

## THE CHANGING ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEADERSHIP ROLES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined the ever expanding roles of secondary school principals in Nigeria. This is because the leadership and administrative acumen of secondary school principals is an important determining factor of the extent to which schools achieve their set out goals and objectives. It further assessed and investigated how principals of secondary schools today can meet up with the challenges of this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The outcome of the study showed that principals need to be up – to – date in terms of today’s administration and management practices. Effective administration and management is also important for creating the enabling environment to enhance the achievement of maximum performance of both staff and students. School principals should be encouraged to perform well through their training and re-training via in-service programmes. The government can assist good administrative and managerial performance of principals by making available the required fund, personnel and material resources for optimal performance as at when due.*

**Keywords:** *Administration, Leadership, Management, Principals, 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

### **Introduction**

Owing to the challenges of the current education system in the country, school principals are concerned with more than management of both human and material resources available in their schools (Oladipo,

2014). They are directly responsible for school's instructional supervision. Such instructional supervision and management of human and material resources are expected to be handled by trained, qualified and experienced personnel for the achievement of the set out educational goals. School principals are entrusted with the management of schools to achieve the set out educational goals.

Supervision and management of schools is so important that only those teachers who are trained, qualified and are well experienced end up to become school principals. Principals play key roles in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools through improved skills of teachers with its rippling effect of improving students' academic performance (Doll, 2016). Among others, principals of secondary schools engage in the improvement of teaching and learning, development of positive supervisory strategies, improvement of school curriculum and library materials, maintaining the school system and above all, evaluating students' progress. In a more specific term, school principals also help to promote the academic and professional status of teachers by encouraging their in-service training to update them with the most current information on pedagogy, curriculum materials, school administration and management as knowledge is not static (Willis, 2014). They are as well saddled with the responsibility of motivating and stimulating both staff and students to encourage their optimum performance. It is also expected that school principals become the source of inspiration to both staff and students for the achievement of school's goals (Ayeni, 2015).

Principal's effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of these outlined roles cannot be separated from both teachers and students' positive performances. According to Olusegun (2018), the observed inadequacies in the performance of most secondary school students cannot be totally ruled out of the performance of the school principals. It is therefore important that school principals become more effective, be up and doing to make a difference in the academic performance of their students and the achievement of school goals through appropriate instructional supervision and right school management. The 21<sup>st</sup> century secondary school principals in Nigeria like other parts of the globe need to pay special attention to their instructional leadership activities as well as proper school administration and management that will go a long way in encouraging

positive performance of teachers and high academic success of students (Musibau, 2017). Their high management and administrative acumen will go a long way in encouraging positive working environment for teachers and attractive learning environment for the students. As such, administrative and management acumen must be tailored towards the achievement of the school goals. It is important to note that principals of schools remain the chief instructional supervisors as well as the managers of both human and material resources available in their individual schools. An effective and efficient school principal motivates and encourage both the teachers and students to put in their best.

They also give appraisal to teachers in order to facilitate students' learning and their optimum academic success (Oyesola, 2014). The major aim of a principal's supervision is to improve teacher's instructional practices and as well and give the needed supports to teachers for better classroom practices (Ihuoma, 2015). Principals are known to have great influence on classroom teaching and learning through their teachers. This is because of help and assistance that they give to their teachers that go a long way to facilitate effective classroom instruction. From time to time, principals are expected to engage in observation of teachers' classroom instruction, formulation and implementation of scheme of work, evaluation and overseeing modification of school's instructional programmes, delivering instructional resources, and proper management of both human and material resources (Ahmed, 2011). At times, principals also help to monitor students' performance, coordinate how the curriculum is fairing and above it all promote the school's academic standard (Ball, 2016). The more principals are engaged in these identified instructional, managerial and administrative functions in schools the better for the achievement of the set out educational goals.

