

Level of Application of Principals' Administrative Skills and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Nigeria: Ebonyi State Experience

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated level of application of principals' administrative skills and academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria: Ebonyi State experience. Three purposes with also three corresponding research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised of 223 secondary school principals made up of 120 females and 103 males spread across rural and urban areas of the state. The number was not too large to require sampling; hence, a census technique was employed, meaning that the entire population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was the researchers' structured questionnaire entitled level of Improvement of Principal Administrative Skills and Academic Performance Scale (LIPASAPS) on a 4-point rating scale. It was validated by three experts, two for Administration and Planning and one from Measurement and Evaluation in Science Education, all from Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki. The reliability was determined using Product Moment Co-relation co-efficient and a reliability index of 0.86 was obtained. The research questions were answered using mean, standard deviation and grand mean, while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistic. Findings of the study revealed that principals application of communication, instructional supervision and financial management skills to enhance the academic performance of students in Ebonyi State secondary schools were to a very low level. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made, among which is government should constantly organize seminars and workshops for the principals on the proper use of communication, supervision of instructional and financial management skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

KEYWORDS: Application, administrative, skills, academic, performance, secondary and Nigeria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the principal ship in secondary school system started with the growth and astronomical increase in students' enrolment. The increased enrolment resulted in teacher's inability to combine classroom instruction with school management; hence the appointment of one of the most senior classroom teacher's as a principal. From the appointment of the principals, he took up the task of running the day-to-day activities of the school. He was therefore saddled with such responsibilities as scheduling duties for staff, marking teachers' lesson notes, keeping records of important events in the school, scheduling Parent Teachers' Association meetings and communicating with officials of the ministry of Education on issues bordering on administration of schools. It is in this regard that [1] described the Nigerian secondary school principal as a manager, an administrator, an exemplary leader, a counselor, a public officer, a building contractor, a nurse, a curriculum developer, a teacher trainer and even a messenger. [2] was of the opinion that principals in the secondary school are designated as principal teachers for purposes of managing and controlling school affairs. To sum it up, the overall administration of secondary schools is the full responsibility of the principals. Administration of schools has attracted various definitions. Administration of education is the process that is geared towards using principles, methods and practices to establish, develop and execute goals, policies, plans, and procedures in such a manner that would enable educational objectives to be achieved [3]. Therefore, educational administration is all the activities planned and executed with the sole aim of achieving predetermined objectives through effective classroom delivery. [4] said that the principal as an administrator performs such functions as a programme planner, supervision of instruction, relationship with supervisors and other central personnel, community leader, personnel management, clerical routines and professional leadership staff. These functions are performed at different times by the principals for the attainment of educational objectives. In the instructional programme, the principals to large extent assess the type of programme being offered to students. He is responsible for drawing up the school timetable, arranges for both internal and external examinations such as termly and yearly examinations among others. In the view of Nwankwo (2004) principals

in secondary schools have under them hierarchy of subordinates each with functions and responsibilities assigned for the purpose of the school. These functions require planning, organizing, commanding, co-ordinating and controlling which are the central focuses of administration. In secondary schools, large number of employees usually the teachers and non-teachers has to be supervised, co-ordinated and controlled for them to use the available resources for effective and efficient teaching and learning. It is equally the duty of the principal to organize his staff for co-operative work with parents, students' leaders and key citizens of the community in formulating the philosophy and objectives of the educational programme. The principal should also delegate responsibilities to colleagues, relate problems to the school world, to the instructional process and guidance to staff members in their efforts to improve teaching and learning. In doing this, the principal has to employ some administrative skills such as communication skills, skills in financial management, skills in supervision of instruction, and leadership skills, [5].

Communication according to [6] is the purposeful interchange of ideas, opinions, information, presented personally or impersonally by symbol signal to pass a message. Therefore, if ideas, opinions, information are exchanged between two or more persons, communication has taken place. The principal communicates ideas, information and delegate duties to other members of staff using communication skill and organizational skill. Effective communication in the secondary school by the principal ensures or enhances good relationship among the personnel in the school, improves teaching and learning, makes teachers to be up to date in the trend of things, and ensures timely achievement of educational objectives. According to [7], effective communication establishes and disseminate goals of the school; develop plans for their achievements, organize human and other resources in the most effective and efficient way, select, develop and appraise members of the school, lead, direct, motivate and create a climate in which people want to contribute and evaluate and control performance. However, principals' poor communication skills have greatly affected academic performance of secondary school students because of their inability to infuse in teachers' new method of teaching. This according to [8] is responsible for students' poor achievement in mathematics as a result of poor teacher's communication in the classroom.

