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Principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools: A case of Ilorin Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of administrative skills by secondary school principals plays an inevitable role towards the attainment of educational goals and objectives. This study investigated principals' administrative skills implementation in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State on the indicators of principals' financial and physical facilities maintenance and interpersonal relationship skills. The study adopted a descriptive survey. One hundred teachers were randomly selected from public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis as a sample. The researcher instrument titled Assessment of Principals' Administrative Skills Questionnaire (APASQ) was used for data collection. Two research questions were raised and answered to guide the conduct of the study. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions raised. Findings showed that 28.8% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that principals had financial skills in Ilorin Metropolis. Results indicated that 45.6% constituted the majority of the respondents who strongly agreed that principals had physical facilities maintenance skills. It was shown that 42% constituted the majority of the respondents who strongly agreed that their principals had interpersonal relationship skills. Findings revealed that 68% constituted the majority who agreed that the level of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis was high. It was recommended among others that principals endeavour to keep a high level of professional spirit and good moral standards in the schools to adopt their administrative skills to sustain a good working environment for teachers and other staff in their schools.

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Introduction

Administrative skills are expected of secondary school principals at the appointment of their principalship which includes ensuring that both teachers and students in the school are doing what he or she is employed to do, organise the time-table and daily routine in such a way as to ensure proper of education activities, paying regular visit to the classroom to observe lesson and assist teachers to improve on their competence, ensuring adequate provision of instructional materials, seeing that

appropriate evaluation procedures are used for appraising students development, relating well with members of staff to motivate them, identifying educational problems in the school such as lack of teachers, lack of funds to find a solution to them, ensuring proper records in the school attendance register, logbooks, scheme of work, etc. and make sure that school funds are spent appropriately, promotion of discipline among staff and students. All these are the situational issues in the school environment (Khawanja, 2012). In secondary schools, principals ensure that teachers work together to find, interpret and achieve the objectives of the organisation by applying different functions like planning, organising, staffing, relationships among different stakeholders, leading and controlling. The administrative skills of secondary school principals help to make or mar the school. It is their skills which help in the management of teaching staff, affect the learning of the students and thus affect the overall environment in the school (Beladas & Callo, 2023).

Khawanja (2012) revealed that the school principal is the keeper of keys, the director of transportation, the coordinator of correspondence, the quartermaster of stores, the divisor of intricate schedules, the publisher of handbooks, the director of public relations and the instructional leader. Therefore, the role the school principal plays in a school largely affects the academic performance of the learners. The delivery of education in any country depends on its teachers and the quality of improvement of that education hinges on the role played by competent teachers.

Ukozor and Edet (2023) opined that principals' administrative skills enable the principals to be in charge of a group of teachers and as well as responsible for ensuring that they do their work properly. This is common to all professions and occupations and is the practice of monitoring the performance of school staff using befitting and amicable techniques to ameliorate identified flaws among staff thereby improving their performance and increasing the standard of the school.

Also, principals ensure that the source of school finance, physical facilities maintenance, and interpersonal relationships are put into effective consideration to attain the set goals of the educational system through effective administrative skills of school principals. Human organisation requires leadership and effective administrative skills and it calls for building morale and cooperation, using sound techniques, basing decisions on a sound knowledge of human nature and developing the ability and willingness to delegate (Adu & Olatundun, 2017).

Most of the secondary school principals face some challenges that could affect the school administration as a result of the level of principals' administrative skills. Many of the principals in senior secondary schools are not paying as much attention to principals' administrative skills as they ought to. They are more engrossed in their administrative duties, rather than the professional responsibility of the administrative skills. Among the problems of school administration is that of the inadequate funds, poor leadership style, poor supervision of instructional delivery and nonchalant attitude of teachers to the teaching profession among others.

Drawing on the explanation, the present study aims to (1) examine available principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis, (2) to determine the level of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis. Hence, the research questions are formulated as follows

- (1) What are the available principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis?
- (2) What is the level of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis?

The concept of principals' administrative skills

Principals' administrative skills are those skills of the school principal who must ensure that they are all directed towards efficient and effective teaching and learning in the school to be able to produce quality outputs. By implication, the principal of a school

is a planner, director, controller, coordinator, organiser, adviser and problem-solver (Werang, 2023). The principal is the person on whose shoulders rest the entire administration, success or failure of the school. The principal identifies and sets goals and objectives of the school, which of course, must be in line with the national objectives, analyse tasks and share responsibilities of the staff according to specialization and expertise (Samad & Lashari, 2022). Several studies have discussed the administrative skills of principals within the secondary school system, the principal stands out as the chief executive of the school, he is also the school administrator, the instructional leader and the personnel manager for both the students' academic performance and staff personnel. The principal is also the finance and physical facility manager (Tangkere, 2023).

