

Administrative Skills and Teachers' Job Involvement in Public Secondary Schools in Post-COVID Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

One of the issues hindering the attainment of secondary education goals is low teachers' job involvement. This is considered by scholars as a major source of low productivity in schools. This study examined the relationship between administrative skills and teachers' job involvement in public secondary schools in post-COVID Imo State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions and one hypothesis. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 5363 teachers in public secondary schools in all the six education zones. The multistage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample size of 580 teachers for the study. Two researcher-made instruments, namely; School Administrators' Skills Questionnaire (SASQ) and Teachers' Job Involvement Questionnaire (TJIQ) were used to collect relevant data for the study. The research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. The results showed a significant relationship between the administrative skills of principals, vice-principals and heads of departments and teachers' job involvement. The study concluded that administrative skills are practicable capabilities for coordinating the activities of teachers in addition to utilizing resources in the school. The study recommended among others that school administrators should attend conferences and seminars to equip themselves with capabilities that will enable them perform their administrative roles effectively for high teachers' job involvement in secondary schools.

Keywords: Administrative skills; job involvement; technical skills; human skills; conceptual skills

Introduction

Education is an indispensable tool for social change and national development. The recognition of education as an essential tool for socio-economic and political development has heightened the interest of various governments in human resource development through different levels of education. In Nigeria, this is evident at national and state levels, although the circumstances, priorities and challenges differ. At both levels, human resources development through secondary education is seen as key for economic growth and competitiveness.

A functional secondary education is important for a developing country such as Nigeria in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction, social coherence and enhanced health among its populace. Secondary education forms the pool from which tertiary institutions draw their clientele. It equips students with the requisite knowledge and skills that enhance their progression to higher professional and academic pursuits. Secondary education, in addition, provides the nation with middle level trained human resources needed to drive national development. The huge importance placed on this level of education requires the efficient management of secondary schools in Imo State in particular and the nation as a whole to improve education outcomes.

Human resource is the most important resource among others in accomplishing the goals of a school. Without human resource, other inputs made in the system cannot be harnessed and the achievement of goals may not be possible (Makano, 2008). Human resource is responsible for mobilizing, organizing and utilizing other productive inputs. One major way through which administrators could properly utilize the human resources in a school and achieve set goals and objectives is by boosting the job involvement of teachers. Teachers are part of the school workforce involved in human development. They are the primary agents through which instruction is carried out. A teacher is an extremely important resource for learning because he/she interacts with pupils or students on a daily basis and imparts the requisite knowledge and skills in them. For secondary education goals to be realized, teachers must be committed and involved in their teaching job.

Effective school administration is the sine qua non for high teachers' job involvement and goal attainment. Productive resources in the school are harnessed through effective administration and its related skills for the achievement of educational goals. In line with this, Omoregie (2005) opined that the management of human and material resources available to education is the precondition for the attainment of educational goals. Administration in every institution is the process of mobilizing all productive resources for the achievement of goals and objectives. Principals, vice principals and heads of departments are school administrators whose job involves providing leadership for other school staff as well as acquiring, coordinating and utilizing human resources, physical resources and financial resources for the attainment of school goals (Ezeugbor, 2014). If school managers do not possess the appropriate training and competencies for harnessing all the resources in the school, educational goals may not be

achieved. School administrators have enormous administrative duties. No school administrator, therefore, can succeed in achieving the goals of secondary education without possessing skills in how to discharge his administrative duties. The absence of such skills may get in the way of a conducive learning environment and result in problems such as examination malpractice, poor academic performance, indiscipline among staff and students, as well as low teachers' job involvement.

In Nigeria, as in other countries, the huge and challenging roles of school administrators have been compounded by the present global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Federal Government on March 20, 2020 directed all schools to close as a precautionary measure aimed at preventing the spread of the pandemic which broke out in Wuhan, China in December, 2019. COVID-19 pandemic has become a threat of global proportions. This response put a sudden end to academic activities, disrupted academic calendars, and impacted negatively on education. The government, however, reopened schools after many months of lockdown. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2020) spelt out the guidelines for the reopening of schools in Nigeria. These guidelines outlined important strategies for implementing safe, efficient and equitable plans for school reopening and operations.

