

Principals' Application of Personnel Management Skills for Effective Human Relations and Staff Security in Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the principals' application of personnel management skills for human relations and staff security in secondary schools in Enugu State. The population of the study comprised of all the principals of the government secondary schools in Enugu State. Respondents were the teachers from five (5) local government areas randomly sampled from the seventeen (17) local government areas that make up the state. The study was guided by two (2) research questions and one (1) null hypothesis. The "Questionnaire of Personnel Management Skills of Principals" was used to get responses from the teachers. This was rated using the modified Likert's four-point rating scale. A mean score of 2.50 was accepted. The mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions while the t -test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 significant level. The result revealed that the principals applied personnel management skills for both effective human relations and staff security only to the least extent. It was further revealed that there were no significant differences in the level of application of personnel management skills for effective human relations by male and female principals. Based on the findings, it was recommended that relevant authorities supervise the schools regularly and implement supervision reports. It was further recommended that government should ensure that they apply the same skills on the principals for them to be able to do the same to their subordinates.

Keywords: Personnel, management, personnel management skills, human relations, staff security, principals, and personnel function.

Introduction

Every organization uses human beings to make things to work. People are employed to do the defined tasks. These personnel follow a certain order to carry organizational plans and achieve the desired goals (Ukoje, 1992). They are referred to as human resources. In secondary schools, teachers are used to actualize the goals of education at that level. They form the school staff personnel.

Management entails the integratiOon of the various essential resources to ensure that the goals and

objectives of the organization are actualized. Effectiveness of management is highly dependent on the availability of resources generally and human resources particularly (Nwandu, Ani & Agbo, 2000).

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A high degree of participation by staff personnel encourages the growth of the subordinates and their ability to accept responsibilities influences effectiveness in management (Onyewole, & Alonge, 2012). For Ani, Olafin and Chukwuma (2005), management is the body of knowledge of getting things done in the most effective and efficient manner. The term management can be used interchangeably with administration. They share a common characteristic of defined goals, especially with regards to personnel.

Personnel management has to do with effectively mobilizing human resources to be able to achieve already laid down goals and specific objectives (Ogunsaju, 2006). Even with high quality of staff, there is still the need to be able to harness and coordinate them properly for the organization to be able to succeed. Such services as human relations and staff security are essential for effective personnel management. Personnel management skills are required. Personnel management skills are the basic competencies that make it possible for people in authority to succeed. Principals need personnel management skills to provide effective leadership in the school. Such skills enable them to cope with their roles which have become complex (Fullam, 2000). Possible problems which may arise from individual differences in teachers need special skills to solve them (Luo, 2004). Such skills include the skills for effective human relations and effective staff security in schools.

Human relation is all about the relationship between persons, in this case, the principals and the teachers: The personnel function of human relations enables the principals to relate to the staff as co-builders and worthy beings and not as mere working tools. These skills assist personnel managers to properly balance personnel needs and the needs of the organization. They also help in conflicts resolutions. It is natural that human beings when treated favourably are more likely to respond favourably. With good human relations treatments to staff, positive behaviours and achievement of educational goals are expected. Some of the behaviours expected from the principals include listening to teachers with empathy, not rebuking teachers for their mistakes in

front of the students, talking gently to teachers, treating them as men and women of worth, making them participate in making decisions that affect them as well as communicating important decisions to them appropriately. Other expectations include maintaining an open channel of communication, finding time to chat with teachers, organizing social events, allowing teachers to exchange views with management, giving teachers the chance to voice out their grievances and sympathizing with teachers in their difficulties. Teachers also need to feel secured.

Staff security is an essential component of personnel management to promote productivity. Teachers need to feel secure in the entire school environment. Certain measures are expected from the principals. These include protecting teachers from students' aggression, from the attacks of aggrieved parents, and even from the intimidations of their own colleagues. Furthermore, the school has to be fenced to keep intruders away. The school laboratories should have safety devices while the first aid box should be adequately equipped. Granting maternity leaves to deserving female teachers and sick leaves to sick teachers give them the feeling that their jobs are secured. Staff whose salaries and allowances are paid as and when due are encouraged to perform harder. The principals should prepare payment vouchers at the right time. The assurance of their terminal benefits on retirement motivates them equally. Organizing send- forth parties and giving welfare/parting packages to retiring staff boosts their morale. The purpose of this study was therefore to determine the extent of the principals' application of the skills for effective human relations and staff security.

Principals are the administrative heads of secondary schools. They are the people in control of authority at this level of education. They are accountable to the Ministry of Education. School principals are involved in providing directions that take the system to the deserved level in terms of ensuring of a standardized curriculum, monitoring of teachers' performance and students' achievements and encouraging parents' involvement in the educational affairs of their children. Principals equally engage in the review of policies that affect secondary education. They administer school

budgets. Above all, principals are involved in the all-important function of personnel administration since nothing works without human beings.

