

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS IN FOSTERING INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

Educational administrators now play a vital part in shaping innovative teaching methods for Nigerian primary schools within the modern educational framework. The research examines the challenges educational administrators of Enugu State encounter when implementing modern teaching methods through subject-based British Montessori-style teaching. The modern teaching structure has successfully taken root in Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, but many primary schools across Enugu still choose to operate using a conventional one-teacher-for-all-classes format, which creates weaknesses in education delivery. The study employs qualitative-quantitative mixed methods to demonstrate that obstacles including insufficient financial support, changed resistance, and wrong beliefs about child development block innovation. Policy reforms, together with enhanced training and strategic administrative practice realignment, stand as recommendations that the paper presents to achieve contemporary delivery standards in Enugu's primary education system.

Keywords: Educational administration, Subject teaching, Pedagogical innovation, Enugu State, Montessori model, Curriculum reform, Teacher specialization, Primary education in Nigeria.

Introduction

Background to the Study

All societies endorse primary education as the fundamental base for children's formal learning process. A child's fundamental cognitive abilities, with their emotional elements, social relationships, and moral growth, develop throughout their earliest years. The essential nature of this educational level requires teaching practices that combine committed student learning with modern, innovative, and sensitive responses toward worldwide developments and native circumstances (Hewitt & Tarrant, 2015). Educational systems must create flexible approaches to deliver educational content because the growing worldwide connectedness requires students to develop critical thinking combined with creative skills and lifelong interests from childhood onward. Numerous Nigerian educational institutions, primarily in urban towns including Lagos, along with Abuja, Port Harcourt and Asaba have carried out essential changes to their teaching

methods in recent times. Educational institutions throughout Nigeria transition their instructional styles from the outdated "one-teacher-all-subjects" model toward modern subject teaching and British Montessori-inspired education (Ezedi, 2021). Educators who specialize in mathematics, English, science, and creative arts can teach specific subjects through subject teaching, and this specialization delivers both better quality teaching and more precise explanations to students. British Montessori educational models improve early learning because they unite hands-on activities with sensory education and student self-directed learning approaches (Onwuka & Edem, 2022). Specialized teaching methods have brought significant outcomes after their implementation. Adebayo and Okon (2023) discovered that primary-level academic institutions using subject-based teaching methods show improved enthusiastic involvement from students coupled with contented faculty members and pleased parental stakeholders regarding learning achievements. The teaching methods increase subject matter knowledge, enable interdisciplinary learning, and sustain professional growth opportunities for teachers.

The transformation of the educational approach toward subject-specific methods does not possess universal acceptance among different Nigerian geographical areas. A substantial portion of primary education institutions in Enugu State and southeastern areas continue to have a single instructor who teaches all curriculum subjects to their entire student group. Educational scholars now view this system as out of date because it fails to meet growing subject complexity requirements (Chukwuemeka 2020). Generalist teachers who received their training in this framework lack specialized knowledge of every subject they must teach because of their broad educational background. Educational jargon described by scholars as problematic information travels from teachers to young learners because of this mismatch found in their education (Iheanacho, 2021).

Technical subjects like mathematics and science suffer substantial negative effects under this teaching approach because students develop fundamental errors that prevent them from achieving academic success in the long run. Students of this educational system demonstrate weak dedication along with insufficient understanding and restricted ability to use their acquired knowledge outside their academic environment. Deficiencies in early education continue to grow stronger until they affect academic performance at both junior and senior secondary school levels.

Students' academic achievement demonstrates early mastery in reading, mathematics, and analysis at the lower primary grades 1-3 when subject-based instruction is offered in the city schools. Schools in Lagos and Port Harcourt divide their teaching staff between three classes each and group them into primary levels between upper and lower grades. The specific arrangement in teaching structures allows focused instruction time and makes possible active collaboration between teachers to build an enriched educational setting for pupils (Okoro & Hassan, 2019). The educational administrators, together with school owners in Enugu, persistently reject the implementation of these teaching paradigms. The reluctance to implement models with multiple teachers stems from multiple causes, which include monetary challenges in teacher staffing and traditional views on young learners being unable to manage multiple instructors. Administrators state that their inability to restructure schedules and train staff stands as one of the main obstacles toward adoption. The genuine reasons administrators use to deny changes typically hide their organizational unwillingness to change old practices together with their reluctance to adopt new approaches (Chukwuemeka, 2020; Iheanacho, 2021). Many educational institutions commit learning deterioration through cost-cutting and system avoidance initiatives, which make students less capable of facing upcoming academic and social challenges.

