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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CHALLENGES FACING PRINCIPALS IN NEWLY OPENED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EBONYI STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study is geared towards the determination of the challenges facing principals in newly opened secondary schools in Ebonyi state of Nigeria. The study is a descriptive survey research work carried out in Ebonyi state, south eastern Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions and one hypothesis, all derived from the purpose of the study and the literature. The population of the study comprises a total of 340 secondary schools. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 36 secondary schools which is about 10% of the entire population. An instrument titled “Challenges of Principals of Newly Opened Secondary School Scale” (CPNOSS) was used to generate data. The face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by the appropriate experts. A reliability index of 0.80 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha tools. Direct delivery method was used to administer the instrument. Frequency tables, means and standard deviations were used in answering the research questions, while Z-test was used to test the hypothesis. Based on the analysis of the data collected, the following findings were made to be the challenges: inadequate fund, shortage of qualified teacher, challenges of low enrollment, problem of office space/classroom, inadequate library provision, insufficient desk/furniture provision, challenges of accreditation, security problem, problem of land space, laboratory provision, challenges of registration, sanitary provision by the school and sourcing of instructional materials. Recommendations were made, which include among others, proper funding of the schools and leadership training programs for the principals.

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INTRODUCTION

Education has been conceptualized as an aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. Education as the foundation of all societies and the globally competitive economics is the most efficient way through which a society can face the challenges of today and tomorrow. It is the best instrument for reducing poverty, inequality, improving health, enabling the use of technologies, creating and spreading knowledge (The World Bank Group, 2004). Balogun (2010) opined that education is the light, without which, the world would be in darkness. Nigeria as a nation craves towards the provision of quality and affordable education for its citizens through the guiding principle of National Policy of Education (2013). The guiding principle of education in Nigeria is the equipping of every citizen with acquisition of knowledge, desirable skills, attitude and values as well as to enable him or her to derive maximum benefits from his or her society, and

also contribute his or her quota meaningfully towards the development of the nation at large. Secondary education is one among the levels of education in Nigeria (Abdulrasheed and Bello, 2015). Fabunmi (2005) defined secondary school education as the form of education which children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. It is the second level of education in Nigeria headed by a school administrator called principal. It is clear that the principal is the head of an institution of this nature and requires skills for the day to day administration of the institution. As a school leader and administrator, a principal must have foresight for effective, efficient and dynamic handling of matters between the school students, staff and the host communities. Similarly a principal must be in a position to guide and provide expertise guidance in regards to curriculum development, teaching method, and evaluation as well as supervision of human and material resources. For a school to function well, the principal must be in a position to exploit all possible means to keep a healthy environment for the students, staff and the general public. Therefore a principal, who is the chief executive officer of a school, should guide and inspire the teachers for job satisfaction. The principal also sets the direction of policies, acceptable standards for academic and behavioral achievement of students, establishes a friendly school climate and influence

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the commitment of every stakeholder in the society for the achievement of the educational goals (Abdurashid and Bello, 2015). Agbenta (2006) viewed the school principal as a leader who provides direction and expert advice for the development of teaching and learning in school. The principal has a duty to lead, guide, conduct, direct and motivate everything that bothers on the teaching and non-teaching staff toward achievement of the school goals and objectives. The principal's position is a high-pressure job in the context of instructional supervision and fund management in his or her day to day running of the school. It is a job that the remuneration is less compared with the responsibilities attached to it especially in a developing country like Nigeria. The secondary school principals are faced with many challenges in their daily routine; these challenges are enormous which hinder the total achievement of the secondary school aims and objectives.

Statement of the Problem: The Nigerian education system especially secondary education is witnessing a lot of challenges that are impacting negatively on the achievement of its conceived goals and objectives. With pressure from politicians and other stakeholders to bring about significant changes in education sector, principals are confronted with many duties and responsibilities. These duties and responsibilities become more enormous when it involves administering of newly opened schools. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the challenges confronting principals of these newly opened secondary schools in Ebonyi State. This study is poised to make recommendations on possible solutions to the identified challenges.

Purpose of the Study: This research work has the purpose of identifying the challenges facing principals in newly opened secondary schools in Ebonyi state, southeast Nigeria.

