Original Article

Principals' Application of Staff Involvement Skills in Decision Making in the Attainment of School Goals

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on principals' application of skill of staff involvement in decision making in attainment of school goals. The general purpose of the study was to determine the extent of principals' use of personnel function skills in attainment of goals in secondary schools while the specific purpose is to assess principals' application of the skill of staff involvement in decision making. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 8,864, made up of 273 principals and 8,591 teachers while the sample size was 870. Stratified proportionate random sampling technique was used to get the sample size. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the eight hundred and seventy (870) respondents that comprised of 273 principals and 597 teachers from the two hundred and seventy-three (273) Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The hypothesis was tested with z-test statistic at .05 level of significance. The study revealed that skill of staff involvement in decision making was poorly applied by principals in Secondary School administration. The study recommended that State Ministry of Education and Post Primary Schools Management Board should organize seminars and workshops to educate principals on how to apply personnel management skills in Secondary Schools. Furthermore, reward system should be introduced for principals that distinguish themselves in the application of personnel management skills. The study concluded that poor application of personnel management skills has adversely affected educational development in Enugu State.

Keywords: Staff involvement skills, decision making, school goals

Introduction

$\mathcal{E}$very organization engages various forms of resources in order to achieve its goals. Human resource happens to be one of the most important of these resources; as attainment of organizational goals is dependent on effective coordination and utilization of other resources by the human resource. All the people in an organization who are involve in the planning and management as well as those who execute arid carry out organizational plans are referred to as personnel (Maduka, 2012). Personnel in various organizations often come from diverse

backgrounds with varying psychological traits, it becomes necessary for their abilities to be harmonized and tailored towards the achievement of the goals of the organization. This is done through personnel management. Personnel management entails the harnessing of abilities of human beings who are staff of an organization with the aim of achieving the goals and objectives of the organization (Maduka 2012).

The process of personnel management involves planning, organizing, coordinating, leading and controlling. The personnel management services often expected to be provided in organizations include orientation of staff, Familiarization with the environment, training and re-training to enhance of professional competence as well as the provision of incentives and motivation. Others are delegation of duty, good human relations and staff security (Mbah, 2011). All the personnel management activities are inter-related; hence poor attention to any of the activities may undermine the desire to achieve organizational goals.

One of the major concerns of personnel management is to get the best out of staff. For this to be possible, personnel manager expects that organizational staff should be regarded as co-builders and partners in progress. They should be carried along especially in major decisions that affect them and their work. Personnel manager endeavours to balance the personnel needs of individuals with the organizational tasks.

Odutola (2010) asserts that for effective personnel management to be achieved, the following skills should be adopted: staff orientation, motivation of staff, delegation of function to staff, involvement of staff in decision making and good human relations. In this study, personnel management skills shall refer to the above skills as identified by Odutola (2010). The skill of good human relation enables managers of personnel relate to staff with a sense of dignity. It makes staff to have a feeling of self-worth. Mbah (2011) observes that good human relation is necessary for resolution of organizational conflicts. Since conflicts are bound to occur in organizations, it is necessary that managers have this skill and apply it to help resolve conflicts.Furthermore, the skill of involvement of staff in decision making is central to

achievement of goals of organization. Invariably, all decisions concern staff in one way or the other. To get their maximum co-operation, they need to be involved in the process of decision making.

Educational analysts are, therefore, getting increasingly worried over the way personnel management skills are applied by principals in secondary schools. While some lament over how orientation is conducted for newly recruited teachers and those on transfer, others feel deeply concerned about the near-absence of motivation for teachers and the indiscriminate manner duties are delegated to teachers at this stage of our educational development. Furthermore, stakeholders in the educational system continue to make reference to abysmal lack of good human relations and non-involvement of teachers in decision making by principals in secondary school administration as major hindrances to the realization of the educational goals. They contend that teachers, as vehicles of successful educational programmes, cannot be side-lined by principals who desire to succeed. In view of the above, it is clear that the haphazard manner in which personnel management skills are applied by principal in secondary schools has become worrisome. It is therefore, the concerns expressed on the involvement of staff in decision making by principals in secondary schools that this study is set to investigate.

