

Instructional Leadership Practices of School Principal and Management of Quality Academic Performance of Students in Public Secondary Schools, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined instructional leadership practices of public secondary school principals in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted ex-post facto research design. The population for this study comprised of public secondary school teachers. There are a total of 18,999 public secondary school teachers teaching in various secondary schools across the state. Using stratified random sampling technique, 36 public secondary schools were sampled from three Local Government Areas of Odukpani, Calabar Municipality and Calabar South for this study. Seven (7) teachers were drawn from each of the schools with 252 secondary school teachers engaged as the respondents for the study. Teacher Rating and Ranking of Public Secondary Schools Principal's Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Data got were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer and Chi-square statistic. Results showed that a significant relationship exists between principal's instructional leadership practices and quality academic performance of public secondary school students. The study recommended amongst other things that appointment of school principals should be strictly based on knowledge and experience of classroom instructions, school supervision and school leadership.*

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I. Introduction

The school principal is key to the implementation of school policies and the achievement of the objectives upon which the school is established. This is why the leadership roles of principals is important in the understanding of school effectiveness (Halinger & Walker, 2017; Walker, 2017)

There are different types of leadership roles of the school principal in school management. Instructional leadership which refers to the principal's direct role in teaching and learning processes is one of the very important aspects of principal's leadership roles in school.

Besides, the school principal is required to inspire the teachers as well as other staff under his control in the form of transformational and transactional leadership (Lai, Wang & Shen 2017). These forms of leadership assists the principal in achieving the collective vision of change and in the motivation of members of his teaching as well as non teaching staff and the various stakeholders of the school to develop the full capabilities of the learners which is the fulcrum upon which the school is established.

Also, there is collaborative leadership which refers to the leadership that includes school administrators, teachers, parents and members of the society in the general improvement of the organizational attributes of the school (Hallinger & Heck, 2010)

However due to increased educational issues, challenges and the accompanying reforms upon which schools are meant to embrace and in line with the demand for

school quality educational delivery, the instructional leadership role of the principal has assumed a new dimension in educational administration.

It is on the above background that Murphy (2012) sees principal's instructional leadership role as the leadership function that supports classroom teaching and student learning in the school. Also, Pan et al (2015) stated that principal's instructional leadership has the strongest impact on student's learning outcomes among all types of leadership.

Despite the importance placed on principal's instructional leadership especially comparing with other forms of principal's leadership focus, instructional leadership appears to have been neglected in schools.

Widespread evidence abound of the poor academic performance of students in both internal and external examinations as a result of poor academic performance of students. Agbo (2008) stated that among the forces behind examination malpractices in schools is lack of supervisory role of the principal on the teachers. The study continued that most often, teachers are faced with the character of laxity at duty post,

incompetence resulting in poor completion of the subject curriculum. The problem of poor performance of schools/ students during examination has often been blamed on the poor instructional leadership of the school principal. A study by Dada (2014) revealed that school governance , instructional leadership of the principal, corruption, lack of accountability and transparency all contribute to poor academic performance of the students. This study continue that since leadership has a role to play in getting learners ready for quality performance in schools, the appropriate leadership behavior in this direction is instructional leadership which is basically being executed by the school principal.,

Irrespective of the fact that public secondary schools are staffed with well qualified principals. Effective academic performance of students is supposed to produce correlation of grades in respective examinations. Cases whereby performance of students in school examinations has no correlation with University Tertiary Matriculation Examinations and Universities aptitude or placement examinations are clear incidences of poor academic performance in our public secondary schools. Student performance is meant to produce progressive measures given similar curricular circumstances.

Although performance is determined by various school factors, instructional leadership plays a very significant role in its quality. Ibrahim & Orhodo (2014) established that instructional leadership of the principal have significant inputs on student's achievement in school.

Southworth (2002)stated that the school principals have often neglected their roles as instructional facilitators in schools, their preference for other aspects of school management other than instructional management have left the schools under severe academic as well as instructional challenges.

In the light of the above and in a bit to reiterate the roles of the school principal, the principals roles in school is tied but not restricted to the following duties : setting academic goals for schools, implementation of school curriculum, assessing the effectiveness of the teacher's instructional practices, evaluating and supervising student's improvements.

This study is therefore meant to examine instructional leadership of school principals on students academic performance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.

Research questions

1. What are the perspectives of instructional leadership often exhibited by school principals
2. In what ways do principal's instructional leadership practices related to students academic performance in school.

Research hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the instructional leadership of the school principal as perceived by the teachers and student academic performance in school.

II. Methods

The research design adopted for this study was ex-post facto research design. This design became necessary as no variable of this study can be easily manipulated. Also, its usefulness is inclined to the reason that both principal's instructional leadership and the student's academic performance have already occurred. The population for this study comprised of public secondary school teachers in Cross River State. There are a total of 18,991 public secondary school teachers distributed in the 18 Local Government Areas of the state.

