

Managerial Skills And Enhancement Strategies Of Secondary School Principals

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Abstract

This paper investigated the managerial skills possessed by secondary school principals in Anambra State and the enhancement strategies for national transformation. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A proportionate stratified random sample of 268 principals and 1159 teachers totaling 1427 respondents, took part in the study. A fourteen- item questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation and t-test. The finding indicated that the many principals did not possess the managerial skills for effective management of secondary school for national transformation. It was also found out that there was a significant difference between the mean rating of principals and teachers on the managerial skills and enhancement strategies for the principals. Among the recommendations made were that principals that did not specialize in education should be encouraged to get at least a diploma in Education. They should be encouraged or sponsored to undertake continuous self professional development. These would contribute to enhancing their managerial skills.

Keywords: School Management, Educational Transformation, Managerial Skills, Secondary Education.

Introduction

In Nigeria, as well as in many other countries, the call for improved educational systems has resulted in both a gradual, general shift in educational management and specific efforts on the part of the governments to develop policies for transforming education. For several decades now, different Governments have indicated interest in transforming Nigeria and have come up with various educational policies and programs to ensure that they achieved their goals. The present administration has also come up with its transformation agenda which it hopes to achieve through quality education. Hence, new ideas in education in the area of policies and programmes, school, structure, funding, school management, mode of assessment of students' performance etc, have been introduced in the education sector (Kolo, 2009). In effect, the various Nigerian governments recognize that the education sector is the key sector for the attainment of any transformation agenda. Education is accorded the highest priority so that Nigeria must participate competitively in the comity of nations in the production, transfer and utilisation of knowledge. It is on this platform that the Federal Republic of Nigeria in her national policy on education stated that:

Education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument for change, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook for society has to be preceded by an educational revolution (FRN, 2004:7)

As a follow up to this proclamation, this country has seen much effort and focus on improving its public education system. In line with international trends, one of the primary thrusts of these efforts has been on improving the management of schools as organizations (Babayemi, 2006; Elmore, 2005; Fuller, 2007; Nyagura, 2012; Schmoker, 2006). Strategic planning, education reform and school improvement have been the common strategies utilized in schools across the country. The emphasis is on the implementation of transformational management, the shift from quantity to quality and the achievement of system-wide transformation as desirable goals. While these efforts achieved some of the desired results, e.g. schools with vision and mission statements, increased enrolment and retention and increased community participation, there has been an accusation that the Nigerian educational system is not living up to expectations. Authors have continued to worry that the quality of education provided for Nigerian citizens cannot bring about any significant desirable transformation (Babayemi, 2006; Eneasator, 2001; Ofojebe, 2008). Dilapidated infrastructures, ill motivated teachers, poor funding, lack of support nor encouragement for research, inadequate budgetary allocations to education, diversion or misappropriation of educational funds, are problems that have over time, been observed to cause decline in educational growth (Ogunsagu, 2006; Oyedeji, & Fasasi, 2006). Given these problems, one would argue that the type of education given to Nigerian is ill suited for the country. Uduaghan (2011) did not hesitate to say that:

People argue that education given to Nigerians has created problems it cannot solve; human trafficking the culture of fraud and impunity, kidnapping, killing, armed robbery and total disrespect for our value system and more. In addition the Nigeria are said to be confronted with poverty, unemployment, urbanization, lack of capacity and managerial skills needed to move the economy forward.

In the face of the problems in the education sector, school leaders are increasingly being urged to utilize profound managerial skills and transform their schools. It is expected that when schools are transformed, the learners, staff and community are positively affected to enhance national transformation. If school leaders must transform their schools, they must possess relevant managerial skills for doing so.

Managerial skills are essential capabilities that determine the extent of the actualization of educational goals. To be skilled in something for example in management connotes enough ability do something well. Okoye (2007) defined managerial skills as the ability to plan, control, organize and direct the operations of an educational enterprise for the purpose of achieving the objective target set for the educational system as a whole. Fullan (2005) defined managerial skills as the competencies required for effective and efficient planning, staffing, organizing, coordinating, controlling and decision-making. The ability, knowledge and experience required to accomplish management tasks are known as managerial skills. Managerial skills of school leaders thus refer to their ability to successfully plan, organize, co-ordinate, control, make decisions and initiate actions to aid the effective management of schools.

