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Article: **Principals' Administrative Behaviour in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Challenges and Remedies**

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Principals' Administrative Behaviour in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Challenges and Remedies

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Abstract

The principal administrative behavior serves as a motivator whose effectiveness in school business requires focus and commitment. Actualizing the organization goal often poses severe challenge to administrators. This paper is therefore designed to examine the various challenges facing principals' administrative behavior in Nigerian secondary schools. The paper focuses on concept of principal administrative behavior, school principals' tasks in the realization of educational aims, factors hindering principals' administrative behavior in school administration, relevance of principals' administrative behavior in school administration. Based on this, it was recommended that conferences, seminars and workshops and other staff development programs should be sponsored by the government to serve as motivational strategies for secondary school principals. Also, persistent change in educational policies should be guided against by the government to ensure consistency in educational system. Government should endeavor to provide to schools the educational resources which will improve principals' administrative behavior effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: Principal, administrative behavior, secondary school, Nigeria

Introduction

Education is recognized as a great investment that requires effective management for its success. Actualization of the educational goals irrespective of the nation concerned does not merely occur. It results from a combination of factors which include the behavior of administrators as well as influence of self-determination in giving right to the subordinates.

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This is very essential, because organizational effectiveness hinges largely on leadership efficacy (Liebowitz & Porter, [2019](#)). Administrative competence in terms of availability of skills and knowledge are necessary in realizing organizational goals. Apart from that, those are the rights to exercise leadership powers and authority on school governance. The school administrative behavior therefore, is often charged with the responsibility of being able to harness the available manpower and other resources in the organization in a way that desired school organizational goals can be achieved (Arikewuyo & Onanuga, [2015](#); Asogwa et al., [2020](#); Gunawan et al., [2020](#)). Specifically, the basic requirement for effective school administrative behavior is in-built in the capability of secondary school administrators towards teachers' improvement, students' development and relevant educational stakeholders for the realization of educational goals'. The role of the administrator (who is often referred to as the principal in Nigeria secondary school system) equally includes being able to translate educational policies into programs and actions in the school. The success or failure of the school largely relies on administrators' ability to touch desired educational goals. Therefore, principals' duties as administrative heads of the school are numerous, which subsequently bring variety of challenges in effective management of personnel and instructional activities towards enhancing quality and service delivery (Omemu, [2017](#)).

The principal administrative behavior acts as an energizer that arouses the interest of staff towards effective service delivery in school setting. Actualization of secondary education goals demands adequate guidance of staff and students', which on certain occasions poses severe challenges to the school heads (Omorie, [2005](#)). It also includes creating and maintaining environment, ensuring accountability and transparency as well as influencing decision making that guarantees success in the educational system (Chinenye, [2020](#)). Moreover, administrative behavior is also an ability to translate educational polices into action in which Omorie, ([2005](#)) emphasized as a product of competent leadership of the principal administrative behavior. According to Robinson ([2010](#)), knowing a good school depends on leadership and its quality in educational result. Therefore, education even though it is a business requires principal administrative behavior which can only be obtainable through quality headship and leadership. The vitality of the school can be measured by the

administrative power and exercise of power that the school's head controls. It is through this that his or her ability to stimulate teachers, students and the general public in and outside the school to co-operate in order to achieve the aims of the school can be established.

Principal as the administrative head of secondary school plays key person in ensuring that the students receive quality school experiences. The following are the administrative responsibilities of the school principal; student personnel, school community relation, teaching and programme development, finance and management and school facilities (Obi, [2014](#)). Williams ([2009](#)) observed that today's school heads are anticipated to be visionaries, instructional and curriculum implementer, supervisors, role models, public relation officers and communication specialists, financial plan specialists and caretakers of numerous legitimate, vowed and plan directives and creativities. Apart from these responsibilities, the school principal strives to meet the expectations of various stakeholders such as parents, teaching and the non-teaching staff, Post-Primary Schools' Service Commission and educational ministries in both Federal and State levels.