One of the administrative skills of a principal is to maintain a good relationship with the teachers, and immediate community and also ensure continuous contact with the Ministry of Education in the area in which the school is situated. There are several categories of administrative skill areas of principals in the school system such as student personnel, staff personnel, instruction and curriculum development, school finance and business management, school plant and other general tasks (Ajayi, 2012). The principal is a standard setter, one who leads in the development of an aspiration and expectation on the part of both teachers and students to do good work. A school principal needs to be skillful in providing solutions to teachers' problems by improving methods, materials and evaluation and thus; provides a good measure of quality control. One of the administrative skills of a principal is to improve teachers' testing techniques and develop their ability to analyse and interpret data. The principal as an administrator needs to possess certain administrative skills to effectively perform his duty (Elizabeth et al., 2023).

Principals' financial skill

The financial skill of principals is defined as the determination, acquisition, allocation and utilization of assets or financial resources, usually with an overall goal in mind. It deals with the functions of investing and financing and school asset management. It involves analysing financial situations, making financial decisions, setting financial objectives, formulating financial plans to attain those objectives and providing effective systems of financial control to ensure progress towards the set objectives of secondary education (Phumsawatkamjorn, 2023).

The financial skill of principals is important in the running of school activities. No formal organisation has ever succeeded without financial resources. Therefore, it becomes imperative for institutions, firms, organisations and business entities to consider financial management to enhance good performance and mitigate against financial risks. Growth and development of the educational sector particularly secondary education in Nigeria is dependent on how well finances are managed. Durak and Özüdoğru (2023) stated that the financial skill of principals includes not only financial activities and processes but also management activities, with both processes depending on the financial administrative system. The objective of the financial skill of principals in the federal government is to ensure that, the resources entrusted to it are acquired and used lawfully, efficiently, and effectively to the maximum practical extent. Given this, Limthnawanit (2023) observed that it is quite unfortunate that the little resources available are not effectively managed in Nigerian secondary schools. One thing is to raise funds, another is to ensure that the fund raised is well utilized by the school managers. However, to ensure judicious spending of funds and accountability, school administrators (principals) plan and prepare budgets for their schools.

Principals' physical facilities maintenance skill

Physical facilities maintenance skills which include the classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, laboratories, teachers' quality, school management, teaching

methods, peers, etc are the responsibilities of school principals to be effectively monitored through administrative skills of school principals (Mgbodile, 2016). The physical characteristics of the school have a variety of effects on teachers, students, and the learning process. Poor lighting, noise, high levels of carbon dioxide in classrooms, and inconsistent temperatures make teaching and learning difficult. Poor physical facility maintenance and ineffective ventilation systems lead to poor health among students as well as teachers, which leads to poor performance and higher absentee rates (Babullah & Nurachadijat, 2023). Both students and teachers need facilities such as libraries, science resource corners, good drinking water and toilets. The current emphasis all over the world among educational practitioners is on learner-friendly school environments with learner-friendly instructional delivery systems. Modern school environment emphasises provision of facilities such as adequate and spacious workshops/laboratories, computers, good water source/supply, toilet facilities, functional libraries, transportation, and communication systems among others. All these facilities are required in appropriate quantity and quality (Mgbodile, 2016).

The learner is the centre-point of learner-friendly education, which starts at the primary school level. Primary school is the fulcrum for all other levels of education. It is therefore important that care should be taken in organizing, coordinating and managing educational activities at the primary school level. Atstsaury et al. (2024) observed that no nation could produce the kind of citizens who would think creatively and help solve problems facing humanity without sound primary education. Thus, primary education occupies a critical position in the education system and its importance in the overall national and individual development cannot be overstressed.

Principals' Interpersonal Relationship Skill

Issue of school principals and staff relationship for leadership to occur there must be a dynamic interaction and existence of persons, positions and situations. When teachers are not informed whether they are doing poorly or doing well, uncertainty will surround their performance. This will contribute to negative outcomes such as reduced satisfaction, an increase in office politics and lack of commitment. School principal plays a pivotal role in managing teachers' job performance by providing the proper response. The absence of principals' interpersonal relationship skills will possibly reinforce undesired behaviour affect teachers' feelings and result in confusion and dissatisfaction (Orubuloye, 2016).