Statement of the Problem

The incessant exhibition of certain behaviour considered inimical to the realization of secondary school goals by teachers cast doubts on the extent of the principals' application of the necessary personnel skills. Such behaviour includes hawking during school hours, irregular attendance to school, use of outdated scheme of work, among others. These attitudes which obviously show low commitment to duty have grave implication, for the achievement of educational objectives. It could be that the teachers were not given adequate orientation or that the necessary motivation to spur them to greater commitment to duty is lacking. Hence, teachers resort to other means of survival-at the expense of their legitimate work. The use of out-dated scheme of work implies that the teacher's knowledge is also out-dated. It therefore, tends to question the application of

personnel management skills in relation to staff orientation.

The burden of the shortfalls in the application of personnel management skills is not only on students, it spills over to the society at large. While the students who are not well taught resort to various forms of examination malpractices in order to pass their senior secondary school certificate examination, the dropouts constitute social nuisance to the entire society. The problem of this study is therefore encapsulated in the principals' inability to use personnel function skills to attain educational goals in secondary schools. It is the above problem that this study is designed to tackle.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to determine the extent school principals use their personnel function skills for attainment of goals in secondary schools. The specific purpose was to assess the extent of principals' application of skill of staff involvement in decision making in attainment of school goals.

Research Question

This research question guided the study: What is the extent of principals' application of skill of staff involvement in decision making in attainment of school goals?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis guided the study and was tested at .05 level of significance:

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent of principals' application of involvement of staff skill in decision making in attainment of school goals.

Concept of Principalship

The principal is the acknowledged administrative head of the Secondary School. It is in view of this that experts among whom are Ogamba (2007) and Ezeocha (1990), refer to him (the principal) as the school administrator. Ogamba (2007) further states some of the roles of a school administrator to include the following:

a. Recruitment of the right teacher: He argues that the principal has a vital role to play in the recruitment of the right teacher for the school. Even when he is not directly involved in the recruitment exercise, he owes the responsibility of making his employer know the actual number of vacancies that exist in his school and in what subject areas.

b. Orientation: The principal conducts orientation exercise for the new teachers in his school. This is the process of familiarizing teachers newly posted to the school either on fresh appointment or on transfer. The teacher is introduced to other staff and students.

c. Human relationship: The principal needs human relationship to be able to retain teachers posted to his school. He needs to show interest in the teachers' personal problems and introduce them (teachers) to various places of interest in the community. Policies, opportunities for growth, provision of desired working materials and incentives motivate staff and help to retain them.

d. Assignment of duty: It is the duty of the principal to assign duties to teachers with reference to their qualifications, areas of specialization and personal interests. This helps teachers to give their best to the students as well as make the job interesting.

e. Delegation of duties: Principals delegate duties to teachers. In delegation, experience, interest and suitability of persons are considered. Duties to be delegated are made clear and specific. Not too much should be delegated to a staff at a time. Delegated duties require constant supervision and periodic reports to ensure compliance. The principal however needs to be available to handle questions, issues and clarifications that may arise from delegated duties.

While upholding the views of Ezeocha (1990) on the roles of principals, Ogamba (2007) adds that the community relations function of the principal is central. He needs to work with the community to provide support for any necessary change in policy. The complimentary role of the community in provision of basic amenities in schools is facilitated through this function. Ukeje (as cited in Maduka, 2012) categorizes principal's roles into working with the community, improving educational programmes, selecting and developing personnel as well as managing the school. This means that the principal has the responsibility of collaborating with the community to ensure provision of necessary facilities and the success of educational programmes and projects. He also provides efficient and reasonable

work schedule. He ensures that available resources are optimally utilized. The principal, in conjunction with the teachers, classify students to obtain maximum benefits. He evaluates the teachers periodically to ensure that they are doing the right things towards the achievement of stated goals.

In the work of Okonkwo (2010) on the personnel function of a technical secondary school principal, he sees the principal as the direct link between the implementers of the policy (teachers) and the policy developers (government). The author believes that the quality of the school programmes is largely dependent on the relationship between staff and the institution and on the inter-relationship between members of staff. This is a major responsibility of the principal. To achieve this, he needs to develop appropriate school philosophy of personnel management. He needs to obtain suitable staff, induct new staff and maintain staff morale.