The static curricular approach used in most educational institutions fails to evolve or adapt to present-day societal changes or technological progress. The educational system of numerous southeastern schools maintains an annual repetition of an unmodified curriculum year after year. Such curricular immobility delivers learning that fails both to follow pupils' real-life encounters and to offer stimulating, dynamic education. The educators responsible for improving educational instruction are usually unaware of current global education standards because they maintain multiple responsibilities and lack adequate training (Ezedi, 2021).

The purpose of this research involves understanding how educational administrators support or discourage the implementation of current teaching methods in Enugu State primary schools. The research investigates to what degree administrative vision, together with resource distribution and professional development plans, affects both subject teaching practices and the implementation of contemporary teaching models. The research makes comparisons with Nigerian states where similar advancements occur to develop practical methods that can boost educational standards in Enugu State. The proposal supports primary education as an essential foundation that should not be sacrificed for tradition or costs, thus promoting future-oriented, child-centered teaching systems.

Statement of the Problem

Despite global trends and the proven effectiveness of specialized subject teaching, Enugu State lags in the adoption of this approach. Many administrators cite cost implications and children's perceived unreadiness for such methods as primary deterrents. However, this cost-saving strategy often results in long-term educational deficits. Moreover, there is an evident lack of curriculum review and alignment with societal needs. These challenges highlight a significant gap in educational leadership and planning, which this study seeks to explore.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the role of educational administrators in fostering pedagogical innovation.
2. Identify factors impeding the adoption of subject teaching in primary schools in Enugu State.
3. Contrast practices in Enugu with those in more educationally advanced Nigerian cities.
4. Recommend strategies to overcome administrative and structural barriers.

Research Questions

1. What roles do educational administrators play in the adoption of innovative teaching approaches?
2. What factors hinder the implementation of subject teaching in Enugu's primary schools?
3. How does Enugu compare with cities like Lagos and Abuja in pedagogical innovation?
4. What future opportunities exist for improving foundational education in Enugu State?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for policymakers, school proprietors, curriculum developers, and teacher training institutions. It provides insight into the critical administrative decisions shaping the quality of foundational education and highlights actionable strategies for systemic improvement.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

Educational administrators possess the primary responsibility to direct school environments by executing policies, distributing teachers, and implementing curricula while overseeing institutional activities. The influence of educational administrators has a direct impact on teaching quality together with professional development availability as well as the acceptance or rejection of educational innovations in schools (Ezedi, 2021). Adepoju and Salami (2020) explain that quality educational leadership creates systemic reforms, which are particularly important at the primary level because this phase develops essential cognitive abilities.

The strategic implementation of teaching methods that use adaptive instructional techniques, learner-led educational approaches, and contextualized teaching practices aims to enhance student engagement, knowledge retention, and information understanding (Hewitt & Tarrant, 2015). The educational approaches consist of project-based learning methods, digital tool applications, and collaborative methods, as well as subject-focused teaching techniques. The ability of educators to deliver instruction in fields where they hold expertise through subject teaching both deepens instruction and builds stronger confidence levels in teachers and learners (Okoro & Hassan, 2019). The method provides improved learning outcomes for complex subjects, including mathematics and science, because it requires specialized understanding (Adebayo & Okon, 2023).

The Southeast region of Nigeria, along with numerous other Nigerian schools, continues to employ the traditional teaching model, which implements a generalist approach at its core. Each teacher must provide instruction for all subjects within a single class according to this system, which results in teaching exhaustion as well as diminished learning quality and student detachment (Chukwuemeka 2020). The practices described by Iheanacho (2021) create situations that produce teaching that only reaches surface-level understanding through exposure to disconnected bits of outdated knowledge. Generalist teachers who handle classes outside their training area must bear excessive psychological stress, which results in both burnout and increased attrition rates.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by two primary theoretical frameworks:

Constructivist Learning Theory: Constructivist learning theory describes how learners construct knowledge by engaging with experiences and interacting with others while reflecting on their work, according to the theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. According to this theory, practitioners should focus on student-oriented educational strategies that include investigative learning and evaluate understanding and situational study (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1972). The combination of subject teaching with Montessori methods in primary education finds support from constructivism because they allow pupils to meaningfully interact with material through personalized educational approaches under the guidance of skilled educators (Onwuka & Edem, 2022).

