

# Management Competency Needs of Principals for Effective Administration of Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*Many secondary school principals in Nigeria have no serious or professional training in educational management and administration and are therefore bereft of the changing trends in administration of the 21st century. This study investigated the management competency needs of principals for effective administration of secondary schools at senior secondary school (SSS) level. Three research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study comprised all the SSS principals in the South East geo political zone of Nigeria. The sample of the study was made up of 100 SSS principals, selected by stratified random sampling technique from all the SSS located in the five states namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. A structured questionnaire titled "Principals' Management Skills Survey Questionnaire" (PMSSQ) was used for data collection. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found among others that principals consider instructional leadership skills as a very essential management skill needed for effective secondary school administration. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized by universities and ministries of education, these will help to improve the principals' management competency skills in schools in secondary schools.*

## Keywords

*Management Competency, Principal, Effective Administration, Skills, Secondary Education System.*

## Introduction

Education in all countries of the world has been considered very important for personal and societal development (Ikediugwu, 2016). It is in view of the indispensable role of education in the development of man and modern society that various declarations on education have been made at the global level, and in keeping with the requirements of the section 18 of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (FGN, 2004). Olaleye (2013) reports that the problem of Nigeria does not tie with the knowledge and adequate policies, but effective planning and sustained implementation. However, Ikegbusi and Iheanacho (2016) attribute the failure of such educational programmes in Nigeria to several factors. Among these factors are teacher factor (shortage of teachers, inadequate training and poor motivation). They also include lack of basic infrastructure, lack of leadership and administrative will, lack of adequate and accurate statistics, inadequate funding, embezzlement, bureaucratic bottle-neck of civil service and poor attitude to work (Alike, 2016).

The secondary school manager is the principal, he or she is a major determinant of secondary education system (Lipham, 2016). The tone of the school depends on the principals' effectiveness. The quality of training acquired by them will sharpen their administrative visions and missions (Ogba & Igu, 2014). Adaegbe (2016) sees the principal as an administrative head, a manager, a community public relation man, a supervisor, an instructional leader, a curriculum innovator and a catalyst towards planned revolution. Egwu (2016) is of the opinion that the principal is a leader who must plan, coordinate and supervise the affairs of the school, so that they run smoothly. For Ikediugwu (2006) students' performance, teachers' achievement and schools' effectiveness all depend on the quality of the principal in the school. Ikegbusi and Iheanacho (2016) are of the opinion that next in importance to the quality of teaching service is the quality of the administrative service provided in the school. In their view, no amount of administrative services provided elsewhere in the school system can make up for its lack at the level of the school principalship.

This is the level at which the administrative service facilitates most of the work of teachers with children unless the person immediately in charge of the school is professionally competent, the teachers' efforts cannot be maximally effective.

This view is well expressed in National Policy on Education (2004: 22). It stated that government will work towards improving the quality of secondary education by giving support to measures that will ensure effective administration, specially, it outlined the selection of persons of the 'right calibre' for principal of schools and the mounting of induction courses for newly appointed principals. This noble intention of government presupposes that the appointment of principals of schools should be based not on year of graduation, but on administrative competence. Principals are also not appointed on sex and location. A male or female principal can be posted in any school provided that he/she has reached the principals' cadre. Principalship involves the control of human and material resources for the achievement of the school goals and objectives. Sitting at the top of the administrative ladder of the secondary school therefore is the principal.

Management according to Nwune, Nwogbo and Okonkwo (2016) is the arrangement of available human and material resources for the achievement of desired goals and objectives. Lipham (2016) and Nwadiani (2012) explain that in schools, human resources are tutorial and non-tutorial staff with different specializations and roles, who are employed to work in the institution, and material resources are facilities and equipment that facilitate teaching and learning. Ikegbusi, Eziamaka and Onwuasoanya list the indices of effective school management as good communication network, availability of appropriate resources, good human relations and community building, high academic excellence among children, sound discipline among staff and children, systematic student development and transformation among. In the context of this study, management is the organization and utilization of human and material resources by the principal in secondary schools in South East geo-political zone of Nigeria for the achievement of goals and objectives of secondary education.

