

Principals Managerial Competence as A Correlate Of Students' Academic Performance In Ecwa Secondary Schools In North Central Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness and competency of principals of ECWA Secondary Schools in North Central Geo-political zone of Nigeria and how well they were professionally trained in School administration. It was also to find out how effective the training in-service was implemented in order to develop Principals and staff professional competency. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research were employed in order to establish how competent the principals were in their leadership role, the officials of the ECWA Education Department were interviewed and questionnaire administered in 15 ECWA Secondary Schools on 20 teachers in each school in the North Central Geo-political zone. The study found out that most ECWA Secondary School principals, though educated in other fields, were not professionally competent in school administration and planning. Also, principals' managerial competence had a negative relationship (-0.02) with students performance in ECWA secondary schools. It was therefore recommended that Principal of ECWA Secondary schools should be trained professionally in education administration. They should improve in the teaching-learning process in schools, as well as ensure that the factors that led to student poor performance in external examination should be investigated.

Keywords: Principal, Management, Competence, Secondary schools

1. Introduction

Education is regarded as the catalyst for development as well as a process for bringing positive change in the society. In Nigeria, it is recognized as an instrument par excellence for effective national development (FRN, 2004). Education, no doubt, is the key to national development, thus, it is intended to serve the expressed goals and aspirations of the country as enshrined in the National Policy on Education.

Secondary education does not only occupy an important place in the Nigeria education system, it also serves as a link between the primary and tertiary levels. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) defined secondary education as the education the learner receives after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The Junior secondary school (JSS) has also become an integral part of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of the federal government. The Junior secondary school is free, compulsory and universal Statistics show that enrolment at public secondary schools in Nigeria was 7,332,526 in 2008, it stood at 1,031,245 in 2009 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2010). While enrolment is increasing, the numbers of secondary schools in both years remain the same. Thus, since the junior secondary schools now free and compulsory, many parents who, hitherto could not afford to send their children to school, are now doing so. But the declining results from schools in terms of learning achievement, attitudes, values and other affective measures vis-à-vis the huge investment in the sector are quite disturbing. Table 1 below corroborates the poor performance of students as released by the education department of ECWA (EDE) in 2011.

Table 1: Performance of ECWA students in the May/June WAEC Senior Secondary Certification Examination, 2007-2011.

YEAR	ENTRY	NUMBER WITH 5 CREDIT PASSES INCLUDING MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH	PERCENTAGE (%)
2007	120,768	46,932	38.86
2008	132,768	48,003	36.15
2009	157,700	53,201	33.74
2010	158,601	49,637	31.29
2011	172,223	31,021	18.01

Source: ECWA Education Department (2011)

The result above cannot be said to have satisfied the aspiration of the ECWA organization and that of the nation. Adeyemi (2008) has shown in their studies the extent of poor performance in students in public examinations. The most recent was seen in the Daily Trust Newspaper (September 27, 2012) where it was reported that 83% of the candidates that sat for the May/June 2011 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) failed.

According to Okpilike (2010), the Nigeria school system of today is characterized by many forms of vices in the form of student indiscipline, student unrest, cultism, lack of respect, immodesty in dressing, examination malpractice, etc. The teachers on their part exhibit partiality, corruption, various forms of indiscipline such as lateness to school, lack of preparation for class work, absenteeism etc. The shift in the value system according to him has permeated the school system.

The Christian missions established schools in Nigeria to inculcate moral and religious values into the youths. In spite of their tremendous contribution to the education system over the years, Roman Mission like Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Roman Catholic Mission, Methodist Mission and Baptist Mission have been contributing towards education in Nigeria. Despite the increasing rate in the formation of mission schools across the length and breadth of Nigeria, the schools do not live up to the age glory and successes recorded in the past. In the words of Okpilike(2010), the contribution of mission schools towards instilling in youth, the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual is dwindling.

Similarly, Udoh (2002) and Mbewahuche (2004) maintained that the level of achievement in any institution of learning lies mainly with how competent the school leadership is in the area of managing the human, material and financial resources at his disposal. The head of every secondary school in Nigeria is the principal, who is regarded as the chief Executive and responsible for what happens in the school (Oyedeki and Fassi, 2006). As the chief executive, the principal assigns duties to those who could perform the duties, though all responsibilities still reside in him/her as the accounting officer. Obeama cited in Olalekan (2009) sees the principal as a manager, administrator, an exemplary leader, counselor, a public office, a nurse and even a messenger

In view of the significant role of the principal, the Commonwealth Secretariat (1993:35) also adduced the functions to include the following:

- (i) Manage and deploy school resources efficiently.
- (ii) Allocate school accommodation appropriately.
- (iii) Ensure satisfactory standards of maintenance and cleanliness of school facilities.
- (iv) Organize staff development in school.
- (v) Guide curriculum implementation and change.
- (vi) Manage development appraisal system, whole school evaluation and new integrated quality management system.
- (vii) Create a professional ethos within the school by involving staff members in decision making.