Diffusion of Innovation Theory: Everett Rogers (2003) introduced this theory to explain organizational processes of adopting new practices as well as implementing and resisting change within organizations. The adoption process depends on multiple elements, which include the vision of leadership, existing infrastructure, and organizational culture, as well as how easy or difficult the implementation appears and the new practice's beneficial aspects. Enugu State educational institutions adopt subject-based teaching at a minimal pace because administrators view implementation costs as high while being unfamiliar with the methods and also express doubts about its implementation (Ezedi, 2021; Chika, 2022).

This research dives into the innovative teaching methods alongside the elements in the educational environment that help or hinder their spread to different learning institutions.

Empirical Literature

Research by multiple scholars demonstrates the advantages of subject-based teaching and other new educational methods in Nigerian elementary schools. Many schools in Lagos and Abuja implement subject teaching across lower and upper primary levels because these locations provide better educational policies and private sector developments. Pupils perform better at such institutions alongside teachers experiencing higher job satisfaction, while parents show greater confidence in academic delivery (Okonkwo 2021; Adeyemi & Ojo 2019). Teachers who instruct one to two subjects excel at lesson preparation and evaluation, thus creating improved teaching methods that result in superior academic results (Okoro & Hassan, 2019).

Subject-based education delivered 35% higher results on standardized literacy and numeracy testing compared to generalist classroom students, based on research conducted by Umeadi et al. in 2020. The research bases this educational gap by evaluating 24 educational facilities across Rivers, Lagos, and Enugu states to explain the impact of focused content instruction combined with proper classroom supervision and personalized course arrangements. Research conducted in Enugu State together with its surrounding areas reveals unsatisfactory results. More than half of the 30 schools under study by Chika (2022) depended on curricula whose last updates were at least ten years old. Underqualification among teachers affected more than 40% of essential subject areas, mainly focusing on science and ICT. Research and practice evidence contradict the senior administrators' apprehensions about subject transition causing problems for younger pupils, as outlined in Iheanacho (2021).

According to Okafor and Ezenwa (2023), school leaders across Southeast Nigeria avoid adopting pedagogical reforms because they lack sufficient training programs and government support and face budgetary limitations. The educational sector will face unnecessary long-term costs when instruction stays stagnant because such resistance leads to elevated student dropout demographics and weaker national examination results and reduces learner competitiveness on the global stage.

A wide majority of studies advocate for innovative teaching methods to be implemented throughout basic education programs, including academic content instruction. The inconsistent implementation patterns between Nigerian states reveal that administrators lack both the capability and interest to implement necessary reforms. Educational administrators who maintain instructional quality and develop staff capabilities need to intervene strategically because pedagogical innovations cannot prosper without this kind of leadership. Ezedi (2021) specifies that the educational transformation of Nigeria should be initiated at the school leadership level.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative interviews with school administrators and quantitative surveys among teachers and curriculum planners in Enugu State. Data from comparable schools in Lagos and Asaba were also reviewed.

Population and Sample

The target population included 15 primary schools in Enugu metropolis. Using purposive sampling, 15 were selected (10 public, 5 private), with a sample size of 75 participants (15 administrators, 30 teachers, 30 education officers).

Instruments for Data Collection

- Structured questionnaires for teachers.
- Interview guides for administrators.
- Document analysis of curricula and timetables.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency), while qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis to uncover recurring narratives and administrative trends.

Results and Discussion

To address the research objectives, data was collected from 15 primary schools across Enugu, Lagos, Abuja, and Asaba, encompassing both public and private institutions. The results are presented in tabular form for clarity and comparison, followed by detailed discussions.

Current Pedagogical Practices in Enugu State

Table 1: Distribution of Teaching Models in Enugu Primary Schools

School Type	Subject Teaching (%)	Generalist Model (%)
Elite Private Schools	60% (Upper Primary)	40%
Mid-tier Private	10%	90%
Public Schools	5%	95%
Overall	20%	80%

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The data in Table 1 shows that 80% of schools in Enugu still operate under the traditional one-teacher-all-subjects model. Subject teaching is mostly limited to elite private institutions and rarely adopted in public schools. Respondents in public schools cited lack of personnel and state budget constraints as reasons for continued use of the generalist model.

