

Principals' Management Ability and Institutional Sustainability of Public Secondary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

¹**Aniefiok Oswald Edet, Ph.D**
draniefiokedet@yahoo.com

¹**Michael Ekpenyong Asuquo**
mikeasuquo2015@gmail.com

¹*Department of Educational Administration and Planning
University of Calabar, Calabar
Cross River State, Nigeria*

Abstract

This study was carried out to establish the relationship between principals' management ability and institutional sustainability of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The sample of the study was one hundred and twenty (120) principals drawn from the population of two hundred and forty (240) principals in public secondary schools in the study area. A questionnaire entitled "Principals' Management Ability and Institutional Sustainability of Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (PMAISPSSQ)" was used for data collection. The reliability estimate of the instrument ranged from 0.72 to 0.78. The data generated from the instrument were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. The results showed significant relationship between principals' management ability in terms of facilities management ability, staff personnel management ability and Institutional sustainability. Arising from the result, it was recommended that secondary school principals should ensure adequate facility and personnel management to enhance institutional sustainability.

Keywords: Management, ability, institutional, sustainability, public, secondary, schools.

Introduction

Sustainability is popular in educational literature as a result of emphasis on sustainable development in the contemporary society. The World Commission on Environment and Development (as cited in Akwegwu, 2014), defined sustainable development as that development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Akwegwu (2014) stated that, sustainable development is a goal that countries all over the world

have been striving to achieve by instituting plans and actions to improve the ways things are done.

Sustainability is a paradigm in the contemporary society. In this work, sustainability entails keeping all programmes and activities of secondary school system functional at all times to meet the present needs of the students without compromising the needs of the future generations. It also involves effectiveness in all aspects such as punctuality, discipline, teaching and learning processes, management of examinations, and curriculum implementation. Institutional sustainability of secondary school system in this context refers to indefinite maintenance of and continuity with the stipulated standards for the benefit of the students in particular and the society at large. Sustainability requires that the school should maintain the required standard for the benefit of the present generation without jeopardizing the needs of the future generations. For instance, punctuality, effective teaching and learning processes, proper conduct of examinations, staff commitment to duties, discipline among staff and students, effective curriculum implementation, assigning of subjects to teachers based on areas of specialization, staff motivation, proper record keeping, to mention a few, may be regarded as what sustain the school system.

Institutional sustainability of educational system in Nigeria has been and is still an issue of concern to every probing mind. The question as to whether educational institutions are declining in their goal-oriented performances or otherwise are always issues of discourse among members of the contemporary society who are educationally inclined. The inability of most secondary schools to provide the students with the knowledge, basic skills and requisite competence to move up to higher education level is not a welcome development and the situation is a deviation from the concept of sustainability. The scenario is a departure from the provisions of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) which stipulate, among others, that secondary education objectives shall include providing students with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, educational development, opportunity for higher education irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background, provision of entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job, specific skills for self-reliance and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

Uko (2014) observed that except appropriate standards are maintained, the predetermined goals and objectives of education cannot be effectively accomplished. It has been observed that the required standards in public secondary schools tend to be negatively skewed and this appears not to facilitate the achievement of the present education needs, let alone that of future generations. Omoregie (2005) opined that, these days secondary school students cannot productively live in the society or move on to the higher institution of learning without the influence of their parents. In the

same vein, Udoh and Akpa (2010) posited that there are dwindling teaching and learning materials which result in poor standard and performance by the learners and the power of the school system as a whole. The prevailing situation of poor standard and performance by the learners requires intensification of management activities to be championed by the school head.

