

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS OF PRINCIPALS IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN THE LIGHT OF HIDDEN CURRICULUM**

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*Administration, hidden curriculum, discipline, administrative achievement, administrative constraints, academic performance*

**Abstract:** *Discipline of staff and students has always been in the forefront of effective school administration. This is one of the areas in school administration where when principals get it right, there exists a favourable school environment conducive to teaching and learning. The study ascertained the achievements and constraints of principals in the administration of secondary schools in the light of hidden curriculum. The researchers carried out the study in public secondary schools in Owerri Education zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative paradigm. It specifically employed descriptive survey research design. The sample size of the study was 60 principals. Two hypotheses guided the study. The study was anchored on Henri Fayol's Administrative Management Theory, and supported by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. A twenty-five - item questionnaire was used to collect data. The researchers collected the data in person. The used t-test statistics to test the two hypotheses that guided the study at a significant alpha level of 0.05. The findings of the study revealed that male principals achieve more on administrative discipline than female principals. However, they have equal strength in the development of the school. Nevertheless, financial constraint impedes the effective administration and management of the schools by both male and female principals in rural and urban areas. Drawing from these findings, the researchers therefore recommended that equal opportunities and financial strength should be given to both male and female principals in the administration of the school. This would enable them to be more effective in instilling discipline in the workforce in order to enhance performance among staff and students.*

**Introduction**

Principals also known as headteachers in some academic settings have been challenged by the fallen standard of education in their

schools. This is specifically in the area of discipline where some teachers are not duty conscious. The effect of this is always poor academic performance of students. That

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notwithstanding, societal norms, values, and positive attitudes are relegated to the background. This has led to increased cases of cultism, disregard for constituted school authority, vandalization of educational facilities, examination misconduct, and other nonchalant attitudes to duties from both students and staff (Osuji, 2017). Here, the formation of character that translates to educational excellence is hampered. This is one of the constraints to academic achievement in secondary school administration. This is because the principal fails to carry out his or her duty conscientiously.

Administration is concerned with performance of executive duties, carrying out of administrative policies and controlling day-to-day operations of an organization. Administration according to Udor (2015) is conceived as any formal effort geared towards the realization of set goals using human, material and financial resources. Secondary school administration is so unique in its nature, that administrators of this institution need to model their lives in virtues. Secondary school in Nigeria is one of the institutions established to inculcate desired skills to adolescents for academic excellence and achieving national development (Agusiobo, 2017). Secondary school administration therefore has to do with how secondary schools are managed or administered. For an effective secondary school administration to be achieved, there must be effective supervision of instruction. According to Osakwe (2010), it is the art of over-seeing the teaching-learning process. This therefore, makes sure that the school is administered and managed in an effective manner to achieve the educational objectives. Based on this then, administration of secondary schools must seek to produce quality graduates with employability skills and sustainable alacrity through effective and efficient instructional

delivery and students' discipline (Udor, 2015). This calls for some questions that different stakeholders in education ask: where is the place of hidden curriculum in school administration?

Hidden curriculum plays a significant role in the administration of schools. Hidden curriculum is looked at as those unintended positive or negative learning experiences, which shape the culture of the school (Osuji & Oluoch-Suleh, 2017). Staff and students always look up to the principal for the right thing to do in school. For example, coming to school early, preparing well for class, seriousness in classroom work, participating actively in school activities, thorough supervision of teaching and learning activities, just to mention a few. Principals are supposed to be role models to the staff and students. Their positive lifestyle will translate to a conducive teaching and learning environment. The principal's lifestyle especially in school influences the teachers either positively or negatively. If the principal adopts a disciplined lifestyle, this automatically creates a culture of discipline in school; hence, an opportunity for administrative achievement. If on the other hand, the principal adopts a laissez faire attitude to school administration, then the resultant effect is gross indiscipline among the staff of the school. Discipline is a controlled behaviour, an enforced compliance or a systematic method of obtaining obedience. It has been pointed out that part of any school principal's job is to handle staff and students' discipline. When principals perform highly in their tasks, discipline becomes the fruit ripped. But if not, indiscipline, which is seen as a problem in secondary schools (Eke, 2018) and a cankerworm, will invariably affect the quality of teaching and learning, uncovered/unfinished school curriculum. The effect will lead to poor results, dropouts, wastage of resources invested by stakeholders of education such as parents and the

government. Therefore, when principals enthusiastically establish discipline in school, it translates presumably to enhanced managerial and academic performance.