Using stratified random sampling technique, 36 public secondary schools were sampled for this study. The schools were drawn from three Local Government Areas of Odukpani, Calabar Municipality and Calabar South on the basis of proximity to the researcher. Seven (7) teachers were drawn from each of the schools with 252 secondary school teachers engaged as the respondents for this study.

Teacher Rating and Ranking of Public Secondary Schools Principal's Questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. Data got were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer programme and Chi- square statistics.

III. Results

Table 1-Teacher rating and ranking of public schools principal instructional leadership practices in public schools

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS	MEAN	SD	RANK
Less concerned about ensuring a conducive environment for teaching and learning with regards to noise control in school, time management for staff and students and community school relations	3.03	1.42	9
Does not give time for discussion of issues that relate with teaching and learning during staff and student assembly	3.13	1.12	8
Does not encourage teachers with praise, prize and gifts when their students perform	3.82	1.27	4

qualitatively in a particular subject			
Does not carry out routine check of classes during teaching	3.63	1.31	5
Does not supervise teachers in their teaching	3.58	1.24	6
Create no time to check teacher and student notebooks	3.00	1.34	10
Less concerned about teaching and learning process in relation to subject curriculum	3.92	1.12	3
Does not ask student questions to ensure they benefit quality teaching	3.97	1.14	2
Pay less attention to the supply and use of instructional materials for teachers and students	3.52	1.30	7
Pay less attention to issues of mentorship for junior teachers by the more experienced senior teachers especially on instructional process	4.07	1.18	1

Table 1 shows the perception of the teachers on the instructional leadership practices of the principal. Drawing from the table, public school principals are less concerned about teaching learning environment with regard to noise and environmental issues that have to do with school and community which are detrimental to teaching and learning with a mean of 3.03. The second leadership behavior of the public school principal was that they do not discuss problems that are concerned with performance of the students arising from teaching and learning practices in schools with a mean of 3.13. In the same vein, a mean of 3.36 showed that principals do not have a reward system for their teachers based on instructional outcomes and student performance.

Also, a mean of 3.58 showed that public school principals do not visit students and teachers in their classes to supervise teaching. Principals do not check the notebooks of the students to ensure that the curriculum for each subject is implemented with a mean of 3.00.

Majority of the public school principals pay less concern to teaching and learning practices in line with subject curriculum with a mean of 3.92. A mean of 3.97 showed that principals do not find out whether the students are benefiting from what the teachers are teaching them in terms of school objectives and behavioral objectives.

School principals do not supply the teachers with instructional tools for teaching and learning with a mean of 3.52. Also, a mean of 4.07 showed that principals do not provide for mentorship planning in their schools. Rather, they allow the junior teachers to grow on their own without creating avenues for them to benefit from the wealth of experience and knowledge of the more senior teachers.

These attributes of the public school principals showed that they maintained inappropriate instructional leadership practices in schools leading to poor academic performance of students.

Hypothesis testing

The null hypothesis for this study stated that: There is no significant relationship between the instructional leadership practices of principals and students academic performance in public secondary schools.

For each of the instructional leadership practice, a cross tabulation of the academic performance of the students was developed to facilitate a Chi-square (χ^2) test of the association to be conducted at $\alpha = .05$ level of statistical significance. The Chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 15.67$, $df = 5$) indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected at critical value of 11.07 at $\alpha = .05$ level of statistical significance.

The rejection of the null hypothesis led to the conclusion that there was a significant correlation between instructional leadership of the school principal and the academic performance of the students in public secondary schools. The study explains why public secondary school students in Cross River State perform poorly in examinations.

IV. Summary Of Findings

This study was meant to discuss data collected on the instructional leadership practices of the school principal. The hypothesis stated for the study was rejected and alternative hypothesis stated.

The study revealed by the perception of public secondary school teachers that the instructional leadership practices of the public schools principals were inadequate to produce the required academic performance of the students based on the following practices of the principal:

Principals fail in the provision of conducive environment for teaching and learning in schools. They do not have control on the noise produced by the students neither do they have control on the noise produced by motorist. Also, majority of the principals maintained poor relationships with the host communities of the school leading to hostile relationships which occasion the environment of the school .

Principals showed low level of responsibility in attending to problems that are associated with teaching and learning as well as the performance of the students during staff and student assemblies. Worse in this direction is the development that most school principals do not attend assemblies. They rather delegate

authorities to their subordinates without arming them with the tools to carry out this important duty satisfactorily.

School principals do not have an internal reward system for the teachers even in the form of praise, prize and gift. The teachers are key players in the delivery of instructions and they require encouragement and motivation to accomplish their duties. They hardly recommend the hard working teachers to higher authorities for promotions and special appointments.

