

Research Article

Principals' Administrative Tasks in Schools: A Panoramic Overview

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Abstract

This paper reviewed relevant literature on principals' administrative tasks performance in Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria. Principals in schools manage a wide array of administrative tasks, encompassing human, material, financial, and time resources, to ensure effective educational programs and a positive learning environment. Their responsibilities include supervising staff, managing the budget, developing curriculum, and overseeing student performance, all while fostering teacher growth and positive school culture. Studies on administrative variables have dominated scholarly literature in recent times. It attempted to review how administrative tasks performance of principals interface with the attitude of teachers to work in public secondary schools in Nigeria. The administrative tasks that were reviewed included instructional management, students' services management, staff personnel management, financial and physical resources management and school community relations. From many of the reviewed literature, it was observed that principals' administrative tasks performance significantly predicted attitude to work of teachers in public secondary schools in Nigeria. It was, therefore, suggested that principals and teachers should be encouraged for the satisfactory performance of the administrative tasks of principals; public school principals should be encouraged to take the performance of their administrative tasks very seriously because of the importance that positive satisfactory performance of these tasks has on the attitude of work of teachers, among others.

Keywords

Overview, Principals, Secondary Schools, Administrative Tasks, Performance, Panoramic

1. Introduction

Viewed against the backdrop of its political and socio-economic relevance to personal and national development, education can be described as the oxygen that is needed for the growth, sustainability and overall technological development of any nation. It equips an individual for his survival in a competitive world through the acquisition of competen-

cies and needed dexterities in a formal school setting, like the secondary schools and tertiary institutions.

The basic administrative tasks of principals include but not limited to management of instruction, management of students' services, management of school staff, financial and physical resources management (i.e. school business admin-

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istration) and school community relations. Management of instruction involves classification of students, allocation of subjects to teachers, provision of instructional materials, time-tabling, evaluation and supervision, marking of lesson notes, among others. Management of instructions relates to supervision of everything concerning instruction in the school. It requires the principal to oversee the teaching and learning process as well as provides instructional direction for teachers.

Management of instruction appears to be the major fulcrum of the principal's job description because the goal of school administration is the enhancement of effective teaching and learning. As the one who assures the position of an instructional leader in the school, the principal directs and leads the teachers and students in the selection of appropriate school activities that are capable of enhancing the instructional programmes of the school.

Management of students' services includes the admission and classification, guidance and counseling, maintenance of school discipline, social and recreational activities and the maintenance of school discipline [10]. The students are at the centre of the educational process; therefore, all the activities that go on in the school are aimed at developing their personality to the fullest. It stands to reason, therefore, that school heads need to oversee opportunities for students to develop acceptable behaviors and acquire good moral rectitude and training that will prepare them for their future lives.

The principal is expected to show considerable concern for students teaching and learning situation, provide viable opportunities of developing and molding their characters, undertake to understand and solve their personal problems, and cater for their well-being and comfort. Besides, the principal should have assessable and cumulative records of all the students and also develop a method of reporting to the parents the progress of their wards in school [23].

Management of staff personnel includes the selection and placement of staff, staff development, motivation and evaluation. This management function demands that the principal should be pre-occupied with the personal and professional problems of his staff so as to be able to guide against negative spill-over effects of one on the other. It also involves a careful study and critical analysis of staff's needs before making requisition to the appropriate authorities. The principal must also realize that the success of the school programme and that of the overall education goals depends on the quality, dedication and performance of the staff.

Management of financial and physical resources also falls within the purview of the task of the school principal. Although the responsibility of providing appropriate materials and financial resources to secondary schools in Nigeria is on the government, yet the effective use of the educational purpose rests on the school principal. For example, school buildings, equipment and supplies cost a great amount of money; thus they should be adequately maintained. The storage and distribution of school supplies and equipment must also be

given adequate attention. Therefore, the principal must exhibit strong accountability for the school supplies.

As the chief accounting officer of the school, the principal must ensure accurate keeping of all school records and the accounting system based on sound accounting principles in all his financial transactions. He works with the bursar to prepare the school budget. If he is involved in any type of revenue collection, like school fees, examination levies, Parents Teachers Association (PTA) levies, among others, he should ensure that receipts are issued for such monies collected; and records kept of all items of expenditure. Although this schedule is that of the bursar, nowhere applicable, yet the principal has to supervise all financial transactions of the school.