These functions of the principal are targeted at achieving efficient teaching and learning in the school. Since the missionaries handed over the responsibilities of the schools to Nigerians, there had not been any significant successes in the mission schools (Okpilike, 2010). The headship of secondary schools in Nigeria is usually a product of the teaching force. Teachers, who have spent a minimum of ten years in service, are usually appointed as principal and vice principal of secondary schools. Sometimes two vice principals, one for administration and the other for academic are appointed into the position of principals. The same applies to mission schools. Up till now, mission secondary schools do not take administrative qualification and criteria into consideration for appointment into leadership positions in schools (Turaki 1993).

Over the years, heads of secondary schools in Nigeria have been accused of various lapses and offences (Okpilike 2010). The falling standard of education in the schools has been attributed to the inefficiency of principals (Obeamata, 1984). They are said to be inefficient and accused of faking to provide direction and adequate leadership for their schools. All these inefficiencies, lapses and ineptitude on the part of secondary school principals in Nigeria are often attribute to their lack of professional training, as they do not possess the necessary managerial qualifications and skill needed to administer the schools (Okpilike 2010). This of course, might have its attendant implications on student achievement. (Oladele 2003) argued that the extent to which the school system is able to accomplish its stated objectives particular performance among students is influenced by gender of the school leadership. Also, Cruz (2005) posited students 'performance is related to school location and availability of physical facilities. Several factors have been attributed to the perceived effectiveness in term of student's performance among which are teacher factor parental factor, economic factor , social factor and principal's leadership behavior and competence. This study would be limited to the principal's managerial competency as a potent factor for students' performance.

The behaviour of leadership has been identified as one of the major factors influencing the productivity of subordinates in any organization in which the school system is not an exception (Babayemi 2006). It can be inferred from the foregoing that principals' managerial competency has a relationship with students' academic performance. It is against this background that, this study seeks to investigate the effect of principals' managerial competencies on students' academic performance.

Generally, the Nigerian secondary school system has faced unprecedented times lately due to poor results and products. The results released by the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and national examination council (NECO) shows dismal performance among students. Available statistics from WASSCE and NECO shows a table to buttress this fact. Experts have delved into the factor responsible for the poor performance. Factors ranging from student, teachers, school facilities, curriculum, environmental etc. have been investigated; Mbewahuche (2004) posited that the level of achievement in any institution of learning lies mainly with how competent the school leadership is in the area of managing the human, material and financial resources at his disposal. Also there seems to be increasing public dissatisfaction with the performance of ECWA Secondary School graduates Biyo (2000). There appears to be discontent by parents, staff members and frustration on the side of proprietors over falling standard. There by, making the society to lose confidence in the system. Ekundayo (2010). However, all blame seems to be placed on the principals who are the major actors in school administration.

2. Statement of the problem

The dismal performance in external examinations among students of both public and private schools in Nigeria raised a lot of concern. Many factors have been attributed as responsible for this trend. Some of the factors include the teacher factor, student, environment and institutional factor.

Principals' managerial competence has been investigated in public schools and is seen to be partly responsible for students' poor academic performance. However, the managerial competence of the private school principals has seemingly not been exhaustively investigated. Thus, in view of student poor performance in both internal and external examination, three questions agitate the mind of the researcher: is the principals' managerial competency a predictor of students' academic performance in ECWA Secondary school in North-central zone of ECWA district? What is the competency rating among principals of ECWA secondary school in North- central zone of ECWA district? What is the relationship between principals' managerial competency and students' academic performance?

Seeking answers to these posers constitute the major problem of the study. Therefore, the thrust of the study is to investigate principals, managerial competency and its effects on students' academic performance in ECWA secondary schools in North central Nigeria.

3. Objectives of the study

The objective of the study was to investigate principals' managerial competency and its effect on students' academic performance in ECWA secondary school in North central Geo-political zone of Nigeria. In specific terms, this study is intended to:

- 1) Determine the status of principals of ECWA secondary schools in North central Geo-political zone of Nigeria.
- 2) Determine the relationship between principals' competence and student's academic performance in ECWA secondary schools in North- central Geo-political zone of Nigeria.
- 3) Compare competences among male and female principals in ECWA secondary schools.
- 4) Determine whether school location has any effect on principals' managerial competency.