Competency is however looked at in terms of skills. For Katz (2015) there are three basic skills identified as necessary for every administrator to possess which include: technical, human and conceptual skills. These basic skills are generally defined and examined in relation to the task of the secondary school principals. Competency as opined by Carol and Edward (2004) is the successful performance of a task through the use of knowledge, skills, attitude and judgement. They further explain that it is the state of being functionally adequate in the performance of one's duty. Stronge, Richard and Catano describe competency as the ability to do something well, measured against a standard especially ability acquired through experience or training. In other words, a competent principal should possess the competencies which he/she need for effective administration of secondary schools. In the context of this study, competency is the knowledge, skills and attitude which the principal of secondary schools need to enable them improve in their responsibilities in schools.

Pollock and Ford (2015) define administration as the act of administering or the state of being administered or management of public affairs. Management and administration according to Ikediugwu (2016) are two sides of the same coin. In distinguishing between educational administration and management, Kafele (2016) sees educational administration as the arrangement of human and material resources and programmes available for education and using them carefully and systematically for achieving educational objectives, while management he defines as the application of management principles, procedures and practices to the issues and problems of education. Smith (2015) sees management and administration as synonymous. Heller (2012) outlines functions of school administrators as including management of instructional programmes, staff personnel administration, students' personnel administration, finance and physical resource management and community relationship management.

Decision-making as an integral part of planning is a very crucial and indispensable aspect of management and very essential for the success of instructional management. It is therefore very imperative that school principals be knowledgeable in decision making for effective school administration. Olaleye (2014) opines that principals as the chief executive in secondary schools should possess skills for making right decisions that will be of immense benefit to the school need and staff generally. Iheukwumere and Afiamgbon (2016) consider that decision-making as a mental exercise and display of intellectual or conceptual ability of the educational plans made for national development had failed because of lack of adequate information on matters involved which resulted due to wrong decisions.

Ikediugwu (2016) posits that for a result oriented secondary school management, the teachers need to be motivated using democratic leadership skills by the principal, full involvement of the teachers in programme development, provision of adequate qualified teachers and adequate teaching materials. Ikegbusi (2014) and Egwu (2016) opine that workers will be more productive if they have the opportunity of meeting their needs while working in an organization, such as improved condition of work, payment of salaries as when due and provision of in-service training among others. In addition, Kiddler (2015), McNamara (2016) and Okoye (2016) agree that communication skills, leadership skills and decision-making skills are essential for effective personnel management. Egwu (2016) and Heller (2012) agree that managing funds is one of the major tasks of principals. The success of any school programme according to Iheukwumere and Afiamgbon

(2016) depends very much on the way the financial inputs are managed. Alia and Iwuoha (2014) state that the central purpose of the financial management is the raising of fund and ensuring that the funds so mobilized are utilized in the most effective and efficient manner. They further outline the following means through which schools could raise funds: school fees, old boys/girls, non-governmental agencies, community efforts, donation from individuals, charity organizations, endowment funds and proceeds from school activities.

In the view of the above, the author has decided to carry out this study on the skills needed by secondary school principals for effective administration of secondary schools in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The problem of the study put in question form is: What are those skills that could be adopted by secondary school principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Nigeria?

### Research Questions

The study was guided by these research questions.

1. What are the instructional leadership skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria?
2. What are the personnel management skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria?
3. What are the financial management skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on the instructional leadership skills needed by principals for effective secondary schools' administration.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the financial management skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools.

### Methodology

The study adopted a survey design aimed at investigating management competency needs of principals for effective administration of secondary schools in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. 100 secondary schools were selected by stratified random sampling technique from all the senior secondary schools located in the five states (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo) in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. According to Nwankwo (2016) stratified sampling ensures the representation of every stratum. This comprised of 20 secondary schools from each geo-political zone. The questionnaire titled "Principals' Management Skills Survey Questionnaire" (PMSSQ) was used for data collection. The PMSSQ was made up of 30 items. Each of the items was on a 4 point likert-scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D). The questionnaire items were arranged in three clusters to elicit information regarding the management leadership skills needed by principals. To ascertain the validity of the instrument, the instrument was face validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Abia state University, Uturu, Nigeria.

To determine the reliability of PMSSQ, a test re-test technique was employed. A pilot study was carried out by administering the PMSSQ instrument at intervals of two weeks on 20 non-participating SSS principals from Imo state. The reliability test was calculated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A correlation coefficient of 0.85 was obtained which indicated high consistency of items of the instrument. The researcher, with the help of six research assistants administered and collected the instruments from the respondents during the All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS),

held at Ekwueme square in Awka, Anambra state of Nigeria from 2nd to 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2016. This technique helped the researcher to reduce the chances of the questionnaire being misplaced or not returned by the respondents. Out of the 100 copies of PMSSQ distributed, 98 copies (representing 98%) were dully filled and retrieved. Descriptive statistics including the use of mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics.