Furthermore, the school principal plays a dual role, one to the general public and the other to the internal operation of his organization. The principal reaches out to the various publics that make up the school system. School community relations starts from the relationship with staff and students, spreads outwards to parents and then to the wider public which the school serves. The principal should recognize, strengthen and use this bond in a way that will enhance the realization of school goals. No school can operate in a social vacuum from the society it is designed to serve.

The school derives its existence and sustenance from the community that supplies the input used in the school. The school, in turn, processes and refines the input which it sends back as output to the community to develop and advance it for the betterment of the larger society. This dependence on the community makes it difficult for the school to function effectively without the support of the community. It is against the foregoing that this paper sought to panoramically overview the performance of principals' administrative tasks in Nigerian Public Secondary Schools.

The School Principal

Every organization, schools inclusive, has set goals and objectives, which the activities of the organization hopes to accomplish within a given time frame. The achievement of secondary school goals and objectives depends on the ability of the school principal to provide purposeful, directional and effective leadership. Effective leadership involves overseeing the activities of staff, providing direction for organizational task performance and helping staff to harmonize organizational activities with organizational goals.

Generally, the principal is supposed to be a model of honour, respect, dignity and wisdom that other staff should emulate, especially when he is focused and dedicated to the job. It should be a reference point for other staff, especially the teachers, who are directly saddled with the responsibility of proper upbringing of the students. Teachers generally expect principals to know about all aspects of the school, while still giving teachers autonomy and freedom to make good decisions, and earnestly considering all opinions involved. They also want a leadership with high moral rectitude; someone whose integrity and intellect they respect [16].

When the principal is not forthcoming or falls short in the performance of his or her administrative tasks, this may negatively impact on the attitude to work of teachers. When such situations arise, teachers may tend to display lackadaisical attitude towards their work; and this may manifest in lateness to school and classroom, disregard for school rules and regulations, absenteeism, indiscipline, moral laxity, non-diligence to duty, among others [20]. This often times slow down progress in the school and the school's inability to actualize its educational objectives.

Sequel to the foregoing, the quality of leadership provided by a principal through the performance of his or her administrative tasks may positively or negatively impact the disposition of teachers to work [21]. The teachers, as partners in progress, are expected to complement the efforts of the principals through effective teaching and learning in the classroom. The significance of teachers in this regard will depend on the attitude they bring to bear on their jobs. The researcher is of the opinion that the attitude to work of teachers, to a large extent, may depend on the way and manner the school principal performs his or her administrative functions as school head.

As earlier asserted, the achievement of organizational goals depends on the ability of the leader to provide purposeful and directional leadership [9]. In the secondary school system, for example, this role is performed by the school head, who is the principal. In addition to the universal management functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating and reporting performed by the principal, there are other specific administrative tasks carried out by the principal that are geared towards the enhancement of effective teaching and learning. These administrative tasks are instructional management, students' management services, staff personal management, financial and physical resources management and school community relations. These administrative tasks make school administrative unique and distinct from other types of human organizations such as religious business and health organizations.

Instructional Management Task Performance

Instructional management task performance by principals involves classification of students, provision of instructional material, allocation of subjects to teachers based on qualification and experience, time-tabling, evaluation and supervision of instruction [10]. Supervision of instruction demands that the principal oversees the teaching and learning process and also provides instructional direction for teachers.

Instructional management appears to be the major thrust of a principal's job because the goal of school administration is the enhancement of effective teaching and learning. Researchers identified different instructional tasks components to include establishing clear instructional goals, being resourceful for staff, creating a school culture and climate conducive to learning, communicating the vision and mission of the school, setting high expectations for staff, developing teacher leaders, maintaining positive attitudes towards stu-

dents, staff and parents [27].

The result of a study carried out on principals instructional management function by [1] indicated a significant predictor of attitude to work of teachers in public secondary schools in Nigeria. The result indicated that instructional function task explained 96.6% variance in the attitude to work of teachers. This finding could be attributed to principals' establishment of clear instructional goals, creation of a school culture and climate conducive to learning and maintaining positive attitudes towards staff, students and parents. This might also be due to good instructional supervisory leadership provided by the principals to the teachers, could have lightened the burden of effective instruction in schools.