Nwankwo ([2011](#)) stated that principal administrative behavior in the school management is the orderly procedure of skill force and material resources existing in educational setting and judiciously utilizing them with clear guiding principle towards achieving the educational objectives. Therefore, principal administrative behavior in post-primary education would mean the degree to which institution principals annex manpower and other resources and policies required for the actualization of set goals. However, without the requisite competencies, the school principals in Nigeria would not be able to achieve effectiveness in school administration. Chinenye ([2020](#)) acknowledges that the management competencies, administrative behavior and styles applied by a secondary school principal is very critical to ensuring that students have quality school experience and quality output from the system. Based on this notion, this study examined principals' administrative behavior in Nigerian secondary schools by focusing on challenges and remedies.

Concept of Principal Administrative Behavior

The principal administrative behavior is concerned with institution efficacy in educational administration. Several studies have conceptualized what characterized effective school managers and key elements for leadership effectiveness (Allix, [2010](#)). However, these positions may become more pervasive as clearer understanding of an effective educational leader may become controversial. Some observers argued that competencies for principal administrative behavior have established squat dimension for training highest administrators and that considerable prominence is giving to fiscal control, labor discussions and community relationships. Therefore, Alimo-Metcalf and Alban-Metcalf ([2015](#)) noted that principal administrative behavior on the administrative effectiveness is the same as the Holy Grail in educational management. Most of the capacity building programs for school administrators fundamentally focus on instructional effectiveness. Secondary school administrators with the possession of competencies and knowledge required for effective administration do so their own preferences, values and usually bear the financial implication. The institutional structure does not encourage, promote and prioritize knowledge and skill advancement in the area of teaching and learning, but tolerates the few who cultivate them (Allix, [2010](#)).

Principal administrative behavior is the capability of school managers to maximize school inputs to produce optimum educational services. It is concerned with the output an organization achieves in the extent of its environment (Arikewuyo & Onanuga, [2015](#)). Evers et al. ([2018](#)), described principal administrative behavior as the extent to which administrators maximally enhance their competencies, acclimatize to innovativeness and expanding their awareness as well as capabilities to attain excellence in their organizations. Principal administrative behavior in post-secondary education connotes the degree to which educational administrators coordinate men and material resources in school towards achieving the objective of secondary education.

Principal's administrative behavior is often viewed as the capability of school heads to apply innovative, organizational as well as management strategies in most efficient way using the limited available resources for the

accomplishment of set objectives. Ideally, principal administrative behavior manifests in the ability of an administrator to be obsessive about knowledge and have unblemished idea for enhancing students' academic performance (Sergiovanni, [2016](#)). Effective administrators are captivating, competent, influential, collaborative and compassionate towards transforming ancient school principles. Obiukwu ([2013](#)) emphasized to enhance administrative effectiveness principal need to delegate responsibilities amid workforce in different sections, units or departments. Equally, secondary school heads need to be proactive in making judicious decision regarding monetary resources through soliciting for the staff input.

Administrative Behavior Theory

The administrative behavior theory is a universal concept that explain steps through which personnel completer their task. The theory was developed by Herbert Simon whose discoveries centered on how organization provide the bases to perform certain functions that run counter to other. He elucidated the procedures through which goal specificity and validation enhance functional behavior in work place. He condemns Fayol's inanities and Taylor's "profitable man" norms, recommending the "administrative being" who follows self-absorption and only conscious of conceivable verdict substitute prepared for settling for a passable explanation than linger observing for an optimal one (Agosto, [2002](#); Javid & Al-Hashimi, [2020](#); Si et al., [2020](#)). The theory postulates that highly ranked people involving in decision making with a greater worth component and vice versa. Simon notes that from this viewpoint, an organization's ladder can be observed as a congealed set of means-ends chains that is stimulating consistency of choices and actions all through the society (Agosto, [2002](#)).

There are two fundamental perceptions associated to the administrative behavior theory. The first concept deals with bounded level-headedness which connotes the intellectual confines of those making decision. The second concept relates is concerns with satisfaction which attempts to attain at least some least level of a particular variable, but which does not strive to achieve its maximum possible value. Therefore, the most common application of this concept is in administrative behavior, which, unlike conventional economic accounts, assumes that fabricators treat profit not as

a goal to be maximized, but as a restraint. Under these, although at least a critical level of profit must be achieved by firms; thereafter, priority is attached to the attainment of other goals.