4. Literature review

4.1 The Role of the School Principal

The administrative head of a school is here referred to as the manager or administrator. As defined by Ozigi (1982), the administrative head of a school is an individual who directs the affairs of an organization in such a way as to attain primary goals and objectives of the organization (school) and who gets things done quickly and efficiently. Among numerous activities of the administrator (manager) according to him, are; planning, organizing, supervising, controlling, directing and evaluating. The school administrator is therefore simply the executive head of an institution of learning that makes decisions and implements its policies and programmes. He coordinates, organizes and directs activities in such a way that things work smoothly, quickly and efficiently. A school administrator is both a leader and manager of an institution. Doll (1995) further explains this view that leadership functions administratively or management functions are usually combined in a single role and that a manager or an administrator is called by such names as head, director organizer, principal etc. supporting the above views, Edem (1982) was of the opinion that school administrator is one saddled with the responsibility of administering and managing school by making things happen and by organizing human, financial and material resources in order to achieve the objectives of the institution within the targeted period. Njoku (2004) describes the post of school administrator (manager) as, the most challenging assignment that faces the manager. And because of this highly complex and demanding task, the administrator is required to possess professional skills and competent management techniques in order to achieve the educational goals of the school. The successful implementation of the school curriculum and other programmes depend largely on management ability to carry out the task or assignment effectively.

4.2 Historical Development and Contribution of ECWA to Western Education in Northern Nigeria

The greatest legacies left behind by the early missionaries to African in general and Nigeria in particular was the establishment of western education. Though, the ulterior motives of early missionaries were to evangelize, they had to introduce western education to help them in the evangelization. According to Yusufu (1993), during the pioneering period the mission pre-occupied itself with the funding of mission stations in order to have a foothold on the interior. The mission devoted her time to evangelism and church planting rather than education. Yusuf went further to quote the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) field secretary, Andrew Stirrentt as saying, "care must be exercised not to introduce subject on the curriculum other than reading of the Bible, writing and sample Arithmetic, because subjects like English, Mathematics, Commerce, Book-keeping and other worldly arts and science are likely to be a source of temptation to pupils which will lead them to enter into government services, receive lucrative positions and often spend this substance in riotous living."

Between 1939 and 1969, SIM established many schools and appointed both academic and non-academic staffs who were Christians to head and work in the schools. According to Yusuf (1993:14), "the Sudan Interior Mission handed over primary schools to ECWA in the mid-1960's and the Northern Government in the late 1960's.

However, this handover of schools to ECWA management did not last because by 1970, government took over secondary schools and other establishment being managed by voluntary agencies. This takeover of schools by government apparently brought joy and happiness to parents because of non-payment of school fees, uniforms, boarding fees and in most cases the gift of free exercise books. This happiness was short lived as they soon watched with dismay the sudden fall in academic, moral standards and overwhelming deplorable conditions in public schools.

5. Research questions

The following research questions were answered by the findings of the study:

1. What is the status of principals' managerial competency in ECWA secondary schools in north central geo-political zone in Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between principals' competency and students' performance in ECWA secondary school?
3. In what way does the competency of male and female principals differ in school management?
4. How does school location (in terms of urban or rural) influence principals' competency in ECWA secondary schools in the north central geo-political zone of Nigeria?

6. Statement of hypotheses

To guide the investigation, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between principals' competency and students' academic performance in ECWA secondary schools in North Central Geo-political Zone in Nigeria (Ho1).
2. Competency of male and female principals does not differ in ECWA secondary school management (Ho2).
3. There is no significant difference between principals' competence in ECWA rural schools and principals' competency in ECWA urban schools (Ho3)

7. Methodology

The study adopted the survey design. The population for the investigation consisted of all ECWA secondary school in the North central Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. There are a total of twenty-seven (27) secondary schools in the zone which make up six (6) states and the FCT, Abuja. The States were: Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Kogi, Niger, Kwara, and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Therefore, principals and teachers of all the ECWA secondary schools in the zone constitute the population. A total of twenty-seven (27) [18 males and 9 females] principals, three hundred and eighty-nine (389) teachers, make up the population of the study. The sample for the investigation consisted of fourteen (14) ECWA schools selected from the states that make up the North Central Nigeria. A sample of principals consisted of eight (8) male and six (6) female whose managerial competencies as it affected students' academic performances was investigated. Twenty (20) teachers were selected from each school using the simple random technique. Thus, a sample of two hundred and eighty (280) teachers and fourteen principals brings the total research subjects to two hundred and ninety-four (294).