The foregoing result aligned with that of [28] who found that principals' instructional leadership significantly influenced communication, decision making, motivation, supervision and attitude of teachers to work. This result could be occasioned by the support given to the teachers by the principals in improvisation of teaching and learning materials. The finding also agrees with that of [17] who found that principals' instructional leadership significantly influenced communication, decision making, motivation, supervision and attitude to work by teachers. It also found that direct supervision of instruction is positively and significantly related to teachers' performance and attitude to work. This result agrees with that of [15] who found that principals play their instructional leadership roles to high extent and these roles affect the work performance and attitude of teachers.

Students' Services Management Task Performance

This management task by principals is seen as one of their essential tasks as it involves all the activities that are rendered to the students for the achievement of educational goals, apart from the normal classroom instructions [24]. Students' services management comprises all the curricular and co-curricular aspects of the school programme. It is an important area in the administration of secondary schools that seeks to provide placement and follow-up services. It includes assistance given to students on financial, health and safety, food and housing, variety of co-curricular activities, and recommends appropriate disciplinary actions to the school authorities concerning erring students [4].

The students are at the centre of the educational process; therefore, all the activities that go on in the school are aimed at developing their personality to the fullest. Students' management services aim at providing an environment that is conducive to students' development, placing great emphasis on the construction of a harmonious and vibrant school life.

The results of the study carried out on management of students' services by [2] showed a significant predictor of attitude to work of teachers in public secondary schools in Edo State. According to the result, management of students' services task explained 96% of the variance $F(1,724) = 36126.234, P < 0.05$ in the attitude to work of teachers. This finding could be attributed to the serious decline in students' population in public schools in Edo State; coupled with few

teachers' population in the schools [11]. The students are now fewer and this makes for effective management of students' services. In addition, according to [13] the little resources available to the school could be used to cater for the needs of the students.

The result of this study agrees with that of [25] who found that management of students' personnel, guidance/counseling and recreational services significantly correlated with suitable secondary education can only be achieved when teachers have a positive attitude towards their work. This result could be because of the closeness of principles and teachers to the students because of reduce students population in public schools in Edo state. The closeness could enhance the in loco parentis role of both principals and teachers because they would be able to have one-on-one predictive interactions with the students.

However, this finding disagreed with that of [14] who posited, among others, that the principals' provision of students discipline contributes only 73% of attitudes to work of teachers and productivity in senior secondary schools in Enugu State, while 92.7% was contributed by some factors. The findings tends to also disagree with that of [19] who asserted that years of experience and teachers area of specialization were the only significant predictors of the teachers attitudes towards (A practice among other variables such as gender and age).

Staff Personnel Management Task

The hallmark of human resources management in any organization to retain, attract, reward and develop a team of highly motivated workforce capable and willingly ready to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of instructional objectives [22]. School personnel management is an important management function concerned with obtaining, developing and motivating human resources as required by the school to achieve its objectives [22].

School personnel management is the act of planning, organizing, controlling, stimulating and motivating teachers in order to enhance their commitment to the attainment of school goals and objectives. To Murphy (2020), it includes practices like orientations, motivation and welfare, among others. Included to the foregoing are decision making, delegation of duties, supervision, staff training and development, among others. The reason for staff personnel management task by principals include, enhancing staff motivation, dedication, collegiality and commitment in assisting students in their learning endeavors [18].

The result of the study in a related variable showed that staff personnel management task was a significant predictor of attitude to work of teachers in public secondary schools in Adamawa State [3]. The result indicated that staff personnel management task explained 94% of the variance ($R^2=.940$, $F(1,802) = 9462.143$, $P<0.005$) in the attitude to work of teachers. This could be due to the cordial working relationship that exists between the principals and teachers. It could also be due to the leadership style adopted by the principals

in the management of their schools as some of the literature reviewed showed that good leadership styles positively impact the attitude of teachers to work.