Personnel functions of principals include all the things principals do to encourage teachers to give their best towards achieving the goals and objectives of secondary education in accordance with the national policy on education as revised (FGN, 2014). These include having the right staff for the available subjects, training and retraining of staff to cope with current trends, providing welfare services and motivating staff appropriately. The place of human relations and staff security as functions of principals cannot be over emphasized.

Research Questions

The following research questions and null hypothesis guided the study.

1. To what extent do principals apply personnel management skills for effective human relations?
2. To what extent do principals apply personnel management skills for effective staff security?

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference in the application of personnel management skills among male and female principals on human relations.

Method

The researcher used a survey research design. The study was carried out in Enugu State. The population consisted of 293 principals of the state secondary schools distributed in seventeen (17) Local Government Areas of the state. A simple random sampling technique was used to select five of the Local government areas whose teachers were the respondents that provided information about all the principals. A "Questionnaire of Personnel Management skills of Principals" developed by the researcher was used to collect data for the study. It was designed to obtain information on the aspects of personnel management as stated in the research questions. A modified four-point Likert scale was used, thus: Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Least Extent (LE), Not at All (NA). These were weighed 4, 3, 2 and 1 points respectively. The reliability co-efficient of the questionnaire was computed using the Cronbach Alpha and the result

was positive at 0.83. This was interpreted as very highly reliable with regards to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire instrument was validated by three (3) experts in the area of Educational Administration and one (1) in the area of Measurement and Evaluation. Means (x) and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions. Means scores of 2.50 and above were accepted while those below were rejected. "T" test was used in testing the null hypothesis at a significant level of 0.05. Results from the various computations were presented in tables.

Result

The data collected from the respondents formed the basis for analysis. The results derived from the responses to the questionnaire were presented in tables according to research questions and null hypothesis.

Research Question One: To what extent do the principals apply the personnel management skills necessary for effective human relations?

Table 1

Mean ratings of teachers on the principals' extent of application of personnel management skills for effective human relations

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	SD	REMARKS
	Principals listen with empathy to teachers	2.54	0.49	GE
	Teachers are not rebuked in front of the students for their mistakes	2.43	0.43	LE
	Principals talk gently to teachers	2.43	0.45	LE
	Teachers are treated as men and women of worth, not as mere tools.	2.30	0.41	LE
	Teachers are made to take part in important decisions affecting them and their work.	2.30	0.32	LE
	Important decisions affecting the school are appropriately	2.30	0.34	LE

communicated to teachers				
The school maintains an open channel of communication	2.44	0.35	LE	
Principals find time to chat with teachers	2.25	0.35	LE	
Parties/get together are organized to make teachers socialize	2.28	0.35	LE	
Teachers are given the chance to exchange views with management	2.34	0.35	LE	
Teachers are given the chance to voice out their grievances	2.41	0.36	LE	
Individual teachers needs are often assessed and attended to	2.48	0.37	LE	
Principals sympathize with teachers in difficulties	2.41	0.40	LE	
CLUSTER MEAN	2.38	0.38	LE	

Table 1 shows that item (1) is the only item with a mean score above the cut-off point of 2.50 on the Likert' scale. It shows that the principals listen with empathy to the teachers. Each of the items 2 – 13 has mean score below 2.50 cut-off point. The cluster mean is 2.38, indicating that the principals do not apply the personnel management skills necessary for effective human relations to an acceptable level.

Research Question Two: To what extent do the principals apply the personnel management skills necessary for achieving effective staff security in schools?

Table 2
Mean ratings of teachers on the principals' extent of application of personnel management skills for effective staff security

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	SD	REMARKS
	Teachers are protected from	2.39	0.49	LE

students' aggressions				
Teachers are protected from the attack of aggrieved parents	2.35	0.32	LE	
Teachers are protected from the intimidations of their own colleagues	2.34	0.38	LE	
Bullying of teachers is prohibited	2.03	0.38	LE	
The school environment is free from physical causative hazards	2.40	0.39	LE	
The school laboratories have safety devices	2.34	0.44	LE	
The school is fenced to keep intruders away	1.96	0.55	LE	
Teachers are not punitively transferred	2.37	0.37	LE	
The school first-aid box is equipped to provide first-aid services to teachers when necessary	2.49	0.35	LE	
Maternity leaves are granted to deserving female teachers	2.47	0.44	LE	
Sick leaves are granted to deserving teachers	2.48	0.37	LE	
Medical records of teachers are kept in the school for references when needed	2.45	0.32	LE	
Send-forth parties are organized for teachers who go on transfers	2.25	0.38	LE	
Welfare packages are given to retiring teachers	2.53	0.35	LE	

