

# Principals' Knowledge of Education Law in Secondary School Administration in Delta and Bayelsa States, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This paper examined principals' knowledge of education law in secondary school administration in Delta and Bayelsa States. Ex-post facto research design was used to generate data from a population consisting 617 principals of public secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States. The random sampling technique was utilized to sample 124 participants, wherein Bayelsa has 49 selected figures from the three (3) Senatorial Districts of the state while in Delta State, sampled figure consists of 75 across the three (3) Senatorial Districts respectively. The instrument was constructed to generate data from respondents and was analyzed using the Pearson 'r' statistics. Findings indicate that principals in secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States have not obtained sufficient legal knowledge of education law in secondary school administration. Therefore, it was recommended that, school principals should be trained in education law because all aspects of school administration involve the application of legal guidelines.

**Keywords:** principals, education, law, administration

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## 1. Introduction

The school as a hazardous place has many legal issues involving legal implications that should not be ignored by the school administrator such as student and staff discipline, infringement of students' rights, search and seizure of students' items, writing of reports on students and personnel/teaching conditions, physical safety of students, school attendance, maintaining order and students right following the rule of law. Law according to Blackstone's definition is a rule of civil conduct, commanding what is right and prohibiting what is wrong. These undoubtedly should be reasons why teachers' training programmes in most developing countries like Nigeria should offer their students training courses on legal aspects of school operations. Such courses are intended to equip the students with some basic knowledge of the law which enable them to be conscious of the legal implications of their actions or inactions and decisions.

Education laws are meant for the protection of the human rights of staff and students in a school setting. It therefore implies that education laws are protective, providing the necessary framework and procedure for institutional management. As a result, its knowledge by those operating the education system cannot be overemphasized since schools are the ideal context for legal education activities. In sequence, legal knowledge of education enables school principals to encourage respect for the rule of law and fundamental principles of justice built into international human right treaties.

According to Williams (2013), public school principals must be prepared to apply knowledge of school law in a variety of situations. Some of such situations apply to school discipline, decision making and law by judicial decision - a judicial interpretation which is an important element of the legal process under the doctrine of *Stare decisis* (stand by the decision) and decision on examination malpractices, imposition of corporal punishment, expulsion of students from school and the rights of students. He also argued that school principals and educators in general should have knowledge of education law in order to minimize their own legal liability and to prevent potential legal problems in the school system. It is against this background that Gallant (2004) suggested that school principals should be knowledgeable about school law not only as a response to the growing number of education related court cases but also as a proactive way of providing an effective defence against possible litigation. He went further to state that, "school principals who possess knowledge of education law may be better positioned to make informed decisions concerning legal issues in their administrative practices". They may be better able to anticipate legal problems that may arise from their disciplinary actions and decisions that may infringe on students' rights. Also, they would be able to consider the legal implications and respond appropriately. In contrast, ignorance of education law on the part of some school principals may lead to costly and time consuming litigations, which ought to be avoided.

Nakpodia (2008) was of the opinion that in the school system, rules and regulations are provided for and enforced by school principals for the purpose of maintaining effective discipline based on laid down procedures. However, these rules and regulations must be consistent with the provisions of the constitution as they affect students, parents and other stakeholders in the educational sector. In addition, he observed that most of the cases resulting from school authorities belong to the category of the law regulating wrong behaviour, since law is the

science of what is good and just – “justest ans boni et alqui”. It becomes apparent that school administrators need to subscribe to it. Therefore, the awareness and knowledge of the existing legislations on education with particular reference to school discipline should constitute the quality of the school principals.

Insufficient knowledge of education law among school principals may be attributed to a number of demographic factors such as experience, qualification, gender and location. These elements are essential to successful administrative practices of school principals. With so many aspects of schooling affected by law, principals must ensure that they are proactive in minimizing the possibility of breaking any law that stem from any of the issues in the school system. Laws in Nigeria which applied to principals in Bayelsa and Delta States alike are enshrined in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in chapter 4 containing the fundamental rights from where education laws derive its strength. These laws are fundamental human rights such as right to life; right to dignity of human person; right to fair hearing; right to freedom of movement; right to freedom of expression; right to freedom of assembly and association and right to freedom from discrimination. These are laws that prevent the school principals from acting indiscriminately when dealing with students and staff. Hence, the observation by Boone (2013), is informative in this regard. He noted further that, “principals must have the ability to anticipate possible dangers and take steps to avoid them and regulate school life in such a way that learning is taking place while the rights of all are being respected”.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Informed principals, with knowledge about education law, understand that the discharge of their duties is guided by the rules and regulations governing their schools. Consequently, litigation becomes inevitable where discipline and decision made by school authorities infringe on students’ and staff’s rights. It is against this background, that studies need to be carried out to investigate the extent some school principals employ knowledge of the law and relevant section of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, to solving the problems of school discipline.

