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Comparative Analysis of Principals' Management Strategies in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Anambra State of Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare the management strategies adopted in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population comprised all the 315 secondary schools in the 254 public and 61 private government-approved secondary schools in the five Education Zones of Anambra State. The sample, selected through stratified random sampling, was made up of 95 secondary schools comprising 76 public and 19 private whose principals constituted the subjects of the study. Data was collected through a questionnaire and analyzed using percentages and t-test. Results revealed that management strategies adopted by principals of schools in public and private secondary schools in Anambra

State showed no significant differences. It was recommended among others that principals of secondary schools should adopt all the management strategies in this study as this will improve school administration and consequently students' academic performance.

Key Words: Management Strategies Secondary Schools Administrative Effectiveness

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify and compare the management strategies adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State for effective and efficient goal attainment.

Management is a term with nuances of meaning and defined in various ways. Babalola (2006) defined it as simply being in charge or being in control. Mgbodile (2003) and Duze (2003) saw management as leadership aimed at influencing group activity toward objectives/goals accomplishment. It is thus the behaviour of the man in leadership position, when he is carrying out such vital functions of administration which include planning, organizing, directing, controlling, coordinating and evaluating activities, aimed at achieving the goals of the establishment or organization. Also, they opined that leadership style refers to management as a set method or behavioural approach adopted by a leader in his effort to manipulate the important correlates of administration – the men, the job and the materials, toward goal achievement. But Farmer and Richman in Okoli (2007) provided a most all-inclusive view that:

Management involves strategy, innovation, initiating about change, creative problem-solving and decision-making, actively seeking out alternatives and opportunities, reformulating goals and priorities, redeploying resources, negotiating, resolving conflicts, dynamic or active leadership diplomacy, statesmanship and a high degree of risk-taking and entrepreneurship.

This implies that management is a process by which managers create, direct, maintain and operate purposive organizations through coordinated cooperative human efforts to accomplish as effectively and efficiently as could be set objectives and goals. Underlying the understanding of management then is the existence of an organization with a set goal or aim,

and with members who have roles assigned to them, and then a person at the top who coordinates activities to attain the already set goals of the organization. This person at the top is often seen as the leader. This means that a manager is often performing also in the position of a leader. His leadership styles will also affect or influence goal/objective attainment.

Educational management can be conceived as being able to handle carefully and un-wastefully what happens in the process of educating people so that everything works out according to plan (Babalola, 2006). He explains further that educational management goes along with the quest to put the school system under control, regulation or supervision in its attempts to effectively and efficiently organize available scarce resources through cooperative efforts when establishing institutions of learning, enrolling learners, attracting best staff, conducting teaching, learning, and research, as well as graduating learners at all levels of education. In doing these, it involves planning, organizing, directing, controlling, coordinating, staffing, and budgeting. According to him, a good educational manager will be one who works with staff and students with fewer complaints about failure rates, dropout rates, repetition rates, retention rates, absenteeism, wastages, sicknesses, strike actions, and unfinished work.

Education is seen by most countries as the foundation to any worthwhile development. As such, its management in a country has a lot to contribute to the future and overall development of that country. Since the school as an organization entails management, the school administrator has the duty to manage human, financial and material resources for the effective and efficient implementation of the school programmes and for maintenance of the school plant. This way, the requisite education to be given to the populace can be adequately managed for maximum productivity and attainment of the nation's educational goals (Duze, 2005). Management in education would then include such key areas as staff/personnel management, school plant and facilities management, financial management and social relation management.

Ndu, Ocho and Okeke (1997) defined leadership an act of influence on a matter relevant to organizational or group functioning and survival. Koontz and Weihrich (2005) defined leadership as influence of act or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of set goals while Duze (2003) emphasized that the success of any organization depends largely on the leadership. From the foregoing, it is

obvious that the future of any enterprise, particularly, the educational enterprise depends in no small measure on effective leadership.