Condolence packages are given to families of deceased teachers

2.63 0.30 LE

CLUSTER MEAN 2.40 0.39 LE

This Table 2 shows that items 26, 27 and 28 have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50 on the Likert scale. This shows that the principals often organize send-forth parties for teachers going on transfer, give welfare packages to retiring teachers and give condolence packages to families of diseased

Table 3

Summary of t-test (items) analysis of mean ratings of male and female principals' application of personnel management skills necessary for effective human relations

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	t-cal	DECISION
27.	Principals listen with empathy to teachers	2.54	0.49	2.50	0.50	0.65	Accepted
28.	Teachers are not rebuked in front of the students for their mistakes	2.43	0.43	2.42	0.43	0.08	Accepted
29	Principals talk gently to teachers	2.43	0.45	2.36	0.43	1.26	Accepted
30	Teachers are treated as men and women of worth, not as mere tools	2.30	0.41	2.27	0.47	0.65	Accepted
32	Teachers are made to take part in important decision affecting them and their work	2.30	0.30	2.23	0.40	2.04	Rejected
32	Important decisions affecting the school are appropriately communicated to teachers	2.30	0.34	2.42	0.33	1.65	Accepted
33	school maintains an open channel of communication	2.44	0.35	2.39	0.36	0.59	Accepted
34	Principals find time to chat with teachers	2.25	0.35	2.27	0.39	1.18	
35	Parties/get together are organized to make teachers socialize	2.28	0.37	2.29	0.34	0.01	Accepted
36	Teachers are given the chance to exchange views with management	2.34	0.35	2.33	0.36	0.12	Accepted
37	Teachers are given the chance to voice out their grievances	2.41	0.36	2.39	0.35	0.39	Accepted
38	Individual teachers needs are often assessed and attended to	2.48	0.37	2.49	0.33	0.41	Accepted
39	Principals sympathize with teachers in difficulties	2.41	0.40	2.44	0.47	0.74	Accepted

teachers. Items 14 – 27 each has a mean score below the cut-off point. The cluster mean of 2.40 which is also below the cut-off point shows that the principals' level of application of personnel management skills necessary for achieving effective staff security is very low.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of teachers with regards to female and male teachers' application of personnel management skills necessary for effective human relations

CLUSTER MEAN 2.38 0.59 2.37 0.40 0.75 Accepted

The result of the items analysis in Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of teachers with regards to male and female principals' application of personnel

Table 4

Group analysis of the hypothesis

Groups	No	X	SD	DF	Sign level	T-cal	Critical value	Decision
Male	195	31.03	3.14	251	0.05	1.52	1.97	Accepted
Female	58	30.80	3.12					

The group analysis of hypothesis presented on Table 4 shows that at 251 degree of freedom and 0.05 significant level, the calculated t-value of 1.52 is less than critical value of t of 1.97. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of teachers with regards to male and female principals' application of personnel management skills necessary for effective human relations.

Summarily, the study sought to find out the level of the application of personnel management skills for effective human relations and staff security by the principals of secondary schools in Enugu State. It further sought to determine whether the principals' level of application of the skills was influenced by gender. The findings revealed that the principals applied the skills for human relations and staff security to a low level. Furthermore, it was found out that the level of application of the skills is not influenced by the gender of the principals.

Discussion

The analysis of the two research questions (Tables 1 and 2) indicates that the principals apply the personnel management skills for effective human relations and staff security only to the least extent. The tested hypothesis also revealed that gender does not influence the level of application of personnel management skills by the principals. The findings are not ideal. Edom (2006) expects the principal as a leader to be able to influence the actions, behaviours and feelings of staff to win their willingness to co-operate. The principals who rose on the rank would

management skills for effective human relations. The 't' scores for each of the skills in the table except for item 5 are found to be less than the critical value of t. The null hypothesis is therefore upheld

have learnt from their own experiences that treating staff as worthy human beings helps to motivate them. They fail to talk gently to them. They deny them appropriate communications, adequate socialization and the opportunity to voice out their grievances. Lack of job security implies that their salaries and allowances do not always come as and when due. Physical security is not assured and there are no welfare packages. It further shows that on retirement, they are not sure of their benefits.

Naturally, women are believed to have human sympathy but that belief is not upheld in this study. It might be that the ministry of education does not supervise the schools regularly and use supervision reports to effect changes. It might further be that the principals themselves do not receive the desired treatments from the government. Teachers should be treated well in order to move them to actualize the goals of secondary education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusions drawn from the study are that:

1. The principals' level of application of personnel management skills for effective human relations and staff security is very low.
 2. The principals' application of personnel management skills for effective human relations is not based on their gender.
- Drawing from the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. The Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPMB) should treat the principals well so that they will be able to replicate same.
2. The Area Inspectors should supervise the schools on regular basis and make use of supervision reports.

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