Mgbodile (2004) contends that the school principal's role does not end with improving educational programmes; he gets involved in developing them. The principal is concerned with the planning and development of the school curriculum in line with the objectives of Secondary Education. He oversees the preparation of the school time table and the selection of appropriate learning activities and teaching aids which facilitate the works of the teachers. Furthermore, the principal has the responsibility of development of teaching staff. This he accomplishes through sending teachers to seminars and workshops both within and outside the school.

In his contribution, Edem (2006) states that principals are school leaders endowed with authority to influence the actions, behaviour and feelings of his staff and students and to expect their willingness to co-operate. He stresses the need for the principal to formulate a philosophy of education directed towards achieving educational goals. He believes that the philosophy held by the teacher reflects the teacher's belief of what education is. The teacher's belief, in turn, affects his teaching methods, his use of school curriculum and his relationship with the students. It is in view of the strategic position occupied by principals in Secondary School administration that this study is structured to examine the extent

principals apply personnel management skills in order to achieve goals of Secondary School administration.

Personnel Functions and Involvement of Staff in Decision-Making

Involvement of staff in decision making process or Participative Decision Making (PDM) is gaining popularity as a skill of personnel management. The skill is also called participative management, dispersed leadership, open-book management (Steinheider, Bayerl & Wuestewald, 2006). They state that the basic concept involves any power-sharing arrangement in which workplace influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchical unequal. Such power- sharing arrangements may entail various employee involvement schemes resulting in co-determination of working conditions, problem solving and decision making (Steinheider et al., 2006).

Carmelli, Sheaffer and Halevi (2009) opine that participatory decision making by the top management ensures the completeness of decision-making and increases team members' commitment to final decisions. Each team member has an opportunity to share their perspectives, voice their ideas and tap their skills to improve team effectiveness. Carmelli et al (2009) note that as each member relates to the team decisions, there is a better chance of their achieving the results. They believe that a positive relationship between decision effectiveness and organizational performance exists.

Probst (2005) describes participative decision - making as the extent to which employers allow or encourage employees to share or participate in organizational decision process. He asserts that employees' participation in the decision - making process improves understanding and perceptions among colleagues and superiors, and enhances personnel value in the organization. Berry (2006) and Walker (2009) agree that by sharing decision-making with other employees, organizational communication becomes much more effective and everyone produces more efficient results. Berry (2006) further states that participative decision - making can be used as a tool to enhance relationships in organization, explore incentives of employees and increase the rate of information circulation across the organization.

However, one of the primary risks in any participative decision - making or power - sharing process is that the desire on the part of management for more inclusive participation is not genuine. Arnstein (2009) contends that there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process. He believes the difference lies in the fact that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. Participative decision making allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit (Arnstein 2009).

Similarly, Debruin, Parker and Fischhoff (2007) argue that when participative decision-making takes place in a team setting, there would be social pressure to conform to group domination, where one person takes control of the group and urges everyone to follow his standpoints. They also believe that when ideas come from many people, time can be an issue, the meeting might end and good ideas go unheard. They further identify possible negative outcomes of participative decision-making as high costs, inefficiency, indecisiveness and incompetence. Cotton, Vollrath, Froggott, Lengnick-Hall and Jennings (2008) identify six dimensions of participative decision-making as follows:

Participation in work decisions: This is characterized as formal, long-term and direct participation. The content in this dimension focuses on works, e.g. task distribution, organizational methods of task.

Consultative participation: Similar to the previous one except it has lower level of influence in decision-making.

Short-term participation: Employees participation is temporary, ranges from sessions of several hours to campaigns of several days. It is recognized as formal and direct.

Informal participation: Could happen in interpersonal relationships between employers and employees. Usually, no fixed roles and specific contents are decided in advance.

Employee ownership: This involves formal and indirect participation. Although subordinates have the chance to participate in decision-making, usually the typical employees cannot.

Representative participation: This is measured as formal and indirect. In organizations, the degree of the influence is medium as representatives playing a role that mediate between typical employees and superior.

Decision making relates to study because the dimensions of participative decision-making help principals to understand various aspects of decision-making teachers could be involved in to ensure realization of educational goals. Since participative decision-making gives teachers a sense of belonging, it makes them feel more committed towards achievement of goals of education.