Three main styles of leadership have been discussed by scholars (Ocho, 2004; Duze, 2003; Okeke, et al., 1985). These include the authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. The authoritarian style connotes leadership through force. It is imposed upon the organization. According to Okeke et al. (1985) it is commonly called dictatorship. Here, the leader gets others to do things by giving them little space to influence decisions. The leader uses fear, threats, authority and personality to achieve his wish. Essentially, the led has very little or nothing to say about the way things ought to be done. The leader takes primary responsibility for the group by controlling, managing and directing. An authoritarian leader gives greater prominence to organizational demands, thus, he is task-oriented.

A school administrator who adopts the autocratic leadership strategy tends to be generally friendless and impersonal in his dealings with his staff and thereby creates an atmosphere of mistrust and witch-hunting which may lead to high turnover of teachers. Although, he could accomplish the school activities quickly, sometimes at the expense of his staff, the quality of work may not be high since the staff may not have the sense of belonging as regards the goals and values of the school and may also lack adequate morale/motivation and job satisfaction which are very essential for high quality staff performance in an organization.

In democratic leadership, power and authority are usually derived from the followership. According to Okeke et al (1985) democratic leadership permits self expression, creativity and group interaction and it is personal task oriented, participative and non-directive. Here, the leader persuades and considers the feelings of persons and encourages participation in decision making. People's basic needs, right, and freedom are guaranteed and respected by the organization's decision-making and leadership, and organization matters are shared with the group. The leader is accommodative and considerate of his group members' feelings and suggestions. The democratic leader tends to trust his subordinates and encourages them to use their initiatives in carrying out their duties while he coordinates them. His friendly and cooperative behaviour stimulates and motivates his subordinates to strive to achieve the objectives of the organization. He promotes shared relationships between him and his subordinates, maintains good and cordial relationships that generally promote healthy organization climate, which may

help to retain workers in the organization. In an educational institution where democratic leadership strategy prevails, there will be high commitment, genuine harmony, mutual trust, job satisfaction, and high quality of production.

Laissez-faire leadership style is a kind of leadership where the people do what they like to do with the leader not enforcing any rules and regulations. The leadership grants complete freedom to group or individual decisions without direction by the leader. It is marked by indecision and indifference. In a school under laissez-faire situation, teaching and learning processes are usually low and examination results poor. There will be frustration, low staff morale and lack of job satisfaction. Leadership styles will obviously influence the management strategies adopted by school administrators.

In discussing the management strategies which principals should adopt in order to run their schools smoothly Ozigi (1977) highlighted the following:

- Principals must exhibit their ability to organize, and delegate responsibility and authority. They obviously cannot cover everything themselves and any attempt to uphold this would lead to inefficiency. They should plan well in advance, budget their time and work in a systematic way to ensure that everything goes on well. They should endeavour to motivate others to work adequately.
- They should exhibit effective teaching ability and let others learn from them the techniques of teaching adequately.
- They should endeavour to work with others and obtain cooperation so that they can carry their plans through. They should create the atmosphere which will make people happy to work with them.
- In order to obtain cooperation, principals should try to make others feel important. Principals should treat people fairly and have respect for their views and feelings. Principals should not try to make their staff feel always that they are the 'boss' whose decisions must always be obeyed. They should not be snobbish, but regard all members of staff irrespective of their social positions as people of worth and dignity.

In the same vein, Ejiogu (1985:36) stated that administrators would always succeed if they employed the following strategies:

- Give subordinates share in decision-making
- Express appreciation whenever a subordinate does a good job.
- Counsel, train and develop subordinates.
- Keep subordinates informed of the true situations, good or bad, under all circumstances.
- Stay aware of the organization's moral standards and does everything possible to make it high.
- be easily approachable and communicate effectively with subordinates.
- Show willingness to support subordinates even when they make mistakes.

