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Personnel Management Practices adopted by Principals in Administration of Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Mixed research design was employed for the study. The population of the study was comprised of 1,642 respondents, with 61 principals and 1,518 teachers from the Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. Multiple stage sampling technique was used to sample 485 respondents which consisted of 30 principals and 455 teachers. The instruments for data collection were questionnaire and interview. The instrument was validated by three experts who are lecturers in the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach alpha and it yielded reliability coefficients of .78 and .72 for Cluster I and Cluster II, respectively. The overall coefficient of the entire instrument was found to be .75. Data analysis was performed using mean and standard deviation. It was found that staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in their administration of secondary schools in the Awka Education Zone, Anambra State, include; motivating of teachers, encouraging team building so as to promote cohesiveness in the school, supervising teachers' activities, disciplining of teachers exhibiting misconduct behaviors, delegating duties to teachers, mentoring of teachers, rendering counseling services to teachers, recommending staff for promotion, and appraising staff performances. Based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations were made.

Keywords: principals, school administration, personnel management, staff personnel management, students personnel management.



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Introduction

Education is the bedrock of moral training and acquisition of relevant values, knowledge and skills for the purpose of becoming functional members of society. Formal education is delivered at the school level in order to bring about desirable changes in learners' behaviors for useful living and self-reliance. Each secondary school has a principal who is appointed as a result of qualification and seniority to ensure smooth administration of the school. Several scholars have defined school administration from different viewpoints. In the view of Wali (2018), school administration is the process of coordinating human, material and time-based resources towards the attainment of pre-determined objectives of a school. In the same vein, Nnebedum, Akinfolarin, and Obuegbe (2018) defined school administration as the application of stipulated policies, procedures and principles in coordinating the available human, material and financial resources towards the attainment of set goals and objectives of the school. School administration could be seen as the systematic process of managing the available resources to attain predetermined goals. These resources include; human, time, material, and financial. The position of human resources as the personnel in the educational process is very crucial. Ofojebe and Nnebedum (2016) stressed that the distinguished characteristics of human resources (personnel) stem from the fact that other resources cannot be controlled without human effort. Personnel management rests on the shoulders of school principals so as to create conducive learning environment in order to achieve set educational goals and objectives.

The hallmark of personnel management in any organization is to retain, attract, reward, and develop a team of highly motivated workforce, capable and willingly ready to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of institutional and national educational objectives (Odiagbo, as cited in Abdulkareem & Gabadeen, 2015). Personnel Management in educational institutions can be classified in two categories: staff personnel management, and student personnel management (Abdulkareem & Gabadeen, 2015; Nwakpa, 2015).

In the view of Aja-okorie (2016), staff personnel management is an important management function concerned with obtaining, developing, and motivating human resources as required by an organization to achieve its objectives. In the view of the researchers, staff personnel management is the act of planning, organizing, controlling, stimulating, and motivating teachers in order to enhance their commitment to the attainment of the school objectives. Ejuh and Okoro (2016) outlined staff personnel management practices to include: orientation, motivation, and welfare, among others. Similarly, Althassan (2014) asserted that staff personnel management practices (services) include: orientation, decision making, delegation of duties, supervision, staff professional development, and motivation. The reasons for staff personnel management include; enhancing staff motivation, dedication, and commitment in assisting students in their learning endeavors.

According to Aja-Okorie (2014), student personnel management encompasses all the activities assigned or performed by school administrators towards making students or learners improve themselves. This improvement includes the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of students. Student personnel management could be seen as the activities and services rendered to students in order to assist them to achieve maximum benefit from school curricular and co-curricular activities. Student personnel management

practices include issues such as admission, enrolment, classification of students, guidance and counseling, health services, accommodation, transportation, information services, sporting activities, as well as a host of other aspects to cater for the psychological, physiological, and sociological needs of students (Abdulkareem & Gabadeen, 2015). These student personnel management practices are geared towards producing well-disciplined, educated, and functional students that could bring about meaningful development in society. It also stimulates the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of the students.

