Administrative Competencies of Principals of Unity Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated and identified the competencies of principal of Unity Secondary Schools in Imo and Abia States of Nigeria. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. A research instrument titled “Assessing the Competencies of Principal of Unity Secondary Schools was developed and administered to 200 teaching and non-teaching staff of the Federal Girls Government College Owerri and that of Umuahia. Mean was used for data analysis. The result of the study showed that principals should possess these competencies: high administrative skills in planning, policy-making ability and should be able to command respect and loyalty from both staff and students.

Keywords: Administrative Competencies, Principals, Secondary Schools.

Introduction

In Secondary Schools, Unity Schools inclusive, principals are always at the centre. What they do or fail to do have impact not only on their students or teachers but also on the entire schools system. Where they provide qualitative leadership, they are said to be competent. The things that make school principal competent are not limited to experiences or qualifications. There are certain basic qualities that distinguish competent school principals from the incompetent ones. The title “principal” is defined by Sergiovanni (2005) as the person in charge of a school or college for children aged between approximately 10-18. For a principal to provide the needed leadership in school, he or she must be competent. According to Monday, Sharplin and Premeaux (1991) Competency is the capability of bringing about an effect or accomplishing a purpose, sometimes without regard to the quantity of resources consumed in the process. For a principal to be competent, he has to possess some administrative skills. Hoyle, English and Steffy (1998) addressed comprehensively the skills needed for successful school principals. The identified skills include visionary leadership, policy and governance, communication and community
relations, organizational management, curriculum planning and development, instructional management, staff evaluation, using research and data and the ethics of leadership. Nwankwo and Alia (2008) stated that if the above research findings are examined critically with emphasis on the broad goals of secondary education in Nigeria which as stated in the national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004) include preparation for higher education and useful living in society, one would arrive at the conclusion that those skills are essential to Secondary School Principals in Nigeria.

To achieve the objectives of producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers, unity secondary schools need to be efficiently managed by highly qualified educational administrators. The efficient management of these secondary schools therefore, depends to a large extent on the level of competencies possessed by the educational administrators of the Unity Secondary Schools. The principals are the academic and administrative heads of these schools (Whitakers, 2003; Harris, 2004; Babalola, 2006; and Cruz 1995). In 2003, McEwua found that while less competent principals offer excuses, highly competent ones envision a successful school that has achieved its mission. How they do this is simple. They focus on the possibility of a high achieving school, and help their school community buy into that vision. This is a matter of competent leadership.

It has to be pointed out here that competent principals understand that while they help create the school’s vision, they must also cultivate an environment that allows their teachers to make decisions that result in ownership in the vision (Back and Nurphy, 2007). This probably led Fullan (2007) to conclude that competent leaders synthesize and assemble a vision with impute from all stakeholders studies by Marzano et al (2005) found that competent principals establish clear goals and help the school continually work towards achieving them.

This study examined the concept of Administrative Competencies of effective school principals. In Nigeria principals are supposed to possess those qualities in order to be competent in the management of their schools. The problem of this study put in question form, is what administrative competencies should be possessed by principals of Unity Secondary Schools.

**Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to identify the administrative competencies of principals of Unity Secondary school in Imo and Abia States of Nigeria.

**Research questions**

What administrative competencies should principals of Unity Secondary Schools possess?

To what extent is the principal’s knowledge of educational administration manifested?

How competent are the principals in ensuring the welfare of staff and students?

**Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The population of the study consisted of the teaching and non-teaching staff of the Federal Girls Government College,
The sample was 60 teaching and 40 non-teaching staff each, from the two schools giving a total of 200 staff using stratified purposive sampling technique.

A questionnaire titled “Assessing the competencies of Principals of Unity Secondary Schools (ACPUSS)” was designed by the researcher. It consisted of two parts A and B. Part A sought information on the respondents’ personal data while part B contained four sections with 15 items in three clusters A, B, C. A four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4 points) and Agree (3 points) Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point) was provided to assist the respondents in making their responses to the questionnaire. The researcher and three research assistants administered copies of the questionnaire to the two schools. Data were analysed using mean in answering the research questions.

**Research question one**

What administrative competencies should principals of Unity Secondary Schools possess?