Secondary school education is the form of education children receive after primary school and before the tertiary stage. Its importance lies in its position both as the bridge between primary and tertiary education and the agent for preparing individuals for useful living in the society. In Nigeria, there are two categories of secondary schools – public and private. The secondary schools owned by the government are public schools while those owned by others are private schools. All, irrespective of ownership, have common objectives. Some of these objectives as enumerated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) include providing primary school graduates the opportunity for education of higher quality; equipping students to live effectively in this modern age of science and technology; inspiring students with the desire for achievement and self improvement both at school and in later life. In order to achieve these important objectives of secondary education, adequate human and physical resources must be provided. In Nigeria secondary schools, the administrators are called principals. They are strictly involved in instructional management, school plant management, and financial management. They are the chief executives who direct the day-to-day affairs of secondary schools so that set objectives are achieved. When the right strategies are adopted in carrying out these enormous tasks and roles, goal attainment becomes much easier. Therefore, principals, teachers, parents, government and other stakeholders in education would find the outcome of this study very useful in assisting secondary schools towards greater goal accomplishment.

Statement of the problem

School administration involves coordinating human and material resources adequately for the enhancement of teaching and learning processes. Efficient and effective school management is indispensable since it sustains the education system as well as stimulates adequate teaching and learning. It promotes high students' academic achievement and maximizes staff job productivity. The state of secondary education in Nigeria in general, and Anambra State in particular, is characterized by inadequate funding, inadequate staffing, and inadequate equipment and facilities. However, good management, in spite of these adverse conditions could help in the attainment of set objectives. This means that good school management is positively correlated with high students' academic performance. Consequently, it is pertinent that principals should consistently identify and implement strategies which foster healthy administrative atmosphere in their schools.

It is believed that performance in private secondary schools is higher than in public ones and research findings are controversial and have not said the last word about the sources of difference. It could be that the observed differences in students' academic performance in the two categories of schools may be linked with the principals' management strategies. Previous studies in Nigeria may not have specifically compared management strategies among principals in public and private schools. The question is: Is there any difference in the management strategies adopted by principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Research question

What are the management strategies adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the management strategies adopted by principals of the public and private secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Methods

The study is a descriptive survey of the ex-post facto design where the issue investigated had already occurred and there was no manipulation of variables. The population of this study comprised all the 315 secondary

schools with their principals in the government-approved public and private secondary schools in the five Education Zones of Anambra State of Nigeria in 2008/2009 academic year. It comprised 254 public and 61 private secondary schools.

Using the stratified random sampling technique, thirty percent in each school category was selected from each zone giving a total sample of 95 schools whose principals constituted the subjects of the study. This comprised 76 public and 19 private secondary school principals. Distribution of population and sample is shown in Table 1.

The data collection instrument was a thirty-two item questionnaire developed by the researcher and validated in face and content by some educational administration experts. The instrument was trial-tested with twenty principals not involved in the study and the computed correlation coefficient of 0.84 using the test-retest method was found reliable. The Likert-type four-point rating scale was used in scoring where Strongly Agree attracted 4 points, Agree 3 points, Disagree 2 points, and Strongly Disagree 1 point. Mean scores of 2.50 and above along with their corresponding percentages were adjudged to be management strategies used by the school principals. The researcher with the help research assistants administered the questionnaire to the secondary school principals. The data obtained were analyzed the mean, percentage, and t-test at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Research question

What management strategies do principals of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State adopt in running their schools?

The result of the data analysis which answered this question was presented in Table 2 which is quite self-explanatory. Comparison showed that both principals of public and private secondary schools indicated that they adopted all the management strategies shown in Table 2 except for items 15, 20, 21, 23, 29, and 31 which showed mean scores below 2.50. Table 2 also showed that while private school principals favoured strategies in items 23 and 31, those in public schools did not. In the same vein items 15, 20, 21 and 29 which were favoured by public school principals were not by private school principals. On the whole, the average mean scores and corresponding percentages for both categories of principals seem equal indicating that in

comparison from mere observation, there was no tangible difference between the management strategies adopted by both.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the management strategies adopted by principals of the public and private secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

This hypothesis was tested using the t-test and the result presented in Table 3. Table 3 showed that the calculated t-value was less than the Z-critical at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore retained. This meant that there was no significant difference in the management strategies adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Discussion of results

