

Administrative Competencies of Female Principals in Secondary Schools in Nsukka Education Zone

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Abstract

The study investigated the administrative competencies of female principals in secondary schools in Nsukka Education zone of Enugu State. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. A 15-item questionnaire was constructed to collect the necessary data for the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting all the 10 secondary schools headed by female principals. Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 20% of the 818 male and 517 female teachers in Nsukka Education zone. This gave a total of 164 males and 103 females. Means and t-test were employed in data analysis. A mean of 2.50 was taken as the agreement level of the items. The result of the study showed that female principals possess administrative skills and competencies for effective secondary school management. The implications of the study and recommendations were made.

Introduction

School administration according to Sears (1990) is the process in the field of education, which involves planning, organizing, directing, co-ordinating and controlling both human and material resources of the educational institutions for the achievement of desired objectives.

Female principals like their male counterparts are entrusted with the overall management and administration of their institutions. It is expected that female principals perform at par or even much higher than their male counterparts in performing administrative duties. The National policy on Education (FRN, 1998 Section 10) had stated that:

The success of any system of education is hinged on proper planning, efficient administration and adequate financing, and consequently their management and day-to-day administration should grow out of the life and social ethnics of the community which they serve.

Websters' Third New International Dictionary (1966:463) defined competence as "the quality or state of being functionally adequate or having sufficient knowledge, judgment, skill or strength. Administrative Competencies on the other hand, means the quality or state of being functionally adequate in matters concerning administration, or having sufficient knowledge, judgement and skill in administration.

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that the success of educational institutions can only be guaranteed where the heads manifest the skill and traits which make for efficiency in administration.

Statement of the problem

In Enugu State Secondary School in general, and Nsukka education zone in particular, it has been observed that there are more girls than boys and that there are more females in teaching profession than males (Azikiwe, 1992: Elosiuba, 1989: Ojo, 1986). It has also been observed that inspite of the many women in teaching profession in Nsukka education zone, few of them are principals of secondary schools qualifications and experiences notwithstanding as compared with their male counterparts. For example, the latest manpower statistics 2000/2001 of Nsukka education zone has it that there are 37 male principals and only 10 females.

A lot of sentiments have been expressed with respect to the administrative competencies of female principals. Some of these sentiments are that female principals are not as capable as the males in terms of planning, controlling and co-ordinating staff activities, carrying out effective instructional supervision in schools and maintaining effective school community relationship. Some others like, Nwaobasi (1987) reported that female principals are less involved in decision-making than their male counterparts. Ndu (1991) had argued that in an attempt to play their statutory roles as full-time managers of their homes as well as administer their organizations effectively, female managers become exposed to stress and conflicts. However, these views can affect some teachers in the correct assessment of their female principals. It is in view of this that the study seeks to investigate the administrative competencies of female principals in Nsukka education zone.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to:

- 1) Investigate the administrative competencies possessed by female principals in Nsukka education zone;
- 2) Identify ways female principals manifest these administrative competencies;
- 3) Determine the competencies adopted by female principals in ensuring the welfare of staff.

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study:

- (1) What are the administrative competencies of female principals in secondary schools in Nsukka education zone as perceived by male and female teachers?
- (2) In what ways do female principals manifest these administrative competencies in secondary school management?
- (3) How can the administrative competencies of female principals help in ensuring the welfare of staff?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean ratings of male and female secondary school teachers with regard to the administrative competencies of female principals in Nsukka education zone.

Methodology

Research design: This study is a survey.

Sample and Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting all the 10 secondary schools in Nsukka education zone headed by female principals. Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 20% of the 818 male and 617 female teachers in Nsukka education zone. This gave a total of 164 males and 103 females.

Instrumentation

The instrument for this study was a 15-item questionnaire. It comprised four parts. The first part sought demographic information regarding name of schools, gender and rank of teachers. The second part comprised five questions each arranged under three sub-headings according to the research questions. The instrument is built on a four point rating scale.

The questionnaire was face-validated by three experts in Educational Administration and Planning in the Department of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The experts carefully modified some of the items in the instrument. The modified instrument was then administered to respondents after it was pilot-tested using 30 secondary school teachers in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area. The Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient was used based on the responses of the 30 teachers. The overall reliability co-efficient was Alpha 0.074.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Two hundred and eighty copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents with the help of a research assistant who assisted the researcher in distributing, retrieving and collating the questionnaires. Out of the 280 copies of questionnaire sent to teachers, only 250 were retrieved and used for the research. One hundred and fifty (150) for males and one hundred (100) for females.

The researcher used means to answer the three research questions. A mean of 2.50 was adopted as the agreement level for the items. The t-test statistic was used to test the sole null hypothesis formulated for the study.

Result

The findings of the study were presented in Table 1, 2, and 3 below:

Table 1 reveals that items 1, 2 and 3 scored 3.00 and above and therefore both male and female teachers strongly agreed that the female principals possess administrative competencies for planning and management of their schools. Items 4 and 5 scored above the agreement level of 2.50. However, female teachers scored item 43.25 while their male counterpart had a mean score of 2.74.

Data presented on table 2 above show that the mean responses of all the items of both male and female teachers are above the cut-off point of 2.50. Item 6, 7 and 8 for female teachers scored higher than that of male teachers. Hence both teachers agreed that female principals manifest these competences in school management. From the data on Table 3, it can be seen that all the items have mean score above the criterion mean of 2.50 thus revealing that female principals adopt these administrative competencies in staff personnel administration.

