

Strategic Management Practices Adopted by Principals for Effective Administration of Secondary Schools in Anambra State

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Abstract

The study investigated the strategic management practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey. The study population comprised all the 258 principals in the 258 public secondary schools in Anambra State. No sampling was done due to the relatively small size of the population of the study. A researcher developed instrument titled “Principals’ Strategic Management Practices for Effective School Administration Questionnaire (PSMPESAQ)” was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts and Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The co-efficient for clusters I and II of PSMPESAQ were 0.88 and 0.77 respectively and the overall coefficient was 0.83. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that principals in urban and rural areas apply strategic planning practices for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that school principals should as a matter of priority explore possible ways of enhancing their strategic planning practices through capacity building workshops. Conclusions were drawn and suggestions for further studies were made.

Keywords: *Strategic Management, Principals, Effective, School Administration*

1. Introduction

Society depends on institutions of learning to produce skilled and knowledgeable individuals who can contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. Therefore this has been a considerable effort for improved educational system to meet up the contemporary demand of the society. This has resulted to changes in educational programmes. According to Chukwumah and Ezeugbor (2015), over the past two to three decades, different Nigerian governments have shown interest in transforming education system and have come up with various educational policies and programmes to ensure that they achieve their goals. Such efforts seem to result to changes and innovation in educational practices. Dauda, Akingbade and Akinlabi (2010) stressed

that to cope with these changes, modern management techniques are used in contemporary organization; one of such techniques is strategic management.

Strategic management has been defined differently by several authors due to its complex nature. For example, Muogbo (2013) defined strategic management as the process and approach of specifying an organization's objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve and attain these objectives, and allocating resources so as to implement the policies and plans. In the view of Wambugu and Waiganjo (2015), strategic management is the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives. Furthermore, Wambugu and Waiganjo pointed out that it involves formulating organization's objectives, implementing and controlling cross-functional decisions which focused on achieving these objectives in the present and future environments. The researcher therefore defined strategic management as the process of developing school goals, setting targets and mapping out strategies to attain the predetermined goals and objectives.

Strategic management provides a guide on how on execution of organizational programmes. In secondary schools, it helps school improve on instructional delivery by mapping out strategies that exploit their external strengths through responding to environmental opportunities, while neutralizing external threats and minimizing internal weakness. It helps principals to examine both present and future environments, formulate the objectives, implement and control the activities which are geared toward achieving these objectives in the present and future environments.

There are several strategic management practices outlined by different scholars, such include; strategic planning, strategic implementation, strategic control and evaluation (Auka, 2016; Wheelen & Hunger cited in Maroa, 2015). Strategic planning and strategic implementation were adopted in this study. These practices were of great interest to the researcher in view of their relevance in bringing about clearer definition of school goals and objectives, setting target, mapping out strategies to attain the goals.

Strategic planning has been defined differently by many scholars. For instance, Nwankwo, Omebe and Nwogbo (2015) defined strategic planning as the complex process by which an organization envisions the future and develops the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that anticipated future. Strategic planning addresses who, where, when and how of reaching desired goals and objectives. Strategic planning practices include: defining the corporate mission, specifying the achievable objectives, developing strategies and setting policy guidelines (Auka, 2016). In the same vein, Ikediugwu and Chukwumah (2015) stated that strategic planning practices include: setting a vision, scanning the external environment, assessing internal capabilities, establishing goals and performance measures among others. These practices could help predict changes in the environment and prepare on time. It is worrisome that Ikediugwu and Chukwumah (2015) pointed out that poor quality formulation of strategic plans is one of the challenges facing secondary schools in Anambra State. The best developed strategic plan of any school may be useless without proper strategic implementation.

Strategic implementation is the act of carrying out or executing the school's plan. In the same vein, strategic implementation is viewed by Auka (2016), as the process through which strategies are put into actions throughout the organization. Strategic implementation entails rational allocation of resources and working through others by motivating and monitoring the activities of staff so as to attain predetermined objectives of the school. Strategic implementation practices entail resource allocation, adopting the organizational structure to suite the strategy as well as creating conducive environment appropriate execution of strategies (Isaack & Muathe, 2017; Palladan & Adamu, 2018). Ikediugwu and Chukwumah, (2015) reported that there was low extent of monitoring and evaluating of the implementation of strategic plan in Anambra State and this could imply that principals have inadequate understanding of the processes. Palladan and Adamu stressed that for effective implementation, there was be proper strategic control to ensure conformity. Secondary school principals might install a variety of control mechanism to aid the monitoring of strategic implementation process for effective school administration.