Specifically the study seeks to:

1. Find out the challenges faced by principals of newly opened government secondary schools in Ebonyi state.
2. Find out the challenges faced by principals of newly opened private secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Significances of the Study: This study will be of immense benefit to diverse individuals consisting of students, parents, government, educational planners and administrators, private school owners and researchers. Intending private school owners and proprietors will find the work useful in their attempt to establish new schools. It is hoped that the findings of the study will enable the government to know materials and their level of adequacy needed for the establishment of new schools. This will enable the government to come up with policies that will guide the establishment of private schools to avoid proliferation. This will also enable the school system attain the expected standard.

Scope of the Study: The study will be carried out in Ebonyi state. Ebonyi state comprises three education zones namely; Abakaliki education zone, Onueke education zone and Afikpo education zone. However, this study is carried out in newly opened secondary schools in the state. The content scope involves identification of the challenges faced by principals of newly opened government and private secondary schools in the state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research study:

- What are the challenges confronting principals of newly opened government secondary schools in Ebonyi State?
- What are the challenges confronting principals of newly opened private secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals of government owned new secondary schools and those of principals of privately owned new secondary schools in Ebonyi state on the challenges confronting them.

Review of related literature

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Secondary Education: Fabumni (2005) defined secondary school education as the form of education, which children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. It is the second level of education in Nigeria headed by a school administrator called principal. The principal as a head is also the liaison officer that mediates between the school and the society. A critical role of the principal is to mobilize the teaching and non-teaching staff towards the achievement of the school objectives. Ibukun (2004) views leadership as a position of dominance and prestige accompanied by the ability to direct, motivate and to assist others in achieving a specific purpose. In this regard the principal of a secondary is expected to function in line with this view.

The Role/Functions of Principals: The head of a secondary school is generally known as the principal. The principal is entrusted and charged with the business of controlling the staff, students, finance and other activities of the school. He sees that government policy decisions are applied to determine the direction and achieve the objectives of the school.

According to Obemeta (1982) many people see the school head as one whose work revolves around the school. The reputation of the school depends on him and therefore can make or mar the school. The principal is the "principle and everything flour there" said Larry Payne, a director with the University of Houston-based Institute for Urban Education (Markley 1996). Traditionally, the principal hires the teacher, manages the budget, and responds to community and parents' concerns and sets the tone on everything from discipline to academic goals. In conclusion, the school principals in the new millennium will add to their list of responsibilities the added duties of finding solution to 21st century challenges. These challenges include but not limited to keeping students motivated and safe in school environment that is increasingly becoming apathetic and violent. The necessity for principals to keep abreast of and implement modern reforms in managing their new schools is essential. In Nigeria, the position of principal evolves from the position and performances of the teacher. According to Aderonmon and Ehiamet alor (1985), the title principal usually refers to the head of a secondary school or post primary institution. The head of the school family, the custodian of the school culture, the mirror image of the school,

the personification of the school motto, the architect of the school, structure and the first among equals in the tutorial team. School management which is headed by the principal encounters challenges through lack of facilities and equipment, admission of children with poor academic backgrounds, lack of sufficient moral and religious instructions, failure on the part of the school manager to create cordial working relation with staff, lack of proper communication among the school manager and staff and lack of integrity and fairness on the part of the principals. Nwankwo (2014) itemized the challenges faced by principals of a new school to include the head teacher factor, public schools versus private school, poor sanitary condition, lack of qualified teachers and the challenges of fund among other.

Theoretical Framework

Social action theory by Max Weber: Max Weber (1864-1920) was one of the founding fathers of sociology. Weber saw both structural and action approaches as necessary to developing a full understanding of society and social change. Weber opines that before the cause of an action could be ascertained one has to understand the meaning attached to it by the individual. He distinguished between two types of understanding. Social action theory examines the actions of people in the context of the meanings that they assign to them and the relationship these actions have with the actions of others. He also examined the cause effect of relationship of actions that are considered to be social. Weber also maintained that social actions occur as a result of cooperation and struggle between the individual and the wider society. An action must only be interpreted according to its subjectively intended meaning. The theory is guided by six principles:

- Actors are individual people
- Actors are goal seeking
- Actors process more than one way to achieve the goals they seek
- Actors are presented with variety of situation contexts that affect the selection of both goals they seek and the means they use.
- Actors are governed by values, norms and ideals that influence the determination of what is considered to be a goal and what means are selected to achieve it.