## Results

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation on Instructional Leadership Skills needed by Principals for Effective Secondary School Administration

S/N	Items	X	Sd	Remarks
1.	Principals in co-operation with his teachers define objectives for the school and each department and unit.	3.25	1.08	A
2.	Principals jointly with teachers select learning experience method and procedures to employ in achieving the objectives.	3.04	0.99	A
3.	Principals assign subjects and classes to teachers according to qualifications and competence	3.62	0.70	SA
4.	Principals allocate time to subjects	3.31	0.80	A
5.	Principals make available facilities accessible to all teachers	3.58	0.61	SA
6.	Principals ensure that the staff in different units and work positions work co-operatively and not antagonistically for the common goals of the school.	3.81	0.39	SA
7.	Principals supervise the teachers' lesson plans.	3.29	0.83	A
8.	Principals supervise teaching and learning activities in the class.	3.52	0.56	SA
9.	Principals evaluate the planning and implementation of curriculum programmes.	3.10	1.06	A
10.	Principals assist teachers to try new research findings	3.21	1.01	A

The results in table 1 above, indicate that the principals perceived all the items as instructional leadership skills needed for effective secondary school administration as all items have mean scores above the 2.50 cut off point on a 4point liket-scale. Item 6 has the highest mean score of 3.81. This shows that the principals consider it to be a very instructional leadership skill for effective secondary school administration.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation on Personnel Management Skills needed by Principals for Effective Secondary School Administration.

S/N	Items	X	SD	R
1	Principals model the behaviours they expect from others	3.71	0.50	SA
2	Principals identify what motivates their staff	3.51	0.51	SA
3	Principals communicate effectively with their staff	3.71	0.50	SA
4	Principals recognize the efforts of their staff	3.67	0.47	SA
5	Principals delegate duties and authorities to capable staff	3.73	0.45	SA
6	Principals involve staff in decision-making and matters concerning them	3.63	0.49	SA
7	Principals praise in public and criticize in private	2.86	0.89	A
8	Principals motive, encourage and persuade their staff	3.41	0.56	A
9	Principals encourage and enable appropriate professional development of staff	3.49	0.51	A
10	Principals defuse tense situations and negotiate a solution	3.63	0.45	SA
11	Principals do not take sides in conflict resolutions	3.73	0.45	SA

From the table above, the results show that all the personnel management skills needed by principals for effective secondary school administration have mean scores above the 2.50 cut off on a 4-point liket scale. Items 5 and 11 have equal and highest mean scores of 3.73, each showing that the principals perceive the personnel management skills as very essential skill needed for effective administration of secondary schools. On the other hand, item 7 has the lowest mean score of 2.86, which indicates that the principals consider the skill less important as personnel management skill needed for effective secondary school administration.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on Financial Management Skills needed by Principals for Effective Secondary School Administration.

S/N	Items	X	SD	R
1.	Principals jointly with the management staff and heads of departments and units, prepare budgets for the school	2.78	1.03	A
2.	Principals prioritize financial allocation according to needs	3.29	0.71	A
3.	Principals plan and source for funds for school improvement	3.27	0.81	A
4.	Principals ensure that budgets reflect agreed goals and objectives	3.49	0.54	A
5.	Principals delegate the mechanism of financial matters to capable staff	3.14	0.76	A
6.	Principals keep close check on financial matters delegated to staff	3.43	0.58	A
7.	Principals work within the constraints of the school budget	3.53	0.58	SA
8.	Principals keep accurate financial information about the school	3.65	0.52	SA
9.	Principals give true and fair view of the financial position of the school	3.67	0.52	SA

Results in table 3 show that all the financial management skills are needed by the principals for effective administration of secondary schools. Each of the items has a mean score above 2.50 cut off points on a 4-point likert scale. Item 9 has the highest mean score of 3.67, indicating that this financial management skill is highly needed by the principals for effective secondary school administration. However, the results also show that the principals do not consider item 1 a very essential management skill needed by the principals for effective administration of secondary schools as the item has the lowest mean of 2.78.