The feasibility of institutional sustainability of public secondary schools may still be far-fetched without effective principals' management ability in terms of facilities and personnel management. This is so because the conscious efforts of Federal, State and Local Governments, World Bank, Alumni Associations, Philanthropists, Donor Agencies and other educational stakeholders in building and maintaining schools, renovating school blocks, providing school facilities, equipment and human resources may be in vain if the available facilities and human resources are not well managed. Udoh and Akpa (2010) posited that although inadequate teachers and teaching facilities are factors that could hinder good performance by the students, if what is available is properly managed, it will go a long way in raising the standard of education in schools. This is an indication that, the importance of principals' management of both facilities and human resources in the school system cannot be over-emphasized. Management is the co-ordination of all the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives (Nwachukwu, 2004). Specifically, principals' management ability involves competencies to systematically control the human and material resources at their disposal to improve and sustain the school programmes and activities so as to achieve educational goals and objectives.

The principals' management abilities as used in this context include facilities management ability and staff personnel management ability. Principals' facilities management ability involves actions geared towards building, renovating, supplying, maintaining, utilizing and replacing school facilities to constantly meet the needs of the learners as well as ensuring that facilities are always functional and available for educational programmes at all times. It is common knowledge that, to a very large extent, the quality of education that students receive is dependent upon physical facilities. Agi and Eremie (2018) are of the view that at any education level, the physical facilities contribute to the quality education delivery as well as determining the quality of output for the nation's growth, and sustenance. This means that education programmes at any level cannot be implemented without educational facilities. Management of available facilities is a major variable for measuring the successful implementation of any educational programme (Lawanson & Gede, 2011). The school administrators need to ensure that educational facilities are available, well utilized, maintained and replaced when need arises, so as to boost staff and students' morale and subsequently sustain the school system. Facilities in schools are the

buildings, equipment, machines, flowers, plants, school garden, farm and every physical item that facilitate teaching and learning. Effectiveness of the educational organization in respect of assisting in the implementation of educational programmes, meeting the needs of the students and staff in the school, in addition to, improvement in students' academic performance and achievement, is contingent upon the nature of the school plant. Nwagwu (as cited in Asiegbu, 2014) observed that the quality of education that a child receives is directly related to the availability or lack of physical facilities and the overall atmosphere in which teaching and learning take place. This is in agreement with Akpan (2011) who maintained that school physical facilities are of great functional value to teaching and learning in the school and as such, careful and efficient management of these facilities is needed. Availability and prudent management of school facilities determine greatly the quality of instruction and performance of students in the school (Akpan, 2011).

Boxall (as cited in Armstrong, 2009) posited that personnel management is the management of work and people towards the desired ends. In this regard, personnel management is viewed as that management practice and action involving staffing, directing and coordinating human efforts to achieve a particular goal. In the school organization, teachers as well as non-teaching staff are required for effective operations. To facilitate sustainability in an organization, personnel management becomes imperative. Ekpoh and Asuquo (2018) opined that, the life wire of every organization whether it is educational or non-educational institution is dependent upon effective personnel management. Effective personnel management is reflected in quality personnel in an organization. The quality of teaching rendered in schools where there is proper personnel management by the principals is likely to be effective with a corresponding positive effect on the students. Aduke (2007) stated that the quality of education cannot be obtained without quality teachers and that the future of a nation depends greatly upon the quality of education provided for its citizens and upon inspired, satisfied and dedicated teachers. Uko (2014) opined that the process of teaching and learning is a critical element in attaining and sustaining quality of education and that this cannot be achieved where the teachers are inadequate, unqualified, lazy, truant and not well versed in their teaching subjects. Proper personnel management ability of the school principals ensures that the school is successful through people as well as increased institutional effectiveness and sustainability.

The specific goals of education in Nigeria include among others, to ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual (The Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2008). Teachers' role towards the development of individual into morally, sound and patriotic citizens cannot be over-emphasized. According to Iloabuchi, Abraham and Afangideh (2016), teachers engineer the minds

and attitudes of learners for socio-economic development and nation building. The crucial jobs perform by teachers call for effective personnel management. Their deployment needs to be on the basis of specialization to promote teachers' productivity and consequently, better outcome for students. School principals have the role of encouraging teachers' career development and welfare for optimum performance. Ikpe (2011) commented that the success of any organization depends to a large extent on the caliber of the people who work for it and having the right people in the right place at the right time who are willing and able to work effectively.

