hinder adequate and meaningful inspection of schools (Wilcox and Gray, 1994).
15. Bureaucratic procedure: Samson (2009) observed that, the laid down government procedure of undertaking a task in an organization often slows down the phase or speed of inspection. Very often inspection schedules are by passed due the process of securing approval for carrying out inspection of adult literacy classes.

### **3. Conclusion**

Supervision/inspection is done to ensure that things are done as planned to be carried out in an organization. Adult literacy classes need adequate supervision and or inspection in order to identify the strength and weaknesses of the classes; be it in the area of personnel, material and funding and environmental. Some problems were identified in this paper. Seven suggestions were made to enhance supervision of literacy classes for goal achievement in adult literacy delivery in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

1. This paper recommends for proper and timely funding and fund disbursement to the supervision section in Adult education for effective monitoring and evaluation for effective goal achievement.
2. Adequate purchase and supply of vehicles should be made to the Agencies where none exist and fueling of the vehicles should be routinely done for adequate inspection.
3. Recruitment and appointment of senior as well as experienced personnel should be ensured for prestige and orderliness in the job.
4. Adequate training and retraining of supervisors and inspectors on the job should be ensured for good job performance.
5. There should be good use of reports of inspection/supervision towards actions on the weaknesses identified during inspection.
6. Some level of autonomy should be given to the supervisory/inspectorate unit in the Agency as it is in the ministry of education to enable them both plan and carry out supervision at their scheduled time.
7. Disciplinary measures should be taken on inspectors/supervisors found with misconduct during supervision of literacy classes.
8. Feedback on the supervision/inspection should be done as early as possible so that burn out does not occur in the beneficiaries.
9. Ensure payment of incentives to supervisors and inspectors to boost their morale.

If the above mentioned recommendations are duly followed, I hope that a better course will be created for effective supervision and inspection of adult literacy classes in Nigeria.

### References

- Achanyo, P. & Githagui M. (2001). Rono explains problems in schools inspection. East African standard online edition. [www.eastandard.net](http://www.eastandard.net)
- Enoh, A.O. (1992). A hand book of educational foundations. Jos: Jubilee publications.
- Mark, K.S. (2005). The functions of supervision; the encyclopedia of informal education, Last update: January 04, 2012.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981). National Policy on Education. Yaba -Lagos. NEREDC press.
- Hornby, A.S. (Ed) (2000). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Oxford University Press; 6th edition.
- Mwanzia, G. M. (1985). A study of the factors that affect inspection and supervision of primary schools in Changwithya and Mulango Zones, Central Division, Kitui District, Eastern Province. Unpublished masters project (PTE), Nairobi University.
- Olembo, J. O; Wanga, P. E. & Karagu, N. M. (1992). Management in Education. Nairobi, Kenya: Educational Research and publications (ERAP).
- Paul, M. (2012). Types of educational supervision. [www.ehow.com/facts-5705886\\_types-educational-supervision.html](http://www.ehow.com/facts-5705886_types-educational-supervision.html)
- Kamuyu, C. (2001). How not to conduct inspections. East African standard: online edition, [www.eastandard.net](http://www.eastandard.net)
- Masara, S. (1987). Teachers hate inspectors. The Standard, p13
- Mc Glynn, A & Stalker, H. (1995). Recent development in the Scottish process of school inspection. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 21(1), 13-21.
- Oxford Advanced learners' Dictionary (2000).Oxford University Press: London.
- Samson, S. (2009). Problems in inspecting Primary schools in Gombe state. A paper presented at a two days training workshop to inspectors of education in Gombe state. February, 2012.
- Sergiovanni, T.J and Starratt, R. J (2006). Supervision: A Redefinition. Columbus: McGraw-Hill.
- Smith, M. K. (2005) 'The functions of supervision', *the encyclopedia of informal education*. Available at [http://www.infed.org/biblio/functions\\_of\\_supervision.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/functions_of_supervision.htm)
- <http://education.state.university.com/pages/2472/supervision-Instruction.html>">Supervision of Instruction-The History of Supervision, Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors, Issues Trends and Controversies.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:**

<http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a fast manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

### **IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners**

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