The term 'effective school administration' has been differently conceptualized by various scholars; however, the multiplicity of the definitions has always pointed at one direction that effective school administration is evident in the attainment of predetermined objectives of the school. Alabi (2017) defined effective school administration as the ability of the school manager to help bring about optimum achievement of the school pre-determined objectives. The administrative tasks performed by the school administrator to help bring about optimum achievement in school include: students and staff personnel administration, school plant maintenance, financial and record management among others. In the view of Nwachukwu, Ogbonnaya and Nwori (2017), effective school administration is the ability of principal to get all members of the school community to work together towards the achievement of excellent goals of the school. Principals bring all members of the school community together through directing, controlling and motivation of personnel to enhance their commitment to attainment of the school goals. Effective school administration is defined by the researcher as the ability of principals to discharge their duties in such a way as to accomplish stated goals.

There are many indicators of effective school administration. Ikegbusi, Eziamaka and Onwuasoanya (2016) listed the indices of effective school administration to include: a good communication network, availability of appropriate resources, good human relations and community building, high academic excellence among students and sound discipline among others. In the same vein, Onyali and Nnebedum (2018) highlighted the indices of effective school administration to include; excellent academic performance of students, motivation and supervision of staff personnel to improve their performance, good school-community relations, proper financial, record, conflict and school plant management among others. From that above, it could be deduced that the indices of effective school administration include: principals' timely discharge of his/her duties, monitoring and motivating of teachers, well maintained school facilities, good school-community relations, well disciplined staff and students, outstanding

performance of students and judicious management of school funds in order to attain the school goals and objectives in rural and urban areas.

Typically, schools in rural areas are remote and relatively underdeveloped compared to the urban counterpart (Plessis, 2014). Plessis added that many secondary schools in rural areas are relatively poor, disadvantaged with inadequate basic infrastructure for sanitation, water, roads, transport, electricity and information and communication technology. Perhaps, this indicates that secondary schools in rural areas relatively lag behind the urban ones which may bring about disparity in strategic management practices adopted by principals and their performance in school administration. However, there have been contradictory reports on research findings regarding the school location and principals' practices in secondary schools. For instance, Syed, Ziarab and Attaullah (2015) reported that there was no significant difference between principals working in urban and rural areas. In the same vein, Oyewole (2013) reported that there was no significant difference in the practices and effectiveness of principals in urban and rural areas. On the contrary, Salfi, Virik and Hussain (2014) reported that urban and rural head-teachers had significant difference in their managerial and leadership practices. Although, those controversial findings were not reported in relation to the area of this study, this suggests the relevance of school location as a variable that needs to be further explored in the present study.

The state of affairs in secondary schools in Anambra State appears unsatisfactory. This is substantiated by Chukwumah and Ezeugbor (2015) who observed that the state of many secondary schools in Anambra State is a matter of concern, as made manifest by dilapidated buildings, insufficient classroom accommodation, lack of essential teaching materials, inadequate staff welfare, shortage of school furniture for students and teachers, lack of other essential facilities such as water, light, toilet facilities and low levels of teachers' productivity. Furthermore, Chukwumah and Ezeugbor (2015) pointed out that many secondary schools in Anambra State have little or no internally generated revenue to offset their financial programmes, poor decision making, examination malpractice, improper planning, poor implementation and rising cases of students' indiscipline among others.

Probably, the reason for the unfortunate situation could be adduced to poor strategic management practices of secondary school principals in Anambra State, who appear to have not dutifully planned strategically to put things in place. To buttress the statement, Diwuma (2006) reported that secondary school principals in Anambra State are not strategic management oriented. Furthermore, there seems to be poor strategic implementation of school programme which may be attributed to poor supervision and monitoring as also observed by Ikediugwu and Chukwumah (2015). This unsatisfactory state of affair makes it imperative to investigate strategic management practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The principals are chief managers of secondary schools who are saddled with the responsibilities of maintaining discipline among staff and students, motivating staff in the school, planning and

implementing school programmes in order to achieve the school goals and objectives. The state of some secondary schools in Anambra State appears unsatisfactory. Some secondary schools in Anambra State seem to be bedeviled with incidences of indiscipline among staff and students, poor decision making, examination malpractice, improper planning, poor implementation and shortage of relevant facilities for improving teaching and learning.

A consideration of the ugly situation seems to suggest existing gaps on the part of the principals to strategically manage secondary schools in Anambra State through planning, implementing and evaluating the school programmes so as to ensure judicious use of the available resources in the school. This appears to adversely affect administrative effectiveness in terms of making good use of personnel, time, energy and materials to produce desired and expected quality outcomes in the school. Therefore, the researcher doubt whether principals adopt strategic management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State and thus the problem of this study. The problem of the study is therefore to investigate the strategic management practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to ascertain the strategic management practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, this study sought to ascertain:

1. Strategic planning practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Strategic implementation practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State.