High performance of principals' tasks is assumed to lead to discipline and overall improvement in the teaching and learning process in the school system. Drawing from Ibukun (2011), principal's performance is seen as the rate or frequency at which they carry out their daily functions towards the attainment of educational goals. Orodho (2014) sees a relationship between educational management and students' academic performance. This is also supported by Onyeike and Nwosu (2018) who opined that principals' role performance to a great extent determine the effectiveness of the teachers in the performance of their job. Such high performance in teachers can be achieved when principals spur them through intrinsic motivating factors like nature of work, recognition, responsibilities (Ejike, 2011).

The principal is the chief executive officer of a secondary school. The principal is the cornerstone of the school and plays an important role in the development of education programme (Abdikadir, 2013). For Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012), usually each school has a single administrative officer, a principal, who is responsible for the operation of the school. The principal, however, can be a male or a female as the case may be. It may interest one to note that the gender of the principal matters a lot for many scholars as it can affect the administrative achievement expected of the principal. The gender of the principal may equally predict the administrative style that will dominate in running the affairs of the school (Ugwu, 2020). This could be accounted by the differences in the psychological make-up of both. As has been observed, many a time, male and female principals perceive themselves as performing the following roles of instructional leadership:

promoting professional development, monitoring students' progress, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for learning, supervising and evaluating instruction, and establishing discipline for enhanced academic performance of the school. Apart from gender, the location of the school, either in an urban area or rural area, where the principal operates determines their effectiveness. Therefore, location is a dominant factor in the principals' administrative achievements and constraints. Alok and Arijesuyo (2013) noted that many scholars in the area of education in the recent past seemed to have shifted studies from the measures of individuals to the measures of the environment. There has been a prevalence of comparative inferiority of rural schools and this has shown an existence of urban-rural differences in students' academic performance (Ugwu, 2020). It has been observed that schools in urban areas are always in need of talented, passionate teachers who want to make a difference in the lives of their students. Higher academic performance is also an expectant factor from schools in urban areas because, most often, they have more qualified teachers and facilities (Agusiobo, 2017). Rural areas are the opposite of urban areas. It has also been observed that some stakeholders in the education sector especially parents and students feel that rural schools perform less when compared to urban schools because they usually lack facilities like good library and laboratory. Another reason could be as a result of their uneducated parents or guardians who are unable to give them direction (Ugwu, 2020).

The success of any school depends on the ability of the principal in his or her leadership style since he or she is the leader of teachers and students. The principal facilitates, collaborates, guides, and influences teachers and students (Northouse, 2010; Shamaki, 2015). This is where hidden curriculum plays

out fully. Those covert activities and lifestyle of the principal play important role in shaping the life of the school. Being the driving force behind the school programme, it has been observed that some of the principals do not proactively mobilize all members of staff and students towards identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate decision on types of follow-up action required to improve teachers' inputs and students' learning outcomes in the school (Ugwu, 2020). This is because their lifestyles and administrative styles do not reflect the positive culture of the school. Based on this, indiscipline increases, resulting to poor performance of staff and students (Osuji, 2017).

Whenever, a school administrator establishes discipline in school, the school environment becomes more conducive to teaching and learning, hence, enhancement of academic performance. Udeme (2013) is of the view that indiscipline behaviour appears to be endemic in schools in recent times, being manifested by students at all levels particularly among the secondary school students. Derrick (2019) opines that a large part of any school principal's job is to handle students' discipline. The first step, he says, of having effective students' discipline is to ensure that teachers know the expectations. He maintains that discipline starts with the enforcer. This agrees with the assertion of Gunawan, Triwiyanto, Kusumaringrum, Zulkarnain, and Nurubadi (2018) that character is a determinant of organizational climate, organizational work, and organizational competitive power. Further, that there is a significant effect of hidden curriculum variables on the student character buildings. Hidden curriculum is an implicit curriculum that expresses and represents attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour, which are conveyed or communicated without aware intent. It is conveyed indirectly by words and actions that

are parts of the life of everyone in a society. The principals' lifestyles and work ethics influence either positively or negatively on the school climate. Accordingly, Asako (2015) emphasised that principals' managerial performances in secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria has remained questionable. He opined that there are evidences of poor infrastructure, teachers' poor attitude to work due to vacillating nature of principals such as nagging, and non-involvement of teachers in decision making. Hence, indiscipline among staff and students are not uncommon. To address this issue, it is worthy to note that the hidden curriculum plays positive or negative role administration and management of the school (Alsubaie, 2015). Hence, principals have to be aware of this and work towards establishing discipline in the system.