Two types of questionnaire were used for data collection. These are: Management of School Questionnaire for Teachers (MSQT) and the second instrument is a proforma designed to collect students' result in the Senior School Certificate Examination for five years (2006-2010) from the schools. MSQT has two sections: section A sought the background information of the respondents' and section B consisted of 26 items on a four point Likert scale: Having no capacity (A), Having little capacity (B), Having moderate capacity (C), and Having excellent capacity (D) The scales would be used to elicit degree of opinion of the respondents on principals' managerial competencies. Result of students' performance was obtained from the school records using five years (2006-2010) in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). The respondents were expected to indicate their opinions on the characteristics of the principals' managerial competence.

Validity was built into the collecting instruments by relating each item in the questionnaire to specific variable for making an opinion about the Principal Managerial Competence in the school. The instrument designed by the Commonwealth Secretariat (1998) stating the functions and Managerial Competence of School Principal was adapted. Also, face validity was sought by subjecting the instruments to critical appraisal of experts in Educational

Administration and Educational Measurement and Evaluation all from Nasarawa State University Keffi. They were asked to rate the instrument (MSQT) using a 5-point scale (Excellent 5, Very Good 4, Good 3, Fair 2, and Poor 1). They were requested to also check for ambiguity of the items, appropriateness, language used, clarity of purpose and relevance to the study. This enabled the researcher to obtain logical validity index of 0.73 for the MSQT. The value so obtained was considered sufficient to use the instrument. The reliability index of the MSQT was obtained using the Split Half reliability estimate to obtain a coefficient of 0.72 for MSQT. This value was suitable enough to use the instrument for the entire study because of its high internal consistency.

The researcher visited the schools that were used for the study. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the teachers in the respective schools with the aid of a research assistant after formal introduction with the school principals and respondents. Also records of academic performance of students in SSCE for five years (2006-2010) were obtained from the schools using the pro-forma. The questionnaires were collected after completion by the respondents. A “wait and take” approach was employed to collect the questionnaire and a 100% return ratio was achieved. The statistical tools that were employed in testing the hypotheses are the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Statistic and the T-test at a significance level of 0.05.

8. Results

Table 2: Mean Assessment of Principal’s Managerial Competency in ECWA Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria.

S/N	School	Mean (Competent)	(Not Mean Competent)	Competent (%)	Not Competent (%)
1	ECWA High School Keffi	25.92	14.69	62.82	36.18
2	ECWA Staff School Jos	33.30	18.27	64.58	35.42
3	ECWA Peace College Nas.	29.00	14.65	66.43	33.57
4	ECWA Sec. Sch. Makurdi	30.15	13.61	68.89	31.11
5	ECWA Comp. Sec Sch. Lafia	32.50	19.59	62.46	37.54
6	ECWA Hills Christian Academic Maitama	36.19	16.19	69.09	30.91
7	ECWA High Sec. Sch. Doma	27.92	14.23	66.24	33.76
8	ECWA Sec. sch. Miango	28.07	18.26	60.58	39.42
9	ECWA Sec. Sch. Kabong Jos	34.76	18.30	65.51	34.49
10	ECWA Sec. Sch. Tudun Wada	31.73	16.80	65.37	34.63
11	ECWA George Comp. Sec. Sch. Egbe.	27.88	14.38	65.97	34.03
12	ECWA Sec. SCH. Gano Illorin	27.46	19.15	58.91	41.09
13	ECWA Sec Sch. Nuku-Abaji	28.61	16.15	63.92	36.08
14	ECWA Sec. Sch. Total-Shendam	37.76	16.19	69.99	30.01
15	ECWA Comp. College Utan Grand Means	29.88	17.84	62.61 Xc = 64.96	37.39 Xn = 35.04

Table 2 shows the results for the mean assessment of principal’s managerial competency in ECWA secondary schools in the north central geo-political zone of Nigeria. Based on the pre-determined objective of the study, the result showed that the mean assessment of principals in the sample schools met the stipulated mean score of 50. This implies that a mean of 64.96 shows that principals are competent in managerial responsibility in their respective schools.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient for principal’s competency and students’ performance in ECWA secondary school in the North central geo-political zone of Nigeria.

S/N	Variable	N	Mean	r	Remark
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1	Principal's competency	15	64.96		Negative and weak relationship
2	Students performance	15	43.17	-0.02	

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient between principal's managerial competency and students' performance for five (5) years. This reveals that principal's managerial competency and students' performance correlates negatively. This indicates that there is a negative relationship between principal's managerial competency and students' performance. The correlation coefficient obtained in table 3 was transformed to a t-value and tested at a probability level of 0.05. This is to establish whether the relationship is statistically significant.