School administrators have long had to operate under tremendous pressure with scarce resources in increasingly uncertain environments. The reopening of schools has presented new challenges for them. In a period like this, school administrators must possess enough administrative skills to manage their teachers and schools effectively and thrive amidst the chaos and turbulence in the post-COVID world. In a pandemic, a managers' ability to manage employees towards attainment of organizational goal becomes a herculean task. This is because the safety concerns of teachers may have a negative impact on their job involvement and commitment as their well-being and stability of their families are affected. The teachers may be alienated from their jobs due to the effects of the pandemic. At this period, an administrator in an educational institution requires competencies to involve the teachers in their jobs towards achieving organizational goals.

Administration and the related skills determine to a high extent teachers' job involvement and educational outcomes. School administrators who possess and use administrative skills could get teachers involved in their teaching job. Administrative skills which are indicated in school administrators' technical, human relations skills/human skills and conceptual skills are valuable as they help the administrators coordinate the activities of the school and effectively harness

human and material resources in the school. Administrative skills affect teachers' effectiveness in different ways and can help build efficiency on the long term (Ajadi, 2017).

Low teachers' job involvement could have a devastating effect on secondary education. The attainment of secondary education goals, which is indicated in this study as students passing external examinations such as West African Senior School Certificate (WASSC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) Examinations, may be hindered by low teachers' job involvement. A teacher who is not involved in his job sees his work as an unimportant aspect of his life, has his interests elsewhere, and the type of work he does and how well he does it does not affect his self-image to a great degree (Kanungo, 1982). Such a teacher is alienated from his or her work. Work alienation manifests in apathy, tardiness, high rates of absenteeism, uncooperative attitude, labour strikes and other undesirable behaviours in the workplace.

The crux is that if care is not taken to properly utilize the human resources in schools with administrative skills, secondary schools in post-COVID Nigeria could be endangered. In a school where the available productive resources are not well-coordinated and utilized, the teaching workforce could be alienated, disenchanted and unresponsive. The probable outcome of this type of situation may be unruly and half-baked students. This could impede the attainment of educational goals. Low teachers' job involvement could be caused by the following indices as exhibited in the work environment: poor remuneration, leadership style, inadequate training and career development, inadequate educational resources (Amadi & Amushie, 2017), and health emergencies such as COVID-19 pandemic. These manifest in teacher burn-out, lateness, truancy, uncooperative attitude, and low productivity. Although these factors may have been adduced for the low level of teacher's job involvement, the issue of administrative skills is of paramount importance to this study. Administrative skills comprise technical skills, human skills and conceptual skills. These constitute the variables that could affect the achievement of secondary education goals in the post-COVID era. The absence of these capabilities in secondary school administrators could determine the job involvement of teachers and invariably students' academic performance.

Literature Review

Administration, according to Peretomode (2001), is the integral part of the management process concerned with facilitating the accomplishment of the goals of an organization such as the school

through the methodical management of limitations and careful utilization of available limited resources. According to Ogundele, Sambo and Bwoi (2015), school administration involves: planning, coordinating, directing, supervising and assessing the entire school system; administering the curriculum and instructional process; allocating resources; appraising staff; and relating with the community, among others.

In his seminal paper, Katz (1974) conceptualized the idea of a three-skill framework for effective administration. The skills are technical skills, human relation skills/human skills and conceptual skills. Katz defined a skill as an ability which is not necessarily inborn, but which can be developed and manifested in performance and not just in potential. Jones and George (as cited in Kaifi and Mujtab, 2000) defined technical, human and conceptual skills as follows: technical skills are job specific skills associated with the job: human skills involve the ability to understand, change, lead and control the behaviour of people and groups as well as work with and through these individuals by communicating, coordinating and motivating them; and conceptual skills as the ability of seeing the organization as a whole, analyzing situations and solving problems to the benefit of everyone involved.