Effectiveness in any aspect of human life determines the achievement of the set out goals. The effectiveness of principals' instructional supervisory and school management roles determine to a large extent the academic achievement of students (Olagoke, 2014). Studies have found out that principals' instructional supervision and prompt school management is in-built in human relation. Therefore, only when the school principal establishes a friendly relationship with both staff and students can meaningful working and learning

environment be expected to result. It was also found out that only in a condition of collaboration with teachers can principals achieve maximally in their management and administration of schools. Principals can go a long way in positively influencing teaching and learning process in their schools when they involve positive administration and management. They can also go a long way encourage professional development of teachers at the school level. A combination of these two can eventually lead to the overall development of education in Nigeria. It was as well established that principals who are qualify and have had long years of experience in school management and administration as well as having undergone leadership training often provide good instructional supervision and appropriate school management (Onyeike, 2013).

Principals of schools however face a lot of challenges in the course of performing their duties of instructional supervision and school management. Among such challenges are those that are associated with lack of required material resources (human and materials), professionalism, management of staff and students as well those that centres on interrelationships (Akpan, 2013). There is also the problem of lack of required administrative and management skills on the part of principals to properly manage and supervise both human and material resources that made available for the achievement of school goals. Among others, principals face the problems of managing appropriately classrooms, laboratories, libraries, sporting facilities and other physical equipment that are found in the school. There is also the challenge of proper management of teaching and non-teaching personnel. The school principals have the challenge of attending to teachers' personal and professional needs in order to encourage maximum output from teachers and optimum results from the students (Nwadianna, 2001). Principals today also face the problem of overload of work as they are saddled with very many responsibilities (Jackson, 2014). Principals' management, administrative and supervisory roles place too much on the same person, that makes being effective and efficient in all very difficult if not impossible. Some principals are found to lack positive environment to successfully carry out the management and administration of schools for positive results. Surge in the population of schools especially those in urban centres pose another great challenge to principals' administration and management of

schools. The population of a single class in some urban centres today is equal if not more than the population of a whole school a century ago.

Motivation of school principals remain one of the problem besetting their maximum performance in schools. Issues relating to the recruitment, selection, training, salary, promotion and the appraisal of their performances should be based on the best practices the world over. What is on ground today base on observation is highly questionable. This is because factors of ethnicity, religion, tribe and creed have much influence on each of the identified variables. Most principals' effect on school's productivity is therefore doubtful as the unfair treatment of teachers in all their different cadres affect their productivity (Isaac, 2012). Lack of appropriate motivation of principals therefore has been found to have effect on the extent to which they are able to create and maintain the required positive environment in which both teachers and students can carry out their assignment effectively and efficiently to accomplish school's educational goals. The extent to which principals can help motivate both staff and students through persuasion, stimulation and encouraging them to act in a manner which is capable of fulfilling the objectives of secondary schools is therefore hampered by lack of appropriate motivation. It is important for principals to provide the atmosphere and good incentives that can create the needed motivation in both staff and students, this can only be done when they are motivated appropriately. The more principals are effective and efficient in their assignment, the more schools get closer to the attainment of their goals and the less the resources that will be required for the attainment of such objectives.

For effective development of education like any other human organisation, the capabilities of the members of staff must be improved from time to time. The need to achieve the outline goals of secondary schools education in Nigeria has being of great concern to all stakeholders in the industry from time past. As such, constant improvement of teaching and non-teaching staff is important if the pre-planned goals and objectives set out for that level of education is to be achieved.

Secondary school in Nigeria is that level of education that admits pupils after their primary schools and qualifies them for admission to tertiary institutions that are also referred to as post-secondary institutions. It helps to prepare children for admission to

higher institution of learning. As such, the Federal Government of Nigeria categorically spelt out the aim of secondary education as the preparation for useful living within the society and for higher education (FGN, 2013, P 18). Hence, secondary schools in the country are expected to live up to this expectation and this assists to provide highly quality secondary school education that will help to provide good foundation for useful life to all beneficiary (Oladimeji, 2016).

