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Perception of Leadership and Administrative Pattern of Principals in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the perception of leadership and administrative pattern of Principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The population of the study consisted of the two hundred and ninety six (296) principals in all the two hundred and ninety-six (296) public senior secondary schools in the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The sample of this study comprised the two hundred and ninety-six (296) principals selected from the two hundred and ninety-six (296) public senior secondary schools in the twenty three (23) Local Government Areas in Rivers State, representing 100% of the population using the census sampling technique. Out of the 296 copies of questionnaires distributed 275 representing 96% of the total number of copies, were duly completed and returned. The instrument for data collection for this study was a 30 item self-structured questionnaire titled “Perception of Leadership and Administrative Pattern of Principals Questionnaire (PLAPPQ)”. The instrument was structured using the modified 4-points Likert Scale model of; Very High Extent (VHE) – 4 points; High Extent (HE) =3 points; Low Extent (LE) = 2 point and Very Low Extent (VLE) =1 point. The instrument was validated by the researcher’s supervisor and two other experts in the field of educational management. Cronbach alpha was used to measure the reliability and obtained 0.92 which implied that the instrument was reliable. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer five (5) research questions, while the t-test statistics was used to test the five (5) null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the findings revealed that to a high extent, Principals performed administrative roles in students and staff personnel administration as well as leadership roles. The study concluded that principals perform their administrative roles to a high extent as regards to students and staff personnel administration and greater leadership performance in public secondary schools. It recommended among others that principals should endeavour to enhance their knowledge by attending conferences, workshops as it is essential to continue to develop their administrative skills for greater students and staff personnel administration. Government should imbibe administrative principles in their general school administration in order to ensure effective staff and students’ administration.

Keywords: Administration, Leadership, Principals, Performance, Public secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Every organizational leader wants to accomplish their goals, and it's commonly believed that these can only be accomplished to the extent that the organization's structure and leadership are able to coordinate the organization's material and human resources with other external factors. In this instance, the principal of the school has a responsibility to see that these objectives are effectively met. As bureaucratic institutions, schools are expected to operate with the highest levels of efficacy, efficiency, and quality in all areas of their operations.

Stakeholders are extremely concerned about our secondary school graduates' subpar quality. Students' poor academic achievement is another indication of this poor quality. The graduates lack the ability to perform any work connected to their jobs, including being independent. There is a prevalent perception that the inadequate bureaucratic or administrative job performance of school principals in our secondary schools may be contributing to pupils' poor academic performance, even if scholars may have performed studies on how this bad academic performance might be addressed. Several factors determine how much academic excellence and staff performance are attained. Inadequate access to basic amenities like electricity, comfortable housing, a nice school bus, science and laboratory equipment shortages, a lack of classrooms and libraries, and a bureaucratic office layout can all be blamed for poor performance. These are tangible resources that support efficient instruction and learning in educational settings. When they are given, a proficient teacher can attain a level of instructional efficacy that is significantly higher than what is feasible without them. In the event that the principal is required to furnish them, he will face difficulties in carrying out his administrative duties as he must navigate bureaucratic obstacles to get his way.

If the aforementioned facilities are there but in bad condition, it tends to lower teacher morale and decrease their level of dedication, which will positively impact teachers' attitudes towards their work. It is also appropriate to point out that low academic performance has also been linked to school principals' ineffective bureaucratic role-playing. In this instance, principals have applied a democratic leadership style by involving staff in decision-making and duty delegation, instead of emphasising autocracy. Better opportunities for staff development and delegation will also contribute to the improvement of principal-staff relationships. Therefore, the researchers are interested in learning how much principals carry out their bureaucratic duties and are concerned about the bureaucratization of education. The following questions have been put to forward: how much do principals in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools carry out their administrative and leadership duties in terms of managing staff and student personnel?