Another important and critical skill for principals in administration of secondary school to enhance academic performance of students is financial management skill. Financial management skill according to [9] is that management activity which is concerned with the planning and controlling of a firm or organization's financial resources. According to Ogbonna, it is also concerned with the decisions on how to conceive, expand and give account of funds provided for the implementation of the programme of an organization. Therefore principals of secondary schools need to process and utilize fund procured and allocated to their schools for the achievement of educational programme. Proper financial management skill possessed by the principals will go a long way in equipping the principals on how to prepare budget, expend money allocated to education, account for all financial resources for achievement of educational programmes, minimize financial fraud, and help them know when and where to vire found for administration of schools. Supporting the above view, [10] said that the principal use financial management skills to prepare school budget and keep accurate financial records. In contrast, the inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching, non-existence or obsolete, dilapidated buildings, blown off roofs, non- existence of medical services for both staff and students, insubordination of teachers are all indication of principals' poor financial management [11].

In the same vein, supervision of instruction by the principal is also another important variable in the discourse of this study. The principals have to have a proper knowledge and principles of supervision of instruction for effective teaching and learning to enhance academic performance of students. The poor attitude of some teachers towards teaching and learning, poor method of teaching, non-mastery of the subject matter by some teachers and lack of interest in teaching necessitated supervision of instruction. This is because according to [12] principals delegate most of their primary duties such as supervision of instruction to teachers who are not experienced in instructional supervision and this affects the academic performance of secondary school students. Instructional supervision according to [13] is a service activity which is carried on with a view to helping teachers do their job in the classroom better as reflected in the various methods of instructional supervision. [3] perceived the process of instructional supervision as a way of helping advising, refreshing, encouraging, stimulating, improving and overseeing certain groups with the help of seeking their co-operation in order to ensure that supervisor is successful in the task of supervision. Instructional supervision as one of management skills by principals help classroom teachers in solving their professional problems, help new teachers in choosing the best method of teaching which will transcend to academic of achievement of students.

Academic performance of students in the context of this study in relation to instructional supervision refers to the ability of students to pass the core subjects, science subjects and art subjects at senior secondary school certificate (SSSCE) level. Also, cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) and completion of educational bench marks such as secondary school certificate and bachelor's degrees represent academic performance. It is commonly measured through examinations or continuous assessments.

However, in Ebonyi state it seems that the poor academic performance of students observed in all public secondary school can be attributed to poor management of the principals. It does appear that most principals in Ebonyi state fail to adopt proper communication skill, financial management skill and supervisory management skills in administration of secondary schools. This has greatly affected and lowered the academic performance of students in Ebonyi state. Principals have equally failed to consider their administrative skills as determinant of students' academic performance. It is against this back drop that the researchers want to assess the administrative skills and academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State. This was with a view to determine the level of improvement of secondary school principals' skills in area of communication, financial management and supervision of instruction on academic performance of students.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary education in Nigeria where youths are prepared for useful living and higher education has not been given proper attention in terms of realizing its goals. It seems that the administrators charged with the task of utilizing the available scarce resources to attain the secondary school objectives are not competent enough. This is manifested in the poor performance of students in senior secondary school certificate examinations over a decade now.

It also appears that most principals in Ebonyi State fail to adopt effective communication network, proper financial management and failed woefully in their instructional supervisory roles. This ugly situation has captured the attention of education stakeholders in Ebonyi state. This they did through the expression of their concern over the poor performance of students in school certificate examinations. It is the above scenario that the problem of this study put in a question from is "what is the level of improvement of principals' administrative skills and academic performance of secondary students in Ebonyi State?"

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the level of improvement of principals administrative skills and academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the level of principals applications of communication skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state;
2. determine the level of principals' application of supervisions of instructional skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State;
3. analyze the level of principals' application of financial management skills to improve the academic performance of students in Ebonyi state in secondary schools;

Research Questions

1. What is the level of principal's application of communication skills to enhance the academic programme of secondary school students in Ebonyi State?
2. What is the level of principal's application of supervision of instructional skills to enhance the academic performance of students in Ebonyi State Secondary Schools?
3. What is the level of principal's application of financial management skills to improve the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and test at 0.05 level of significant to guide the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the level of their application of communication skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the level of their application of instructional supervision skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the level of their application of financial management skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design carried in Ebonyi state of Nigeria. The population for the study was made up of 223 secondary school principals made up of 120 females and 103 males in Ebonyi State and this number was not considered to large to require sampling, hence a census technique was employed, meaning that the entire population was used for the study.

The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire titled “Level of Improvement of Principals’ Administrative Skills and Academic performance Scale” (LIPASAPS), developed by the researchers on a 4-point scale. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from Administration and Planning and one from Measurement and Evaluation unit in Science Education department all from Ebonyi state University, Abakaliki.

To determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out outside the study area using 20 randomly selected secondary school principals in Enugu State. Enugu state was chosen because the state is close to Ebonyi State and both share similar characteristics. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Pearson Product Movement co-relation and was found to be 0.86. This value indicated that the instrument was reliable and therefore adequate for the study. The research questions were answered using mean responses, standard deviation and grand mean while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. The four point rating scale was Very High Level (VHL) 4, High Level (HL) 3, Low Level (LL) 2, and Very Low Level (VLL) 1.

III. RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the level of principals’ application of communication skills to enhance the academic performance of students in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Mean responses of respondents on the level of principals’ application of communication skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary schools students in Ebonyi state.

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Principals use communication skills to provide the necessary information for decision making in the school.	1.78	1.08	VLL
2	He uses it to control the activities in the school for effective service delivery	2.32	2.00	LL
3	Communication skills give teachers the opportunity to express their feelings in the class.	1.10	1.80	VLL
4	Effective communication skills serve as one of the motivational functions to encourage achievement in subordinates.	1.55	2.00	VLL
5	Principals use communication skill to encourage cordial relationships between staff and students for effective performance	2.25	1.95	LL
6	Principals use of communication skills minimizes information distortions to the barest minimum in the school	2.22	2.00	LL
7	The use of both horizontal and vertical communication skills by the principals promotes healthy atmosphere for effective class activities	2.00	2.20	LL
8	Principals’ communication skills evaluate and control performance of teachers.	2.15	2.40	LL
9	Principals’ communication skills help develop plans for the achievement of goals of the school.	1.85	2.00	LL
10	Principals’ communication skill makes the school an open system interacting with its environment.	2.03	2.15	LL
Total Grand Mean		1.92	0.19	VLL

Key: VHL = Very High Level, HL = High Level, VLL= Very Low Level.

Result on table 1 showed the responses of respondents on the level of principals’ application of communication skills to enhance students’ academic performance. The grand mean of 1.92 with a standard deviation of 0.19 is an indication that principals’ application of communication skills enhanced the academic performance of students in Ebonyi state secondary schools is to a very low level.

Research question 2: What is the level of principals’ application of supervision of instruction skills to enhance the academic performance of students in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Mean responses of respondents on the level of principals’ application of supervision of instruction skills to enhance the academic performance of students in Ebonyi state secondary schools.

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Principals’ assist in keeping accurate school records of students’ academic performance	2.40	2.00	LL
2	Principals’ in collaboration with other staff members allocate time to each subject for effective teaching to enhance students’ academic performance.	1.98	1.11	LL
3	Principals’ encourage the use of good teaching methods by teachers for proper lesson delivery.	1.86	0.74	VLL
4	Principals’ assist in providing school facilities for improving teaching and learning	2.11	0.01	LL
5	Principals’ encourage and help teachers to improvise instructional materials not available in the school.	2.12	1.01	LL
6	Principals’ ensure that remedial lessons are held to make up for missed ones to enhance students’ academic performance	2.35	0.97	LL
7	Principals’ monitoring of instructional supervision assist teachers in classroom	1.96	0.96	

8	management Monitoring of supervision of instruction by principals' help teachers to solve their professional problems to enhance students academic performance.	1.87	0.89	VLL
Total Grand Mean		1.84	1.87	VLL

Result on table 2 revealed the respondents responses on the level of principals' application of supervision of instructional skills to enhance academic performance of students in Ebonyi State. The grand mean of 1.84 with a standard deviation of 0.87 is an indication that principals' application of supervision of instructional skills to enhance the academic performance of students in Ebonyi state secondary schools is to a very low level.

Research question 3: What is the level of principals' application of financial management skills to improve the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State?

Table 3: Mean responses of respondents on the level of principals' application of financial management skills to improve the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	The school budgets are prepared by the principal jointly with the management staff to cover important library text materials for students and staff.	1.85	0.89	VLL
2	Principal source for funds for the provision of chalk to help teachers deliver their lessons properly.	2.19	1.10	LL
3	Principals assist in keeping financial information about the school for reference to aid provision of teaching facilities in the school.	2.27	1.09	LL
4	Principals facilitate the school budget to reflect a set goals and objectives of improving teaching and learning in school.	2.09	0.04	LL
5	Principals scrutinize budget prepared by the school bursar to help principals plan for the academic improvement of students.	1.96	1.02	VLL
Total Grand Mean		2.07	1.06	LL

Result on table 3 showed the level of principals' application of financial management skills to improve the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State. The grand mean of 2.07 with a standard deviation of 1.06 showed that principals' application of financial management skills was to a low level for the improvement of academic performance of students in Ebonyi state secondary schools.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and test at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the level of principals' application of communication skills to enhance academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state.

Table 4: t-test statistic on the level of application of communication of skills by principals to enhance academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state according to gender.

