

Principals' Application of Administrative Competencies for Effective Management of Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State

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Abstract

This study investigated the principals' application of administrative competencies for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of 1,338 teachers from all the 61 public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw 152 teachers for the study. A duly validated instrument titled "Administrative Competencies Scale (ACS)" was used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded reliability co-efficients of 0.84 and 0.85 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively with an overall coefficient of 0.85. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed among others that principals apply instructional leadership competency for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others Ministry of Education should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to enhance principals' instructional leadership strategies through intensive and annually seminars, workshops and conferences.

Keywords: *Principals, Administrative Competencies, Effective Management, Secondary Schools*

Introduction

Education is the key to national development. It plays important roles in national development by inculcating positive character in individuals and equipping them with sound knowledge and requisite skills. The essence of education is to guide and enhance learners' developmental process. Egbuhelu (2019) averred that the extent to which the child's development is enhanced depends upon the quality and effectiveness and the administrative competence of the school administrators who are responsible for the planning and implementation of the educational programmes.

Administrative competences are skills and capacity of a principal to develop school programs, set target and procedures to execute to it. According to Oboegbulem, (2013), administrative competencies are state of being functionally adequate in matters concerning administration, or having sufficient knowledge, judgement and skill in administration. In the conceptualization of Ikegbusi (2016), administrative competencies are the knowledge, skills and

attitude which enable principal of secondary schools to improve in their responsibilities in schools. It is skills, knowledge and aptitude that enable a manager to run the daily affairs of an organization. There are numerous administrative competencies. They include: instructional leadership, personnel management and financial management competencies (Adegbemile, 2011; Adegbemile, Abdullahi, Azike & Nzurumike, 2011). For the purpose of this study, instructional leadership and financial management were adopted. This justification for investigating the two areas is at the researchers' discretion.

Instructional leadership is the act of influencing, leading and directing teachers to improving teaching and learning. Hayat (2015) defined instructional leadership as the type of leadership that is based on the principle of supporting teachers and giving them the opportunity to learn and grow to meet the different needs of students. Quah (2011) defined instructional leadership strategies as leadership roles that are directly related to the teaching process, involving the interaction between teachers, students and the curriculum. It is responsibility of principal to apply instructional leadership competency to promote teaching and learning. Okeke (2020) stressed is the act of influencing learning outcome through managing curriculum, delegating teaching tasks, supervising and evaluating teachers' classroom instructions, encouraging staff professional development. Instructional leadership involves planning of school scheme of work, evaluation and selection of textbooks for school and assisting teachers to improve the teaching methods. Hallinger (2010) averred that the instructional leadership competency requirements of secondary school principals include coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school.

Financial management is process of planning, sourcing and ensuring judicious use of school funds. The principals as the chief accounting officers of the schools are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring judicious use of school funds through several financial management competency. Alia and Iwuoha (2014) opined that principals' financial management competency for effective administration of schools include prioritizing financial allocation according to needs, ensuring that budgets replicate agreed goals and objectives, delegating the mechanism of financial matters to capable staff, keeping close check on financial matters delegated to staff, working within the constraints of the school budget, planning and sourcing for funds for school development, keeping accurate financial information about the school and giving fair financial position of the school. Ugwu, Chime and Agu (2020) noted that financial management competencies are required of principals to ensure that the desired goals or outcomes of education are achieved with the least possible resources. The principals demonstrate financial management competency through sourcing and ensuring prudence in the use of school funds. The application of financial management competency ensures proper allocation of the limited funds for effective school management.

Effective school management is the outcome of utilization of the available resources in the school. In the conceptualization of Olorunsola and Belo (2018) effective school management is the ability of principal to optimally utilize both human and material resources available to school in order to achieve educational goals. According to Adeyemi (2011) effective school management is concerned with ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the available human, physical and financial resources together with the ability to combat any constraints that might hamper the achievement of the objectives. Effective management of human, material, time and financial resources is highly crucial for institutional sustainability and the development of school action plan (Umar, 2019). There are many indicators of effective school management. Olorunsola and Belo