According to Sergevanni and Starrat (as cited in Lunenburg, 2010), technical skill involves the ability to use knowledge, methods and techniques to carry out definite tasks. In a school setting, technical skills may include the procedures for writing a lesson plan, developing a study unit and filling out an annual report. Technical skills are needed to get the work done. Heads of departments (team leaders) need technical skills most, because they are closer to the teachers who carry out the day-to-day activities of the school, but they also need human skills to challenge, motivate and coordinate the work of teachers who teach the students (Lunenburg, 2010).

Human skills refer to the administrator's ability to work with and through people, and this requires them to understand, motivate and lead other people individually or in a group (Lunenburg, 2010). An administrator who possesses this skill has self-understanding, communicates with and develops his/her subordinates and has acceptance as well as consideration for others. Human skills include the ability to delegate, develop subordinates, appraise effectively and guide and control the behaviour of subordinates towards better quality performance (Mabey, 2003). This skill is more demanding than the other two because

interpersonal relations involve consideration of the differences in attitudes, emotions and cultural characteristics of peers, subordinates and superiors (Onchoke, Oloko & Obonyo, 2015). Human skills are thought to be important for every level of management though the greatest demand for such skills is expected to be among first line supervisors such as heads of departments and middle level managers where the highest number of interactions with subordinates is likely to take place (Sergevanni & Starrat, as cited in Lunenburg, 2010). Middle level managers such as principals need human skills to manage individuals from a broad range of departments, subject areas and other technical experts such as counselors, social workers and school psychologists (Lunenburg, 2010).

Conceptual skills is the ability to see the organization as a whole, to understand how the different parts fit together and depend on each other and to realize how a change in one part can affect other parts and subsequently the whole organization (Katz, 1974). Administrators who possess conceptual skills have the ability to think creatively and understand complicated or abstract ideas (Lunenburg, 2010). Conceptual skills involve the ability to better understand complex situations and develop creative solutions. The skills result in the mental ability to integrate and coordinate the organization's interests and activities. This set of skills enables the administrator to see the various factors involved in any given situation and to conceptualize the inter-related pattern of relationships among them so that the most effective possible course of action can be taken in the best interest of the organization (Samson & Draft, 2009).

Job involvement could be seen as an individual's psychological identification or commitment to his or her present job. Job involvement also refers to the physical, mental and emotional presence of an employee while working in the organization. An individual who is job involved sees his job as very important and for this individual, the job is very tied to his self-image (Kanungo, 1982). Being job involved, therefore, implies that work is a vital part of an employee's life and that he/she is positively absorbed in the fundamental aspects of his/her job and is motivated and captivated by the job and organization (Sachdeva, 2014). An employee with a high level of job involvement would regard his or her work as a very important part of his or her life and would sincerely care for and be concerned about it (Saxena & Saxena, 2015). Highly involved people, for this reason, perform very well on their jobs and this considerably boosts their self-esteem. Job involvement is said to be high when an employee feels attached mentally and psychologically to the job as well as when the employee is highly enthusiastic and committed to

duties in the work place, while low job involvement is exhibited when the employee is apathetic, indifferent and less committed to duty (Kanungo, 1982).