Sources of Variation	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	P	Decision
Male	103	3.31	0.73	221	0.61	1.96	0.05	Upheld
Female	120	3.29	0.88					

Result of the hypothesis on table 4 showed that the calculated t-value of 0.61 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 221 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This is an indication that the null hypothesis stated in the study is upheld and the alternate rejected. This implies that the opinion of male principals do not differ significantly from those of the female principals.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the level of principals' application of instructional supervision skills to enhance academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state.

Table 5: t-test statistic on the level of application of instructional supervision skills by principals to enhance academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state according to gender.

Sources of variation	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	P	Decision
Male	103	2.27	0.93	221	0.24	1.96	0.05	Upheld
Female	120	2.26	0.75					

The above shows that at 0.05 significant level and degree of freedom of 221, table of t-cal of 0.24 was less than the t-critical of 1.96. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld. This indicates that

male and female principals do not differ significantly in their level of application of instructional supervision skills to enhance academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the level of principals' application of financial management skills to boost academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state.

Table 5: t-test statistic on the level of application of financial management skills by principals to boost academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state according to gender.

Sources of Variation	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	P	Decision
Male	103	2.82	0.31	221	1.43	1.96	0.05	Upheld
Female	120	2.73	0.28					

The above table shows the result of the t-test that at 0.05 significant level and degree of freedom of 221, table of t-cal of 1.43 was less than the t-critical of 1.96. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld. This shows that male and female principals do not differ significantly in their level of application of financial management skills to boost academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

The result of the study on table 1 showed that respondents indicated that principals' application of communication skills to enhance academic performance of secondary school students was to a very low level. It is pertinent for principals to note that effective communication skills are side qua non to efficient and quality academic performance of secondary school students. Appropriate communication skills entail principals' ability to pass on information to classroom teachers and students alike on the need to be able to adhere strictly to modern method of teaching. Equally, effective communication skills in secondary school by principals ensures good relationships among the personnel in the school, improves teaching and learning, make teachers to be up to date in trend of things and enhances timely achievement of educational objectives. On the contrary, principals' poor communication skill has greatly affected the academic performance of students because of their inability to infuse in teachers' new method of teaching. This is in line with [6] who said that poor communication in the classroom is responsible for students' poor achievement in mathematics. The corresponding hypothesis was upheld because the opinions of male principals do not differ significantly from those of their female counterparts.

Result on table two revealed that principals' application of supervision of instructional skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi state was to a very low level. Supervision of instruction by principals' is one of their primary responsibilities as this will help classroom teachers in their teaching activities, classroom management, maintenance of discipline, use of modern method of teaching, using teaching materials appropriately and adopt a proper and adequate evaluation of students to enhance their academic performance. However, because some principals do not apply correct classroom supervision of instructional skills, students' academic performances generally become very poor. This is in line with [9] who noted that because principals delegate most of their primary duties such as supervision of instruction to teachers who are not experienced in instructional supervision; this according to them affects the academic performance of secondary school students nationwide. The corresponding hypothesis indicated the male and female principals do not differ significantly in their level of application of instructional supervision skills to enhance the academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State.

Result of the study of the study on table three also showed that principals' financial management skill to enhance academic performance of secondary school students in Ebonyi State was to a very low level. Financial management or present spending of fund allocated to the education sector will help to procure some vital equipment and aid the provision of educational facilities. In secondary schools nationwide principals poor financial management has led to wasted spending of money. Some of the monies are not channeled appropriately thus, lading to embezzlement. This is in agreement with [10] who noted that inadequate infrastructure equipment for teaching, non-existence or obsolete, dilapidated buildings, blown off roofs, non-existence of medical services for both staff and students, insubordination of teachers are all indications of principals' poor financial management skills. The absence or inadequacies of these all important school plants causes ineffective teaching, poor classroom management, indiscipline, and poor students participation in classroom activities, hence poor academic performance of students. The corresponding hypothesis showed that male and female principals do not differ significantly in their level of application of financial management skills to boost academic performance of students in Ebonyi state secondary schools.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has been able to examine various degrees of principals' application of administrative skills and academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria with focus in Ebonyi state with regards to application of communications, supervision of classroom instruction and financial management skills. The findings were that principals of secondary schools do not apply these skills very well and this accounts for students' poor academic performance in both external and internal examinations. This calls for a serious re-awakening by principals if academic performance of students is to be improved and sustained.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is urgent need for regular seminars and workshops to be organized by government for the principals on the application of communication, classroom supervision of instruction and financial management skills.
2. Teachers should be encouraged by government to improve upon their method of teaching without been supervised.
3. Principals should be encouraged to under-go an intensive in-service training programme on financial management to enable them know how to imbibe the culture of prudent spending.

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