This study therefore focuses on the administrative achievements and constraints of principals in public secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The study succinctly relates these variables to hidden curriculum, whereby the principals have specific roles to play. This therefore calls for the need of this study.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Principals work hard in order to come out with positive outcomes in their administrative duties. That notwithstanding, there has been a social outcry that the administrative achievements of principals in public secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State have been quite low recently. There has been incessant gross indiscipline among staff and students in schools located in both rural and urban areas of the zone. This poses constraints to the administrative achievements of the principals.

Lack of knowledge, inexperience and negligence on the side of principals as regards their roles in administration of schools have caused a whole lot of indiscipline and poor performance of students and staff equally.

Every year, the zone experiences cases of cultism, disregard for constituted school authority, vandalization of educational facilities, examination misconduct, and other nonchalant attitudes to duties from both students and staff. It is against this backdrop that this current study ascertained the administrative achievements and constraints of principals in the light of hidden curriculum in public secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the achievements and constraints of principals in public secondary school administration in the light of hidden curriculum in Owerri Education zone of Imo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

1. Established the administrative achievements of male and female principals in secondary schools.
2. Determined the administrative constraints of principals in urban and rural secondary schools.

#### *Hypotheses*

The following null hypotheses tested at an alpha level significance of 0.05 guided the study:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on their administrative achievements.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of principals on their administrative constraints in urban and rural secondary schools.

#### *Significance of the Study*

The study has both theoretical and practical significance. The findings of this study validate the two theories that stood as a hinge for the study. That is, the theory of Henri Fayol that states that administrative achievements are reached through proper planning, organisation, command,

coordination and control. Further, the theory of Albert Bandura, which indicates that people look up to models in the way they carry out their professional duties.

Regarding its practical significance, the findings when disseminated will benefit principals, teachers, and students, and future researchers. The findings will strengthen the role of the principals and create awareness in them on how to carry out their duties conscientiously. Both teachers and students will also benefit from the findings of this study. They would learn how to play supportive and collaborative role for better outcome in school enterprise. The future researchers can gain knowledge from the findings of this study which should serve as literature in their further research in related area.

#### *Scope and Delimitations of the Study*

The study had both content, geographical and level scope. The content scope focused on the administrative achievements and constraints of principals. The geographical scope concentrated on public secondary schools in Owerri Education zone of Imo State. The population/level scope was centred on both male and female principals of these schools. The researchers decided on the aforementioned scope in order to get robust information on the phenomenon being studied.

#### **Review of Literature**

This section focuses on theoretical framework and review of related empirical studies. The theories reviewed were Henri Fayol's administrative management theory and Albert Bandura's social learning theory. The empirical review concentrated on administrative achievements and administrative constraints.

#### *Theoretical Framework of the Study*

The study was anchored on Henri Fayol's Administrative Management Theory and was supported by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. According to Fayol (1916),

administration and management has functional elements that include: planning, command, coordination, and control. He equally gave out fourteen principles of management through which he prescribed certain strategies for structuring behaviours in organizational life in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. For the sake of this study, our focus is on one of his principles, which is Discipline. According to Fayol, there must be respect for and obedience to the rules and objectives of the organisation. This is where hidden curriculum plays a major role. This is because the principal who is the administrator must show good example for the staff and students to follow with regard to discipline in school. His or her exemplary lifestyle and administrative skills inadvertently translate into academic excellence in the school.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory tries to support Henri Fayol's administrative management theory in ascertaining the administrative achievements and constraints of principals in secondary schools in the light of the hidden curriculum. Bandura (1971) outlines four conditions necessary for social learning to take place. These are attention, retention, production, and motivation. The social learning theory demonstrates that children's future behaviours are strongly influenced by observing the behaviour of adults and how these behaviours are rewarded and punished for their behaviours. In their lives, children observe a variety of people that can influence how they grow, develop, and behave. The behaviour of these people can define the child, and these influences include parents, siblings, friends, and teachers. The people that children observe are referred to as models and their behaviours influence children. This is because, when children observe models, they encode some of their behaviours, remembering what they have seen

and replicating such behaviours (Brown, 2013).