Table 4 above presents the t-test analysis of the difference between the mean scores of the male and female teachers in Nsukka education zone of Enugu State with regard to the administrative competencies possessed by female principals. As can be seen from Table 4, the statistical analysis of the difference between the mean ratings for the male and female teachers on the administrative competencies of female principals yielded a calculated t-value of 3.02 at 248 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value of 3.02 is more than the critical (table) value of 1.96, the hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean scores between male and female teachers on the competencies of female principals was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female teachers.

Discussion

Data collected from the respondents on the administrative competencies of female principals (table 1) show that male and female teachers rated the 5 items above the cut-off mark of 2.50. However, female teachers

scored items 1, 2, 3 and 4 higher than their male counterparts. This shows that while male and female teachers agreed that female principal's possess these competencies, female teachers scored these competencies more than the male. Thus, ability to motivate teachers, ability to establish rapport and cordial relationship with staff, ability to plan for effective productivity among others. This finding is in conformity with the views of Azikiwe (1992) who stated that women have broken loose from the manacles of invention. Women are now seen as good administrators, planners, accountants, lawyers and members of other prestigious professions.

The findings on the rating of male and female teachers on the manifestation of the administrative competencies of female teachers provided a high mean for female teachers on item 6, 7, 8 and 9. However, both teachers scored the items above 2.50. The high mean scores by female teacher show that female teachers strongly agree that female principal manifest these competencies in the management of their institutions. Thus, ability to delegate responsibilities to staff and back it up with authority, ability to consult staff in matters affecting them and ability to carry out disciplinary measures judiciously to erring staff are among the administrative competencies that female principals manifest in their day to day school management. This finding, rightly contradicts the views of Awa (1997) who in his study on the factors responsible for non-involvement of female principals in decision-making stated that one of the factors was the female principals' arrogance. On the competencies of female principals and welfare of staff, both male and female teachers agreed that female principal's possess administrative competencies that help them in staff personal administration.

The t-test analysis of the difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the competencies of female principals (table 4) was rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference in the opinion of female teachers.

Implication of the study

This study has serious educational implications for female principals. The findings of the study have shown that effective performance of female principals in school management is predicated on their possession of administrative competencies. The study has also shown that female principals contrary to speculations based on gender bias possess the skills and traits that make for competency in school management and administration.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

- (1) Enugu State Management Board should have a fair distribution of qualified and experienced male and female teachers to the positions of school principals in Nsukka education zone;
- (2) Secondary school teachers in the zone should show equal respect for male and female principals. Gender discrimination and bias should not operate in school leadership;
- (3) Enugu State Management Board should appoint female principals to head coeducational schools. This will reduce bias from the on set among male students and teachers towards the capability and administrative competencies of female principals.
- (4) Female principals should while discharging their duties, show evidence of practical knowledge of leadership qualities and administrative skills and strategies.

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Table 1: Mean ratings of Male and Female Teachers on the Administrative Competencies of Female Principals

S/N	Items	<u>Male</u> N ₁ =150			<u>Female</u> N ₂ =100		
		X	SD	Remark	X	SD	Remark
1	Ability to motivate teachers	3	0.97	SA	3.81	1.11	SA
2	Ability to Establish rapport and cordial relationship with staff	3.01	0.97	SA	3.80	1.12	SA
3	Competence in planning for effective productivity	3.29	0.95	SA	3.64	1.13	SA
4	Ability to apply democratic leadership style in administration	2.74	1.00	A	3.25	1.17	SA
5	Ability to command the loyalty of both staff and students effectively.	2.60	1.01	A	2.52	1.24	A

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Male and Female Teachers on the Manifestation of Administrative Competencies of Female Principals

S/N	Items	<u>Male</u> N ₁ =150			<u>Female</u> N ₂ =100		
		X	SD	Remark	X	SD	Remark
6	Ability to delegate responsibilities to staff and back it up with authority	2.74	1.00	A	3.64	1.13	SA
7	Ability to carry out disciplinary measures judiciously to erring staff	3.25	0.95	SA	3.74	1.12	SA
8	Ability to consult staff in certain decisions concerning their welfare	2.82	0.99	A	3.17	1.18	SA
9	Ability to evaluate teachers performance on the basis of input and performance	2.65	1.00	A	2.85	1.21	A
10	Ability to make far reaching decision like their male counterpart	2.86	0.99	A	3.26	1.17	SA

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Male and Female Teachers on the Female Principal Competencies and Staff Welfare.

S/N	Items	<u>Male</u> N ₁ =150			<u>Female</u> N ₂ =100		
		X	SD	Remark	X	SD	Remark
11	Ability to handle matters concerning welfare of staff effectively	2.70	1.00	A	2.94	1.20	A
12	Ability to organize seminars, workshops and enlightenment	3.02	0.97	SA	3.05	1.19	SA
13	Ability to accept criticism from staff when the need arise	2.50	1.02	A	2.68	1.23	A
14	Ability to avoid victimization of teachers through denial of promotion and punitive transfer	3.10	0.97	SA	3.05	1.19	SA
15	More sympathetic in solving staff and students problems	2.80	0.99	A	3.03	1.19	SA

Table 4: T-test Analysis of the Mean ratings of Male and Female teachers on the Administrative competencies Possessed by Female Principals

Group	X	SD	N	DF	level of significance	Cal-t-val	Table t- value
Male	2.87	0.75	150	248	0.05	3.02	1.96
Female	3.23	0.74	100				

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