Secondary school personnel within Awka Education Zone, Anambra State appears inadequately managed. This seems evident based on personnel lateness, absenteeism and other forms of misconduct affecting secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. This is supported by the study of Uzoehina and Nwankwo (2016) who observed that the increased rate of truancy, lateness and general poor job performance of teachers, coupled with the overt negative attitudes of teachers, are issues of major concern affecting secondary schools in Anambra State. In the same vein, Uwakwe (2017) observed incidences of lateness, absenteeism, and a general lack of direction in student personnel management in secondary schools in southeast Nigeria, including Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. Uwakwe further observed that situation is of great concern amongst parents and the public who usually place the blame for increasing student dropout and poor discipline as a result of inadequate student personnel management practices of the school principals. This unsatisfactory state of affairs prompted the researchers to embark on the current study.

The purpose of the current study is to ascertain the personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study sought to identify:

- Staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.
- Student personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions.

- What are the staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State?
- What are the student personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the student personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed research design. According to Creswell (2012), mixed research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing and combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study or a series of studies in order to understand a research problem. In the current study, the choice of mixed research design is premised on the fact that the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches will provide a better understanding of the personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. Further justification for the choice of this research design is that the design enables the researchers to use a qualitative strand to explain initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2012; Orodho, 2012).

The population of the study is comprised of 1,642 respondents, made up of 61 school principals and 1,518 teachers from the Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. Multiple stage sampling technique was used to sample 485 respondents, which consisted of 30 principals and 455 teachers.

The data collection instruments employed were questionnaire and interview. Data collected from multiple sources provides richness and depth of data in line with the explanatory design procedure, which is a variant of mixed methods research conducted over two phases (Creswell, Vicki, & Clark, 2011). The research instrument employed during the first quantitative strand of the study was a questionnaire. The researchers developed a questionnaire titled the "Personnel Management Practices Questionnaire (PMPQ)" which was then applied for the purposes of data collection. The PMPQ was structured as two versions, for school principals and for teachers. The PMPQ has two clusters (I and II), based on the two areas of personnel management: Cluster I contains 13 items on staff personnel management practices, whilst Cluster II contains 12 items on student personnel management practices. The instrument contains 25 items in total, structured as a four-point, Likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted at 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The qualitative data in the second phase were collected by way of researcher-led interviews.

The PMPQ was subjected to face validation by three experts. Each of them are lecturers, with two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability of the PMPQ instrument was established. Data used for computing the reliability indices were obtained from copies of the questionnaire administered to a sample of 20 principals and 30 teachers in the Aguata Education Zone. The choice of Aguata Education Zone was because both the Awka and Aguata Education Zones share similar characteristics in terms of school management. The obtained data were subjected to tests for internal consistency Cronbach alpha, which yielded reliability coefficients of .78 and .72 for Cluster I and Cluster II, respectively. The overall coefficient for the entire instrument was .75.

The administration of the instruments was undertaken by the researchers, together with three research assistants who were all secondary school teachers in the Awka Education Zone, using direct administration method. A total of 485 questionnaires were distributed and 474 were returned properly completed and data able to be successfully retrieved, indicating a 98% return rate. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were coded, entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed by the SPSS in order to answer the research questions and for *t*-tests to test the null hypotheses. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 or above was taken as agreement, while any mean rating below 2.50 was regarded as disagreement. Standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents mean ratings. In testing the null hypotheses, if *t*-calculated is equal to or greater than *t*-critical at .05 level of significance and the degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected and the difference taken to be statistically significant, else the null hypotheses was upheld and the difference taken to be not statistically significant.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State?