School Principals' Tasks in the Realization of Educational Aims

The prominence of secondary education made by the Federal Government of Nigeria is to identify the objectives of secondary education as; preparation for useful living within the society and for tertiary education level. The highlight philosophies are that the post primary schools should be capable of providing standard secondary education to recipients that can benefit from it. Though, it seems the secondary education stage is not performing as expected in carrying out its mandates. Omoregie (2005) expressed the contemporary secondary school products are neither helpfully live in the society nor proceed into tertiary institution without parenteral assistance through examination malpractices. They cannot reason independently or respect the opinions and emotional state of others. They do not show smidgeon of self-respect of labour with the exception of those that will provide them speedy money.

It must be emphasis that education as a tool par excellence for accomplishing nationwide progress would be more of a mirage than reality where post primary education is not efficiently managed to achieve the stated goals. In the management of secondary education, the principal is the administrative head whose role is fundamental. According to Ibukun (2011), the roles of Nigerian school principals' have increasingly converted multifaceted and extremely uncertain. To manage the increasing challenges in the organization, the college administrator must be prepared to serve as agent of positive reformation. According to Ajayi (2012), secondary education in the country is peppered with crunches of numerous proportions and enormousness which suggest that the system is at crossroad.

On the other hand, lack of commitment from school principals can jeopardize school system even when other resources such as materials are surplus Managerial problems arising from poor management styles can create lasting problems on school programs. The principal's duty as an administrator lies in his or her ability to accommodate others' ideas, his or her relationship with staff and his or her tactfulness in school administration

This duty is often misconstrued by either the principal or the other staff particularly where conflict arises, which may impair quality of administration of such schools. To determine what makes a school administrator effective requires a number of factors which may include his type of leadership style, human relations approach, commitment to the welfare of staff and students. All these factors if well harnessed work towards producing desired educational goals of the school. His expertise in managing other resources such finances and other material resources has an added advantage to quality administration. However, these factors are not exclusive because there is need for the leader to understand the peculiarity of the school environment.

Factors Hindering Principals' Administrative Behavior in Nigerian Secondary School

The concern and need for improved schools has become more intensive and there has been a national outcry that the schools are no longer meeting these aspirations as stated in the nation educational policy. However, both men and women leaders can exercise their authority more productively when they have power behind them. Having stated this though, the success of a school principal particularly under the present dispensation when there is huge demand and quest for education, besides following the proposed profile of leadership resource, there is need to prepare the principals to conform to new knowledge, skill, functions and current expectations. Efforts that would encompass thoughtful undertakings and personal evaluation of advancement are germane procedures necessary in the determining effectiveness of administrators towards building robust schools. Besides specific bottle necks that hinder school principals, there are general indices that determine the success and failure of school administration in Nigeria. According to Ajayi ([2012](#)), these are discussed under the following sub-headings:

- The demand on present dispensation of principals
- Personality trait factor
- Knowledge and skills
- Administrative leadership and supervisory roles.
- Conflict management

The Demand on Present Dispensation of Principals

Being a school principal today is much more difficult than it was two decades ago. The demands of today's administrative duties and responsibilities have become more complex due to population of students and staff as well as inconsistency in policy changes. For instance, there have been numerous changes in the curriculum which require more extensive teacher involvement. Many principals continue to experience dissatisfaction with the failure of training programmes to keep to current curriculum changes. There is the problem of students' unrest and teacher militancy, influence of wide spread drug abuse and sexual abuse against women continue to exert social pressure on school governance. All these social problems which make it difficult for a female school principal to maintain successful human relations.

Personality Trait Factor

There are acceptable personality traits that are required in leadership. This was why Akabuogu, (2015) outlined the personality qualities of a principal as possessing extensively ability to supervise by borrowing from large expanse of experience, having general training ability to get with and organize people with confidence to get on and being aware of current educational problems and development, ability to inspire the people with confidence as well as possessing effective discipline that would make you accessible to people. These traits can only be effective if they are properly developed and managed. Because of widely accepted claim that men and women are socialized differently, and that men are confident while women lack confidence, the leaders need to prove themselves as being capable of leading well by equipping themselves with modern knowledge-based materials. This assumption challenges leaders to work extra hard to earn men's confidence, trust and support in such a way that they are entrusted with leadership positions. In effect it implies that the female principal must be conversant with not only the objectives of schools but also have the ability to effect positive change.