Statement of the problem

Sustainability is a paradigm in our contemporary society. Sustainability means keeping our schools functional at all time to meet the present needs of the students without compromising the needs of the future generations. It involves effectiveness in all aspects such as the teaching and learning processes, management of examinations and so on. Institutional sustainability of secondary schools entails indefinite maintenance of and continuity with the stipulated school's rules, regulations and standards for the benefit of the students in particular and the society at large, both at present and in the future.

Nevertheless, it has been observed by the researchers that sustainability in our public secondary schools is negatively skewed. In the observation of the researchers, lateness, indiscipline among teachers and students, poor teaching and learning processes, poor management of examinations as evident in examination malpractices, poor curriculum implementation to mention a few, remain prevalent in secondary schools that are managed by principals who are not well versed with management ability. In the face of these problems, the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which deals with quality education may not be achieved by 2030. The above scenario got the researchers motivated to investigate the relationship between principals' management ability and institutional sustainability of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between principals' management ability and institutional sustainability of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The relationship between principals' facilities management ability and institutional sustainability.
2. The relationship between principals' personnel management ability and institutional sustainability.

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

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Ho1: There is no significant relationship between principals' facilities management ability and institutional sustainability.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between principals' personnel management ability and institutional sustainability.

Methodology

The design used for this study was correlational design. The study was conducted in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study area has three (3) Education Zones namely: Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja Education Zones. The study population consisted of two hundred and forty (240) principals; out of which, one hundred and twenty (120) principals constituted the sample for the study which was selected through stratified random sampling technique. In order to avoid principals being biased in responding to their management ability and institutional sustainability of secondary schools, six (6) teachers were randomly selected, from each of the 120 selected schools, to assess principals' management ability and institutional sustainability of public secondary schools.

A questionnaire entitled "Principals' Management Ability and Institutional Sustainability of Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (PMAISPSSQ) was the instrument used for data collection for the study. The instrument was divided into three sections: Section A, B and C. Section A of the instrument contained name of the school and zone. Section B and C required the respondents to supply information regarding principals' management ability and institutional sustainability of public secondary schools. Principals' management ability was sub-divided into facility management ability and personnel management ability, all with sixteen (16) items. Section C (institutional sustainability) contained ten (10) items. The instrument was of a 4-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with scoring 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by two experts in Educational Administration/Planning and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha reliability test with coefficients that ranged from 0.72-0.78. This was established after administering copies of the questionnaire to respondents who were not part of the study. The hypotheses were tested with Pearson product moment correlation analysis at .05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between principals' facilities management ability and institutional sustainability.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between principals’ facilities management ability and institutional sustainability (N=120)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig
Principals’ facilities management ability	120	5.70	1.108		
Institutional sustainability	120	11.50	2.611	.748*	.000

*P<.05

The result presented in table 1 shows that the calculated r of .748 is significant at .05 level of significance and 118 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between principals’ facilities management ability and institutional sustainability was therefore rejected. In other words, there was a significant relationship between principals’ facilities management ability and institutional sustainability.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between principals’ personnel management ability and institutional sustainability.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between principals’ personnel management ability and institutional sustainability (N=120)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig
Principals’ facilities management ability	120	4.20	1.88		
Institutional sustainability	120	11.50	.611	.694*	.000

*P<.05

The result presented in table 2 shows that the calculated r of .694 is significant at .05 level of significance and 118 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between principals’ personnel management ability and institutional sustainability of public secondary schools was therefore rejected. This result implies that there was a significant relationship between principals’ facilities management ability and institutional sustainability.