Albert Bandura's theory emphasizes on the affective domain of learning. Attention and retention account for acquisition or learning of a model's behaviour while production and motivation control the performance. Drawing from this therefore, principals are supposed to be role models to the members of the staff and students. It is also their responsibility to ensure that they behave in a way that meets the expectations of a role model (Nesbitt, 2013). In doing so, they can help develop and shape staff and students in a way that is beneficial to the school system.

#### *Review of Empirical Studies*

The responsibilities of school principals cannot be overemphasised. A school that does not have a principal finds it difficult to function effectively because everybody tries to be the boss in school. This then affects the entire performance of the school.

In considering the administrative achievements of both male and female principals in secondary schools, some researchers have come up with several literatures. Oboegbulem (2013) studied administrative competencies of female principals in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. A 15-item questionnaire was constructed to collect the necessary data for the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting all the 10 secondary schools headed by female principals. Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 20% of the 818 male and 517 female teachers in Nsukka Education zone. This gave a total of 164 males and 103 females. Mean and t-test were employed in data analysis. A mean of 2.50 was taken as the agreement level of the items. The result of the study showed that female principals possess administrative skills and competencies for effective secondary school

management. The reviewed study concentrated more on the female principals, while the present study focused on both the administrative achievements of the female and male principals. Both studies adopted the quantitative paradigm, but differed in the methodology and geographical location.

In the same vein, Matheri, Cheloti and Malwa (2015) determined the effects of principals' gender on management effectiveness in secondary schools in Mtito-Andei Division, Kenya. The study sought to establish the relationship between the principals' gender and their effectiveness in management of the discipline, staff, students and school finance. The study used ex-post facto research design. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents for the study. The sample size was 28 principals and 140 teachers. The researchers used questionnaire and interview schedules to collect data. In analysis, they subjected the data collected to descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that there was a significant relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of discipline. It was also found that there was no significant relationship between the principals' gender and their effectiveness in personnel management, student management and financial management. The reviewed study and the present study focused on the achievements of gender in administration, however, in a different geographical location. The research design and the sample size were also different. On another account, Okoroma (2016) studied the administrative abilities of male and female principals and goals achievement in public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Out of the 245 principals that participated in the study, only 63 were females and 182 males. For a balance, the sample of the study consisted of 63 vice principals from the schools administered by male principals and 63 vice-principals from the schools

administered by female principals. Out of the 2,394 teachers in the selected schools 1197 or 50% were chosen for the study and this gave a total of 1,323 respondents. An instrument known as 'Principals' Administrative Abilities Assessment Questionnaire (PAAAQ) was used for data collection. The chi-square statistical method was used for the analysis of data. The finding of the study revealed that female principals are better achievers of school goals than their male counterparts. The reviewed study is similar to the present study on the determination of the principals' administrative achievements. However, they differ in population and location.

Regarding principals' administrative constraints in the administration of urban and rural secondary schools, Morrison and Afokeghene (2020) investigated principals' administration effectiveness in secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative paradigm, specifically, the descriptive survey research design. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. The sample size for the study was one hundred and twenty (120) principals that were selected using the random sampling techniques. Questionnaire was used to collect data. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and z-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at an alpha level of 0.05. The result of the study among others showed that: there is no significant difference between the mean perception of urban and rural principals on staff personnel administrative constraints to principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools. There is a significant difference between the mean perception of urban and rural principals on facilities and equipment constraints to principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools. There is no significant difference between the mean perception of urban and rural principals on funding

constraints to principals' administrative effectiveness. It equally indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean perception of urban and rural principals on funding constraints to principals' administrative effectiveness. The research above differs from this present study from the point of view that it was carried out in another Education Zone and for the fact that it considered only the constraints to the administrative roles of principals.

In addition, Onderi and Makori (2013) sought to establish the challenges that confront principals of secondary schools in Nyamira County in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey. The study sample consisted of 87 principals purposively selected from these schools. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The study established that principals faced serious challenges which included interference from sponsors, inadequate funds, inadequate resources and lack of qualified teachers. The reviewed study is related to the present study by its consideration of constraints to principals' effectiveness in their administrative roles but differed in location.

### **Methods**

The study adopted quantitative paradigm. It specifically adopted descriptive survey research design. The justification for this design was to get the opinions of some of the principals on their administrative achievements and constraints. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Owerri Education zone of Imo State.