Impediments to Pedagogical Innovation

Table 2: Reported Barriers to Adopting Subject-Based Teaching

Barrier Type	Frequency (%)	Notes/Observations
Financial Constraints	75%	Increased cost of hiring subject-specialist teachers
Resistance to Change	60%	Cited as “unnecessary complexity” by many administrators
Misconceptions About Readiness	65%	Belief that children under 10 are not mature enough
Curriculum Redundancy	80%	Lack of updates or reviews to match modern societal demands

Barrier Type	Frequency (%)	Notes/Observations
Lack of Teacher Training	55%	Teachers unprepared for subject specialization

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2025)

The main challenges to innovation in Enugu schools appear in Table 2, where financial limitations combine with incorrect beliefs about child growth and refusal to adapt. A high percentage of administrators cling to outdated beliefs since they think subject teaching should not address students whose age qualifies them as beginners. Rutters and worksheets from past academic years that are simply reused annually were identified as primary obstacles during the assessment process.

Comparative Roles of Educational Administrators

Table 3: Administrator Involvement in Pedagogical Innovation

Location	Strategic Hiring	Curriculum Review	Teacher Development	Timetable Design
Lagos	Proactive	Regular	High	Structured
Abuja	Proactive	Regular	Moderate	Structured
Asaba	Moderate	Occasional	Moderate	Hybrid Approach
Enugu	Passive	Rare	Low	Rigid

Source: Interview and Observational Data (2025)

Table 3 shows a marked contrast in leadership approach. The educational administrators from Lagos and Abuja actively initiate professional staff recruitment along with developmental training programs and lesson plan modifications. The absence of visionary and autonomous leadership or training of administrators in Enugu allows outdated teaching models to remain dominant because such reform efforts fail to materialize.

Comparative Analysis of Pedagogical Models

Table 4: Regional Pedagogical Models and Learning Outcomes

Region	Teaching Model Adopted	Impact on Learning
Lagos	Subject Teaching	High student performance, strong literacy
Abuja	Subject Teaching	High teacher efficiency, improved engagement
Enugu	Generalist Teaching	Low comprehension, high content repetition
Asaba	Hybrid/Progressive	Mixed outcomes, improving with investment

Source: Comparative Survey Analysis (2025)

The comparative analysis (Table 4) reveals that subject-based instruction correlates strongly with improved academic performance, teacher morale, and learner engagement. Enugu lags behind in these areas, primarily due to its reliance on the generalist model and conservative administrative culture.

Discussion of Findings

The collected data supports the main argument that educational administrators determine whether educational innovations thrive or stagnate in teaching approaches. Strategic leadership in Lagos and Abuja City has produced innovative educational models. The two regions exhibit better

educational performance and better management practices in classrooms together with stronger parental interaction with schools (Adeyemi & Ojo, 2019; Adebayo & Okon, 2023).

The governmental management approaches in Enugu State reveal the problems that result from weak administration and poor resource utilization. The majority of administrators refrain from action because they argue about high price points together with worry about classroom appropriateness, yet empirical data shows otherwise (Ezedi, 2021, and Chika, 2022). According to the constructivist learning theory, teacher-led approaches receive support for use in specific subjects when specialist instructors lead the instructional process (Vygotsky, 1978). Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory confirms that visionary leadership becomes essential for establishing successful innovations, which fail to root in the absence of visionary leadership.

The study highlights the necessity to establish capacity programs and curriculum development with policy backing so administrators in Enugu and parallel regions can foster effective change leadership.

Conclusion

Research results indicate that the Enugu primary educational leadership faces a significant shortfall. Various trends of educational innovation at both global and national levels have not prevented numerous schools from using outdated instructional methods, which reduce learning quality. The failure of administrative leaders to adopt transformational methods stemming from their financial concerns, together with false data, causes widespread academic deficits. The important foundation of primary education requires immediate attention to innovation instead of postponement.

Recommendation

1. State education boards must adopt new policies that require subject instruction starting in Primary 3 and provide proper funding for such programs.
2. Government organizations, together with non-governmental organizations, should provide funding to train teachers in basic subjects, including English, mathematics, and science.
3. A scheduled review of curricula helps maintain their connection to modern society as well as new technology advances.
4. Federal incentives together with funding should be established to support private educational institutions when they hire specialist staff members.
5. Administrators need to engage stakeholders and parents through sensitization programs to reveal pedagogical reform benefits, which will support common investment in this initiative.

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