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the strategic planning practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the strategic implementation practices adopted by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic planning practices adopted for effective administration schools.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic implementation practices adopted for effective administration schools.

2. Method

Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The study was carried out in Anambra State. Anambra state is one of the States in South East, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 258 principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The entire population of 258 principals was used for the study without sampling. The researcher utilized the entire population because the size is relatively small and manageable.

A-researcher developed questionnaire titled “‘Principals’ Strategic Management Practices for Effective School Administration Questionnaire (PSMPESAQ)” was used for data collection. The instrument was developed based on review of related literature and consultation of experts in educational management. The instrument has two sections namely A and B. Section A focused on personal information of respondents such as school location. Section B has two clusters namely; I and II. Cluster I contains 10 items on strategic planning practices and Cluster II has 9 items on strategic implementation practices, The instrument contain 19 items. The face validation of the instrument (PSMPQ) was determined. To ascertain this, the researcher presented the title, purpose of the study, research questions, research hypotheses and the copies of the questionnaire to three experts and their suggestions were used to draft the final of the instrument. Cronbach alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of the instrument. The co-efficient values for clusters I and II were 0.88 and 0.77 respectively and overall coefficient was 0.83.

The researcher with the help of five research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Anambra State collected data for this study. These research assistants instructed and oriented on the purpose of the study and how to distribute, collect and handle the retrieved copies of the questionnaire. This enabled them have a good knowledge about the study, and help to answer questions and clarifications from the respondents. Direct approach was employed in collecting the data and provision for follow up was made where the respondents could not submit on the spot. A total of 258 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 247 copies of questionnaire were successfully retrieved, indicating 96% percent return. At the end of the exercise, copies of the questionnaire that were properly completed and retrieved were used for data analysis. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and t-test to test the hypotheses. In answering the research questions in this study, mean rating that falls below 2.50 was taken as disagreement and any mean rating of 2.50 or above was taken to indicate agreement. In testing the null hypotheses, if t-calculated is equal to or greater than t-critical at 0.05 level of significance and the appropriate degree of freedom, the null hypothesis is significant and thus was rejected, but if otherwise, it is not significant and thus was not be rejected.

3. Results

Research Question 1: What are the strategic planning practices applied by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores of Strategic Planning Practices Applied by Urban and Rural Secondary School Principals for Effective School Administration

S/ N	ITEMS	Urban Principals (N =164)			Rural Principals (N = 83)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision	Mean	Sd	Decision
1	Formulates the mission of the school from ministry of education overall mission to attain high academic excellence in school	3.05	0.89	Agree	2.76	1.14	Agree
2	Determines the objectives of the school in accordance to the mission for cohesion among staff	2.98	1.00	Agree	3.08	1.00	Agree
3	Integrates the inputs of staff in the planning process to motivate them to execute predetermined goals	2.68	0.92	Agree	2.89	0.96	Agree
4	Analyzes the resources at the disposal of the school for optimal usage	2.16	1.09	Disagree	2.47	0.98	Disagree
5	Considers the school priorities in developing the school plan to maintain a clear focus on reaching the most important goals of improving students academic performance	2.95	1.04	Agree	2.95	1.06	Agree
6	Develops programmes needed to attain school goals to increase the efficiency of the school	2.74	1.04	Agree	2.70	1.01	Agree
7	Sets policy guidelines for operation of the school programme to attain desirable learning outcome	2.28	1.12	Disagree	2.36	1.10	Disagree
8	Maps out strategies to give direction for improving teaching and learning	2.64	1.10	Agree	2.60	1.09	Agree
9	Sets out targets for various units in the school to prevent distractions in attainment of school objectives	2.71	1.10	Agree	2.57	1.00	Agree
10	Develops clear rules and regulations to guide the operation of the strategic plan	2.76	1.05	Agree	2.72	1.12	Agree
Cluster Mean		2.70	1.04	Agree	2.71	1.05	Agree

As shown on Table 1, all the items except items 4 and 7 of both urban and rural principals' mean scores are above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicating agreement with the items as their strategic planning practices. The overall standard deviation scores of urban and rural principals were 1.04 and 1.05 respectively and this indicated that their responses are homogenous.