A comparison of management strategies adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools as shown in Table 2 revealed four interesting issues:

1. Principals of public and private schools all strongly indicated that they
 - ✓ hold dialogue with teachers before taking actions
 - ✓ do not caution teachers in the presence of students
 - ✓ always involve teachers in selecting school functionaries
 - ✓ assign duties to teachers based on their extra-curricular interests
 - ✓ form committees among teachers to solve school problems
 - ✓ report teachers problems to owners of the school
 - ✓ allow P.T.A. opportunity to initiate ideas
 - ✓ report staff problems to appropriate authorities
 - ✓ invite parents of deviant students and habitual late-comers for dialogue
 - ✓ discuss disciplinary issues with teachers

- ✓ issue queries to erring teachers
 - ✓ report teachers who misbehave to appropriate authorities for appropriate disciplinary actions
 - ✓ involve some senior teachers in school administration
 - ✓ disallow senior students from using corporal punishment on their juniors
 - ✓ invite philanthropic members of the community to help the school
 - ✓ allow teachers to attend seminars and workshops
 - ✓ assign subjects taught according to the teachers' areas of specialization
 - ✓ report teachers problems to owners of the school
 - ✓ no sacred cows in disciplining both students and teachers
 - ✓ encourage teachers to go for further studies
2. The following management strategies were also fairly adopted by both categories of school principals:
- ✓ help teachers in solving their personal problems
 - ✓ involve the PTA in preparing the school budget
 - ✓ pay friendly visits to staff at home

All these management strategies adopted by the two categories of principals are indeed fundamental to effective and efficient school administration as found by scholars and researchers (Nakpodia 2006; Duze, 2003; Ogbodo, 2002; Ejiogu, 1985; Okeke et al. 1985; Ozigi, 1977). In fact, principals who do not involve their teachers and P.T.A. in school issues are said to be autocratic and teachers usually leave the entire school activities for such principals to execute alone. This is often disastrous since the principals are bound to fail thereby jeopardize effective teaching and learning. On the other hand principals who adopt these management strategies are seen to be good leaders and democratic. These researchers pointed out that autocratic leadership is counter-productive in the school system and advocated a greater touch of democratic leadership.

That all the principals report staff problems to the appropriate authorities, invite parents of deviant students for dialogue, discuss disciplinary issues with teachers, issue queries to erring teachers, and disallow corporal punishment is not surprising. In-service training enables teachers to acquire and develop new skills and strategies in their profession. This is worthwhile and encouraging due to its contribution to professional growth and development. It could be in realization of this that all the principals accepted that they allow their teachers to attend workshops and seminars. In effect, all these are appropriate strategies for smooth running of every school system, irrespective of proprietorship.

Every manager needs money in order to meet some demands of his organization and in the school system of today when government alone cannot fund education the gifts from philanthropists are highly welcome. This explains why all the principals agreed that they invite philanthropic individuals to assist their schools.

3. However, the results revealed that principals of private schools unlike those of public schools indicated very strongly that they:
 - ✓ invite parents of students who have academic problems for dialogue
 - ✓ invite parents of deviants and habitual late-comers for dialogue
 - ✓ ensure that staff salaries are paid on time
 - ✓ always surcharge staff who fail to perform their duties as cautionary measures
 - ✓ award prizes to teachers whose students performed very well
4. On the other hand, the principals of public schools unlike those of private schools indicated that they strongly adopt the following management strategies:
 - ✓ expel grossly misbehaved students from their schools
 - ✓ send back home students who come late to school
 - ✓ give soft loans to teachers pending when they are paid

Generally, greater percentage of principals of private schools than public schools adopted the management strategies as revealed by both the higher mean scores and higher percentages from the data analyses. These

management strategies are all worthwhile and are bound to stimulate effective teaching and learning. However, the differences in findings indicated in (3) and (4) listed above could be realistic. For instance, it is most expected that erring students and teachers should be appropriately dealt with but understandably, private schools are in need of student numbers and may not want to lose any student that they already have through expulsion. This is probably why the principals who are usually the proprietors of private schools prefer to dialogue with parents of deviant students instead of expelling them from the school. Besides, public secondary schools in Anambra State usually admit numerous students, some of whom are deviant and undisciplined and consequent upon this is often expulsion of misbehaved students.