Because most Rivers State schools seem to have nipped all of the significant bureaucratic tasks that principals should undertake in the bud, the leadership administration of the principals is crucial to this study. In light of this, a study was done to find out why principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, don't seem to be doing their jobs.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of a principal's leadership in secondary school administration, and he cannot function in isolation. Because the school is a bureaucratic organisation and his role performance is directed and influenced by multiple bodies, including the ministry of education, the school management board, the Parents Teachers Association (PTA), the board of governance, and the community in which the school is situated, his success depends on his ability to work well with his staff and with good community relationships. Accordingly, Nwideduh and Obasi in Nnabuo, Okorie, and Agabi (2004) stated that administrators in the Nigerian school system are disadvantaged because they merely act as the ministry of education's

proxy, providing ready-made policies, directives, and staff that have already been hired, even without the necessary funding. Therefore, it is essential that the school administrator have the abilities that will give him an advantage over others in order to enable him to carry out his bureaucratic tasks in an appropriate manner.

The aim of the study is to evaluate principals' perceptions of leadership and administrative style in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools. Specific objectives include:

(1) Examine how much of a student administration pattern principals in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools have.

(2) Assess the scope of principals' staff personnel administration practises in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools.

(3) Determine the scope of principals' administrative and leadership style in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The research design used in the study was descriptive. Two hundred ninety-six (296) principals from all two hundred and ninety-six (296) public senior high schools in the twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas of Rivers State made up the study's population. (Source: Senior Secondary School Board of Rivers State, 2021).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Using the survey sampling technique, the study's sample consisted of 296 principals who were chosen from among the 296 public senior high schools in the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State. This represented 100% of the population.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection for this study was a 30 item self-structured questionnaire titled "Perception of Leadership and Administrative Pattern of Principals Questionnaire (PLAPPQ)". The instrument was divided into two sections, A and B. Section 'A' sourced for the background information of respondents, while section 'B' generated information on the issues raised by the various research questions and hypotheses of the study. The response to the items on the research questionnaire assessed five issues under appraisal in this study. The instrument was structured using the modified 4-points Likert Scale model of; Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points; High Extent (HE) = 3 points; Low Extent (LE) = 2 point and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point.

Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviewees was compiled and examined. The five (5) research questions were addressed using the mean and standard deviation statistics, and the five (5) null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the t-test statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Presentation of Demographic Variables

Table 1: Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
31-40	102	37.1
41-50	36	13.1
51-60	83	30.2
60-above	54	19.6

Total	275	100.0
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Table 1 above showed 31-40 were 102 representing 37.1%, 41-50 were 36 representing 13.1%, 51-60 were 83 or 30.2% and 60-above were 54 or 19.6%.

Table 2: Location

Location	Frequency	Percent
Urban	50	18.2
Rural	225	81.8
Total	275	100.0

Table 2 above showed urban respondents as 50 representing 18.2%, while rural was 225 or 81.8%. There were more of rural respondents than urban respondents.

Table 3: Position

Position/Sex	Frequency	Percent
Female principal	175	63.6
Male principal	100	36.4
Total	275	100.0

Table 3 above showed 175 or 63.6% were female principals, 100 representing 36.4% were male principals.