Table 4: Testing the significance of the correlation coefficient (r)

S/N	Correlation coefficient(r)	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value	α	Remark
1	-0.02	-0.072	-1.771	0.05	Not Significant

Df=13

Table 4 shows the t-test analysis for the transformation of the correlation coefficient between principals' managerial competency and student performance. The result indicates that the relationship between principal's managerial competence and students' performance in ECWA Secondary School in the North Central Nigeria is not significant to reject the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of probability. Hence, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between principals competency and students academic performance in ECWA Secondary school in the North central Nigeria is not rejected.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of Male and Female Principals' Managerial Competency.

S/N	Gender	N	Mean	D	SE	t_{cal}	$t_{critical}$	Remark
1	Male	9	65.19	1.83	0.32		2.179	Not Significant
2	Female	6	64.59	4.24	0.48	1.178		Significant

$\alpha=0.05$, Df =13

Table 5 shows the t-test analysis for the comparison of male principals and female principal in terms of managerial competency as assessed by teachers of ECWA Secondary schools in the north central Nigeria. The calculated t-value of 1.178 is less than the critical value of 2.179 at 0.05 level of probability and degree of freedom 13. Hence Null Hypothesis (H_0) is not rejected. This indicates that hypothesis 2 which state that competency of male principal do not differ from competency of female principals in ECWA Secondary Schools management is not rejected. Hence, competence of male principals does not differ from competency of female principals in ECWA Secondary Schools management.

Table 6: T-test Analysis of Difference in principals' competence according to Location

S/N	Locations	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-critical	Remark
1	Urban	9	64.32	1.14		2.179	Not Significant
2	Rural	6	65.92	1.02	2.031		

$\alpha=0.05$ Df =13

Table 6 shows the t-test analysis for the comparison of principals of ECWA School competency in terms of location. The result indicates that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value. Thus, the calculated t-value of 2.031 is less than the critical t-value which indicates that there is no significant difference between principals' competency in urban ECWA Schools and those in rural ECWA School.

9. Discussions

The result of the study showed that principals of ECWA Secondary Schools in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria are managerially competent in their responsibilities. The findings of the investigation are not in agreement with Udoh (2000) who found out that the managerial competency of principals in public secondary schools in Rivers State are inadequate. This may be due to the fact that the schools investigated in Rivers State were public and supervision was not adequate.

Considering the study of Udoh (2000) and Mbewabuche (2004), the findings of this study is a negation to that because while the study of the former revealed that academic performance of student is a function of the competence of the school administrator.

The findings of the study does not take into account principals' professional and administrative training and qualification have higher number of student with high performance relative to principals' without professional administrative training and qualification. The findings of this study revealed that male principal's managerial competency have no significant difference with those of their female counterpart in ECWA secondary school in the North-Central Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. This also is not in agreement with the findings of Uwazurike (2010) who claimed that female principals are managerially competent than male principals'. However, the findings of the study revealed that principals are managerially more competent. This is in agreement with Asikewuyo (2010), who found out that school teachers in Nigeria considered their principals as having the leadership and managerial capacity to administer the schools.

Nevertheless, findings of this study showed that principals managerial competency have no influence on students academic performance. This suggests that students' low academic performance in ECWA secondary schools is not influenced by principals' managerial competence. Some other factors may be responsible for students' poor performance.

10. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it has been shown empirically that principals' of ECWA secondary schools in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria are competent in their managerial responsibilities. The implication of this result is that the principals are not responsible for the poor students' performance in external examinations. This is indicative in the correlation coefficient of -0.02 between competency and students' academic performance.

Also, principals' sex differential has no influence in their managerial competence. Principals of ECWA secondary schools are managerially competent irrespective of size and location. This means that size and location have no (moderating) effect on managerial competency of principals of ECWA secondary school in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The basic conclusion drawn from the investigation is that principal's managerial competency does not influence students' academic performance in ECWA secondary school in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals of ECWA secondary schools should be encouraged by the ECWA Council to undergo requisite training and retraining capable of enhancing teaching and learning in schools.
2. Principals of ECWA Secondary schools should evolve ways of enhancing quality of teaching and learning through effective supervision, management and retraining of staff.
3. Principals of ECWA secondary schools in the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria should be monitored by the ECWA Education Council in terms of their managerial competence in schools to ensure standards and quality.
4. Periodic postings of Principals of ECWA Secondary Schools should be done across school locations to have even distribution of management in all ECWA schools.

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