## 3. Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between knowledge of education law and the administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States?
2. What is the relationship between corporal punishment regulation and the administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States?
3. To what extent would regulation on administrative decision making determines the administrative practices among school principals in Bayelsa and Delta State?

## 4. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study

1. There is no significant relationship between knowledge of education law and administration of secondary school by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States.
2. There is no significant relationship between corporal punishment regulation and administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States.
3. There is no significant relationship between regulation on administrative decision making and administrative practice among school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States.

## 5. Concept of Legal Knowledge

The administrative abilities and functions of the school principals are exercised under the rule of law. Therefore, understanding the legal implication of his duties and functions is important for an effective school administration. The concept of legal knowledge presupposes that, “if people are armed with knowledge and confident about the legal system, they will learn how to act in situations where due process of the law is required”. Thus, legal knowledge connotes the understanding of the legal system of a given country including enacted laws by government that prohibit certain action deemed wrong either civil or criminal in nature by individuals and group of persons that are capable of attracting court actions or litigations. Specifically, education law provides legal knowledge for school administration and those who operate the education system.

Oyedeji (2012).stated that, “education law and the term school law are the names given to the branch of civil law that covers the operation of education”. According to the Viet Nam (2013), “education law is a set of rules and regulations that guide the workings of an education system”. It revealed that “education law may deal with the creation and funding of schools and school policy, teacher requirements and the right of students”. Also, that “education law can dictate the standards and practices of teachers”. By implication, education law operates as civil law, although with concern on how the law affects the operation of the education system. It thus implies that school administrators should be knowledgeable about rule of law governing school administrative practice

in Nigeria schools.

Kalagbor and Agabi (2013) suggested that, “the school administrators, including principals, should employ preventive legal management strategies in their students’ management”. They observed that legal aspects that border on educational administration being an emerging issue in Nigerian educational system are important and indispensable tools for “on-the-job survival” of educators, principals and teachers today. They revealed further that legal aspects which relate to school administrative practices, including students’ management, particularly in the secondary schools, find their sources from the constitution, legislation in form of decrees, edicts, bye-laws and common laws (courts decisions or judgment laws). Others are from administrative and executive directives (memos, circular letters and guidelines) from Ministry of Education, National Policy on Education (NPE) and school rules and regulations.

According to Riplington and Associate (2013) as cited in Ribstein (2014), opined that education law is centered on the law that “regulates educational bodies (public and private schools and universities)”. They observe that in an increasingly litigious society, it is important that educators are aware of the laws that regulate their operations and conduct of their institutions. According to Riplington and Associate these laws are;

- Forms of laws;
- School and the state;
- School systems;
- School authorities and those who are responsible for providing education to children;
- Requirements that teachers and support staff must meet;
- Teachers and the law;
- Students and the law;
- Legal relationships between employer, teachers, parents/guardians, students and visitors;
- Negligence; and
- Contracts.

This seems to explain a model of legal knowledge for school principals. Thus, in any school system where personnel services are not effectively managed within the limits of the education laws, indiscipline and litigation will become a regular feature and consequently, the attainment of the goals of the school system will be greatly impaired.

## **6. Training in Legal and Ethical Knowledge**

One of the most neglected aspects of professional training in teacher preparation seems to be their knowledge in due process of the law and ethical practice required in school administration. This implies that as school administrators, the principals need to be formally trained before they assume administrative positions. This will require mandatory leadership courses at the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) before they assume managerial positions. Therefore, NIEPA would of necessity expand its programmes to provide the opportunity and avenues for such training.

Training in professional discipline will assist principals in their function. Such training will enable them demonstrate their abilities to lead through professional knowledge. This knowledge is applicable to organizational and administrative competence, ability to work out a good school policy and put it into effect. It involves skill of delegation of authority, ability to understand the professional problems of teachers and give professional guidance. Also, it gives the ability to establish good working relationship with staff and parents. Cranston (2002) assumes that school principal is expected to possess legal knowledge relevant to administrative practice. He found that institutions of learning require competent leadership as it happens in other wider organization.