Knowledge and Skills of an Administrator

There is dire need that aspiring school principals should possess fundamental proficient knowledge and skills essential for efficient running

of school. The need for ensuring conformity with contemporary knowledge, skill as well as current expectations require appropriate dimensions which is an integral part of both recruitment and selection of school administrators. But where proper and well-articulated educational and professional guidelines are not adhered to in the selection of principals, such leadership is more likely to face professional crises in management. It follows that staff management ability, which is largely dependent on knowledge acquisition and skill development becomes paramount as actualization of educational goals depends largely on teachers quality (Obi, [2014](#)).

Administrative Leadership and Supervisory Roles

Principals as administrative heads of schools occupy positions and perform supervisory roles. The ability to perform these roles generally shapes the achievement of the school goals. The term leadership implies relations between persons whose desires and aspirations must be harnessed for the continuity of the organization. Ozigi, ([2014](#)) grouped the principal's leadership role and duties into two broad categories; professional and administrative roles. According to him, principals must be knowledgeable and concerned with the quality of instruction as well as pupils' welfare. Obiukwu ([2013](#)) emphasized that the success of any leadership depends largely upon principles of planning, organizing, communication, motivation and abilities in resolving conflicts.

Conflict Management

Management of school conflicts should not be neglected as an area of importance in the role of a school principal. There are ways in which school conflicts are part of the schools. Management of school conflict is a joint responsibility of various agencies such government and individuals as well as organizations. Ozigi ([2000](#)) stated that school conflicts vary based on size of the school and caliber of the teaching staff in such school determines how school conflicts could be managed effectively. According to Agom ([2015](#)), a school conflict arises from the fact that most of the school principals are not appointed on the basis of ability and expertise. In most cases, political consideration plays a major role in their appointment. In situation whereby, there is often an array of problems emanating from government insufficient fund allocation, insufficient revenue generation based on principals' lack of

expertise in fund raising capabilities, embezzlement of fund, fraudulent practices of school bursars with or without the collaboration of school principals, misappropriations of funds, among others which continue to affect school administration generated numerous school conflicts.

Relevance of Principals' Administrative Behaviour in School Administration

Administration of school is concerned with the mobilization and coordination of men, materials, financial and other resources for the accomplishment of set goals. This involve: assessment of school community relation, utilization of practical skills essential for the survival of organizational policies, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict handling, running meetings are essential (Ojo, [1999](#)). All these tasks can be linked planning, organizing, directing, supervising, and evaluating the school system. Being performed by school principal towards efficient and effective teaching and learning in the school. The school principal by implication is a planner, director, controller, coordinator, organizer, adviser and a problem-solver on whose shoulders rest the entire administration, success or failure of the school (Maduabum, [2014](#)). The principal identifies and set goals of the school in line with the national objectives. Analyses tasks and share responsibilities of the staff according to specialization and expertise (Uyanga, [2008](#)). The principal is the school administrative and academic leader. He is concerned with the initiation, organization and direction of the actions staff and students towards the achievement of school objectives. The growth in school population, programmes and procedures has led to a revolution in principal ship in the Nigerian secondary schools. The secondary school head is no more a mere headmaster or a head teacher serving as a classroom teacher and as an administrator performing the duties of a clerical officer in most cases. Rather, today's school principal is seen as a resources manager whose authority, responsibility and accountability have increased tremendously. Such a person is now regarded as an executive, responsible for the organization and operation of a school. The school principal now performs a number of tasks and responsibilities classified into the following categories:

- (a) Student personnel services involving the selection, orientation, placement, guidance and counselling and general welfare of students;