As regards disciplining of teachers and rewards, unlike the public school principals, private school principals have the full authority to hire or fire any teacher without having to report to any higher authority for disciplinary actions or take permission from anybody to spend monies accruing to the school in rewarding outstanding teachers' performances. Also, they need to protect the image of their schools by making sure teachers' salaries are paid on time so as not to be likened to public schools where it is well known that teachers are not committed to their jobs because government is not committed to the welfare of teachers. This is a major reason why parents move their children from public schools to private schools.

Furthermore, some of these management strategies were not strongly used by public school principals due to some fundamental problems. For instance, it is difficult for them to invite parents of their students due to the very high population of the students. They cannot attract prompt payment of teachers' salaries since the salaries are paid by the government, not the principals. Again, awarding prizes to teachers for excellent work means using their personal money for this purpose, since all the fees in the schools are made accountable to government while government has no room for prize awards when they cannot even pay teachers' salaries as at when due. Some have not paid salaries of teachers for upwards of five months.

In testing the null hypothesis, the mean scores of the management strategies adopted by both public and private secondary school principals were subjected to the t-test statistic for two independent means, and it was found that there was no significant difference in the management strategies they adopted in administering their schools in Anambra State. The reason for this

finding could be adduced from the fact that most of these principals are professionally trained teachers who possess many years of teaching experience. Since many of them have served in the school system for many years it is obvious that they would be conversant with many of the management strategies investigated. It is expedient to note that most principals of private schools are retired senior teachers or principals from public schools.

Another plausible reason for the non-significant difference in the mean values of the strategies adopted by the principals could be attributed to the fact that all the principals are university graduates with sound educational and professional backgrounds. Nwiyi (1989) reported that a significant relationship existed between principals' work experience and knowledge of strategies for coping with management problems. In almost all the States in Nigeria, Anambra State inclusive, only experienced teachers with proper teaching (professional) qualifications are appointed as school principals. This implied that they must have all studied some courses in educational administration and this might have acquainted them with effective management strategies for running their schools.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the management strategies adopted by the principals of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State were not significantly different even though slight differences existed in the degree of adoption of some of the management strategies in the administration of the schools. All principals, irrespective of school ownership, employed basically the same management strategies in administering their schools. These identified management strategies are indeed fundamental to effective and efficient administration of secondary schools in Nigeria. It could therefore be concluded that the observed differences in teachers' commitment to their jobs and students' academic performance in public and private secondary schools may not be solely due to the principals' management strategies. Other variables must be in action which should be further investigated.

Recommendations

However, it was recommended that every school principal whether public or private secondary school should study and adopt all the management strategies in this work as they would be useful in enhancing school

administration. Teachers who are aspiring to be school principals should also learn from these and begin to warm up for greater inputs into the school system as effective and efficient school administrators. Parents, guardians, the immediate school communities, government, school proprietors, and all stakeholders in education should also endeavour to understand their roles from this study and play them well in making schools more conducive for effective teaching and learning.

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Table 1: Distribution of Population and Sample of Secondary Schools According to Education Zone and School Category

Education Zone	Population of Secondary Schools			Sample of Secondary Schools		
	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total
Aguata	48	6	54	14	2	16
Awka	61	7	68	18	2	20
Nnewi	43	12	55	13	4	17
Ogidi	62	9	71	19	3	22
Onitsha	40	27	67	12	8	20
Total	254	61	315	76	19	95

Sources: For Population, Ministry of Education, Statistics Division, Awka (2009)

Table 2: Responses on the Management Strategies Adopted by Principals of Public and Private Secondary Schools in Anambra State of Nigeria (N = 95)