The effectiveness of secondary schools in achieving the basic aims to a large extent depends on some key factors. Among these are the effectiveness and efficiency of the frontline supervisor of the school. The achievement of the educational goals of secondary schools is affected by factors that are directly related to the government, school environment, availability or otherwise of human and material resources, school community. Principals, in terms of their leadership and administrative effectiveness and efficiency is also a very important factor in schools' achievement of the set out educational goals. The extent to which a school achieve its set out goals depend greatly on the leadership and administrative acumen of the school principal. As each level of education is set up to achieve some outlined goals and objectives, the extent of achieving these set out goals to a large extent depend on a combination of factors. The achievement of the set out goals and objectives is not automatic, but is as a result of teamwork and positive collaboration among the individuals and groups of people that are involve as it is found in other human organisations. The extent of the achievement of the set out goals and objectives to a large extent depend on the school principal whose ability, skills, experience, exposure, personality, professional competence go a long way to determine and influence the extent of achievement of the set out goals and objectives as he/she in many ways influences and motivates other resources that are available towards the achievement of the outlined goals.

The fact remains that important issues having to do with the school – staff, curriculum methods and the techniques of teaching, school plant, co-curricular activities as well as human relationship are very important and if well-coordinated can go a long way in ensuring the achievement of school goals. All these depend on the principal's management and administrative acumen. The quality of today's secondary school graduates in terms of their productivity leaves so

much questions in the mind of most stakeholders in the education sector of the nation's life as many of them have been found to have performed below expectation (Ford, 2011). For more than two decades ago, there has been an outcry of the fall in the standard of the nation's education. This is illustrated by the fact that some product of the nation's secondary education cannot converse in simple English language. Some have been found to be unable to construct mere simple sentence to express what is in their mind. Are secondary schools in the nation adequately achieving the identified objectives in the National Policy on Education? As according Olanrinoye (2015), product of today's secondary school are far away from living a useful life in the society or are many qualified to successfully gain admission to higher education as stipulated by the National Policy on Education. To initiate positive changes in the product of the nation's secondary schools therefore will involve adequately addressing emerging problems relating to both staff and students, the government in terms of provision of adequate finances, human and material resources as well as school management and administration put in the hands of school principals. In Nigerias secondary schools today, observation revealed that they are bedeviled with a combination of challenges among which include examination malpractice, cultism, indiscipline and truancy among others which continue to encourage poor performance in both internal and external examinations that make the achievement of the preplanned goals and objectives difficult to achieve. Ineffective administration and management of schools has been identified as key factors that has encouraged the present state of affairs in the nation's secondary schools (Knigas et al, 2012). As through their positive instructional supervision, right administration and management, they can initiate outstanding and meaningful changes in both staff and students that will not only affect the tone of the school but will bring out meaningful results in students' success. Secondary schools can only achieve the set out goals and objectives and effectively contribute to the development of the country when they are effectively managed and administered by qualified and experienced principals. Such good administration will have its foundation in a combination of activities, people and government policies to guide the activities of secondary school principals, other members of staff and students.

Secondary school principals in Nigeria today are frontline supervisors of the schools they head. They are entrusted with leadership, administrative and supervisory roles. A secondary school principal adequately combines each of these: he/she is a/an leader, teacher, governor, business director, organizer, guide, philosopher and friend to all members of staff and students. The effectiveness of each school therefore depend to a great extent on the unique administrative and leadership qualities of the school principal. It is therefore worthy of note that a principal with a wide knowledge and experience of human management and good leadership quality is more likely to be more successfully than another who does not have any of those sterling qualities (Fried, 2017). It is not too much to conclude that the more successful a principal is in working out positive teamwork, promote healthy school climate, culture and creating a good school environment with high morale, the better for the achievement of the set out goals and objectives. This is because it will go a long way in motivating both staff and students to work towards the achievement of the set out goals. The extent to which the principal is capable of communicating effectively with his/her members of staff (teaching and non-teaching), as well as with the students, can go a long way in ensuring trust between the principal and other personnel that are found in the school setting which will in turn facilitate positive and harmonious working environment (Usman, 2015).