This result agrees with that of [18] who found that principal's leadership style had a positive impact on attitude of teachers to work and their job performance. This study agrees with that of [7] who earlier found that democratic leadership style and tension effectiveness and attitude to work in public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government area of Ogun state were significantly related. This finding also agreed with that of [5] who asserted that there was a positive relationship among democratic leadership, school effectiveness and attitude to work of teachers. More so, the result aligned with [8] who found that the reward practices adopted by principals positively impacted attitudes to work of teachers in secondary schools.

However, the result disagreed with that of [14] who revealed that training of teachers had the most impact on different work dimensions such as improvement of teaching strategies, reduction in teacher's personnel, but less impact on attitude of work of teachers. The result also disagreed with that of [6] who posited that there was no significant relationship between school organizational culture and teacher's attitude to work.

Financial and Physical Resources Management Task

This is also known as school business administration. This management task ensures that expenditures are well directed towards achieving good value for money, involving appropriate acquisition and allocation of physical and other resources [13]. Other activities that help achieve this goal include the use of effective structures, budgets and resources control.

Physical resources management refers to setting of appropriate structures and processes, identifying educational resources needs, establishing sources of funding and conceiving well formulated budgets, identifying reputable suppliers and service providers, and procuring, utilizing, maintaining and controlling the assets and educational resources within given boundaries and policies [7]. Physical resource management should account for the procurement of suppliers, monitor resources arrival, application of resources to instructional processes, resource shortages and retrieval and re-opportunities of unused or under utilized resources during a given financial period.

Otoide et al [26] studied the effects of principals participation in the management of physical and material resources on their motivation and attitude to work. The study sought to establish whether there was a significant relationship between the principals involvement in management of physical and material resources on their motivation to work in secondary schools in Uganda. The study established that principals were moderately involved in management of physical and material resources. The findings also revealed a statistical significant relationship among principals level of participation in the management of physical facilities and their mo-

tivation and attitude to work ($B=.378$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$).

In a related study, [21] examined principals' management of financial and non-financial resources as correlate of instructional goal fulfilment in secondary schools in Calabar metropolis. The study, an expo facto research design, showed that there was a considerable association between the management of financial resources by school principals and the fulfilment of instructional goals. A significant relationship was also established between principals management of non-financial resources such as school libraries, school records and human resources) and the fulfilment of instructional goals in secondary schools in the study area.

Mendoza et al. assessed the factors of educational resources management that related to the quality of work-life among public elementary school teachers [12]. The study revealed that different schools manage physical resources and time, financial, human information and communication technology and community resources were also well managed. Moreover, the community and physical/material resources significantly related to the teachers quality of work-life, in satisfaction, a work place stress, financial reimbursement, working condition, work-life balance and safety as well as health based on the regression of variables. However, there was no significant difference in the perceptions of two groups of respondents to educational resource management and the level of their quality of work-life.

In the same vein, the results of the study carried out by [29] indicated that management of financial and physical resources was a significant predictor of attitude to work of teachers in public secondary schools in Edo State. This result could be attributed to the transparency in handling school financial matters displayed by some school principles. It could also be due to well directed financial and physical resources management procedures adopted by some principals in order to ensure that expenditure is focused towards achieving good value for money. This result aligns with that of [7] who found a considerable association between school leaders' management of financial and non-financial resources and the fulfilment of institutional goals.

2. Conclusion

Based on the results of the variables reviewed against the backdrop of relevant literature, this paper concluded that the performance of the administrative tasks of principals in schools cannot be undermined because of the strong positive influence that satisfactory performance of these tasks exerts on the attitudes to work of teachers. The reviewed studies revealed that the level of principals performance of the five administrative tasks measured in the study was high and very satisfactory, and that the attitude to work of teachers in schools is positive. Positive attitude to work of teachers leads to effective teaching and learning which on the long run, can lead to better learning outcomes.

3. Suggestions

Based on the review of relevant literature studies, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) School principals and teachers should be encouraged to sustain the very satisfactory performance of the administrative tasks of principals and the favorable attitude to work of teachers in secondary schools.
- 2) Public school principals should be encouraged to take the performance of their administrative tasks very seriously because of the positive influence the satisfactory performance of these tasks has on the attitudes to work of teachers. The sensitization could be written commendation and financial and material rewards for principals with very satisfactory administrative task performance.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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