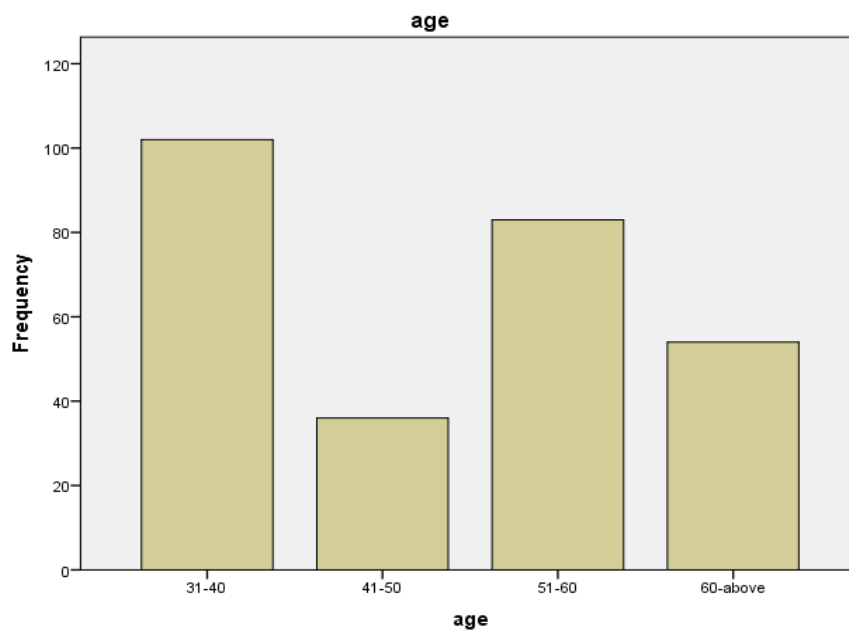


Fig. 1: Age distribution of respondents.