Leadership has very many definitions and so it seems quite difficult to come up with a single definition. For the purpose of this work, leadership can be defined as a body of people who lead and direct the activities of others toward the achievement of the group's goals. Sally (2012) simply refers to leadership as the state or position of being a leader. A leader is that individual who directs and guide others to do what is right at the appropriate time. Leadership in its deepest sense involves that ability to lead, direct and organize a group. Leadership often involves a right combination of good strategy and character. As such, Godwin (2015) concluded that purposive leadership at time involves good persuasion by which such leader uses appropriate medium to encourage his/her subject to follow the path that is correct and may assist in the achievement of the organisation's goals. It involves social process by which leaders appropriately encourage and influence others to accomplish the predetermined goals and objectives



of a group. On the other hand, a good leader at a school setting is expected to demonstrate good character to serve as example to staff and students in the bid to achieve the organization's goals. 21<sup>st</sup> century principals are leaders in their respective schools to both staff and students.

Leadership further involves the exercise of power or influence among a group of individuals as man is a social animal that often live in company of others. According to Oluwole (2013), it involves the ability of an individual or organization to lead or guide other individuals, team or entire organization towards the achievement of the group's goals. Agboola, Lamidi and Siyanbola (2017) concluded that leadership basically includes pattern of behaviour as it involves the influence extended by an individual or group to direct its efforts toward personal attitudes of others towards the achievement of the group's goal. A principal fits in well to the position of a leader as he/she leads other school personnel towards the achievement of the set out goals.

The principals of secondary schools play very many roles in the bid to achieve the set out goal. The typical 21<sup>st</sup> century principal remains a central figure in the administration of secondary schools. The purpose of school administration is to enable members of staff of such school and the students to work together harmoniously with the school management to achieve the set out goals and objective of the school. Administration is the means by which the set out goals are achieved through cooperative human efforts in the capacity to effectively and efficiently coordinates many and most times conflicting social energies in a single organisation. Sally (2012) sees it as the activities that are carried out in order to plan, organise and run a business, school or other institution. It is majorly concerned with building individuals into and organisation as well as managing and directing such organisation or institution. The focus of 21<sup>st</sup> century principal majorly involves the performance of executive duties, carrying out of planned out policies to fulfill a purpose and the control of day-to-day running of the school. Administration simply put involves the process of guiding, leading and controlling the efforts of a group of individuals towards some outlined and predetermined objectives, creating required positive interaction between available human and materials resources.

Principal provides the drive and direction for realizing and achieving the set out goals. Leaders involving appropriately

management skills make best use of resources and process to make such achievement happen. Principals appropriately focus on producing positive changes in the school. Principals as schools' administrative heads engage in the provision of directives and the utilisation of resources for the purpose of the school's effectiveness. Leadership is the procedure whereby a person influences another individual or group members towards goal setting and goal achievement with no force or coercion involve (Fleet, 1991; p.157).

As principal is the sole administrator of the school acting as a link between the government, community, parents and the school (Adelana, 2018). The principal receives blames for all faults and praises for all good actions that are associated with the school (Adesola, 2016). The administration, management and leadership of the school rest on the shoulder of the principal. As in the bid to lead and direct others towards the achievement of the set out goals he/she automatically plays the roles of a manager, an administrator, curriculum planner, disciplinarian, an assessor and evaluator. He/she is as well involve in examination, resource allocation, costing, planning as well as appropriately coordinating school – community relation (Oladele, 2013).

Among others, a secondary school principal performs the following functions in the bid to deliver quality output in the 21st century education system in Nigeria. These include:

He/she is a leader in the school organization; he/she is the personnel manager of both staff and students; he/she is the manager and maintenance of school's physical facilities; he/she is an executive manager and supervisor of the school; he/she is a curriculum and instructional supervisor with a major focus on quality assurance; he/she is the manager of school finance as the chief accounting officer; he/she is in charge of record keeping and monitoring of other school records kept by others; he/she is a motivator to both staff and students; he/she is a change facilitator and he/she is a prime mover of positive community relations. In the bid to successfully perform excellently well in each of these outlined roles, 21<sup>st</sup> century principal must be conversant with the latest in terms of pedagogy, school management and administration, and as well build a strong rapport with both staff and students. The extent of a principal's success depend

on the amount of positive and harmonious environment built for both staff and students.