Managerial skills are high priority issues for many people concerned with education these days. It is not surprising, then, that so many authors have provided insights about such skills for school administration (Mestry & Grobler, 2004; Monyatsi, 2005). The skills include the abilities to create a healthy school culture for continual improvement in quality education; teamwork with others; communicate goals, policies, and procedure to staff; modify practice and school structures to accommodate new policy expectations; provide curriculum leadership opportunities; ensure good principal-staff relationship and guide specific initiatives to improve student achievement (Carr, 2005; Elmore, 2005; Lezotte, & McKee, 2006).

The importance of school leaders' possession of managerial skills for national transformation is obvious. Management is an integral part of any organization. It involves skillful organization and utilization of resources (human and material) for the achievement of goals (Ajaegbo, 2010). In educational organizations, the onus of managing schools for realization of educational objectives rest on the school head –rector, vice chancellor, principal or head teacher. In order to achieve optimum results, the leaders should be skilled in management. At the secondary level of education, the principal is the school leader. It is his duty to ensure that goals of educational policies and programs are realized. Azubike (2009) posited that the school principal is at the helm of implementation of education policies in his school. The principal is the person responsible for administrative practices of the school using the resources at his disposal in such a way that the school's objectives are achieved. He relates with the various education authority to ensure that desired educational goals are realized. He performs managerial functions such as planning organizing, directing, coordinating, communication, motivation. Specifically his functions/roles include: establishing of healthy school climate and culture; curriculum instructor development and improvement; provision and maintenance of school plant facilities; and instructional and non-instructional supervision. Fagbamiye (2004) stated that the principal is essentially an organizer and implementer of plans, policies and programmes meant for specific educational objectives. His administrative tasks include directing the teachers and students in an environment conducive to the maximum development of the learners. The principal as the chief executive officer is expected to work hard to achieve stated goals using his knowledge and wisdom.

The extent to which principals possess the managerial skills to transform educational management is a matter of concern given that most secondary principals carry an enormously varied workload in managing their school resources and being the professional leaders of the school. At the same time, there is a very demanding administrative duty to manage. The working day of the secondary school principal is also characterised by a high rate of interruption, and is people-intensive. The principal must make sense of all this diverse activity in ways that achieve the purpose of the school, and which are congruent with the culture and underlying values of the organisation. He cannot play his role effectively if not adequately equipped with essential managerial skills because the process of effective utilization of available resources needs special skills or ability.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian education system has many challenges: schools grapple with large class size, inadequate qualified teacher and shortage of fund. The state of some secondary schools in Anambra State is worrisome as made

manifest by dilapidated buildings, shortage of classroom accommodation, lack of consumable items (e.g. chalk), inadequate staff welfare, shortage of school furniture for students and teachers, lack of essential facilities such as water, light, toilet facilities and low levels of teacher productivity. Many secondary schools in Anambra State are characterized by near absence of internally generated revenue, financial problems, non-existent of computer aided administration, poor decision making, examination malpractice, improper planning, rising cases of students' indiscipline and poor academic performance. In the face of these problems, secondary school principals are being urged to transform their schools. Ascertaining the managerial skills the principals possess, as well identifying the strategies for improving their skills, are the problems of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out the managerial skills of principals in Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to identify:

1. the managerial skill possessed by secondary school principals in Anambra state.
2. strategies for enhancing the principals' managerial skills

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study. They are:

1. What managerial skills do secondary schools principals in Anambra state possess?
2. What strategies would be used in enhancing the principals' managerial skills?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses have been formulated and tested in this study

1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the managerial skills possessed by the principals.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the strategies to be used in enhancing the principals' managerial skills.

Method

The survey research design was adopted for the study. This design is used in this study to collect data from secondary school principals and teachers in order to determine the managerial skills of principals in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

The study population comprised 268 principals and 5,587 secondary school teachers in Anambra State as at February 2013. The sample comprised the entire 268 principals and a proportionately selected sample of 1159 teachers, totaling 1427 respondents. In selecting the teachers sampled, the proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted. The schools were stratified on the basis of their education zones and twenty percent of the schools in each education zone were randomly selected. The entire teachers in the selected schools totaling 1159 were chosen to participate in the study.

The researchers used a questionnaire titled- Assessment of Managerial Skills of Principals (AMSOP). The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part A, has one open ended statement that elicit background information on the respondents job designation (principal or teacher). Part B comprised of 14 items on a four point scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

The instrument was validated by two experts in the department of educational management and policy Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their suggestions led to some modifications in the questionnaire.