Location of Respondents

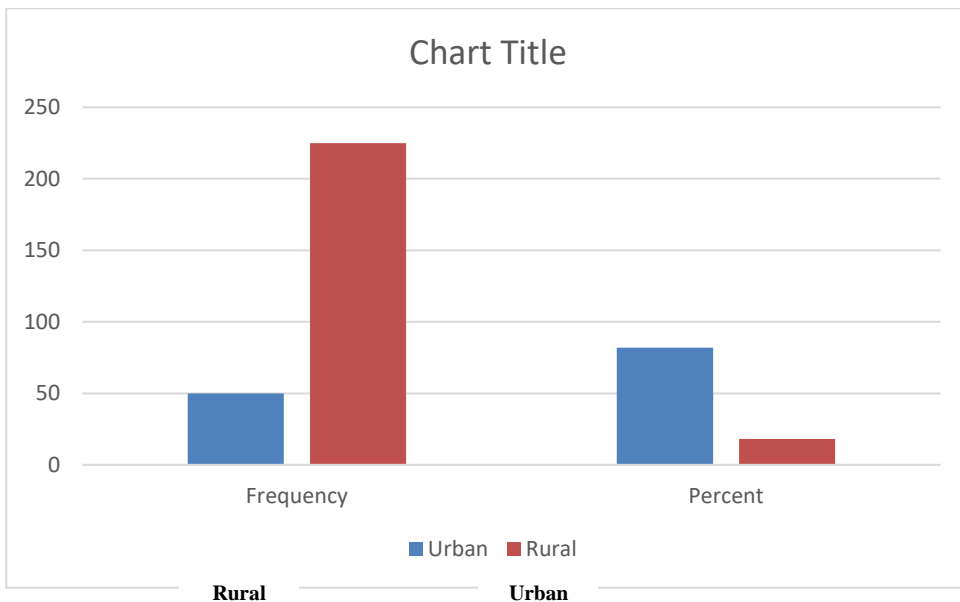


Fig. 2: Location Distribution of Respondents

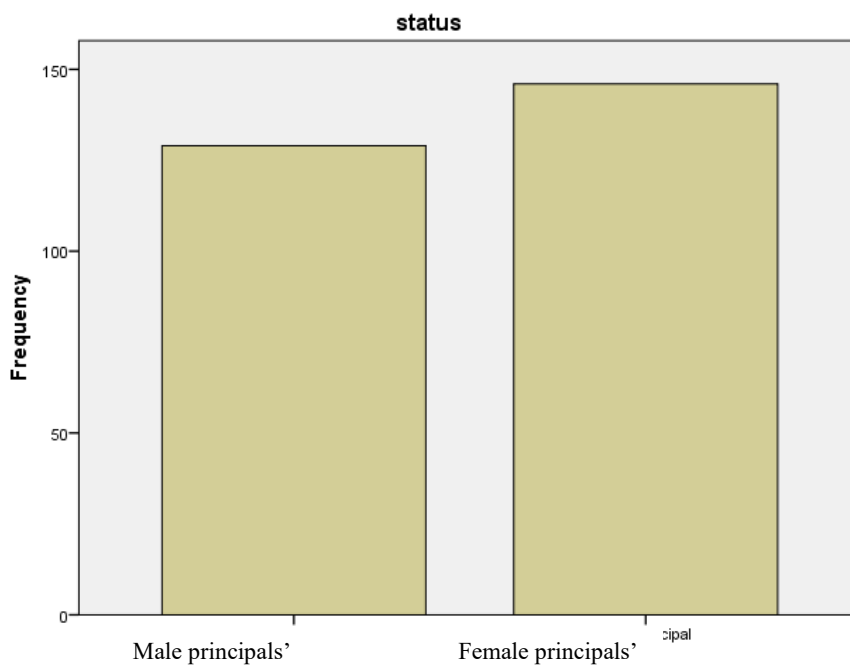


Fig. 3: Bar Chart showing Status or Position of Respondents

Table 4: The extent of principals' students administrative pattern in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Item Statement	Female Principals (175) \bar{x}_1	Sd ₁	Male Principals (100) \bar{x}_2	Sd ₂	Mean Set	Remark
1. Principals organize procedures for orientation of students.	2.90	0.92	2.73	0.98	2.81	High Extent

2.	Principals make sure of the provision of guidance and counseling service for the students.	2.84	0.87	2.77	0.93	2.80	High Extent
3.	Principals make sure that extra-curricular programs are well organized.	2.77	0.93	2.90	0.92	2.83	High Extent
4.	Principals institute policies and procedures with respect to students' safety inside the school compound.	2.69	0.98	3.23	0.82	2.96	High Extent
5	Principals set up school attendance policy and procedures that will help auditors to know the number of students at a guess.	1.01	0.75	1.33	0.51	2.33	Low Extent
6.	Principals institute policy and procedures for handling students' behavioral problems.	3.15	0.89	3.16	0.83	3.15	Very High Extent
Grand Mean/SD		2.87	0.91	2.95	0.89	2.91	High Extent

Table 4 above showed that the aggregate mean of 2.91, which is higher than the 2.50 criterion mean, suggests that principals organise student orientation procedures to a great extent, ensure that guidance and counselling are provided for students, ensure that extracurricular programmes are well-organized, establish policies and procedures regarding student safety within the school compound, establish policies and procedures regarding school attendance that will assist auditors in estimating the number of students in attendance, and establish policies and procedures for handling behavioural issues with students.

Therefore, the aggregate mean score of $2.91 > 2.5$ indicated a high degree of student administration carried out by principals in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools.

Table 5: The extent of principals' staff personnel administrative pattern in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Item Statement	Female Principals (175) \bar{x}_1	Sd ₁	Male Principals (100) \bar{x}_2	Sd ₂	Mean Set	Remark
7. The Principals engage teachers in practices that support professional development.	2.73	0.97	2.53	0.99	2.63	High Extent
8. The Principals help in the formulation of staff personnel policies	2.61	0.96	2.51	0.95	2.56	High Extent
9. The Principals get involved in the recruitment of staff personnel who are capable of undertaking the task of educating the students to the standard	2.60	0.98	2.84	0.94	2.72	High Extent

	the students, parents and the society are expected of.						
10.	The Principals create a supportive environment in which teachers can continue to grow.	2.53	0.97	2.90	0.94	2.71	High Extent
11.	The Principals make provision of resources for instruction programs.	2.11	0.85	2.45	0.55	2.02	Low Extent
12.	The principals encourage teachers' professional development.	2.90	0.92	2.75	1.05	2.82	High Extent
Grand Mean/SD							High Extent
		2.57	0.96	2.70	0.97	2.60	Extent

With an aggregate mean score of 2.60, higher than the 2.50 criterion mean, Table 5 above suggests that principals support teachers' professional development to a high degree. They also assist in developing staff members who can successfully educate students to the standards that students, parents, and society expect of them. Principals also foster a supportive environment in which teachers can continue to grow. However, respondents felt that in Item II, principals provide resources for instructional programmes to a low degree.