Most times, the principals or their representatives are often involve in the curriculum process, as outside the classroom teachers, the principals are the closet to the theater of curriculum implementation in the classroom than any other stakeholder in the education industry. Even where principals are not directly involve in classroom teaching and learning, their influence on classroom interactions between the teacher and students is still very great. They are constantly in touch with classroom teachers that are directly involve in the classroom implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, they have firsthand information on how the curriculum is fairing from time to time. Secondary school principals are therefore involve in all curriculum process – curriculum planning, curriculum development, implementation and evaluation.

Secondary school principals are also involved in conflicts and conflicts management in their different schools. In any human organisation and human setting, there is bound to be conflict of interest which most times encourage conflict. Conflict simply results from disagreement, incompatibility, opposition and divergence of opinion as a number of human beings are not likely to reason and think the same way. In extreme cases, this is expressed in people having different opinion, engaging in different actions or openly opposing one another. Where and when conflicts continue over a long period of time, the success of any organization is open to many challenges. Where conflict is found in a school setting, it may be hamper the success of the goals and objectives of such schools. Therefore, as conflicts encourage individuals that are expected to work together harmoniously for the achievement of the set out goals and objectives working in opposing direction, it remains a monster that must not allowed to grow if the organisation's goals are to be achieved. Despite education law and other government rules and regulations, regulating interactions and interrelationship among the personnel in a school setting, yet, conflict is often witnessed. This is because personal needs, values, attitudes interest and dispositions at time run in contrary to these government's rules and regulations, and as such, this encourages conflicts between and among the personnel that are found in secondary schools that must not be allowed to live. The extent to which the principal is able to

appropriately manage human relationship goes a long way to determine and affects the kind of human relationship. School's achievement of its goal and objectives therefore is dependent on the principal's ability to successfully manage emanating conflicts. The principal's adoption of participative and supportive style of leadership involving trust, respect and development of personal traits among others will go a long way in resolving personal conflict and moving the school forward.

Secondary school principals also represent and present the school to the outside world. The principal as the head of the school represents the school before the governments, the school community, parents and generally before the outside world. Therefore, the principal is in the best position to carry out the function of public relations between his/her school and the outside world. The more he/she makes a positive representation of the school to the outside world, the better for the tone of the school.

If secondary school principals' roles are so vast, then there is the need for positive decision making to encourage right choices from all the alternatives that are open to him/her in the course of school administration. In the light of this, the principal weights the different alternatives that are available to confirm which is better in the course of the school administration, the principal is involved in planning, organizing, directing and controlling the activities of all others towards the achievement of the set out goals and objectives.

Decisions of principals cover a wide range of areas including; resources (human and materials), timing of school programme, management of school fund and provision of useful information for the development and progress of the school. Decision are also required of effective modes of communication, methods of teaching, best strategy of evaluation, when best to evaluate what to evaluate and uses of such evaluation. Decisions made by the principal is however dependent on a combination of factors among these are; the extent to which the decision made will add values to the school, resources available, leadership style of the principal, societal values, data made available and of course, the knowledge of the principal (Williams, 2018). Principal's leadership style is a strong factor in his/her decision making process. For example, an autocratic principal may make most decision without any consultation with any other person. While a democratic

leader will make due consultation with others before coming to conclusion on major issues concerning the school. Much of a principal's decision will also depend on the principals' knowledge, skill, experience and expertise.

The principals of secondary school often make effective use of monitoring and evaluation as useful tool for their assignment. These are useful tools by which the effort made to ensure that a programme or a system is kept in track towards the attainment of its goals as it progress. Evaluation is a systematic way of gathering or collection relevant information that enables decision about the achievement of a school's goals and objectives. It adequately confirms the quality of input, process and output of the school system. It assists in providing answers to issues and questions regarding the progress of the schools as well as making positive decision for school programme's improvement. Secondary school principals use monitoring and evaluation to confirm the effectiveness and efficiency or other wise of available resources and their method of management and administration.