Theoretical Framework

Rensis Likert's Theory

This theory was postulated by Rensis Likert in 1967. This theory is concerned with managerial behaviour. It recognizes four basic styles of leadership, often described as systems 1 to 4. The principles of the systems are largely autocratic and participatory in context.

System 1: Exploitive Authoritative

This is system demands that power and authority move completely downwards. It has threats, punishments, poor communication and absence of teamwork as its regular feature. It implies that decisions are taken and imposed on staff with resultant low productivity.

System 2: Benevolent Authoritative

This system is similar to system 1 in many aspects. However, the only difference is that this system makes provision for consultation with and delegation of duties to the subordinates with marginal improvement on productivity.

System 3: Consultative

Here, opinions of staff are solicited before decisions are taken. This encourages bilateral communication flow with emphasis on team work. Rewards replace punishment and this increases productivity.

System 4: Participative

This system is characterized by good communication and care for high level needs. It advocates for participation of all staff in efforts aimed

at achieving organizational goals. It often results in high level productivity.

An analysis of the Likert's theory simply reveals a two-variant approach personnel management - task - oriented and employee - oriented approaches. The level of productivity should be personnel managers' guide in the choice of their approach.

- This theory is relevant to this study because it shows that management style adopted by principals goes a long in affecting the productivity of teachers. It therefore stresses the need for principals to apply management styles that will enhance productivity. The application of this theory is sometimes influenced by some innate qualities of principals as some may be naturally authoritative while others may be participative.

Empirical Studies

In a study done by Emenuga (1991) to compare the personnel management policies and practices and job satisfaction in Enugu and Nsukka branches of Ikenga Hotels Limited, he used a survey research design, a sample size of 125 workers and questionnaire with 57 items. There were six research questions and hypotheses each. Using ANOVA to answer research questions and t-test statistic for the analysis of hypotheses, it was found that the workers were excluded from the policy making body (board) and that affected their morale and attitude to work. The management was mainly concerned about job output and profit. Furthermore, the study showed that while payment of salaries was regular in Enugu branch, it was irregular at Nsukka branch. Most of the staff expressed their displeasure over the activities of the Management. Again, the study revealed that retraining programmes or in service training were not in place at the two branches of the hotel. This means that they had no opportunity of improving their skills on the job. This study investigated personnel management policies and practices in the tourism industry. It did not consider application of personnel management skills by principals in secondary schools in Enugu state, hence the need for the present study.

Obi (2010) in a study carried out in Enugu and Anambra States on affective work skills necessary for the success of women managers used a descriptive survey research design and a sample size of 314, made up of some men and women in managerial positions in public companies and major industries in the two states. Structured questionnaire with 43 items was the instrument of data collection. The study had four research questions and hypotheses each. While mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, t-test statistic was employed in the analysis of the hypotheses. The study discovered that retraining, orientation of newly recruited gaff, delegation of duty, among others were necessary personnel skills needed by women managers to succeed. This study was only on affective work skills necessary for the success of women managers and not on application of personnel management skills in secondary schools in Enugu State, which this study is designed to address.

Samadi (2011) studied management and industrial equity in Payame Noor University Iran with particular reference to the training of female managers. The study was done with a survey design and a sample size of 613. He collected data with the use of structured questionnaire and interview. There were 24 questions and 8 items for interview. He utilized four research questions and four hypotheses for the study. The study, through the research questions answered with mean and hypotheses tested with t-test statistic, revealed that female managers had personnel problems that militated against achievement of organizational objectives like their male counter parts. Such problems included lack of motivation of staff and absence of good human relations. The study further revealed that the female managers displayed similar managerial skills like their male colleagues. This study examined industrial problems of female managers in Iran. Industrial environments of Iran' and Nigeria are different. Again, industrial and educational environments even in the same country differ widely.

Method

The researcher used survey research design in this study. A survey research design according to Nworgu (2006) is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The survey research design suited this study because it permitted

the collection of original data and described the conditions as they existed in their natural setting.