Table 1. Mean Ratings & Standard Deviation Scores of Principals and Teachers on Staff Personnel Management Practices Adopted by Principals

S/ N	ITEMS	Principals (N = 29)			Teachers (N = 445)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Motivating of teachers	2.71	1.12	Agree	2.62	0.97	Agree
2	Encouraging team building so as to promote cohesiveness in the school	2.53	1.04	Agree	2.50	1.12	Agree
3	Supervising teachers' activities	2.63	1.10	Agree	2.78	1.12	Agree
4	Disciplining of misconduct teachers	2.57	1.04	Agree	2.81	1.08	Agree
5	Involving teachers in decisions making process	2.64	1.02	Agree	2.45	1.12	Disagree
6	Delegating duties to teachers	2.84	1.23	Agree	2.90	1.12	Agree
7	Providing timely information for teachers	2.65	1.00	Agree	2.40	1.23	Disagree
8	Mentoring of teachers in school	2.59	1.13	Agree	2.54	1.17	Agree
9	Equipping staff offices	2.46	1.21	Disagree	2.38	1.14	Disagree
10	Rendering counseling services for teachers	2.67	1.35	Agree	2.52	1.10	Agree
11	Recommending staff for promotion	2.84	1.24	Agree	2.60	1.11	Agree
12	Organizing training programs for teachers	2.33	1.07	Disagree	2.30	1.13	Disagree
13	Appraising staff performance	2.62	1.18	Agree	2.82	1.10	Agree

Cluster Means	2.62	1.13	Agree	2.59	1.12	Agree
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The results shown in Table 1 reveals that the mean scores of principals and teachers for Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 13 are all above the cutoff mean of 2.50, indicating agreement with the items as staff personnel management practices adopted by principals. This implies that the staff personnel management practices adopted by school principals in the administration of secondary schools in the Awka Education Zone, Anambra State, include: motivating of teachers, encouraging team building so as to promote cohesiveness in the school, supervising teachers' activities, disciplining of teachers exhibiting misconduct behaviors, delegating duties to teachers, mentoring of teachers in school, rendering counseling services for teachers, recommending staff for promotion, and appraising staff performance.

On the other hand, the mean scores of principals and teachers for Items 9 and 12 are below 2.50, showing disagreement with the items as staff personnel management practices adopted by principals. This indicates agreement that the staff personnel management practices adopted by the school principals include: equipping staff offices, and organizing training programs for teachers. However, the mean scores of principals for Items 5 and 7 are above the cutoff mean of 2.50, indicating agreement with the items as staff personnel management practices adopted by principals; while that of teachers are below 2.50, indicating disagreement with the item as staff personnel management practices adopted by principals. The standard deviation scores ranged from 0.97 to 1.35, indicating homogeneity amongst principals' and teachers' responses and a similar consensus of opinion.

Research Question 2: What are the student personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State?

Table 2. Mean Ratings & Standard Deviation Scores of Principals and Teachers on Student Personnel Management Practices Adopted by Principals

S/ N	ITEMS	Principals (N = 29)			Teachers (N = 445)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Decision
14	Processing of students' admission	2.67	1.17	Agree	2.63	1.10	Agree
15	Registration of new students	2.90	1.23	Agree	2.82	1.13	Agree
16	Orienting students as and when due	2.76	1.01	Agree	2.70	1.07	Agree
17	Rendering counseling services for students	2.43	1.14	Disagree	2.44	1.23	Disagree
18	Placement of students based on their abilities	2.85	0.84	Agree	2.72	1.06	Agree
19	Organizing co-curricular activities for students	2.75	1.07	Agree	2.68	1.19	Agree
20	Providing health services for students	2.41	0.93	Disagree	2.38	1.43	Disagree
21	Disciplining of misbehaved	2.67	1.20	Agree	2.55	1.22	Agree

	students						
22	Managing of students' records	2.53	1.14	Agree	2.61	1.15	Agree
23	Formulating rules and regulations guiding the conduct of students	2.79	1.09	Agree	2.82	1.08	Agree
24	Appointing of school prefects	2.76	1.16	Agree	2.58	1.17	Agree
25	Rendering of library services to students	2.50	0.98	Agree	2.52	1.04	Agree
Cluster Means		2.67	1.08	Agree	2.62	1.16	Agree