If secondary schools principals will be effective in these multiple roles they are expected to perform and encourage the achievement of the set out goals and objectives, their recruitment, training/development and motivation/remuneration are very important.

The recruitment of teachers is an important function of staff personnel management, in which individuals are employed to fill vacant positions in school. Information on recruitment of teachers are often carried out through advertisement in the media like radio, television and today through the computer, better still, it can be through daily newspapers or posters. Would be candidates that are interested apply in writing or make personal appearance depending on the requirement as stated in the advertisement. At times, it may involve a combination of the two (combining written test and oral interview). Teachers' promotion after employment depends on the education law of each state. As some states involve Paper Pencil Tests (PPT), others involve oral interview, while some others engage in mass promotion regardless of ones performance at work. The post of principals is however reserve for senior teachers that have gained wide experience over the years. This is however subject to vacancy, whoever meet the conditions is engage as principal once there is the required vacancy. Principals of

secondary can only be expected to be upright in their performance of the outlined roles when the best hands are engaged as principals.

Training and professional development of principals like other teachers comes through conferences, seminars, workshops and other in-service programmes. Through such in-service programmes, principals are assisted to upgrade their knowledge, they are also intimated with latest ideas on management and administration skills in other parts of the globe. It also intimate school principals with recent development in other aspects of knowledge, especially on teaching and learning. In most parts of the country, such in-service training is majorly organised and implemented by principals' organisation- All Nigerian Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS).

Secondary schools principals can as well be encouraged to put up their best through right motivation and remuneration. Such need to be emphasized to provide conducive atmosphere for personnel involve in the school setting to put in their best at work. It serves as a means of arousing the interest of every individual and encourage the willingness to come up with greater productivity. It is like food that provide the required energy for human action. Right motivation and remuneration will thus have the needed impacts that is likely to encourage maximum performance of secondary school principals that is bound to affect positive performance of both staff and students..

Thus, today's 21st century secondary school principals can only be relevant and actively put in their best for maximum achievement where the best hand available are involve. In order to engender effective administration of secondary education, due regards should be made to mode of entrance to teaching, fairness in appointment and promotion of teachers, continuous professional training through in-service training via seminars, workshops and conferences. These are important to encourage maximum achievement of secondary school goals. It is also important that due regard must also be given to principal's motivation and remuneration as such are bound to arouse and encourage the principal that zeal to perform his or her duties diligently, dutifully and whole heartedly. Thus, affording a dynamic and outstanding changes in secondary school students' affective, psychomotor and cognitive performances. Making it possible for secondary schools to achieve the predetermined aims, goals and objectives.

**Conclusion**

The study established that today's school principals are concerned with the management of both human and material resources, alongside the provision of orientation for new members of staff, supervision of school curriculum, time tabling and monitoring students' academic progress. For effective of these noble roles, principals are expected to be exposed to continuous in-service training to update them on the latest in pedagogy, administration and management of schools. The extent of each principal's effectiveness and efficiency in each of these identified roles have been found to positively correlates teachers' effectiveness in the teaching and learning process. This in turn has a rippling effect on students' positive academic achievement in school. Principals' effectiveness and efficiency is however challenged by the problems of lack of finances, inadequate materials, inadequate staffing, high turnover of teachers, over population of students, the problem of interrelationships, and above all, unprofessionalism of some teachers.

**Recommendations**

In the light of the present state of principals' administration and management of schools, the following recommendations have been suggested for effective and efficient 21<sup>st</sup> century secondary schools in Nigeria: That principals should engage in in-service training at home and abroad to update their knowledge of modern day school management and administration. This is because knowledge is not static. It is also recommended that principals should set time for their instructional supervision and management of schools as this will have positive influence on teachers' performance and students' overall academic achievement in schools. Principals are expected to involve appropriately, require technical skills to effectively motivate both teachers and students to positive activities that can encourage school's achievement of their outline goals. In view of the present economic realities in the country, it is also recommended that principals should try as much as possible to be dedicated and focused to their roles of instructional supervision, proper management and administration of schools

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