(2018) pointed out that effective school management is evident when a principal is; responsive to teachers' needs as at when due, give room feedback from members of staff, discourage teachers from supporting students in examination malpractices, ensure proper record keeping, maintain healthy relationship with students and teachers, encourage punishment of misbehaved students, encourage participatory supervisory system, ensure timely communication of decisions and listen well to staff's ideas. Some secondary schools in Awka Education zone of Anambra state seems to be characterized with lateness of teachers to class, inadequate coverage of school syllabus, financial mismanagement and embezzlement probably due to lapses in principals' application of administrative competencies in managing school affairs. To buttress this, Okeke (2020) observed that some secondary school teachers in Anambra State go to school and classes late and leave before the school hour, some teach without lesson notes, plans and instructional materials probably due to little attention pay to instructional leadership by the principals. Ugwu, Chime and Agu (2020) also observed that shortages of facilities in secondary schools in Anambra are enough indicators of financial malfeasance which may be connected to poor budgeting activities of principals. Poor budgeting and mismanagement of funds for procurement of school facilities may be due to the financial competency deficiencies of secondary school principals in Anambra State. On the basis of the above exposition, this study was set to determine principals' application of administrative competencies for effective management of secondary schools in Awka education zone of Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine principals' application of administrative competencies for effective management of secondary schools in Awka education zone of Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the:

1. Instructional leadership competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.
2. Financial management competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the aspects of instructional leadership competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?
2. What are the aspects of financial management competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Nworgu (2015), a survey research design is the one which aims at collecting data, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This design was adopted because the study aimed at ascertaining facts or pieces of information from a sample of the population to ascertain principals' application of administrative competencies for effective management. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone in Anambra State, Nigeria.

The population for the study consisted of 1,494 teachers from all the 61 public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone in Anambra State, Nigeria. A sample size of 152 was used for the study using stratified random sampling technique. A researcher-development instrument title

“Administrative Competencies Scale (ACS)” was used for data collection. The instrument was developed by the researchers based on insight gained from literature review. The instrument has 19 items arranged in two clusters namely: B1 and B2. Cluster B1 contains 10 items on instructional leadership competency and cluster B2 has 9 items on financial management competency. All the items are structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

To ascertain the face validity of the instrument, the researchers submitted it together with the research topic, purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses to three experts comprising two lecturers from the Department of Educational Management, and the other a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. These experts were requested to validate the instrument relative to the appropriateness of the structure, instructions items, statements and content coverage. Their suggestions were incorporated in producing the final version of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using a pilot test involving (20) selected teachers from Ogidi Education Zone, Anambra State, which was outside the study area. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha it yielded reliability co-efficients of 0.84 and 0.85 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively and the overall coefficient of the entire instrument was 0.85.

The researchers distributed the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents together with four research assistants (teachers), who were briefed on how to administer the instrument. A total of 152 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 146 copies were retrieved which showed a 96% return rate. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. For decision on the research question, any item whose mean score fell below 2.50 was taken as disagreement while any with mean score of 2.50 and above was taken to indicate agreement. Standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents mean ratings.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the aspects of instructional leadership competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores of Instructional Leadership Competency for Effective Management of Secondary Schools

S/ N	My principal apply the ability to	Teachers (N =146)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision
1	Plan school curriculum programmes based on national syllabus for schools	2.67	1.06	Agree
2	Inspect teachers' lesson plan	2.56	1.10	Agree
3	Supervise instructional activities in classroom	2.74	1.15	Agree
4	Assign subjects to teachers based on their area of specialization	2.71	0.91	Agree
5	Formulate time-table in school	2.60	1.15	Agree
6	Initiate instructional activities to improve teaching	2.45	1.12	Disagree
7	Assist teachers in implementing the curriculum	2.51	1.08	Agree
8	Evaluate the implementation of curriculum programmes	2.48	1.00	Disagree
9	Guide teachers in the use of instructional materials	2.55	1.03	Agree

10	Inspect teachers' lesson notes	2.81	1.17	Agree
Mean of Means		2.61	1.08	Agree

The result of data analysis presented on Table 1 shows that the mean score of teachers for all items except 6 and 8 are above 2.50 which indicated agreement that those aspects of instructional leadership competency are applied by principals' for effective school management. The pooled standard deviation score which stood at 1.08 indicated that there is homogeneity amongst teachers' opinions. The mean of means score of 2.61 which is above 2.50 indicated that instructional leadership competency are applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What are the aspects of financial management competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores of Financial Management Competency for Effective Management of Secondary Schools