Theoretical Studies: Atieno and Simatwa (2012) outlined challenges faced by newly appointed principals in the management of public secondary schools in Bondo district, Kenya. The study was an analytical approach. It employed a descriptive survey. The population comprised 22 experienced principals, 6 newly appointed principals, 28 deputy principals, 249 teachers, 28 member boards of governor chairpersons, 28 parent teacher association chairpersons, and one district quality assurance and standards officer. Data were collected using closed ended and open ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Face validity of the instruments was established by experts in educational administration. Findings revealed that newly appointed principals in secondary schools face challenges in the management of teachers, finances, students, support staff and those that arise in parental involvement in the management of schools activities. These challenges included indiscipline, failure to pay school fees, threat, students' dropout, staff incompetence, and budgeting among others. Recommendations included induction programs, in-service courses and pre-service training courses for the principals.

Empirical Studies: Duze and Ogbah (2013) investigated school climate and challenges facing principals in secondary schools in Delta state. A heterogenous stratified sample of 650 respondents comprising principals, teachers and students was used in the study. The questionnaires used for study was structured on 4 Point Likert Scale with mean scores of 2.50 and above as acceptable level. The questionnaire was validated in face and content by experts in educational administration. The reliability was determined by Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient via test-retest method to obtain a coefficient of 0.85. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores for the research questions raised and one way ANOVA for the two null hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. Result shows that there were no significant difference among the perceptions of principals, teachers and students on school safety, teaching and learning, relationships etc. It was recommended that effective instructional leadership training for principals, violence prevention method, conflict resolution programmes among others be adopted. Mwendwa (2015) in her MSc thesis studied the challenges faced by principals of newly established secondary schools and their coping strategies in Mwingi central sub-county in Kenya. In the study it was observed that new secondary schools were expensive to set up and maintain and that the resources available to the schools are far more limited than the demand. The principals managing these schools are therefore faced with unique challenges to ensure students acquire quality education just as their counterparts in well-established schools. The study therefore sought to find out the challenges faced by the principals in the management of these newly established secondary schools. The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- to find out the contribution of free day secondary education to the rapid establishment of new secondary schools,
- to establish the availability and adequacy of physical facilities in the new secondary schools,
- to identify the financial related challenges faced by the principals in the newly established secondary schools,
- to find out the challenges principals face in the management of human resource
- to identify the coping mechanisms by the principals to overcome the challenges of physical facilities, finance and human resources in the newly established secondary schools.
- The design used in this study was a descriptive survey. The target population was one DEO, one DQASO, and 32 principals from the 32 secondary schools in the Sub County giving a total population of 34 subjects. A sample size of 15 respondents comprising of one (1) DEO, (1) DQASO and 13 principals was chosen for this study. Three instruments were used to collect data including; an interview schedule guide for the DEO and DQASO, and semi-structured questionnaires for principals. Descriptive statistics such frequencies and percentages were used to analyze quantitative data while content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The findings were presented using pie charts, bar charts and count distribution tables. The study found out that the introduction of the FDSE had contributed largely to the establishment of new secondary schools in the Sub-county. Principals face financial challenges, inadequate facilities and shortage of teaching staff. The study recommends among others that long-term planning which predicts future secondary

education demand should be formulated. Such plans will enable the stakeholders to put up enough facilities in time and reduce managerial challenges.

In a related development, Bayar (2016) conducted a study aimed at identifying key challenges of practice that principals face. In line with this purpose, the researcher has employed a qualitative research methodology, interviewing principals working in Amasya district of Turkey, over and above doing document analysis to collect detailed information concerning leadership and administration practice. Challenge facing the principals were identified to include; students violence, families negative attitudes towards school, immigrant students/families from Syria and Iraq, teacher unions (syndicalism), teachers' attitudes and behaviors to principals, and increase of undesired behaviors in classroom and school. In the light of the above findings, the researcher has concluded that working as a principal in a school is more difficult than before. However, for the future of Turkey, Turkish policy makers, researchers and educators should work together to minimize the negative impact of the challenges and keep principals in the Turkish Education System. Generally, the challenges faced by principals of newly opened secondary schools are similar worldwide as identified in the reviewed literature. These include inadequate facilities, paucity of funds, rising insecurity, administrative incompetence among others.

METHODS

Design: The design of the study is a descriptive survey. A descriptive survey according to Eze (2005) seeks or uses sample data of an investigation to document, describe and explain what is in existent or none existent about the present status of a phenomenon being investigated. The researcher collected data from principals of new secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Their responses were used to document, describe and explain challenges of principals of newly opened secondary schools. This design is therefore appropriate for the study.