Owerri has two education zones. Owerri Education zone 1 has 71 public secondary schools and Owerri Education zone 2 has 47 public secondary schools. Therefore, the total number of public secondary schools in Owerri Education zone is 118 (Secondary Education Management Board, 2022). The researchers used 50% to determine the sample size. The sample size of the study was 60. The

researchers employed simple random sample technique to select the 60 principals for the study.

The instrument for data collection was a twenty-five-item questionnaire, which was arranged in five clusters, and on a four-point attitude scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The instrument was face-validated by three specialists in Test and Measurement, Curriculum Studies, and Educational Administration respectively. The instrument was later subjected to pilot testing, and a test-retest coefficient of 0.82 was realized using Cronbach Alpha formula.

The researchers collected the data in person and on the spot. The collected data were subjected to hypotheses testing at an alpha level of 0.05. The t-test statistics was used to test the two null hypotheses that guided the study. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 20) aided in the test. Regarding ethical consideration, the consent of the participants of the study were sought and approval given before data collection. Secondly, all sources used were duly cited and acknowledged.

### **Results (Findings)**

The researchers presented the findings of the study based on the null hypotheses that guided the study. The study had two null hypotheses. The study focused on the administrative achievements and administrative constraints of principals in the management of secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State. Here are the findings of the study:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on their administrative achievements.



Table 1

*Administrative Achievements of Male and Female Principals*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2 tailed)</b>
Males	30	3.6	0.65			
Females	30	3.5	0.87	8.763	58	0.66

**Result:** There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on their administrative achievements ( $t=8.763$ ,  $df=58$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in the mean scores of principals on their administrative constraints in urban and rural secondary schools.

Table 2

*Administrative Constraints of Principals in Schools located in Urban and Rural Areas*

<b>Location</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2 tailed)</b>
Urban	20	36.00	4.614			
Rural	40	36.39	5.450	-2.47	58	0.806

**Result:** There is no significant difference in the mean scores of principals on their administrative constraints in urban and rural secondary schools ( $t= -2.47$ ,  $df=58$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

**Discussion of the Findings**

Regarding the administrative achievement of principals, the findings show that both male and female principals achieve success in school infrastructure, discipline, students’ instruction and academic performance, and principal-teacher-students relationship. The finding disagrees with the finding of Matheri, Cheloti and Malwa (2015) that there is a significant relationship between the principals’ gender and effectiveness in management of discipline. It equally differs from the finding of Oboegbulem (2013) which insisted that female principals possess administrative skills and competencies for effective secondary school management more than male principals.

However, the finding is in line with social learning theory of Albert Bandura that the study hinges on where when principals become role models in school, they achieve

the desired results in school administration. This simply implies that male and female principals have the same opportunity of managing their schools well. Judging from the findings of the study, gender is not a factor in administrative achievements. Therefore, both male and female principals have equal potentials to achieve success in their administration of schools if they are given equal playing ground.

On administrative constraints, the study reveals that principals who manage schools that are located both in the rural areas and urban areas have similar challenges. They are challenged by the following: finance, students’ indiscipline, dearth of mobility, inadequate manpower, and poor infrastructural development. The finding agrees with Onderi and Makori (2013) that principals working in schools located in both rural and urban secondary schools are faced with the challenges of inadequate funds, inadequate resources, and lack of qualified teachers.

The finding also agrees with Morrison and Afokegere (2020) that there is no significant difference between the mean perception of urban and rural principals on constraints to

principals' administrative effectiveness. The findings of the current study also validate Henri Fayol's administrative management theory where coordination and discipline play a major role in school administration. Hence, effective utilization of the school human and material resources, and the practice role modelling create conducive environment to teaching and learning. Therefore, leading to enhanced administrative achievement of principals.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Drawing from the findings of the study, the study concludes that both male and female principals possess and utilize their managerial competences in administration of secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. That the ability of the principals to establish discipline among staff and students by being role models results to administrative achievements despite being constrained by some administrative factors such as finance. Based on these findings, the researchers therefore recommend the following:

1. The Government and the community should continue to support principals through in-service training. This would help them to devise the best means of managing staff, students and school resources for enhanced performance.
2. The Ministry of Education should pay proper attention to the plights of principals. This would enable them to be more diligent to duty for optimal delivery.
3. Individuals especially philanthropists should collaborate with the Government and the community in funding schools in their areas. This would help motivate the principals who work in these areas.

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