Recommended legal training for school principals by Obun, Akpama and Ayang (2012) consists of fundamental human rights. They revealed that, “training in human rights will equip the school principal with the knowledge to avoid violation of students’ human rights and be able to apply the rule of law, due process of the law in the management of social problem arising from school indiscipline”. They also recommended the inclusion of education law in teacher education curriculum. Their line of thinking is informed by the fact that a conducive school climate ensures, among other things, the protection and promotion of human rights of persons within the school organization.

Similarly, training in interpersonal relations and interaction on the basis of the doctrine of in-loco-parentis constitute an important aspect of the principals’ legal knowledge and training. Nakpodia (2008) observed that, “teachers and principals are not absolute in considering the control they have over students in the Nigerian school system within the scope of their duties in terms of reasonable and executing possible rules and regulations”. According to him, “in-loco-parentis is a legal doctrine describing a relationship similar to that of a parent to a child”. It refers to an individual who assumes parental status and responsibilities for another individual, usually a young person without formally adopting that person. He cited examples of legal guardians

who are said to stand in-loco-parentis with respect to their wards, creating relationship that has special implications for insurance and workers compensation law. Against this background, principals have the power, authority and responsibility for administering school discipline. This power to control and discipline students for infractions is thus traceable to the doctrine of in-loco-parentis (in place of parents). Consequently, this position of the principals with regards to disciplinary control of students is well expressed in the Corpus Juris Secundum (79 C.J.S 493). Based on this knowledge, the principal will understand his limitation when student discipline may involve expulsion from school for a period.

## 7. Administrative Practices of School Principals

The school principal has been identified by Peretomode (2001) as the school administrator. He also noted that, “his or her effectiveness depends on an array of skills he or she has to demonstrate arising from his knowledge in theories, techniques and principles of school administration”. Of these skills, Timilehin and Adenike (2013) identified time management as a skill for effective administration of principals in Nigerian secondary schools. They came to the conclusion that keeping a readily accessible record of their appointment and tasks correlates with their effectiveness in their school administration.

In addition to time management skill of school principals, Akinola (2013) viewed the principals’ leadership skills as valuable to their effectiveness in school administration. He noted that some of these skills associated with the leadership abilities of school principals, leading to their effectiveness include: technical skill, interpersonal skill, conceptual and administrative skills. He found a significant relationship between principals’ leadership skills and school effectiveness. In the contribution of Stephen (2014), that there are five key skills for effective school principals. These include: shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement. The Education Portal (2014) observed that the application of these skills will enable the school principals to assist the classroom teacher to develop classroom management skill. It noted that strong classroom management skills are essential for successful teaching.

Meador (2013), in addition to skills of school principals, proposed some characteristics of an efficient school principal to amongst others include the following:

1. A principal must exhibit leadership: This is a characteristic that every principal must possess. The principal is the instructional leader of their building. A good leader has to take responsibilities both in the success and the failures of their schools.
2. A principal must identify with people: If he does not like people he should not be a principal. He has to be able to connect with each person that he deals with on a daily basis. He has to find common ground and earn their trust. There are many groups of people that principals deal with daily including their superintendent, teachers support staff, parents, students and community members. Every group requires a different approach and individuals within a group are unique in their own right.
3. A principal must balance tough love with earned praise: This is especially true with his students and teachers. He cannot be easily persuaded, meaning that he let people get away with mediocrity. He has to set expectations high and hold those that are in charge of to those same standards. This means that there will be times when he has to reprimand people and likely hurt their feelings. It is a part of the job that is not pleasant but it is necessary if he wants to run an effective school.
4. A principal must be fair and consistent: Nothing can take away his credibility faster than being inconsistent in how he handles similar situations. While no two cases are exactly the same, he has to think about how to handle other similar situations and continue on that same track. Students in particular know how he handles students’ discipline and they make comparison from one case to the next. If he is not being fair and consistent, students will call him out on
5. A principal must be organized and prepared. Each day presents a unique set of challenges and being organized and prepared is essential to meeting those challenges.
6. A principal must be an excellent listener. He never knows when an angry student, a disgruntled parent or an upset teacher is going to walk into his office. He has to be prepared to deal with those situations and that starts with being an exceptional listener. He can disarm most difficult situations simply by showing them that he cares enough to listen to what they want to say.
7. A principal must be visionary. Education is ever evolving. There is always something bigger and better available. If the principal is not attempting to improve his school, he simply is not doing his job. This will always be an on-going process. Even if he has been a school principal for fifteen years, there are still things he can do to improve the overall quality of his school. These qualities are to be expressed in his or her administrative skills.