Interpersonal relationship skill on administrative effectiveness, Nuswantoro (2023) remarked that interpersonal relationship skill is the lifeblood of any organisation. No institution can meet the needs of its people without proper communication. Information has to flow from the school management to the staff and students, heads of departments must be briefed by the principals before disseminating the news to other members of staff and students. Principals however make judicious use of interpersonal relationship skills to encourage good communication between the school and community, establish close relationships between parents by holding meeting with them at intervals and building parent-teacher links. The importance of interpersonal relationship skills in the administrative effectiveness of the principals cannot be over-emphasized, perhaps, that is why Amril et al. (2023) lamented that; possibly the most vital and fundamental element in the management process is based on working with people, which is done through some forms of communication. He stated further that the success of managerial actions depends to a large extent on the effective use of interpersonal relationship skills. Palssey (2013) mentioned four (4) major functions of interpersonal relationship skills as follows: interpersonal relationship skill allows employees to express their feelings and also serve as a medium of resolution of conflicts, reducing tension and refining direction for individuals, It serves the motivational function of encouraging achievement in subordinates, It provides the necessary information for decision making and it is used to control the activities in an organization (school) (Trongco & Benolirao, 2023). Interpersonal relationship skill is the ability of the school principals to communicate effectively with teachers, students and other members of the school community. This involves passing on information to them, listening to them, directing, instructing and motivating them for goal realisation. It is how principals could effectively carry out administrative functions in schools to check examination malpractice (Davis, 2012).

Method

The appropriate research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey. This is because the study explained the characteristics of the respondents on the assessment of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis. The population for this study comprised all the 6,750 teachers in the 45 public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis (Teaching Service Commission, 2022). One Hundred teachers were randomly selected in Ilorin Metropolis using simple random sampling techniques. The researcher's instrument titled Assessment of Principals' Administrative Skills Questionnaire (APASQ) was used to collect data for this study from the respondents. The instrument was designed based on the indicators of the variable to determine the administrative skills of school principals. The validity of the instrument was done by experts in Educational Management and Educational Test and Measurement. The coefficient of 0.88 was obtained through a pilot test showing that the instrument was reliable for data collection. Copies of APASQ were administered to school teachers to assess the administrative skills of their principals. The respondents were assured that the information provided in the course of this study was protected from unauthorized persons and that the information obtained was used for the sole purpose of the study. The data collected for this study was subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 21.0 version.

Results

What are the available principals' administrative skills?

Table 1 shows the responses of the respondents on the available principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis based on principals' financial skills. It was indicated that 22.6% of the respondents on average percentage strongly agreed that principals have financial skills, 28.8% agreed, 28.6% disagreed and the remaining 20% strongly disagreed. This shows that 28.8% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that principals have financial skills.

S/N	Principals' Financial Skill: My principal	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total Percent
1	ensures that the income of the school is well managed and spent.	30	45	15	10	100
2	ensures that any money spent was meant for its project judiciously	23	20	22	35	100
3	keeps the financial records of the school properly	28	32	35	5	100
4	ensures that there is no room for embezzlement of school funds	15	18	37	30	100
5	is very transparent and accountable financially	17	29	34	20	100
	Average Percent	22.6	28.8	28.6	20.0	

Table 1. Financial skill

Table 2 shows the responses of the respondents on the principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis based on principals' physical facilities maintenance skills. It was indicated that 45.6% of the respondents on average percentage strongly agreed that principals have the skill to ensure that physical facilities are maintained, 35.2% agreed, 11.6% disagreed and the remaining 7.6% strongly disagreed. This shows that 45.6% constituted the majority of the respondents who strongly agreed that principals have physical facilities maintenance skills.

Table 2. Physical facility maintenance skill

S/N	Principals' Physical Facilities Maintenance Skill: My principal	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total Percent
1	ensures that the school buildings are in good shape	62	29	5	4	100
2	Does regular report in school physical facilities to the Ministry of Education	45	38	10	7	100
3	monitors the school facilities' maintenance for proper use	48	39	9	4	100
4	ensures that teaching materials are available and adequately utilized	32	41	18	9	100
5	ensures that staff rooms are adequate with available chairs and tables	41	29	16	14	100
	Average Percentage	45.6	35.2	11.6	7.6	

Moreover, Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents on the principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis based on interpersonal relationship skills. It was indicated that 42% of the respondents on average percentage strongly agreed that principals have good interpersonal relationships with their teachers, 36.8% agreed, 11.8% disagreed and the remaining 9.4% strongly disagreed. This shows that 42% constituted the majority of the respondents who strongly agreed that their principals have interpersonal relationship skills.