Area of the Study: The study covered newly opened government and private secondary schools in Ebonyi state. The area covered comprises of Abakaliki Education zone, Onueke Education zone and Afikpo Education zone.

Population of the Study: The population of the study comprises 225 public secondary schools and 115 private secondary schools giving a total population of 340 secondary schools. Each school is headed by a principal who is the respondent to the questionnaire.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The researcher used stratified random sampling technique to select a sample size of 36 secondary schools which is about 10% of the entire population. The schools were selected in the following ratio; Abakaliki education zone (16 secondary schools), Onueke education zone (10 secondary schools) while Afikpo education zone (10 secondary schools) and totaling 36 secondary schools. In each of the educational zones, equal number of government and private secondary schools was selected in the sampling. This implies that there were 18 government schools and 18 private schools.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection is a thirteen item questionnaire constructed by the

researcher. The questionnaire was made up of two parts. Part A will sought information on the particulars of the principals while part B sought information on various challenges faced by principals of the newly opened secondary schools. The instrument is titled "Challenges of Principals in Newly Opened Secondary Schools Scale" (CPNOSS). The responses to the questionnaire were rated using of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Validation of the Instrument: Copies of the rating scale were given to two experts in Measurement and Evaluation and one expert from Educational Foundations Department in Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo for validation. Hence the instrument received both content and faces validity.

Reliability of the Instrument: The reliability of the instrument was carried out using 5 principals of government owned and 5 principals of privately owned schools in Enugu metropolis of Enugu state. Cronbach Alpha statistical tool was used to correlate the scores and a correlation coefficient index of 0.80 was obtained.

Method of Data Collection: The researcher adopted direct delivery method with the help of two research assistants. One research assistant visited and administered the questionnaire on principals of new secondary schools in Afikpo education zone while the second research assistant visited and administered the questionnaire on principals of new secondary schools in Onueke education zone. The researcher himself visited and administered the questionnaire on principals of new secondary schools in Abakaliki education zone. The direct method was adopted in the data collection to minimize loss of the instrument.

Method Data Analysis: Research questions were analysed using arithmetic mean while the hypothesis was tested with z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Thus 2.50 score was adopted as decision rule. Any point above 2.50 was accepted positive while any score less than 2.50 value was rejected.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research questions 1 & 2: Mean responses of principals of new government and private secondary schools in Ebonyi state on the challenges confronting them. Table 1: Table 1 is used to answer research questions 1 and 2, which sought to find out the challenges confronting principals of newly opened government and private secondary schools in Ebonyi state, southeast Nigeria. The results on the table show that the items were all accepted as the challenges confronting principals of the newly opened government and private secondary schools in Ebonyi state, southeast Nigeria. This is because all the items had mean values above 2.50 for both respondents. Moreover, the overall mean value for both government school and private school principals are 2.98 and 3.12 respectively, and each is above 2.50, indicating that the listed items were accepted.

Testing of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals of government owned new secondary schools and the responses of principals of privately owned new secondary schools in Ebonyi state, southeast Nigeria on the challenges confronting them.

Table 1.

S/N	Responses	Principals of Government Schools (N = 18)				Principals of Private Schools (N= 18)			
		ΣFX	\bar{X}	S.D	Decision	ΣFX	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Items Statement Inadequate fund	61	3.4	1.06	Accepted	63	3.5	1.08	Accepted
2	Shortage of qualified teacher	59	3.3	0.97	Accepted	65	3.6	1.23	Accepted
3	Challenges of high enrollment	58	3.2	1.01	Accepted	56	3.1	1.16	Accepted
4	Problem of office space and classroom accommodation	50	2.8	0.87	Accepted	59	3.3	0.99	Accepted
5	Inadequate library provision	52	2.9	1.11	Accepted	59	3.3	1.02	Accepted
6	Insufficient provision of furniture	52	2.9	1.07	Accepted	54	3.0	1.04	Accepted
7.	Challenges of accreditation with examination bodies	54	3.0	1.17	Accepted	56	3.1	1.09	Accepted
8.	Security problem	59	3.3	1.06	Accepted	54	3.0	1.14	Accepted
9.	Problem of land space	58	3.2	1.01	Accepted	59	3.3	1.06	Accepted
10	Laboratory provision	50	2.8	1.20	Accepted	52	2.9	1.22	Accepted
11	Challenges of registration	49	2.7	1.22	Accepted	47	2.6	1.18	Accepted
12	Sanitary provision by the school	47	2.6	1.09	Accepted	52	2.9	1.00	Accepted
13	Sourcing of instructional materials	50	2.8	1.12	Accepted	54	3.0	1.20	Accepted
	Cluster		2.98	1.07			3.12	1.11	