It has been observed that administrative skills to a high extent are related to the job involvement and effectiveness of teachers. Lin, Xie, Jeng and Wang (2011) examined the relationship between teachers' job involvement and school administrative effectiveness in junior high schools and found that there was a significant and positive relationship between job involvement and administrative effectiveness. In a study to investigate the effect of principals' administrative skills on teachers' effectiveness in public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria, Ajadi (2017) found that principals' technical, human and conceptual skills had an impact on teachers' effectiveness to various degrees. Hosseinpour, Tamimi, Hosseinpour, Hashami and Jafarzadeh (2014) examined the relationship between administrative skills of principals and their effectiveness and discovered that there is a significant relationship between the administrative skills of principals and their effectiveness. Results of the study further showed that any increase in each of the skills increased the effectiveness of an organization.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there have been reports of low job involvement among teachers in public secondary schools. It has been observed that a teacher who is involved in his or her job exhibits a strong desire to be at work and discharges his or her duties assigned to him or her enthusiastically. The case, however, seems to be different with some secondary school teachers as they exhibit undesirable work attitudes such as lateness and truancy. This suggests low job involvement and lack of commitment which could be as a result of the absence of administrative competencies in school administrators. Some scholars have observed that school administrators do not have the skills they need to discharge their duties. Most school administrators, thus, do not consider administrative skills as determinants in the enhancement of teachers' job involvement. If school administrators do not possess administrative skills in the post COVID-19 era, the job involvement of teachers could be negatively affected. If the students are not well taught, their academic performance could be poor and the goals of secondary education would not be achieved. This study, therefore, examined the relationship between administrative skills and the job involvement levels of teachers in public secondary schools in post-COVID Imo State. The aim was to investigate administrative skills with a view to preventing the undesirable

work attitudes displayed by teachers which indicate low job involvement, and for school administrators and other policy makers to apply appropriate measures that will help in boosting the level of job involvement of secondary school teachers in the post-COVID era.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the relationship between the administrative skills of school administrators and teachers' job involvement in public secondary schools in post-COVID Imo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the relationship between technical skills and teachers' job involvement;
2. investigate the relationship between human skills and teachers' job involvement; and
3. ascertain the relationship between conceptual skills and teachers' job involvement.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between technical skills and teachers' job involvement?
2. What is the relationship between human skills and teachers' job involvement?
3. What is the relationship between conceptual skills and teachers' job involvement?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested in the course of the study:

H01: There is no significant relationship between administrative skills and teachers' job involvement.

Methodology

The research design used for this study is the correlational research design. The study population comprised 5363 teachers in 285 public secondary schools in all the 6 Education Zones in Imo State, Nigeria. The sample size for this study is made up of 580 teachers who participated in the study. The multi stage sampling procedure was adopted in the selection of participants. In the first stage, the population was stratified into six groups using education zones as the basis for stratification. The 6 education zones in the state are Okigwe Zone 1, Okigwe Zone 2, Orlu Zone 1, Orlu Zone 2, Owerri Zone 1 and Owerri Zone 2. In the second stage, a list of all the schools in each stratum was drawn. Using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique, 43

schools were selected. The simple random sampling technique was, thereafter, used to select 14 teachers from each of the schools.

Two self-constructed instruments titled ‘School Administrators’ Skills Questionnaire’ (SASQ) and ‘Teachers’ Job Involvement Questionnaire’ (TJIQ) were used to collect relevant data for the study. The first instrument was structured to obtain data from the teachers and consists of two sections; sections A and B. Section A elicited information on the bio-data of the teachers, while section B contains 12 items that rated teachers’ perception of the skills of administrators. This section was structured in a 4-point modified Likert-type rating scale.

The second instrument, which was also used to obtain data from the teachers, was divided into two sections; sections A and B. Section A elicited information on the bio-data of participants. Section B, which was adapted from the Lodahl and Kejner (1965) and Kanungo (1982) Job Involvement Scales, contained the indices of Job Involvement. It is a 4-point modified Likert-type rating scale with 15 items on the indices of teachers’ job involvement. These items were slightly modified. In numerous studies, the two job involvement measures have shown acceptable levels of reliability and validity. The scales, however, were not used to measure the job involvement of secondary school teachers. The items, therefore, were slightly modified to match the secondary education context in which the teachers worked. Some of the items also did not match certain concepts pertinent to the Nigerian cultural setting.

The researchers, after discussions with three experts in Educational Management, therefore, decided to remove some items and add others. Based on the subjective judgment of the researchers and suggestions received from the experts in Educational Management, three new items were added. The new items are “ I am willing to put in a great deal of extra effort to help my school become successful”, “My loyalty to this school depends on how much I am paid as salary” and “Deciding to work for this organization was a mistake on my part”. The modified items were, thereafter, pretested to check if the participants understood the items or not. Although a total of 602 copies of the TJIQ and SASQ were administered on teachers, 580 copies were returned.