Kuder Richardson's formular 21 (KR-21) was used to determine reliability. The researcher administered the AMSOP on 10 principals and 30 teachers from secondary schools in Enugu State of Nigeria. After analyzing the responses a coefficient of 0.85 was obtained and considered adequate for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered on the sample with the help of ten teachers who did not participate in the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation score were used in answering the research questions. The items were assigned the following point strongly agree 3.58 - 4.00, agree 2.50-3.46, disagree 2.00-2.49 and strongly disagree 1.00-1.99 any mean up to 2.50 was accepted. The t-test was used in testing the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Principals and Teachers Mean Responses on Principals' Managerial Skills

S/N	Item	Principal N=268		Teachers N=1159		Average Mean
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Ability to create and motivate a healthy school culture for continual improvement in quality education	1.61	1.15	1.95	0.95	1.78
2	Ability to work as a team with other individuals in the school system to achieve set goals	3.50	0.93	1.83	0.96	2.66
3	Ability to communicate goals, policies, and procedure to staff	1.63	1.08	2.09	1.06	1.85
4	Ability to modify their practice and modify school structures to accommodate new policy expectations	3.27	1.06	3.26	0.99	3.36
5	Ability to ensure that curriculum leadership opportunities are created for staff	1.65	0.94	2.15	1.16	1.90
6	Ability to actively and personally guide specific initiatives to improve student achievement	3.87	1.18	1.67	0.87	1.77
7	Ability to involve staff in decision-making	3.73	0.67	3.17	0.96	3.45

In Table 1, Items 2, 4, 6 and 7 scored above the decision level of 2.50 in the columns for principals.

This indicates that the principals agree that they possess management skills as listed in these items. Items 1, 3, 5 scored less than 2.50 in the columns for principals indicating that most of the principals disagree that they possess the managerial skills. Only items 4 and 7 scored above the decision level of 2.50 in the columns for teachers. This indicates that the teachers agreed that principals possess managerial skills as listed in these items. On the other hand, items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 scored less than 2.50 in the columns for teachers, hence the teachers' disagreement that the principals possess the managerial skills listed in these items. Only the average means for items 2, 4 and 7 exceeded the decision level of 2.50, the remaining items scored below 2.50. Therefore, one can say that principals and teachers are in agreement that the principals possessed only the managerial skills of working as a team with other individuals in the school system, supervising and directing staff to effectively carry out their various duties and involving staff in decision-making.

In table 2, principals rated item 2, 4, 6 and 7 above 2.50 indicating their agreement on strategies for enhancing principals managerial skills. The principals rated item 1, 3, and 5 below 2.50 showing their disagreement. The teachers scored items 2, 4, 6 and 7 above 2.50 indicating the agreement on strategies for enhancing principal management skills. They rated items 1, 3 and 5 below 2.50 showing their disagreement with the items. The average means for principals and teachers for items 2, 4, 6, 7 also exceeded 2.50. Hence in the opinion of principals and teachers, updating of their managerial skills through self professional development, Internalization of new expectations of their roles in line with global trends, in service training to acquire high degree and obtaining compulsory certificate in the field of education should be basic qualification for principals to ensure that they are professionally and intellectually sound, are strategies for enhancing managerial skills of secondary school principals in Anambra State.

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Principals and Teachers Responses On Strategies For Enhancing Principals Managerial Skills.

S/N	Items	Principal N=268		Teachers N= 1159		Average Mean
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Principals should be made to realize the need for the acquisition of managerial skill for school transformation	1.63	1.02	2.13	1.38	1.80
2	Internalization by school principals themselves of new expectations of their roles as well as how to modify their practice and school structures to accommodate the expectations	3.77	0.42	3.09	0.97	3.43
3	Organization of capacity building workshops and seminars for principals	1.85	1.17	1.91	1.02	1.88
4	Principals should engage in self professional development to update their managerial skills	3.08	1.27	2.29	1.23	3.00
5	Rewarding of principals with outstanding effort in school management could motivate other principals to seek and acquire more skills	1.69	0.91	2.09	1.06	1.89
6	Principals should go for in-service education to acquire higher degree on managerial skills	3.35	1.07	2.91	1.35	3.13
7	A compulsory certificate obtained in the field of education should be a basic qualification for promotion to principalship, to ensure that principals are professionally and intellectually skilled in their jobs	3.17	1.04	2.79	1.14	2.98

**Table 3
 t-test Analysis of Principals and Teachers' Responses on Managerial Skills Possessed By Secondary School Principals**

Variables	No	\bar{X}	Sd	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Principals	268	2.75	1.00	1425	5.63	1.96	Not significant
Teachers	1159	2.30	1.14				

In table 3 the t- calculated is 5.63 while the t-critical is 1.96 at 1425degrees of freedom with 0.05 level of significance. The t- calculated is greater than that t critical indicating that the t-test is significant. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. There was a significant difference between the mean rating of principals and teachers on managerial skills possessed by secondary school principals.