Table 2. Z-test on the differences in the mean response scores of principals of newly opened government and private secondary schools on the challenges confronting them in the administration of their schools

Group	N	\bar{X}	DF	P	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Government School Principals	18	2.98	35	P>0.05	0.76	1.96	Accept Ho
Private School Principals	18	3.12					

The Z-test hypotheses table indicates mean score of 2.98 for principals of government schools and 3.12 for principals of private secondary schools while the standard deviation of 1.07 for principals of government secondary schools and 1.11 for principals of private schools. With a Z calculated value of 0.76 and tabulated value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, it therefore indicates that the null hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals of newly opened government and principals of newly opened private secondary schools on the challenges confronting them in the administration of their schools.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATION

Discussion of Results

Based on the analysis of the data collected, the following findings were obtained and summarized as the challenges confronting principals of new government and private secondary schools in Ebonyi state:

- Inadequate fund needed to provide necessary materials for proper administration of the school. This has remained a major challenge to education sector all over the globe
- shortage of qualified teacher to teach the increasing number of students
- challenges of managing high students enrollment
- problem of office space and classroom accommodation
- inadequate library facility provision
- insufficient furniture provision for both staff and students
- challenges of accreditation by the national examination bodies
- security problem within the school
- problem of land space and occasional land problems with the host community
- lack or inadequate laboratory provision

- challenges of registration during the admission process
- problem of sanitary provision and maintenance by the school
- problem of sourcing instructional materials.

The study agrees with Mwendwa (2015), who observed that principals face financial challenges, lack of inadequate facilities and shortage of teaching staff in their schools. In the light of the above findings, the researcher has come to the conclusion that working as a principal in a newly established school is more problematic than before. Therefore, the researcher personally believes that having effective leaders and more importantly keeping them working effectively and efficiently in the schools are more difficult nowadays.

In this sense, the researcher is interested in and has investigated on what challenges these principals face in the newly established schools. In conclusion, the researcher hopes that educational policy makers not only in Ebonyi state but also in other parts of the country will make some policies to help the secondary school principals in schools work better and more effectively. More importantly, they can organize some leadership training programs for principals. Otherwise, having effective school leaders and keeping them in professionalism will remain difficult. Further research is needed to explore what can be done in order to overcome these determined challenges facing principals in newly established schools. Also, some researchers could develop a questionnaire about these challenges and conduct a study with a larger number of principals.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study have far reaching implications for managing newly opened secondary schools. When relevant stakeholders in educational sector are made to be fully aware of these challenges, there is every likelihood that with a sincere government that has the necessary political will, necessary plans of actions could be initiated to reposition the newly opened secondary schools in the area.

Limitations of the Study

- The research work only focused on identification of the challenges facing the principals of the newly opened secondary schools. It did not focus on strategies for addressing the challenges.
- It took the researcher extra time and effort to reach the respondents due to their tight schedules of activities.

Recommendations

- Leadership qualities and expertise need to be developed among the principals. There is a need for a strong training intervention in school leadership and governance to enhance the capacity of principals. Principals should embark on life-long learning and register for courses in leadership that include staff motivation and appraisal practices. By furthering their studies they will empower themselves to fulfil their duties with excellence.
- Principals should develop a habit of authenticity, honesty and integrity. Principals should lead by example, and as leaders they must not sacrifice their long-term benefit for some immediate short-term gain by compromising their ethics. Principals with ethical reputations attract the best followers and retain loyal parents.
- Schools must be inspected regularly; it is important for a qualified and appointed inspector of schools to know what is happening in these schools. Principals should not be left to run schools as they deem fit. School inspectors should arrive in a school any time and be given access as this will help keeping the government abreast of challenges facing the schools.
- The rate at which the secondary schools are being established should be controlled depending on the demand in a given area. This will reduce haphazard establishment of secondary schools by the communities and private individuals. The community should be sensitized so that they can assist in erecting buildings, and fully equip one school before starting another.
- It is being advocated on several for a proper funding of education especially in developing countries. Government and international agencies should help in this regard.
- Teaching and learning cannot take place successfully without the needed material resources. Relevant stakeholders should gear the necessary efforts to the provision of these resources in the newly opened schools for their proper take off on sound footings.

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