Therefore, an aggregate mean score of 2.60 >2.5 indicated a high degree of staff personnel administration carried out by principals in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools.

Table 6: The extent of principals' leadership administrative pattern in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Item	Statement	Female principals (175) \bar{x}_1	Sd ₁	Male principals (100) \bar{x}_2	Sd ₂	Mean Set	Remark
25.	Division of labour enhances Principals efforts to initiate change and innovation; division of labour leads to high proficiency.	2.80	0.95	2.41	1.02	2.60	High Extent
26.	Rules and regulations makes it difficult to respond to change attached to routine procedures. The ministry of education makes laws, which directs the activities and operations of the school system.	2.66	0.94	2.65	0.93	2.65	High Extent
27.	Hierarchy of authority ensures Principals receives and implement policies from ministry of education. Principals have no right to act on their own even where there is emergency.	2.75	1.05	2.75	1.05	2.75	High Extent
28.	Impersonal orientation make principals overlook differences in human interest,	2.33	1.08	2.67	1.09	2.61	High Extent

abilities and needs of students and staff; result to lack of cordial relation between principals and staff, which stifles introduction of new ideas.

29.	Promotion is determined by seniority and achievement which does not encourage Principals to put in their best due to career orientation.	2.85	0.96	2.54	0.94	2.69	High Extent
30.	Ministry of Education and schools board require Principals to keep both statutory and non-statutory records, because it provides a significant source of information for both the school and community.	2.70	0.96	2.69	0.94	2.69	High Extent
Grand Mean/SD		2.75	0.97	2.60	0.98	2.68	High Extent

The division of labour improves principals' efforts to initiate change and innovation to a great extent, as demonstrated by Table 6 above, which had an aggregate mean of 2.68 greater than the criterion of 2.50. Rules and regulations bring peace and order to school administration, and the principle of hierarchy of authority is practised in secondary schools, where principals receive and implement policies from the Ministry of Education. Seniority and achievement determine promotion, and the Ministry of Education and the Schools Board require principals to keep both statutory and non-statutory records as a source of information.

The overall mean score of $2.68 > 2.5$ indicated that bureaucratic principles had a significant impact on the leadership role performance of principals in public senior secondary schools in the state of Rivers.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Principals' Students Administrative Pattern

Tested hypothesis one showed there is a significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on the extent to which principals perform their bureaucratic role in students' personnel administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The respondents aligned with Otakore (2006), when he rightly puts it that one of the basic task of the school principal is his concern with the total development and well-being of the students that are entrusted in his hand. The principal as the head of the school carefully manages students on admission by making sure that all the necessary requirements and procedures for successful orientation exercise are readily available for the newly admitted students. The principal get involved in the classification and grouping of the students for instruction and maintains timely attendance policy, procedures and as well jointly participate greatly in proper record keeping of the students. The principals ensure the availability of boarding facilities for the students provides recreational facilities such as football pitches swimming pools and other similar equipment. Igwe (2006) opined that truism and students discipline and control make up one of the most important and challenging working task of the principal. In the same vein, Aigboje (2013) buttressed on this by summing up the following as the role of the principal which includes; admission, classification and the preparation of the children for instruction, students welfare service, classroom management, facilities management. When a problem is being identified, as it affects the students

in school system, it becomes the responsibility of the principal to plan, organize and execute the area.