Accordingly, administrative skills can be defined as those skills that are needed by an administrator to be functional. This would involve several skills such as communication, organization and planning. Other skills involved would be computing, staffing and scheduling. The indication of this definition is that administrative

skill has impact on the management of an organization or institution such as the school. This is because, it is these skills that determine how functional the administration of an institution would be. In the opinion of Furchtgott-Roth (2000), the problem of the role of principals in institutional theory can be addressed in considering a model of institutional entrepreneurship. A sociological posing of this question defines institutional entrepreneurs as actors who have social skills, that is, the ability to motivate cooperation of other actors by providing them with common meanings and identities.

This argument points to the fact that administrative skills have a great impact on the success of an institution, particularly as these social skills are needed to motivate staff and students for effective school administrative practices. It also implies that most of the administrative skills of the principals of a school are sociologically based. The Wikipedia (2013) described social skill to mean any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others. This means that social skills are vital for communicating and interacting with others effectively in the school environment. However, the function of the administrative skills of a principal is to be guided by the due process of the law.

### **8. The Influence of Legal Knowledge on Principals' Administrative Practices**

Training in education law and its related field supposedly equip the school principal for administrative competence. School principals, both male and female are expected to demonstrate high knowledge in the rule of law that governs the operation of their school settings. These principals, according to Oboabulam (2013), are entrusted with the overall management and administration of their institutions. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004) in her National Policy on Education revised edition states that “the success of any system of education is hinged on proper planning, efficient administration and consequently their day-to-day administration should grow out of the life and social ethics of the community where they serve”.

Some studies such as those of Asuquo and Usoro (2004) attempt to provide a comparative analysis of legal competencies towards their administrative practices in secondary school setting. Results of their findings showed that male principals were not significantly better in their legal knowledge than their female counterparts. These findings support the notion that both male and female principals undergo the same capacity of training thereby making all capacities of principals to be exposed to appropriate training including legal knowledge that will enhance their administrative competencies. The Monash University (2014) point to the fact that, “feminist legal theory presents a fundamental challenge to existing knowledge about law”. This implies that legal knowledge can be obtained by both male and female principals even they may perform their roles differently in the school system. According to the Education Encyclopedia (2014), the knowledge of law is shown in the role of school principals in respect of their gender. For instance, it observe that based on their knowledge on existing school legislation, principals are able to facilitate their schools' interactions with parents and others in the school community. It further reveals that this includes working with parents when discipline issues arise.

Legal skills meant for school operation are available for male and female principals. He/she needs a high level of proficiency in education law. This is because, as observed by Knock (2012), it is the school principal that keeps the school running, deals with higher level disciplinary problems, that while managing, directing and authorizing, they are still required to understand increased legislative compliance requirements. This skill will enable them to predict, anticipate and lead change, articulate and develop strategy, recruit and equip staff, communicate and inspire a community and be real and relational to everyone. The context or setting of the above may work best in developed nations because, recruiting of staff is not one of the responsibilities of school principals in Nigeria and in most developing nations. There is no doubt about the fact that principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools.

In the opinion of Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005), school leadership requires preparation in legal knowledge. This is because, they are expected to broker the often conflicting interests of parents, students, district office officials, unions, states and federal agencies and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs. They regard the above as what constitute the principal's job description which implies that the field has begun to give overdue recognition to the critical role and mounting demands in school principals. Therefore, with adequate knowledge in law, it seems many principals (male and female) may not be able to withstand the varied expectations on their position. Their study also revealed that there is a litany of concerns about the quality and effectiveness of the leadership preparation typically provided at university-based programmes and elsewhere. They agreed that the legal knowledge base of most school principals is weak and outdated. This observation is based on a number of forces such as: curricula often fail to provide grounding in education law, mentorships and internships often lack depth or opportunities to test leadership skills in real situations, among others.