The two instruments were administered on the teachers with the help of two research assistants who are university graduates. The initial items generated for the study were validated by some experts in Educational Management. The Cronbach alpha reliability estimates of the (SASQ) and

(TJIQ) were ascertained at 0.84 and 0.70 respectively and this guaranteed the use of the instruments for the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were analyzed using means and percentages, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between technical skills and teachers' job involvement in public secondary schools in post-COVID Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Frequencies, Percentages, Mean and SD of the Responses on Technical Skills

S/N	Item- My school administrators:	Disagree	Agree	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	are conversant with the guidelines for writing a lesson plan;	30 (5.2%)	550 (94.8%)	1.95	0.22	Agree
2	have demonstrated knowledge of curricular issues in various subject areas; and	81 (14.0%)	499 (86.0%)	1.86	0.35	Agree
3	are good at preparing the school budget.	189 (32.6%)	391 (67.4%)	1.67	0.47	Agree
	Grand mean			1.83	0.35	Agree

N= 580

Note: With the use of a 2-point Likert scale type, the expected average (mean) response per item should be 1.50 (either in favour or disfavour of what is being measured). Scale: Agree (2), Disagree (1)

Table 1 shows that many of the participants agreed that their school administrators were conversant with the guidelines for writing a lesson plan ($\bar{x}= 1.95>1.50$), had demonstrated knowledge of curricular issues in various subject areas ($\bar{x}= 1.86>1.50$) and were good at

preparing the school budget ($\bar{x}= 1.67>1.50$). The grand mean of $1.83 > 1.50$ implies that most of the school administrators in public secondary schools in Imo State possess technical skills.

Table 2: Frequencies, Percentages, Mean and SD of the Responses on Human Skills

S/N	Item- My school administrators:	Disagree	Agree	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	provide information needed to accomplish tasks to members of staff;	57 (9.8%)	523 (90.2%)	1.90	0.30	Agree
2	enjoy responding to staff members' requests;	100 (17.2%)	480 (82.8%)	1.83	0.38	Agree
3	do not encourage teachers to participate during meetings;	520 (89.7%)	60 (10.3%)	1.10	0.30	Disagree
4	do not care about teachers' welfare; and	507 (87.4%)	73 (12.6%)	1.13	.033	Disagree
5	take decisions alone without involving staff members.	486 (83.8%)	94 (16.2%)	1.16	0.37	Disagree

N= 580

Note: With the use of a 2-point Likert scale type, the expected average (mean) response per item should be 1.50 (either in favour or disfavour of what is being measured). Scale: Agree (2), Disagree (1)

Table 2 shows that majority of the participants agreed that their administrators provided all the information that staff members needed to accomplish their tasks ($\bar{x}= 1.90>1.50$), and responded to staff members' requests ($\bar{x}= 1.83>1.50$). On the other hand, majority of the participants disagreed that their school administrators did not encourage teachers to participate or ask questions during staff meetings ($\bar{x}= 1.10<1.50$), did not care about teachers' welfare ($\bar{x}= 1.13>1.50$) and took decisions alone without involving staff members ($\bar{x}= 1.16>1.50$). Thus, many of the school administrators in public secondary schools in Imo State possess human skills.

Table 3: Frequencies, Percentages, Mean and SD of the Responses on Conceptual Skills

S/N	Item- My school administrators:	Disagree	Agree	Mean	Std.	Remarks
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1	ask questions about the nature of problems before considering ways of solving them;	85 (14.7%)	495 (85.3%)	1.85	0.35	Agree
2	avoid deciding on a solution until they have developed many solutions;	119 (20.5%)	461 (79.5%)	1.80	0.41	Agree
3	understand the goals of my education zone; and	72 (12.4%)	508 (87.6%)	1.86	0.33	Agree
4	readily respond to organizational changes within my education zone.	131 (22.6%)	449 (77.4%)	1.77	0.42	Agree