As can be seen in Table 2, all the items except for Items 17 and 20 of both principals' and teachers' mean scores are above the cutoff mean of 2.50, indicating agreement with the items as the student personnel management practices adopted by principals. This implies that student personnel management practices adopted by the school principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State include; processing of students' admission, registration of new students, orienting students as and when due, placement of students based on their abilities, organizing co-curricular activities for students, disciplining of misbehaved students, management of students' records, formulating rules and regulations guiding the conduct of students, appointing of school prefects, and rendering of library services to students. The standard deviation scores of both principals and teachers, which ranged from 0.93 to 1.23, indicated that the principals' and teachers' rating of each item were close to the mean, implying that their responses are homogenous.

Testing the Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Table 3. t-Test Analysis of No Significant Difference in Mean of Principals and Teachers on Staff Personnel Management Practices Adopted by Principals

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-cal.</i>	<i>t-crit.</i>	<i>df</i>	∞	Decision
Principals:	29	2.62	1.13	.14	1.96	472	.05	Not Significant
Teachers	445	2.59	1.12					

The *t*-test analysis presented in Table 3 indicates that no significant difference was found in the mean ratings of the principals and teachers with regards to the staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. This was shown by the calculated *t*-value of .14, which is less than the *t*-critical value of 1.96 at a .05 level of significance and 472 degree of freedom. Thus, the first null hypothesis was upheld (not rejected).

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the student personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Table 4. t-Test Analysis of No Significant Difference in Mean Ratings of Principals and Teachers on Student Personnel Management Practices Adopted by Principals

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-cal.</i>	<i>t-crit.</i>	<i>df</i>	∞	Decision
Principals:	29	2.67	1.08	0.24	1.96	472	.05	Not Significant
Teachers	445	2.62	1.16					

Data analysis as shown in Table 4 indicates that no significant difference was found in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the student personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. This was shown by the calculated *t*-value of .24, which is less than the *t*-critical value of 1.96 at a .05 level of significance and 472 degree of freedom. Thus, the second null hypothesis was also upheld (not rejected).

Triangulating Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The qualitative results from the second phase of this study were used to assist in interpreting and/or corroborating the quantitative results from the first phase. In an attempt to justify the staff personnel management practices adopted by the school principals, one female principal averred that:

I organize an orientation program for newly recruited staff so as to enable them to gain the required knowledge about their new environment with regards to the facilities available at the school, curricular and co-curricular activities, rules and regulations, as well as their superiors and colleagues. I also embark on unscheduled classroom visits to teachers in order to observe their instructional delivery. I rarely organize training programs for teachers because of a lack of sufficient funds. Staff at my school are involved in decision-making processes in order to elicit their opinions and suggestions concerning matter to be decided upon as this improves the quality of the decisions made.

The implication of the foregoing assertion from the principal is that staff personnel practices within the limitation of her capacity are adopted at the school. The quantitative aspect of this study established the same at a similar magnitude.

Some of the teachers that were interviewed tended to support the female school principal when they stated that:

Orientation programs are organized for newly recruited staff. The principal visits teachers in the classroom during instruction, but shouts and criticizes them in front of the students. Teachers have not been exposed to training programs in recent years. Teachers are motivated and involved in decision making, but in most cases their views are not taken into consideration prior to making the final decision.

The interview reports from a male school principal seemed to send similar signals when he asserted that:

Orientation and training programs are rarely organized at my school because of the limited funds received from the Government. With regards to involving staff in decision making, I take some crucial decisions with the administrative cadre staff, but also sometimes involve teaching staff in decision making in order to give them a sense of belonging. I often supervise teachers in order to ensure their compliance with the established rules and programs of the school. I do not use supervision to witch-hunt teachers, but to render professional guidance and assistance to them when the need arises. There are shortages of basic health facilities at the school that bar me from rendering health services to members of my staff.

Some male and female teachers interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with their school principal's staff personnel management practices, stressing that:

Staff welfare, training, and motivation are not the priority of the school principal. The school principal is much more concerned about the supervisory aspect. Staff opinions during meetings are often discarded. The communication network at the school is poor. Information is often disseminated to just a few members of staff and at the 11th hour.