- (b) Development and implementation of education programs and policies.
- (c) Staff personnel services involving proper appointment, engagement, motivation, training and preservation of workforce: and
- (d) Provision and maintenance of capitals and equipment. Today's principal is restricted in sourcing for funds. Fees to be collected are specified, while he is to follow certain guidelines in spending the money for accountability; development and improvement of instructional programs involving choice of subjects, textbooks, work scheduling, use of instructional facilities and procedures for evaluation of pupils and school progress; and maintenance of effective interrelationships with the community and external agencies for the smooth running of the school. The school principal as a resources manager is beset with a problems arising from external and internal influences on the school system. The school principal in his resource management includes:
 - (i) The rising cost of education and the general economic system of the society;
 - (ii) Politicization of education and the general political systems of the society;
 - (ii) Proliferation of educational theories and the demand for their use in the school:
 - (iv) Increasing public interest in education and the activities of the school, and the demand for accountability from the school system; and
 - (v) Rapid changes in social values, norms, expectations, and goals of the society.

Also, the internal influences on the school principal in his resource management include;

- (i) The explosion of student enrolment;
- (ii) Diversification of the school activities;
- (iii) Staff professionalization;
- (iv) Teacher militancy and attrition;

(v) Emphasis on child- centeredness in the education process; and (vi) growth of organizational complexity of the school.

The following are strategies being employed by the principal to ensure efficient service delivery towards producing quality outputs in this 21st century:

Financial Management

of controlling the revenue generating from the school and ensure prudent utilization of PTA levy to compliment government efforts through the institutionalization of meaningful rapport with the Parents Teachers Association, Education Boards, Old Students' Association and Non-Governmental Organizations for fund raising activities.

Provision and Maintenance of Physical Facilities

Principals must be entirely apprehensive of the physical setting and other facilities located in the school. Decrepit buildings, leaking roofs, uncompleted projects, over-grown trees and lawns, dingy and dark buildings that have demoralizing impacts on people, especially the adolescents (Obidoa, [2006](#)). Consequently, the principals are saddled with the responsibilities of safeguarding that these facilities in spite of the scanty resources at their disposal, for effective teaching.

Motivator

A school principal must not only be skillful in the administration of school resources but must be conversant with the ideologies of arousing the enthusiasm of the subordinates in administrative processes. Principal as an administrative head of the school charge with the responsibility of motivating them to put in their best at achieving educational goals through effective teaching-learning process.

Curriculum and Instructional Supervisor

The roles of the school principal as a supervisor include: obtaining and making available for teachers all educational information; visiting classrooms often to observe his teachers teaching; inspecting teachers' lesson notes and class registers, diaries and teaching aids and offering professional advice for their improvement.

Change Implementer

When it comes to efforts to enhance the excellence of school, the principal is the critical person in making transformation to happen. According to Uyanga (2008), school is an agent overhaul reformation in the society, while the principal is the fulcrum of such reforms and changes.

Challenges Associated with Principals' Administration of Secondary Schools in Nigeria

The role of management in planning, organizing and integrating organizational resources for achieving predetermined or identified objectives cannot be overemphasized (Cerlisle, 2015). However, secondary schools are distressed due to a number of factors such as untidy school environment; inadequate personnel; inadequate school space, building, furniture, equipment and material; inadequate funding, de-boarding of the school programs; poor attitudes of parents to school; students' poor performance in academic programs. These school distressed syndromes are often catalyzed by principal's school mismanagement behavior manifested in his professional incompetence, poor relations and lack of concern for team work and poor leadership. This phenomenon leads to what can be described as "principal's management fever", and if not cured May lead to principal's hypertension. These include;

Insufficient Funding

Paucity of fund is one of the impediments for effective administration of secondary education in the country. The effectiveness of any secondary school hinges on the available resources. Finance is very essential in this aspect in that all other germane components of the school rest on adequate financial provision. Resources like school structure, procurement of facilities, payment of teachers' remunerations and allowances and running costs. Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2013) explained that the speedy development of students' enrolment in Nigeria after the independence followed by the enrolment explosion in recent years have made education a spikey duty for government to bear. Therefore insufficient funding has led to in pitiable teaching and ramshackle buildings (Omoregie, 2005). There is no doubt that inadequate funding of the secondary school education in Nigeria has stalled

the realization of set goals at this level of education as contained in the nation's education policy.