The school organization is set with the aim of achieving those goals and objectives which are in accordance with the provisions of the goals of Nigerian education as contained in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. The school institution is structured and designed in such a way that teaching and learning could take place uninterrupted underneath the supervision and tutelage of the teachers and principals to enable the goals and objectives be achieved. As a result of the structured nature of the school system, it provides every member with power, position, roles and responsibilities, and to work cooperatively in pursuance of the achievement of preplanned goal. Just like every organization having a procedures planned to accomplish its definite goal, so is the school. For example, the hierarchical order of the school organization provides the principal at the apex, followed by heads of departments, teachers and lastly the students. Each and every one of these individuals have a role to play depending on their positions but must not fall short of the prescribed rules and regulations for smooth attainment of goals. The school principal ensures that students are provided with accessibility to psychological services, social work services in school to enable them meet up with their personal needs. The principal has the role of providing guidance and counseling service to the students and make sure that every student is attended to the utmost confidentiality.

The school organization differs from other social units or structure, however every one of them have their purpose for establishment and have to work towards the realization of the target goals. For instance, the school is planned to transmit knowledge and the cultural heritage of the people or society. The principal ensures that there is an effective school adjustment that brings about a successful academic career. He ensures that quality performance in external examination is obtained. The principal exhibit his administrative prowess by making sure there is a conducive environment that will enable teaching and learning take place unhindered. Akpanumoh (2011) outlined the following as the functions of pupil personnel administration; making available guidance and services, instituting policy and procedure and having a system of record keeping of children, their safety while in school, putting up programmes and coordinating these extra-curricular activities and report back to his superior. The principal also provides health care services, basic amenities, instructional supervisions and ensures communication flows from top to bottom. The principal makes sure that students are well informed of any information or instruction from ministry of education and other relevant organization that may be for their interest and beneficial. He also performs the role of spokesman of the students when the need arises.

Principals' Staff Personnel Administrative Pattern

Findings of hypothesis two showed that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on the extent to which principals perform their bureaucratic role in staff personnel administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The stance of the respondents was collaborated by Payne and Wolfon (2000) stating the school principals' role is teacher's development from the perspective of principals' practices and that principals improve the performance of teachers.

A situation where teachers feels that they are being cared for by the principals, honest and knowledgeable, key pieces of the credibility dimensions, teachers feel they are not isolated, more participatory and more efficacious (Handford and Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen Mosin and Garveys, 2015). On the other hand, Bredson (2000) postulate that, creating an environment that is supportive where teachers continues to grow and improve is the second area where principals exert significant influence on teaching, learning and development in schools. In the same vein,

Bredeson (2000) maintained that, principals need to engage in practices that support teachers professional development as teachers transforms their continuous growth in their work in schools.

Principals have great responsibilities to perform in schools especially that of making sure the staff get to work as a team for the overall achievement of the school objectives. Though the principal has no role to play on the recruitment of the members of staff of the school as earlier mentioned, however, he has the responsibility of reporting back to the appropriate body, either the schools' board or the ministry of education concerning his dealings, experiences with some categories of staff. Again, it is the responsibility of the principal to inform the board or ministry where the school is short of manpower. Everybody expects the principal to execute his role effectively, yet the principal is not given free hand to operate. He is being guided by laws, procedures, rules and regulation which he must ensure he follows. For him to achieve great success, he must work cooperatively with all his staff for effective performance of his/her roles in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

The importance of staff personnel in school administration cannot be overemphasizes as it is one key factor to the success and growth of any educational institution. The human resources is a very important resources in any given organization, without which any other resources becomes meaningless and useless as it is the driver to any resources in the organization. These personnel differ in the ways of thinking, reasoning and behaviour. They have different backgrounds, values and aspirations. However, the ability of the leader, principal to harness the different personnel, their views, aspirations, attitudes will engender positive outcome. The principal should be able to communicate effectively with his staff and ensure that they are given the room to participate in decision making which will translate into high productivity. The staff personnel resources are not to be compared with any other resources in the organization. Their contributions to organization in terms of knowledge, ideas, energy and cooperation are manifest in the achievement of organizational goals. Hence, the principal should be able to protect, develop, motivate and utilize them so that they will stay in the organization and better it as well as accomplishing the organizational objectives.