### Hypotheses

Table 4a: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean opinion scores of male and female Principals on the Instructional Leadership Skills needed for Effective Administration of Secondary Schools

S/N	Items	X	SD	X	t-crt	t-cal	Decision
1.	Principals in cooperation with his teachers define objectives for the school and each department and unit	3.18	1.07	3.04	1.12	0.65	Accepted
2.	Principals jointly with teachers select learning experiences, methods and procedures to employ in achieving the objectives	3.15	1.07	2.80	1.94	0.94	Accepted
3.	Principals assign subjects and classes to teachers according to qualification and competence	0.61	0.72	3.67	0.62	0.29	Accepted
4.	Principals allocate time to subjects	3.36	0.70	3.20	1.01	0.56	Accepted
5.	Principals make available facilities accessible to all teachers according to needs	3.55	0.56	3.67	0.72	0.57	Accepted
6.	Principals ensure that all the staff in different unit and work positions work cooperatively and not antagonistically for the common goals of the school	3.82	0.39	3.80	0.41	0.16	Accepted
7.	Principals supervise the teachers lesson plan	3.33	0.85	3.07	1.03	0.85	Accepted
8.	Principals supervise teachers and learning activities in the classroom	3.55	0.56	3.47	0.52	0.47	Accepted
9.	Principals evaluate the planning and implementation of curriculum programmes	3.27	0.98	2.73	1.57	1.16	Accepted
10.	Principals assist teachers to try new research findings	3.27	1.01	3.07	1.03	0.63	accepted

The results of the item analysis in table 4a show that there is no significant difference in the mean opinion scores of male and female principals for effective secondary school administration. The t scores for each of the skills in the table are found to be less than the t-critical. The null hypothesis is therefore upheld.

Table 4b: Group analysis of Hypothesis 1

Group	$\mu$	$\sigma$	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	3.41	0.02	1.33	1.96	Accepted
Female	3.29	0.36			

The above group of hypothesis 1 (table 4b) shows that at 98 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of probability, the calculated t-value of 1.33 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on the need for instructional leadership skills of principals for effective secondary school administration.

**Hypothesis 2**

Table 5a: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean scores of urban and rural school Principals on the Financial Management Skills needed by Principals for Effective Administration of Secondary Schools

S/N	Items	X	SD	X	t-crit	t-cal	Decision
1.	Principals jointly with the management staff and heads of departments and units prepare budgets for the school	2.70	0.99	2.86	1.08	0.54	Accepted
2.	Principals prioritise financial allocation according to needs	3.26	0.66	3.32	0.78	0.29	Accepted
3.	Principals plan and source for funds for school improvement	3.33	0.78	3.08	0.85	0.64	Accepted
4.	Principals ensure that budget reflects agreed goals and objectives	3.42	0.50	3.59	0.59	0.08	Accepted
5.	Principals delegate the mechanism of financial matters to capable staff	3.11	0.80	3.18	0.73	0.31	Accepted
6.	Principals keep close check on financial matters delegated to staff	3.37	0.74	3.50	0.60	0.71	Accepted
7.	Principals work within the constraints of the school budget	3.48	0.51	3.59	0.67	0.63	Accepted
8.	Principals keep accurate financial information about their schools	3.70	0.47	3.59	0.59	0.71	Accepted
9.	Principals give true and fair view of the financial position of the school	3.67	0.48	3.68	0.57	0.06	Accepted

Table 5a shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural secondary school principals on the financial management skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools. Since the t-test analysis reveals that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value in all the financial management skills, therefore the null hypothesis is upheld. This implies that the urban and rural school principals share the same view on the financial management skills needed by principals for effective secondary school administration.

Table 5b: Group analysis of Hypothesis 2

Group	$\mu$	$\sigma$	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Urban	3.34	0.30	1.625	1.96	Accepted
Rural	3.39	0.27			

Table 5b finally indicates that at 98 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated t-value of 1.625 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the financial management skills needed for effective secondary school administration.

**Summary of Findings**

From the results of the study, the following findings are made:

1. The principals perceived all the items listed as instructional leadership skills needed for effective administration of secondary schools as all items have mean scores above the 2.50 cut-off point on a 4-point liket scale
2. All the personnel management skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools have mean scores above the 2.50 cut-off point on a 4-point liket scale.
3. The principals show a high positive response to all the financial management skills needed for effective administration of secondary schools as each item has a mean score above 2.50 cut-off point on a 4-point liket scale.

**Discussion of Findings**

The discussion of the findings is based on the research questions

and hypotheses which guided the study.