S/ N	My principal apply the ability to	Teachers (N =146)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision
11	Prepare school budget	2.86	1.16	Agree
12	Allocate financial resources based on the needs of every unit	2.67	1.10	Agree
13	Develop alternative sources of income	2.54	1.09	Agree
14	Audit the school account	2.60	1.11	Agree
15	Delegate financial matters to skilled staff	2.71	1.00	Agree
16	Prepare the school financial statement	2.56	1.13	Agree
17	Account for funds expended in school	2.45	1.04	Disagree
18	Ensure that budgetary guideline is adhered to	2.40	1.05	Disagree
19	Reconcile school bank account	2.49	1.16	Disagree
Mean of Means		2.59	1.09	Agree

As shown on Table 2, the mean scores of teachers for items 11-17 which are above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicated agreement with the items as the aspects of financial management competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools. On the other hand, the mean scores of teachers for items 17, 18 and 19 which are below the cut off mean of 2.50 indicated disagreement with the items as the aspects of financial management competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools. The overall standard deviation score of 1.09 indicated that there is homogeneity amongst teachers' mean scores. The mean of means of 2.59 which is above 2.50 indicated the aspects of financial management competency are applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

Discussion

The result of the study revealed the aspects of instructional leadership competency are applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. The aspects of instructional leadership competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State include the ability to: plan school curriculum programmes based on national syllabus for schools, inspect

teachers' lesson plan, supervise instructional activities in classroom, assign subjects to teachers based on their area of specialization, formulate time-table in school, assist teachers in implementing the curriculum, guide teachers in the use of instructional materials and inspect teachers' lesson notes. This finding is in consonance with that of Quah (2011) who reported that principals have successfully implemented all the seven dimensions of instructional leadership such as: managing curriculum and instruction, promoting staff development and monitoring students' progress among others. This finding disagrees with the earlier report of Ray (2017) who found out that secondary school principals place more emphasis on their managerial and administrative duties at the expense of applying instructional leadership competency for improve teaching and learning. This also contradicts the finding of Yaseser and Amal (2015) who found that there was moderate level of school principals' engagement in the three dimensions of instructional leadership competency. This contradiction could be attributed to difference in geographical location. It is therefore very clear that principals' application of the core instructional leadership competency promote teaching and learning in school. The principals through the application of instructional leadership competency advocate and support effective teaching via: setting direction for instructional activities, supervising and coordinating teachers' activities. They also plan school curriculum programmes based on national syllabus for schools and ensure that teachers behaviour is directed toward attaining the instructional objectives of the school system. The principals promote a positive school learning climate through exhibiting the competency that creates continuous staff professional development which contribute to improvement on the learning outcomes.

It was also revealed that the aspects of financial management competency are applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. The aspects of financial management competency applied by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State include the ability to: prepare school budget, allocate financial resources based on the needs of every unit, develop alternative sources of income, audit the school account, delegate financial matters to skilled staff and prepare the school financial statement. This is in line with the finding of Akinfolarin (2017) who reported that the financial management competences of principals include: prioritizes financial allocation according to school needs, keeps accurate financial information of the school, ensure accountability in all school expenditures, carry out periodic audit of school budgets and adopts cost-saving strategies This finding disagrees with that of Kaguri, Njati and Thiaine (2014) who reported that financial management competency such as poor preparation of financial reports and auditing school accounts in an arbitrary ways. This contradiction could be attributed to differences in location and time span (8 years) between the two studies; within the 8years there is a possibility that public secondary school principals must have undergone refresher courses which improved their financial management competency. The reduction of reckless spending and misappropriation of secondary schools in Awka education is probably due to principals' application of financial management competency. It also enhances administrative efficiency through proper planning, acquisition and allocation of scare financial resources.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the principals apply administrative competencies for effective management of secondary schools in Awka Education zone. These are instructional leadership and financial management competencies that promote a positive school

learning climate. Principals' application of instructional leadership competency promotes the quality of teaching which result to high academic achievement. The financial management competency is probably the reason for prudence in the use of secondary school funds in Awka education zone. The instructional leadership and financial management competencies are paramount if the objectives of secondary education are to be meaningfully translated into reality.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Ministry of Education should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to enhance principals' instructional leadership strategies through intensive and annually seminars, workshops and conferences.
2. Officials of Post Primary School Service Commission should pay regular visits to public school schools for monitoring, supervision and assisting teachers to ensure continuous improvement on the application of their financial management competency.

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