The population for the study was 8,864 principals and teachers in the 273 government - owned secondary schools in the six education zones of Enugu state (Post Primary School Management Board, 2013). The sample size is 870, made up of 273 Principals and 597 teachers. To ensure that all the respondents are equally represented and had an equal chance of being chosen, the researcher used the proportionate random sampling technique. Teachers were selected according to their schools in the six education zones of the State.

The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher; entitled Principals' Personnel Function Skills Scale (PPFSS) - a 37-item questionnaire. To carry out face and content validation of the instrument, the researcher gave it to three experts from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, for face validation. Two of them are in the education management while one is in measurement and evaluation. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher conducted a trial test using twenty respondents serving in Anambra state owned secondary schools. The instrument was directly administered to the 273 principals and 737 teachers by the researcher with the help of two research assistants.

Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The five hypotheses for the study were tested using Z-test at. 05 level of significance at relevant degrees of freedom. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was employed in the analysis. Using the interval of mean in order to reflect the 4- point scale item for the research questions, any mean score rating of 2.50 and above was regarded as Great Extent while any response lower than 2.50 was regarded as Little Extent.

Result
Research Question
What is the extent of principals' application of skill of staff involvement in decision making attainment of school goals?

Table 1

Mean scores of Principals and Teachers on the extent of Principals' application of skill of staff involvement in decision making for attainment of School Goals

ITEMS	PRINCIPALS			TEACHERS		
	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC.	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC.
To what extent do principals						
Allow teacher take part in decisions that affect them	2.63	1.07	LE	2.11	.96	LE
Seek teachers' opinion before taking decision on policy matters	1.91	1.02	LE	2.21	1.10	LE
Accept good suggestions from teachers	2.14	1.04	LE	2.05	1.04	LE
Consult teachers before giving disciplinary action to erring students	2.21	1.16	LE	2.39	1.03	LE
Grand	**2.22**	**1.07**	**LE**	**2.19**	**1.03**	**LE**

Table 1 with grand mean scores of 2.22 for principals and 2.19 for teachers are both less than 2.50, the benchmark. In view of the fact that these grand mean scores are less than 2.50, it shows that principals apply skill of staff involvement in decision making in Secondary School administration to a little extent. In fact, analysis of the items showed that principals allow teachers take part in decisions that affect them, seek teachers' opinion before taking decision on policy matters, accept good suggestions from teachers and consult teachers before giving disciplinary action to erring students, all to a little extent.

Furthermore, grand mean scores for standard deviation for principals were 1.07 and 1.03 respectively. These scores for standard deviation are less than their corresponding grand means. This implies that many of the respondents were homogenous in their responses while few of them were dispersed in their opinion.

Summary of Findings
From the analysis of the data collected, principals and teachers agreed that principals apply all the components of skill of staff involvement in decision making to a little extent (Table 1). The result

of research question four on the extent of principals' application of skill of staff involvement in decision making revealed that principals allow teachers take part in decisions that affect them, seek teachers' opinion before taking decisions on policy matters, accept good suggestions from teachers and consult teachers before giving disciplinary action to erring students to a little extent. Over-centralization of power has its negative effects on achievement of organizational goals. Allowing teachers to participate in decision making will increase their commitment to final decisions. These results are in line with opinions of Berry (2006) and Walker (2009) in which they noted that by sharing decision making with other employees, organizational communication becomes much more effective and everyone produces more efficient results. For principals to enjoy the co-operation of teachers in the task of delivery of the expected educational services, they need to involve them in decision making.

The z-test of the analysis of the mean scores of the principals and teachers on the extent of principals' application of involvement of staff in decision making. It is shown that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of the respondents. This finding showed that principals and teachers see the extent of principals' application of skill of involvement of staff in decision making from the same stand-points. This implies that extent of application of skill of staff involvement in decision making in secondary school administration leaves much to be desired. Furthermore, this result agrees with that of Berry (2006) and Walker (2009) that without sharing decision-making with other employees, organizational communication becomes ineffective and everyone produces less efficient results.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that principals in government- owned secondary schools apply the skill of staff involvement in decision making poorly. The poor application affects various segments of educational activities including teaching and learning. The overall implication of this is that the realization of educational goals may be threatened. In view of the above, the findings and recommendations of the study should be taken seriously. This would enable the Enugu State overcome emerging challenges and attain the expected height in the educational sector.

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