The principal as the chief executive performs the function of taking care of personnel welfare, professional success or development, and creates good staff morale. Peretomode in Ololube (2019) opined that leaders in education inspire the whole system by effectively influencing the behaviours, thoughts, and feelings of those working within it, and also ensures their vision by creating a strategic alignment across the whole system through words and examples. The productivity of any educational institution does not only depend on research, teaching and learning rather to the extent of the quality of life of every individual who works in the organization. Anyamele in Oluolube (2019) maintained that both the academic and non-academic staff who contribute, support and bring about student learning are all the employees of the educational organization. Hence the principal has the responsibilities of investing in academic and non-academic staff, and try to maximize potentials in all those who comes into the educational environment (Ololube, 2019).

Principals' Leadership Administrative Pattern

Tested hypothesis five showed that there is a there is a significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on the extent to which bureaucratic principles influence principals' leadership role performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Wiles cited in Otakore (2006), the school should be well acquainted with the values, expectations, needs and aspirations of the local community in developing effective school-community relationship programme. Every school is sited in a community, and the school personnels are also the products

of the community. Abraham (2003) opined that harmony must exist between the school and community for the goals of the schools to be achieved. The schools can never be a separate entity in a community where it is situated, likewise the community. The school needs the community in all aspects, in the same way the community needs the school to nurture and transmit the culture and ethical values to the pupils. However, Igwe (2006) maintained that the interest of a community will be to invest in the school where they are aware of the benefits they may derive either in the long run or short run.

The principals are in a central position to ensure that there is a cordial relationship existing between the school and the members of the community. The principal must work in harmony with the community, liaise with them to enable him/her achieve the goals of the schools in the various communities. The principals have the task of maintaining a healthy relationship with the community; seek their opinion in some level of decision making and the progress of the school. The principals must ensure he executes policies and programmes for parents and community participation in school matters. The principal should also welcome the contributions made by parents and community leaders or representatives in discussing the progress and betterment of the school and community. The cordial and mutual co-existence between the principal and the community will enable the principal to effectively manage any complaint brought to him or her by the parents of the concerned students and help in initiating, developing and implementing better plans that will improve and enhance the community.

Where the school-community relation is strained, the community may become hostile to the school system, stealing or vandalization of school properties may become the order of the day. On the other hand, the following school principal's responsibilities were identified by Igwe and Nwafor in Nnabuo, Okorie and Agabi (2004) as regards to school public relations to include; that principals should try to maintain good public relations with parents, members of the local community, officials and other visitors to the school. That the principal should try to promote school community relations through participation of the school in community activities, project as well as community participation in some aspects of school life. An organized visitation of places of interest in the community by the school through the community resource persons could serve as a means to achieve this feat. Regular contact by the principal with other schools, industries, firms, private and public sectors and educational agencies may provide an avenue for those bodies to render help where necessary. It is also important for the principal to supply all the necessary information about his school to those who are interested and other visitors to the school.

To maintain a healthy school and community relationship, Nwaiwu in Koko and Nwiyi (2019) were of the opinion that principals should make available the school as a center of activities for youths and adults in the community and make the community a center of activities for the school. The community should also enlist resource persons to render assistant to the school in the development of their programmes. Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu in Koko and Nwiyi identified some official means of communicating to the community that promotes school and community relationship to include; Conference, Parents/ Teachers Association and the Mass Media. Through these avenues, the school can relate with the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing findings, the following recommendations have been reached:

1. Principals should endeavor to enhance their knowledge by attending conferences as it is essential to continue to develop their leadership and administrative skills for greater student and staff personnel administration.

2. Management should conduct staff due diligence through means including staff audit and other due diligent activities relating to staff control, from time to time.

3. Principals and staff should ensure no steps are skipped in ensuring principals' effective instructional supervision in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

4. Principals and staff should be involved in training and retraining in order keep to maintain effective school finance management.

5. The school principals should imbibe leadership and administrative principles in their general school administration in order to ensure effective staff performance.

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