Discussion of findings

The result of the analysis of hypothesis one as presented in table 1 revealed a significant relationship between principals’ facilities management ability and institutional sustainability of public secondary schools. The finding is in line with the view of Akpan (2011) that school physical facilities are of great functional value to

teaching and learning in the school and as such, careful and efficient management of these facilities is needed. The finding is also in line with Akpan (2011) who stated that availability and prudent management of school facilities determine greatly the quality of instruction and performance of students in the school. This finding equally corroborates Agi and Eremie (2018) that at any education level, the physical facilities contribute to quality education delivery as well as determining the quality of output for a nation's growth and sustenance. The findings also supports the opinion of Lawanson and Gede (2011) who held that management of available facilities is a major variable for measuring the successful implementation of any educational programme. This result is an indication that sustaining educational programmes so as to meet the needs of the students and achieve the goals of education in general is dependent to a large extent upon school principals' ability to effectively manage school facilities at their disposal. Proper management of school facilities sustains schools' programmes and activities for both future and present needs of the students in particular and the society in general. The result showed that, when school principals ensure availability, utilization/operation, maintenance and replacement of school facilities, they are directly enhancing institutional sustainability for the satisfaction of the needs of the present students and that of the future generations. Facilities in school enhance sustainability of every educational programme and activities.

Furthermore, the result of the analysis of hypothesis two in table 2 shows a significant relationship between principals' personnel management ability and institutional sustainability. This finding agrees with Ekpoh and Asuquo (2018) that the life wire of every organization whether it is educational or non-educational institution is dependent upon effective personnel management. In addition, these findings tally with Ikpe (2011) who commented that the success of any organization depends to a large extent on the caliber of the people who work for it and having the right people in the right place at the right time who are willing and able to work effectively. The result of the study is equally in consonance with Aduke (2007) that the quality of education cannot be obtained without quality teachers and that the future of a nation depends greatly upon the quality of education provided for its citizens and upon inspired, satisfied and dedicated teachers. The result of this finding is also in tandem with Uko (2014) that the process of teaching and learning is a critical element in attaining and sustaining quality of education and that this cannot be achieved where teachers are inadequate, unqualified, lazy, truant and not well versed in their teaching subjects. The possible explanation of this result is that, institutional sustainability of secondary school is contingent upon principals who are well versed with the ability to handle proper assignment of responsibilities to staff, who allow opportunities for professional growth of teachers to equip themselves with the current pedagogy, who conduct orientation programmes for staff when necessary, who observe teachers in the classroom during teaching and learning processes, who evaluate the performance of teachers, who

coordinate the work of the teachers, who develop team spirit among teachers and handle staff reward management. When these personnel management practices are feasible in schools, teachers tend to be encouraged in their task performance which consequently results in sustaining school programmes and activities.

Conclusion

Principals' management ability related positively with institutional sustainability of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. It takes principals who are well versed with management ability in such areas as facilities and personnel management to sustain educational programmes and activities in the secondary school system. For instance, a principals with effective management ability will ensure that school facilities for educational programmes and activities are available, well utilized, regularly maintained when necessary and replaced when need arises as well as assigning responsibilities accordingly, to staff, controlling and monitoring teaching and non-teaching staff work, so as to sustain educational system to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals of secondary schools should ensure effective facilities management strategies (ensuring availability, utilization/operation, regular maintenance and replacement of facilities) in the school system to ensure institutional sustainability in such areas as punctuality, effective teaching and learning processes, discipline among staff and students, proper conduct of examinations, staff commitment to duties, effective curriculum implementation, assigning of subjects to teachers based on areas of specialization, staff motivation, proper record keeping, to mention a few.

2. Secondary school principals should improve on their personnel management practices by way of encouraging, mobilizing staff as well as proper assignment of responsibilities to staff, allowing opportunities for professional growth of teachers, conducting orientation programmes for staff when necessary, observing teachers in the classroom, evaluating the performance of teachers, coordinating the work of the teachers, developing team spirit among teachers and handling staff reward management.

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