Items		Public Secondary Schools (n = 76)			Private Secondary Schools (n = 19)		
		Score	Mean	%	Score	Mean	%
1	I usually allow some senior teachers to participate in the administration of the school	220	2.90	72.37	56	2.96	73.68
2	I always hold dialogue with teachers before taking actions	222	2.92	73.03	59	3.10	77.63
3	I usually form committee among teachers to solve school problems	199	2.62	65.46	61	3.23	80.26
4	I usually help my teachers in solving their personal problems	201	2.64	66.12	48	2.51	63.16
5	I usually involve the teachers in selecting school functionaries	242	3.18	79.61	64	3.36	84.21
6	I do not caution my teachers in the presence of my students	295	3.88	97.04	74	3.90	97.37
7	I usually give queries to teachers who misbehave	200	2.63	65.79	58	3.07	76.32
8	I usually allow my teachers to go for in-service workshops	274	3.61	90.13	67	3.51	88.16
9	I usually make out time to discuss with teachers on matters bothering on discipline	253	3.33	83.22	56	2.93	73.68
10	I usually allow the PTA opportunity of initiating ideas in my school	194	2.55	63.82	64	3.36	84.21
11	I usually report the progress of my school at the (PTA) meetings	234	3.08	76.97	76	4.00	100
12	I assign duties to the teachers according to their extra-curricular interests	245	3.22	80.59	56	2.97	73.68
13	I usually hold regular	221	2.91	72.70	75	3.92	98.68

	PTA meetings in my school						
14	I do not allow senior students to administer corporal punishments to junior students	304	4.00	100	76	4.00	100
15	I usually sanction the expulsion of grossly misbehaved students in the schools	232	3.02	76.32	19	1.02	25.00
16	I usually invite parents of students who have academic problems for dialogue	190	2.50	62.50	76	4.00	100
17	I usually report my staff problems to the owners (public or private as applicable)	192	2.53	63.16	55	2.91	72.37
18	I usually encourage my teachers to go for further studies	230	3.03	75.66	48	2.53	63.16
19	I usually invite philanthropic members of the community to help the school	304	4.00	100	76	4.00	100
20	I usually report teachers who misbehave to state education commission or owners of the school	195	2.57	64.15	31	1.62	40.79
21	I usually send back home students who come late to school	190	2.50	62.50	22	1.15	28.95
22	I always surcharge staff who failed to perform their duties	190	2.50	62.50	57	3.02	75.00
23	I always ensure that staff salaries are paid on time	81	1.06	26.65	75	3.93	98.68
24	I usually report the problems of my school to the PTA	304	4.00	100	76	4.00	100
25	I usually invite parents of deviants and habitual latecomers for dialogue	232	3.05	76.32	76	4.00	100
26	I usually invite parents of students who have academic problems for dialogue	249	3.27	81.91	60	3.13	78.95

27	I usually involve the PTA in preparing the school budget	191	2.51	62.83	49	2.55	64.47
28	I usually pay friendly visits to my staff at home	194	2.55	63.82	48	2.50	63.16
29	I usually give soft loans to my teachers pending when they are paid	258	3.40	84.87	31	1.62	40.79
30	I assign subjects taught according to the teachers' areas of specialization	268	3.53	88.16	58	3.07	76.32
31	I award prizes to my teachers whose students passed well	161	2.12	52.96	75	3.96	98.68
32	There are no sacred cows when it comes to disciplining of students or staff	296	3.90	97.37	50	2.61	65.79
	TOTAL	6821	95.51	2388.	1872	98.44	2463.
	MEAN	213	2.99	5 74.64	59	3.08	2 76.98

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Management Strategies Adopted by Principals of Public and Private Secondary Schools in Anambra State (N = 95)

School Category	n	X	SD	df	t-cal	Z-critical	Decision ($p \leq 0.05$)
Public Secondary	76	2.99	4.19	93	0.044	1.960	Not significant
Private Secondary	19	3.08	3.27				