**Table 3
 t-test Analysis for Principals and Teachers' Responses on the Strategies for Enhancing the Principals Managerial Skills.**

Variables	No	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Principal	268	2.78	0.93	1425	2.08	1.36	Significant
Teachers	1159	2.53	1.80				

Table 4 shows a calculated t-value of 2.08 with a critical t-value of 1.56 at 1425 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. The t-calculated is higher than the t-critical indicating that the t-test is significant. Thus the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of principal and teacher is rejected. Therefore, there was a significant difference between the mean rating of principals and teachers on the strategies to be used in enhancing the principals' managerial skills.

Discussion of Findings

It was found that the principals did not possess many of the managerial skills for effective management of secondary schools. It was also found that there was a significant difference between the mean rating of principals and teachers on managerial skills possessed by secondary school principal. This finding agrees with Okoye (2007) who found that principals and teachers in Anambra State differed in their opinions of the managerial skills of supervision possessed by the principals. This finding goes on to buttress that many principal did not possess the managerial skills needed for national transformation. For instance, the principals lacked communication managerial skills in terms of communicating goal, policies, procedures and program to subordinates. Principals lack of communication skills might be one of the reason why Familola in Osuji and Ndu (2002) who studied a number of selected secondary school in Ondo State of Nigeria, stated that many teachers believed that they were not part of the school system because of the communication style adopted by their principals which lead to unsatisfactory individual teachers' performance and grievances.

Findings indicated that in the opinion of principals and teachers, certain strategies should be used to enhance principals' managerial skills. The finding also indicated a significant difference between the opinion of principals and teachers on strategies for enhancing principal's managerial skills. In essence, principals and teachers did not share similar views on the strategies. Despite the significance of the difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers, the findings still remain that principals need strategies to enhance their managerial skills for national transformation. The strategies include principals' self development towards updating of their managerial ability, and their going for in service training to acquire higher degree and that a compulsory certificate obtained in the field of education should be basic qualification for promotion to ensure that they are professionally and intellectually sound. This finding collaborates Carr (2005) and Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe and Meyerson (2005) who suggested that in service training would help school leaders to perform their primary duties as instructional leaders and organization developers for continuous school improvement. It is the researchers' conjecture that principals are already, in many cases, appreciating and acting upon the need to demonstrate their capability in terms of the professional development through their participation in seminars and professional association especially the Anambra State Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS).

A close look at table 2 would reveal that the item with the highest mean score is item 2 which advocates for internalization by school principals themselves of new expectations of their roles as well as how to modify their practice and school structures to accommodate the expectations. This finding collaborates Elmore (2005) who contends that a focus on practice is essential if school reform efforts are to meet with success:

The schools that succeed in changing practice are those that start with the practice and modify school structures to accommodate to it, often making more modest changes in structure than the advocates of school reform would recommend. What our research seems to be saying was that it is pointless to work on structures until you know specifically what kind of practice you are trying to engender. (pg. 4)

Hence if principals are to improve their managerial skills, they must craft improvement strategies that directly impact their practices and management structures. Otherwise, the implementation of transformational management, the shift from quantity to quality and the achievement of system-wide transformation will prove to be elusive goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals who do not specialize in education should be encouraged to get at least a diploma in education.
2. Principals should engage in continuous professional development by reading journals, technical reports and participating actively in seminars and workshops.
3. Poorly skilled principals should be identified through interviews, supervision and evaluation exercise by relevant education boards and ministries and in-service remedial programs should be organized for them.
4. Principas should be encouraged and sponsored to undertake research on managerial skills individually, or in group. This will no doubt enhance managerial ability.

Conclusion

Managing educational systems demand that school principals should possess adequate managerial skills. This study found that many principals in Anambra State of Nigeria did not possess some of the managerial skills for effective management of secondary schools. By lacking some of these skills, the principals would not be able to

effectively organize and direct group behavior and processes and the extent to which principals are able to perform as the champions of school-wide strategic opportunities to improve educational transformation is limited. Thereafter the identified strategies should be used to enhance principals' managerial skills for national transformation.

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