Table 3. Interpersonal relationship skill

S/N	Principals' Interpersonal Relationship Skill: My principal	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total
1	is friendly to students and teachers.	41	34	15	10	100
2	is very approachable	54	39	5	2	100
3	behaves in a way that makes teachers love teaching and encourages students' achievement.	38	41	11	10	100
4	promotes cordial relationships with students and teachers.	49	31	12	8	100
5	uses his relationship with students to solve their problems	28	39	16	17	100
	Average Percentage	42.0	36.8	11.8	9.4	

What is the level of principals' administrative skills?

Table 4 shows the level of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis. One hundred respondents representing 68% agreed that the level of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis was high, 27% agreed that it was moderate while the remaining 5% agreed that it was low. This shows that 68% constituted the majority who agreed that the

level of principals' administrative skills was high in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis.

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S/N	Level	Frequency	Percentage		
1	High	68	68.0		
2	Moderate	27	27.0		
3	Low	5	5.0		
	Total	100	100.0		

Table 4. Level of principals' administrative skills

Discussion

Findings revealed that 28.8% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that principals have financial skills in Ilorin Metropolis. This finding is in line with the findings of Khawanja (2012) who stated that school funds are spent appropriately, promoting discipline among staff and students. Saine (2023) found that analysing financial situations, making financial decisions, setting financial objectives, formulating financial plans to attain those objectives and providing effective systems of financial control to ensure progress towards the set objectives of secondary education. Results indicated that 45.6% constituted the majority of the respondents who strongly agreed that principals have physical facilities maintenance skills. Ajayi (2012) agreed with the findings that physical facilities maintenance skills which include the classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, laboratories, teachers' quality, school management, teaching methods, peers, etc are the responsibilities of school principals to be effectively monitored through administrative skills of school principals. Amril et al. (2023) found that poor physical facility maintenance and ineffective ventilation systems lead to poor health among students as well as teachers, which leads to poor performance and higher absentee rates.

It was shown that 42% constituted the majority of the respondents who strongly agreed that their principals have interpersonal relationship skills. The finding conforms to the findings of Khawanja (2012) who stated that the school principal is the keeper of keys, the director of transportation, the coordinator of correspondence, the quartermaster of stores, the divisor of intricate schedules, the publisher of handbooks, the director of public relations and the instructional leader through effective good rapport. Ajayi (2012) concluded that one of the administrative skills of a principal is to maintain a good relationship with the teachers and immediate community and also ensure continuous contact with the Ministry of Education in the area in which the school is situated. Findings revealed that 68% constituted the majority who agreed that the level of principals' administrative skills was high in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis. Finding agrees with Ukozor and Edet (2023) who opined that principals' administrative skills enable the principals to be in charge of a group of teachers and as well as responsible for ensuring that they do their work properly. Alkhawaldeh and Khasawneh (2023) concluded that principals ensure that the source of school finance, physical facilities maintenance and interpersonal relationships are put into effective consideration to attain the set goals of the educational system through the effective administrative skills of school principals.

Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that the assessment of principals' administrative skills implementation in public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis was different based on the ability of school principals' skills. It was concluded that the level of principals' financial skills was very low. However, the school principals were able to

improve physical facilities maintenance skills and interpersonal relationship skills among the teachers and students. Principals need to keep the financial records of the school properly, ensuring that the income of the school is well managed and spent, ensuring that there is no room for embezzlement of school funds among others. Furthermore, several recommendation are drawn from this study: (1) principals must endeavour to keep a high level of professional spirit and good moral standards of the schools to adopt their administrative skills to sustain a good working environment for teachers and other staff in their schools, (2) principals as the heads of schools should make efforts to ensure that the rules and regulations that serve to guide the conduct of their teachers should be fair and not rigid to give room for effective human relations that will no doubt increase teachers' job commitment, and (3) school principals should shun away from embezzlement of school funds so that the limited funds generated will be spent judiciously for the school's progress.

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