Due to the enormous responsibilities of the principal's office in the school system, Arikewuyo (2009) suggest that as school administrators, the principals need to be formally trained before they assume administrative positions. A distinction is not found in his study of a particular training for male and another type for female principals. This indicates that gender is not a strong factor to consider a principal for training in any

part of their profession, including legal knowledge experiences. Cranston (2002) observed that principals (male and female) are expected to possess legal knowledge in order to enhance their skills and leadership capacities. This agrees with the notion by Ekundayo (2010) that modern day school principals should be knowledgeable, professionally competent and resourceful.

## 9. Methodology

This design of this study is a correlational study based on ex-post facto design. Ex-post is a research method which involves variables that an investigator cannot manipulate. The population of the study comprised all 617 principals of public Senior Secondary Schools in Bayelsa and Delta States. There are 33 local government areas in the six (6) Senatorial Districts of the two states. The researcher adopted the random sampling technique involving the multi-stage procedure. This method was used to draw 124 participants for the investigation. An instrument developed by the researcher was used to obtain data for the study after an extensive review of related literature on principals' legal knowledge on education law in the administration of secondary schools. The instrument obtained its face and content validity through the experts' judgment to evaluate the applicability and appropriateness of the content and the adequacy of the instrument. The validated instrument was further subjected to reliability coefficient. The test-retest method was employed to generate data for the purpose by administering the instrument twice to the same participants. Data generated in the study were collated, organized and analyzed. Both the descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized in the analysis of data using the Pearson 'r' statistical tool enabled the study to establish the linear relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable investigated in this study.

### Analysis of Result

#### Research Question 1

What is the relationship between knowledge of education law and administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States? In order to answer this question, data generated from 124 school principals in both states were used. The analysis of data involved the mean score and standard deviation statistics as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Analysis of knowledge of education law in the administration of secondary schools in Bayelsa and Delta States**

s/n	Items	No	Rating Scale				Total score	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
			SA	A	D	SD				
1	Students are entitled by the virtue of their status to sensitive rights.	124	296	138	2	0	436	3.51	0.88	Accepted
2	Students are entitled by the virtue of their status to sensitive rights	124	120	258	8	1	387	3.12	0.78	Accepted
3	The constitutional guarantee of the freedom of speech does not immunize the invasion of the rights of others	124	280	120	12	4	416	3.35	0.83	Accepted
4	Disciplinary measures which violate rights to hearing could result to school administrators being taken to court	124	252	132	22	3	409	3.29	0.82	Accepted
5	Student in public schools are not stripped of their right completely	124	224	159	18	4	402	3.24	0.81	Accepted
6	An action of negligence succeeds when school authority owe a duty of care, fail either by what he has done or by what he has left undone to perform that duty and student suffer damage through that act or omission	124	236	159	10	4	409	3.29	0.82	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>							<b>3.3</b>	<b>0.55</b>		

The Table 1 measures the responses of school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States respectively on the variable of knowledge of education law in the administration of secondary schools in Delta and Bayelsa States. The mean and standard deviation statistics were employed to rate their responses on the six items of the questionnaire structured to generate the responses. 2.5 means score was used as benchmark for accepting the calculated response on a four point scale of strongly agree=4, agree =3, disagree =2 and strongly disagree =1.

Results in Table 1 indicates that responses on all the six items were accepted because they were greater than 2.5 mean score and thus the result showed that knowledge of education law has a strong relationship in the administration of secondary schools in both state.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between knowledge of education law and administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States. This null hypothesis is aimed at testing for significant relationship. The Pearson ‘r’ statistics was employed, performed at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 2, where degree of freedom (df) is  $N-2 = df$ . Thus,  $N=124-2$ , therefore  $df=122$

**Table 2: Pearson ‘r’ Analysis of Knowledge of Education Law and Administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States**

States	No.	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal. Value ‘r’	Crit. Value	Level of sig	Decision
Bayelsa	33	18.88	2.58					
Delta	91	20.72	1.95	122	.015	-4.204	0.05	Rejected (significant)