N= 580

Note: With the use of a 2-point Likert scale type, the expected average (mean) response per item should be 1.50 (either in favour or disfavour of what is being measured). Scale: Agree (2), Disagree (1)

Table 3 indicates that majority of the participants agreed that whenever problems arose, their school administrators would ask lots of questions about the nature of the problem before considering ways of solving them ($\bar{x} = 1.85 > 1.50$) and that their school administrators avoided deciding on a solution until they had developed many solutions ($\bar{x} = 1.80 > 1.50$). In addition, many of the participants agreed that the school administrators understood the goals and direction their education zones take ($\bar{x} = 1.86 > 1.50$) and readily responded to organizational changes within the education zone ($\bar{x} = 1.77 > 1.50$).

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: Administrative skills are not significantly related to teachers' job involvement in public secondary schools in post-COVID Imo State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Administrative Skills and Teachers' Job Involvement

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Technical Skills	1	.277**	.506**	.720**	.180**
2	Human Skills		1	.513**	.816**	.143**
3	Conceptual Skills			1	.817**	.216**

4	Administrative Skills	1	.222**
5	Teachers' Job Involvement		1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the correlation array of administrative skills and teachers' job involvement. The table shows that a positive and significant relationship exists among teachers' job involvement and technical skills ($r=0.180$), human skills ($r=0.143$) and conceptual skills ($r= 0.216$). Similarly, the combined influence of administrative skills has a direct relationship to the job involvement of teachers ($r=0.222$). This implies that administrative skills are positively related to the job involvement of teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State. The null hypothesis was, therefore, rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The hypothesis which stated that administrative skills are not significantly related to teachers' job involvement was rejected. Findings from the study indicate that administrative skills are positively related to teachers' job involvement. This implies that school administrators who possess and deploy administrative skills effectively are able to enhance teachers' job involvement more than those who do not possess administrative skills. The finding is in line with Ajadi (2017) who reported that principals' technical, human and conceptual skills affect teachers' effectiveness in various degrees. The finding is in consonance with Lin, Xie, Jeng and Wang (2011) who found that job involvement and school administrative effectiveness are significantly and positively related. The finding also gives credence to Hosseinpour, Tamimi, Hosseinpour, Hashami and Jafarzadeh (2014) who found that there was a significant relationship between the administrative skills of principals and their effectiveness.

The result suggests that the call of an administrator is not just to administer, but to acquire various forms of skills that will aid in the discharge of administrative functions. During the recruitment process of principals, emphasis is often placed on qualification and number of years in service with absolute neglect of administrative skills. This has often resulted in poor management of resources entrusted to principals. It therefore means that every principal must build capacities in the three domains of administrative skills since teachers' job involvement is hinged on the administrative capabilities.

Conclusion

The entire world is going through turbulent times as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has negatively impacted the lives of people and the economies of nations around the world. The education sector has not been spared as it has witnessed unprecedented disruptions. School administrators, therefore, need administrative skills so as to succeed amidst the chaos and turbulence in the present world. Secondary school administrators require administrative skills to boost the job involvement of their employees towards organizational success. Technical skills, human skills and conceptual skills are valuable capabilities that help school administrators to effectively manage the human and material resources in their schools. School administrators could learn and develop these skills by attending workshop and seminars in the short run. Teachers' job involvement could be enhanced by administrative skills and this could lead to the attainment of school goals. The researchers, in view of the findings of this study, conclude that administrative capabilities enhance teachers' job involvement to a high and significant extent.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. School administrators should attend workshops and seminars to equip themselves with the administrative skills that will help them boost the job involvement levels of their teachers.
2. School administrators should delegate functions to teachers according to their areas of expertise in order to enhance their job involvement.
3. School administrators should encourage the participative leadership approach where teachers are involved in decision-making and the day-to-day running of the school because this will be helpful in boosting the level of job involvement of secondary school teachers.
4. School administrators should create an enabling school environment that breeds mutual trust, teamwork and collaboration among teachers in order to improve the job involvement of their teachers.

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