The study recorded a very ugly trend in the effort of the public school principals in coordinating the supply, improvisation and utilization of instructional materials in school. This trend has left the work of instructional delivery quite uninteresting to teachers and their learners leading to poor academic performance.

Also, there was the incidence of complete absence of mentorship in public schools. The principals do not have a mentorship programme where junior and less experienced teachers will benefit from the wealth of knowledge and experience of the senior teachers.

The study revealed that principals hardly come to class to carry out the duty of instructional supervision on- the- spot of teaching. They do not demand to see the notebook of students as part of evaluating the work of the teachers especially as it has to do with implementation of the curriculum and coverage of the arms of the school curriculum. They do not also seek the opinion of the students over what they learn from the teachers in the various school subjects

A good number of the teachers perceived that principals show nonchalant attitude on teacher punctuality and absenteeism. This neglect create complete absence of teachers during early morning and late afternoon lessons with high level of loitering of the students in the school compounds.

V. Discussion Of Findings

The main objective of this study was to assess the instructional leadership practices of public secondary school principals in Cross River State. To achieve this purpose, one null hypothesis was stated and a questionnaire developed to collect data from teachers on the instructional leadership practices of public school principals.

Responses from teachers on the extent to which principals ensured a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning to take place showed that principals were nonchalant over issues that are associated with providing a conducive environment for learning including relationship with the host community of the school to foster a peaceful atmosphere for teaching and learning to take place. As Bush (2014) stated, provision of conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning as well as relationship with the community of the school and parents is the auxiliary role of the school principal which has implication on instructional practices of the school. The school principal must be able to develop and coordinate the environment of the school; making it free from noise and rancor, establish productive relationships with parents and community if schools must achieve efficiency in academics.

Responses from teachers showed that principals do not show interest in discussing issues that are related with student performance during staff and student assemblies; they do not visit teachers and students in the classrooms during teaching and they do not check notebooks of the teachers and students to establish progress in the delivery of the subject curriculum and implementation. This is a clear negation of the core role of the principal as instructional leader. The duty of the instructional leader is to emphasize his or her responsibility to set standards and expectations for teachers and learners. The instructional leader must communicate these standards to the teachers and learners. It is on this note that Al-ghanabousi (2010) identified teachers and learners appraisal as a formal means for instructional leaders to communicate organizational goals, conceptions of teaching, standards and values to the teachers and students. It is the duty of the principal to monitor the implementation of strategies to achieve the school goals, provide feedback to the teachers and learners with regards to individual performance, abilities, strengths and weaknesses.

The opinion of respondents also showed that school principals show very little interest over issues of teacher punctuality and absenteeism in school and class, create no time to evaluate the work of the teachers and do not have any functional reward system in school for teacher performance. They do not also recommend teachers for promotions and appointments to higher responsibilities as a reward for hard work. Undoubtedly, the school principal is expected to work closely with the teachers under him, observe them to establish their areas of strength and weaknesses at their duty post. It is on the above background that Dufour (2002) indicated that the instructional leader needs to have up-to-date knowledge of the three areas of education- curriculum, instruction, assessment and in addition, a functional system of teacher and learner reward. It is on the strength of these instructional indices that learners who are at the forefront of effective schools can achieve academically.

A good number of teacher respondents showed that the practices and behavior of the school principal on instructional materials availability, supply and utilization on instructions is poor. Contrary to Robinson (2007) who held the views that one of the instructional leadership responsibilities of the school principal is to

coordinate and plan all the resources that may lead to effective delivery of instructions. Although the idea of sourcing and ensuring the availability of instructional materials for effective lesson delivery is the primary duty of the teacher. It is also the duty of the supervisory role of the principal to ensure that this resources are made available for instructions. The principal is also duty bound to create a conducive environment for the teachers to exploit their role of creativity as it has to do with the availability of instructional materials in schools.

Principals do not have a functional system for mentorship to thrive in public schools. As stated by Ingersoll (2001) one of the causes of poor academic performance in school is the lack of mentorship especially for incoming teachers. Also, Arikewuyo (2016) stated that it is the duty of the instructional leaders to assign a mentor, provide orientation and shuffle scarce resources so that the new comer feels welcomed and equipped to carry out his duties. This among other things will avail the new teacher the opportunity of acquiring relevant knowledge of the instructional process and procedure, appreciate the school environment and develop love and a passion for the job.

VI. Recommendations

The study drew the following recommendations

1. Appointment of public school principals should be based on the knowledge and experience on classrooms instruction, school supervision and leadership.
2. Relevant authorities should arm the school principal with his key duties upon appointment and monitor to ensure compliant.
3. Performance of the students should be viewed by relevant authorities such as state schools boards and Ministry of Education as a yardstick for performance of the principals. Erring principals in this direction should be sanctioned.
4. Qualified inspectors from Ministry of Education and State Schools Board should be reminded of their duties of school inspection and government should review their guidelines to include the core duties of the school principal.

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