On the aspect of student personnel management practices adopted by school principals, three of the school principals shared similar views, stating that:

Student admission is based on merit, and their placement in various classes is based on their academic abilities. Misbehaved students in school are punished. Sporting activities are often organized for students in order for them to have a meaningful digression from academic monotony and boredom. Students are often counseled if the need arises.

This assertion seems to be justified by three teachers who argued that:

Students' lateness, absenteeism and other forms of misconduct are discouraged by the school authority through disciplinary measures. Some days are mapped out for sporting activities. The admission of students is sometimes influenced by interference from outside the school. The health program for students is very poor as a result of a shortage of health facilities at the school.

From these interview results, the qualitative results from the second phase of this study appear to corroborate the quantitative results from the first phase.

Discussion

It was found that staff personnel management practices adopted by the school principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria, include: motivating of teachers, encouraging team building so as to promote cohesiveness in the school, supervising teachers' activities, disciplining of teachers exhibiting misconduct behaviors, delegating duties to teachers, mentoring of teachers in school,

rendering counseling services for teachers, recommending staff for promotion, and appraising staff performance. This is supported by the findings of Onwurah (2010), who reported that staff personnel management practices of school principals included: orientation of newly recruited staff, motivation, involvement of staff in decision making, enhancing staff promotion, encouraging free contributions of ideas from teachers through regular meetings, and encouraging teachers to be creative in the delivery of their lessons. The similarity in findings may be as a result that the two studies were conducted in southeast Nigeria and share similar characteristics in terms of school management. The staff personnel management practices encourage the cooperation, dedication and commitment of teachers in performing their duties. It was also revealed that there was no significant difference found in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the staff personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. This contradicts with the findings of Ojima (2015), who reported a significant statistical difference between school principals and staff on staff personnel management practices. The difference in geographical location indicated a dissimilarity in the two studies' participants who might have varied views on staff personnel management practices in their respective states. The two studies may have yielded the same or similar results assuming they were both conducted in the same state.

The finding of the study showed that the student personnel management practices adopted by the school principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State include; processing of students' admission, registration of new students, orienting students as and when due, placement of students based on their abilities, organizing co-curricular activities for students, disciplining of misbehaved students, management of students' records, formulating rules and regulations guiding the conduct of students, appointing of school prefects, and rendering of library services to students. This is in agreement with the finding of Abenga, who reported that the various student personnel management procedures adopted for the enhancement of the quality of education include: orientation of new students, provision of instructional programs and facilities, promoting character training, encouraging sports, social and recreational activities, and maintaining student discipline. This agreement in the findings may be as a result that the schools are established in order to cater for the educational needs of the students, which may lead to principals adopting the aforementioned practices for the development of the students.

The personnel management practices adopted by school principals help students to benefit from school curricular and co-curricular activities. This may account for the outstanding performance of secondary school students in Anambra State in the SSCE examinations in the period 2013 to 2016. It was also found that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers with regards to student personnel management practices adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. This is in agreement with the findings of Chike-Okoli (2009), who reported no significant difference in the mean scores of principals and staff on student personnel management practices in secondary schools. The agreement between the two findings is not surprising as the two studies were conducted in two states of Nigeria and which by implication may have similar characteristics of student personnel management practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that most of the personnel management practices are adopted by principals in the administration of secondary schools in Awka Education Zones of Anambra State. These practices help to produce motivated and dedicated teachers to enhance instructional delivery. Consequently, students will derive maximum benefits from the school curricular and co-curricular activities. Based on the findings of the current study, the following recommendations are made: Government should make provision for the retraining of school principals in the area of personnel management so as to help them update their skills and knowledge needed for the management of staff and students. The government also should embark on sensitization of school principals and student personnel management through the media. Enlightenment should be provided on the counseling and provision of health services for students. The economic situations in Minna and Awka are similar and this may impact on the ways in which student personnel are managed in the two studies.

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Notes

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