**Instructional Leadership Skills needed by Principals for Effective Secondary School Administration**

Research question 1 sought to find out the instructional leadership skills that could be adopted by secondary school principals for effective administration of secondary schools in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The results show that the instructional leadership skills needed by principals for effective secondary school administration include: principals’ cooperation with the teachers in defining objectives for the school, selecting learning experience and methods/procedures to achieve the objectives; assigning subjects and classes according to qualifications and competence, allocating time to subjects, making facilities accessible to all teachers according to need. The skills also include principals ensuring that all staff work co-operatively for the common goals of the schools, supervising lesson plans, teaching and learning activities; evaluating the plan and implementation of curriculum programmes and assisting teachers to new findings. These findings are in line with the views of McNamara (2016) and Okoye (2016) who argue that for effective secondary school administration, the administrators must possess basic skills in management and leadership. Heller (2012) is of the opinion that school managers must employ and decision-making skills, leadership competencies, supervisory skills and skills for school climate management. These findings are not surprising because according to Ikegbusi (2004) the success of any human endeavour depends on the competencies and skills possessed by the personnel who performs the tasks necessary for the achievement of objectives.

It is therefore very clear that lack of these core instructional leadership skills would make the principals ineffective in achieving the goals and objectives of secondary schools. It is in support of this that Nwune, Nwogbo and Okonkwo (2016) say that without adequate commitment to the performance of school heads’ instructional roles categorized as supervision, curriculum development and innovation, the goals of education may not be realized.

### **Personnel Management Skills needed by Principals for Effective Administration of Secondary Schools**

On research question 2 which shows the personnel management skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools. The skills include: principals identifying what motivates their staff, recognizing the efforts of their staff, motivating their staff, involving their staff in decision-making on matters which concern them, communicating effectively with the staff, delegating duties and authorities to capable staff, encouraging appropriate staff professional development. These findings are equally in line with the findings of Olaleye (2013) who found that school administrators, in order to be effective, will always involve their staff in decision-making as well as delegate duties to capable staff. He further says that successful administrators are those who know how to motivate their staff to make them co-operative and loyal. Also, Ikediugwu (2016) agrees that encouraging staff professional development helps teachers to improve on their weaknesses.

Other personnel management skills needed by principals for effective administration of secondary schools as shown in the results of the study are principals modelling behaviours expected from others, principals calming tense situations and negotiating solutions and not taking sides in conflict resolutions. These findings are in agreement with Alike (2016) and Adaegbe (2016) who differently reported those behaviours that demonstrate leadership competencies and conflict management skills which include among others: set expectations, model behaviours expected from others, do not take sides, and negotiate to achieve resolutions. Kafele (2016) supports the above findings by saying that timely resolution of conflicts brings harmony, co-operation, unity, job satisfaction and good job performance.

### **Financial Management Skills needed by Principals for Effective Administration of Secondary School**

Research question 3 sought to find out the financial management skills that secondary school principals could adopt for effective administration of schools. From the results, it was the opinion of the principals that prioritizing financial allocation according to needs, ensuring that budgets replicate agreed goals and objectives, delegating the mechanism of financial matters to capable staff, keeping close check on financial matters delegated to staff, working within the constraints of the school budget, planning and sourcing for funds for school development, keeping accurate financial information about the school and giving time and fair view of financial position of the school are financial management skills needed by principals for effective secondary school administration. These findings are in line with the views of Alia and Iwuoha (2014) who agree that any school administrator must know how to manage his or her finance effectively. Still in support of these findings, Keller (2012) and Lipham (2016) say that financial management skills are needed by the school principals to make them effective in planning, sourcing and in utilization of school funds.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the above findings, the following conclusions are highlighted

Principals of secondary schools in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria needed instructional leadership skills, personnel management skills and financial management skills for effective administration of secondary schools. Therefore, nobody talks about management competency of principals without mentioning

instructional leadership, personnel management and financial management skills.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the discussion that followed, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. Education managers should discourage and manage conflicts in the school system and also create conducive organizational climate devoid of indiscipline.
2. Principals will endeavour to be competent in defining objectives with teachers as this will make teachers to be committed in their job to ensure that the objectives and goals of secondary education are achieved as they participate in deciding the objectives.
3. Principals of secondary schools need additional training in school administration. This will make them to be competitive in the committee of nations. It will also equip them with specialized skills and systematic body of principles to sharpen their administrative skills.
4. To improve the management competency of principals, seminars, workshops and conferences have to be organized by universities and ministries of education. Principals need training and re-training in administration of secondary schools.
5. Induction courses for newly appointed principals should be organized by universities and ministries of education, such short term practice oriented courses would enrich practising school administrators.

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