From the Table 2, the Pearson ‘r’ calculated value of .015 is greater than the level of significance of 0.05 with a critical value of -4.204. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between principals’ legal knowledge on education law in the administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States. Findings drawn on this variable indicate that, there is a significant difference between principals’ knowledge of education law and secondary school administration in Bayelsa and Delta States. This finding is supported in the study by Nakpodia (2011). He found that teachers and students do not often understand what the rights of students are. He discovered that most school administrators in both states lack the knowledge of the Nigerian constitution on the fundamental human rights and that courts students where it was discovered that school authorities do not apply the due process of law in taking disciplinary measures. According to Peretomode (2001), legal knowledge presupposes that if people are armed with knowledge and confident about the legal system, they will learn how to act in situations where due process of the law is required. Although, what has caused the difference was attempted in the study by Asuquo and Usoro (2004). They carried a comparative analysis of the legal knowledge to establish the administrative competencies of male and female secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The sample of the study was 120 principals whose opinions were tested on the basis of two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The result showed that male principals were not significantly better in their legal knowledge in terms of school supervision than their female counterparts. The implication from this finding points to the fact that legal knowledge either in Bayelsa or Delta States is capable of enhancing principals’ in secondary school education in all aspects of the school system in the administration of corporal punishment, students’ expulsion, decision making and school personnel management.

### Research Question 2

What is the relationship between corporal punishment regulation and the administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States? This question is aimed at measuring the utilization of legal knowledge as it affects corporal punishment regulation in the administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States respectively. The mean and standard deviation were employed in the analysis of generated data. The result is presented in Table 3

**Table 3: Analysis of corporal punishment regulation in the administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States**

s/n	Items	No	Rating Scale				Total score	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
			SA	A	D	SD				
7	Any form of corporal punishment that is not directed towards the interest of the child violates his or her fundamental human rights.	124	164	165	18	6	353	2.84	0.71	Accepted
8	Corporal punishment in Nigeria schools is no longer acceptable, as it is an offense punishable by law in some states	124	92	156	30	31	309	2.51	0.62	Accepted
9	A school should have a procedure preferably in writing for dealing with students’ discipline	124	292	132	2	3	429	3.45	0.86	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>								<b>2.93</b>	<b>0.73</b>	

Data on the variable of corporal punishment regulation as it relates to the knowledge of education in the administration of secondary schools was measured. Generated data from 124 school principals using three items of the questionnaire were subjected to mean and standard deviation calculation at 2.5 mean score rating. Item one obtained a mean score of 2.84, SD of 0.71; item two obtained mean score of 2.49, SD of 0.62; item three obtained mean of 3.45 and SD of 0.86. the grand mean of 3.80 and SD of 0.22 show a high level of response, accepting the question that there is relationship between the independent variable of corporal punishment regulation and the knowledge of education law in school administration by secondary school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between corporal punishment regulation and administrative practice among school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States. The formulated null hypothesis was stated to measure the significant relationship between in the application of corporal punishment regulation in the administration of secondary schools by principals in Bayelsa and Delta States respectively. The Pearson ‘r’ statistics at 0.05 level significance was employed. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 4

**Table 4: Pearson ‘r’ Analysis of Corporal Punishment Regulation in the knowledge of secondary schools by Principals in Bayelsa and Delta States**

States	No.	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal. Value ‘r’	Crit. value	Level of sig	Decision
Bayelsa	33	9.24	2.35					
Delta	91	20.72	1.95	122	.032	-4.15	0.05	Rejected (significant)

In Table 4, the Pearson ‘r’ calculated value of .032 is greater than the level of significance at 0.05. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Thus, the claim that there is a significant relationship between corporal punishment regulation and the knowledge of education law in school administration by school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States.

Result of data analysis on this variable produce the finding that there is a significant difference between corporal punishment regulations in Bayelsa and Delta States in the administration of secondary schools by principals. The finding is consistent with the disparity that has trailed the use of corporal punishment among countries and different states. The Free Dictionary (2013) and the United Nations Committee on the Right of the Child (2001) reported that several countries have prohibited the use of corporal punishment in their school system. Instances of it is in the United States where it has been outlawed in majority of the states. Report in the Wikipedia (2013) revealed that it is legal in both public and private schools in 19 states; whereas corporal punishment has been outlawed in Canada, Kenya, Korea, South Africa, New Zealand and nearly all of Europe. The use of corporal punishment, according to The Free Dictionary, attracted litigation as cited in the case between Ingraham V. Wright. The setting of the case was founded on the experience of corporal punishment involving students from Florida junior high school. The students had received physical punishment, characterized by padding so severe that one student had required medical treatment. The plaintiff’s parents of students who had been disciplined brought suit against the school district, alleging that corporal punishment in public schools constituted cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eight Amendment of the United States constitution. The plaintiffs also claimed that the Fourteenth Amendment required due process before corporal punishment could be administered. Consequently, the court ruled that the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment was designed to protect persons who are convicted of crimes, not students as a form of discipline. The court also held that, although corporal punishment did implicate a constitutionally protected liberty interest, traditional common law remedies such as filing an action in tort were fully adequate to afford due process.