Insufficient School Facilities

School facilities are the material resources that facilitate effective teaching and learning in schools. Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2013) postulated that educational facilities are those things which enable a competent teacher to ensure instructional effectiveness that far exceeds what is possible when they are not provided. The state of infrastructural decay in many secondary schools in Nigeria is a manifestation of deplorable funding of the system.

Squat Staff Morale

Teachers are the centre-piece of any educational system. No educational system can upsurge above the standard of its teachers. Teachers whose morale is low are not likely to perform as expected in the school system. According to Ajayi and Oguntoye (2010), the several difficulties pervading the whole educational system in Nigeria such as cultism, examination malpractices, drug abuse, naughtiness, persistent poor academic performance of students in public examinations and many more seem to suggest that teachers have not been performing their job as expected.

Pitiable Supervision of Schools

Effective instructional delivery and maintenance of standards in the school system are improved through regular internal and external supervision. Ayodele (2012) claimed that secondary schools are currently overseen by two categories of people, which are internal and external supervisors respectively. The primary responsibility of inspectors is to ensure that high standards are maintained and that schools are run in accordance with the laid down regulations. While it has been argued that the principals have been discharging their duties as internal supervisors, the external supervisor (inspectors from the Ministry of Education) appear non-functional as they seldom visit schools to monitor the operations in these schools. This has invariably hindered effective teaching-learning in schools.

Persistent Changes in Government Policies

Policy provides a road-map for actions tailored towards meeting specific goals. According to Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2013), education policy

represents definite courses of action planned by the government in power and approved as advantageous to the issues and problems of education. Policies which take the form of ordinance, code or even an act have been observed with changes in the political leadership of Nigeria. School principals are frequently caught in this web when government changes existing education policy. The discrepancies in educational policies have been claimed to be accountable for the poor service delivery in the system.

Remedies for Principals' Administrative Behavior in Nigerian Secondary Schools

The solution recommended by Federal Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development centered on attainment of managerial ASK medicine. Basically, these are: managerial attitudes, skills and knowledge respectively.

(i) Principal managerial approach: These refer to the state of mind and dispositions of the principal to act in reaction to the inner and outer effects on the school. The principal must be prepared to react confidently and should be flexible in his plan and decision preparation and execution.

(ii) Principal administrative skill: These refer to the abilities toward reason, modify and to hit the books autonomously. The principal anticipates problems and map out strategies for providing solutions. The principal's managerial skills include the following:

- (a) Rational, and problem-solving ability
- (b) Understand and repeated use of basic analytical concepts;
- (c) Ability to learn from experience and grow in understanding in a changing world;
- (d) Ability to deal effectively with others, both in persons and through written communication.

(iii) Managerial knowledge of the principal: This denotes the pertinent theories and philosophies, process and practice of school management in a mutable globe. The "ASK" are inter-dependent and interconnected. That is, the adequate knowledge to execute all the administrative activities of the

school as well as the managerial skills to administer and manage the affairs of both teaching staff and non-staff.

Conclusion

Secondary school's effectiveness to a larger extent depends on prudent mobilization and utilization of manpower and material resources by the institution's administrator. Thus role of the principal in education transformation cannot be overemphasized if the stated goal as stipulated in the nation's educational policy are to be actualized. The schools are beset with a lot of problems that have distressed them posing a great challenge for today's principal to manage. Thus, it is quite important for the principals, who are school resources managers, to be well-equipped with knowledge, skills and techniques of modern management.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Capacity buildings inform of seminars, conferences and workshops should be periodically organized by the government to enhance effective service delivery.
2. Persistent changes of educational policies should be avoided to ensure policy consistency.
3. Government should endeavor to provide to schools the educational resources which will improve principals' administrative behavior effectively and efficiently.
4. These principals should also ensure that they apply such knowledge, skills and techniques efficiently and effectively in running the schools as well as good leadership style and behavior.
5. School administrator should ensure that teaching, non-teaching staff and students are physically safe by keeping them in pleasant conditions.

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