The data for providing answers to the above research question are presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Mean ratings of Teaching and non-teaching staff of Federal Government Girls College Owerri and Umuahia.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item Summaries</th>
<th>Federal Govt. Girls College Owerri N = 100</th>
<th>Federal Govt. Girls College Umuahia N = 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X Decision</td>
<td>X Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Principals should have high planning skills</td>
<td>3.03 SA</td>
<td>3.05 SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Principals should give definite assignments and get feedback</td>
<td>3.00 SA</td>
<td>2.93 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Principals should make policies with ease</td>
<td>2.66 A</td>
<td>2.65 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Principals should take staff along with them</td>
<td>2.89 A</td>
<td>2.9 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Principals should command loyalty of staff and students</td>
<td>300 A</td>
<td>2.90 A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of the analysis of data in table 1 shows that all the items constituting the cluster met the acceptance criteria mean of 2.55 and above on the four point rating scale. While the highest recommendation went for item (with mean of 3.03 and 3.05), and the lowest recommendation went for items (with mean of 2.66 and 2.65).

**Research question two**

To what extent is the Principals knowledge of educational administration manifested?

The data for providing answers to the above research questions are presented on table 2.
Table 2: Mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff of Federal Government Girls College Owerri and Umuahia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item Summaries</th>
<th>Federal Govt. Girls College Owerri N = 100</th>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Federal Govt. Girls College Umuahia N = 100</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Principals delegates responsibilities to staff</td>
<td>2.77 A</td>
<td>2.85 A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Principals are efficient in coordination</td>
<td>2.22 D</td>
<td>2.10 D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Principals do not mismanage funds of the school</td>
<td>2.12 D</td>
<td>2.18 D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Principals make staff evaluate him</td>
<td>2.15 D</td>
<td>2.19 D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Principals aim at meeting the college goals</td>
<td>2.80 A</td>
<td>2.70 A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of data presented above (Table 2) show that only two of the items met the acceptance criterion mean of 2.55 on the four point rating scale. Regarding knowledge of educational administration, the respondents agree that the principals among other practices delegated responsibility to staff and aimed at meeting the school goals. These staff however, did not agree that their principals were efficient in coordination nor made staff evaluate them. The staff also reported that their principals mismanaged fund.

Research question three

How competent are the principals in ensuring the welfare of their staff and students?

Analysis of data in respect of research question three are presented on Table 3 below.

Table 3: Mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching of Federal Government Girls Secondary Schools Owerri and Umuahia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item Summaries</th>
<th>Federal Govt. Girls College Owerri N = 100</th>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Federal Govt. Girls College Umuahia N = 100</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Principals reduce stress for staff</td>
<td>3.00 SA</td>
<td>3.13 SA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Principals organize workshop and enlightenment campaign</td>
<td>2.00 D</td>
<td>2.05 D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Principals motivate workers</td>
<td>2.05 D</td>
<td>2.18 D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Principals encourage students to be of good conduct</td>
<td>3.19 SA</td>
<td>3.17 SA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Principals provide staff with working materials</td>
<td>3.50 SA</td>
<td>3.40 SA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of data in respect of research question three shows that out of the five items that make up the cluster, only three of the items met that acceptance mean of 2.55.

These items are 11, 14 and 15 with mean scores of 3.00, 3.19 and 3.50 (Owerri staff) and 3.13, 3.17 and 3.40 (Umuahia staff). The respondents are indicating that the principals show good administration by reducing stress among their staff, provide working materials. The staff also agreed that the principals encourage the students to be good conduct.

Discussion

The teaching and non-teaching staff of the two Unity Schools agreed that Principals should have the following competencies good planning skills, ability to give definite assignments and feedback: command loyalty from both staff and students. These findings are in agreement with Ogbonnaya (2002), Mbiti (1984), Ezeocha (1999), Ejiogu (1990), Omenyi (2007) and Peretomode (1996) who stated that educational administrators be it in Secondary Schools, Colleges of Education Universities should possess high planning skills, policy making ability and command loyalty from subordinates. Furthermore, the staff of the two colleges agreed that their principals delegate responsibilities to staff and aimed at meeting their college goals. These qualities are meant for successful administrators. McEwau (2003), Cempbell and Gregg (1983) pointed out that administrators who exert such influence deserve to be called leaders.

Respondents from the two schools did not agree that their principals were efficient in coordination and agreed that they mismanaged the funds in their institutions. These indicated that the principals are dishonest in managing the funds in their schools.

The results showed that the principals reduce stress among staff by providing needed materials to enhance teaching and learning. On the other hand, these items 12 and 13 did not meet with the approval of the respondents. The respondents indicated that the principals do not organized workshops and as a result do not motivate their staff.

Organization of workshops for staff help them in their professional growth (Abba et al 2004; Allison , 2001; Akubue, 2002 and Nwachukwu, 2004).

Conclusion and recommendations

The study showed that competent principals must commutate with staff and students and lead by example. The finding of the research work that principals were highly skilled and commanded the loyalty of both staff and student, it was found out that principals of the Unity Schools had good knowledge of educational administration.

The principals of these Unity Secondary Schools should organize workshops and seminars for the enhancement of the job of the staff working under them.

References