### Research Question 3

To what extent would regulation on administrative decision making determines the administrative practices among school principals in Bayelsa and Delta State? The question seeks to justify how administrative decision making is regulated by legal knowledge of school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States. Results drawn on the mean score and standard deviation analysis is presented in Table 5



**Table 5: Analysis of regulation of administrative decision making among principals in Bayelsa and Delta States**

s/n	Items	No	Rating Scale				Total score	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
			SA	A	D	SD				
16.	School administrator must bear responsibility of any negative action of their decisions.	124	336	105	2	1	444	3.58	0.89	Accepted
17.	Decision that affect individual should be consistent with written regulations in the school logbook.	124	124	180	58	1	363	2.92	0.73	Accepted
18.	Decision to promote students is determined by performance level.	124	308	120	8	0	436	3.51	0.90	Accepted
19.	Any decision that borders on a child must be taken in consideration of the child's interest.	124	240	168	8	1	417	3.36	0.84	Accepted
20.	Decision to promote staff is determined by performance level.	124	304	120	4	3	431	3.47	0.86	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>							<b>4.21</b>	<b>1.05</b>		

Table 5 consists of item 16-20 of the questionnaire where the issue of regulation of administrative decision making and administrative practice of school principal was measured. Responses on each of the item was drawn from the 124 participants designed for the study. The calculated rating scale on each item where item one obtained a mean of 3.66 and SD of 0.91; item two =2.92, SD =0.75; item three =3.51, SD =0.90, item four =3.36, SD 0.86; item five =3.47, SD =0.89. The high positive responses on all items answer the question that regulation of administrative decision making correlates administrative practice among school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States respectively.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between regulation on administrative decision making and administrative practice among school principals in Bayelsa and Delta States. This null hypothesis was formulated to test if there is relationship between regulation of administrative decision making and administrative practice among principals in both states. Table 6 presents that analysis.

**Table 6: Pearson r Analysis of Regulation on Administrative Decision Making among Principals in Bayelsa and Delta States**

States	No.	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	Cal. value	Crit. value	Level of sig	Decision
Bayelsa	33	17.15	1.92	122	.004	-.818	0.05	Accept
Delta	91	17.41	1.38					(not significant)

The calculated result in Table 6 has a Pearson r calculated value of .004 less than critical value at -.818 at the level of significance of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, meaning that there is no significant relationship in regulation on administrative decision making among principals in Bayelsa and Delta States. This finding agrees with the studies by Hloniphile (2011), Olorunsala and Olayemi (2011). They found that the school principal is a leader and that decision making is a key function of his leadership; and that decision making is the heart of administrative process and leadership in schools. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000) found that school-based decision making rests on two well established propositions. These are; the school is the primary decision-making unit and its corollary, decision should be made at the lowest possible level and change requires ownership that comes from the opportunity to participate in defining change and the flexibility to adapt it to individual circumstances. The study by Denig and Quinn (2001); Arong and Ogbadu (2010) found that school principals must be knowledgeable and be able to use and make moral judgement and decisions with the dignity of each person in mind, while promoting equality in all aspects of education. In another study by Troy (2009), making ethical decisions require training in the act; that ethical dilemmas often test the personal, professional and ethical values of school administrators as they struggle to do or say the right thing.

### 10. Conclusion

Arising from the findings of the study, it was concluded that legal knowledge of education law enhances the school principals' administration practices in all aspects of the school system. The knowledge of education law shapes the understanding of school personnel to acknowledge the fact that the regulation on corporal punishment is administered in the interest of the child. In addition, principals with legal knowledge make moral judgment and decisions with the dignity of the human person and promoting equality in all aspects of education.

## 11. Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. School principals should be trained in education law because all aspects of school administration involve the application of due process of law
2. School administrators and their staff should avoid corporal punishment in the school system in compliance with prohibition against corporal punishment for school age children.

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