The cluster mean of 2.70 and 2.71 for urban and rural principals respectively which are above the cut of mean of 2.50 indicated that urban and rural principals apply strategic planning practices for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. These strategic planning practices include; formulates the mission of the school from ministry of education overall mission to attain high academic excellence in school, determines the objectives of the school in accordance to the mission for cohesion among staff, maps out strategies to give direction for improving teaching and learning and sets out targets for various units in the school to prevent distractions in attainment of school objectives.

Research Question 2: What are the strategic implementation practices applied by principals for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State?

S/ N	ITEMS	Urban Principals (N = 164)			Rural Principals (N = 83)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision	Mean	Sd	Decision
11	constitutes a team to execute strategic plans for improvement of administrative efficiency	2.66	1.11	Agree	3.00	0.92	Agree
12	Motivates members of staff to apply the stated strategies in the school plans to improve their job performance	2.72	1.09	Agree	2.95	1.02	Agree
13	Disburses the available resource to implement the plans for properly management of school facilities	3.16	0.84	Agree	3.05	1.15	Agree
14	Provides the necessary information to staff so as to enable them execute the school programmes	2.88	1.02	Agree	2.59	1.17	Agree
15	Rely on experts in the implementation process so as to ensure transparency	2.41	1.03	Disagree	2.30	1.08	Disagree
16	Directs staff on ways to execute the school plans so as to bring about improvement in teaching and learning	2.84	0.99	Agree	2.81	0.90	Agree
17	Assigns duties to members of staff with commensurate authority to execute the tasks in accordance with the school plans	2.73	0.96	Agree	2.71	1.18	Agree
18	Divides work into sub-units in line with the school objectives for efficiency in the school system	2.85	1.08	Agree	2.96	1.08	Agree

19	Constitutes the strategic plan implementation committee for smooth operation of the school	2.35	1.04	Disagree	2.51	1.25	Agree
Mean of means		2.73	1.02	Agree	2.76	1.08	Agree

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores of Strategic Implementation Practices Applied by Urban and Rural Secondary School Principals for Effective School Administration
 Data analysis presented on Table 2 revealed that mean scores of urban and rural principals for items 12-14 and 16-19 are above the cut off mean score of 2.50 indicating agreement with the items as their strategic implementation practices. On the other hand, mean ratings of urban and rural principals for item 15 is below the cut off mean score of 2.50 indicating disagreement with the statement.

The pooled standard deviation scores of urban and rural principals were 1.02 and 1.08 respectively. This implies that the mean scores of urban and rural principals to each item are close, implying that their responses are homogenous. Thus, the degrees to which mean ratings of urban and rural principals vary to each item are low. The cluster mean of 2.73 and 2.76 for urban and rural principals respectively which are above the cut of mean of 2.50 indicated that urban and rural principals apply strategic implementation practices for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. These strategic implementation practices include; constitutes a team to execute strategic plans for improvement of administrative efficiency, motivates members of staff to apply the stated strategies in the school plans to improve their job performance, disburses the available resource to implement the plans for properly management of school facilities and assigns duties to members of staff with commensurate authority to execute the tasks in accordance with the school plans.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic planning practices adopted for effective administration schools.

Table 3: The t-test Analysis of Principals in Urban and Rural Scores on the Strategic Planning Practices adopted for Effective School Administration

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal.	t-crit.	df	∞	Decision
Urban Principals	164	26.93	9.94	-0.13	1.96	245	0.05	Not Significant
Rural Principals	83	27.11	10.04					

The result on Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of -0.13 is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 245 degree of freedom. This is an indication that is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic planning practices adopted for effective administration of schools. Thus, the null

hypothesis of no significant difference between the groups was not significant and thus, not rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic implementation practices adopted for effective administration schools.

Table 4: The t-test Analysis of Principals in Urban and Rural Scores on the Strategic Implementation Practices adopted for Effective School Administration

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal.	t-crit.	df	∞	Decision
Urban Principals	164	24.62	8.77	-0.21	1.96	245	0.05	Not Significant
Rural Principals	83	24.88	9.34					

As shown on Table 4 shows the calculated t-value of -0.21 is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 245 degree of freedom. This is an indication that is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic implementation practices adopted for effective administration of schools. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the groups was not significant and thus, not rejected.

4. Discussions

The finding of the study showed that urban and rural principals apply strategic planning practices for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. These strategic planning practices include; formulates the mission of the school from ministry of education overall mission to attain high academic excellence in school, determines the objectives of the school in accordance to the mission for cohesion among staff, maps out strategies to give direction for improving teaching and learning and sets out targets for various units in the school to prevent distractions in attainment of school objectives. This supported the finding of Kariuki, Maiyo and Ndiku (2016) which revealed that strategic planning practices applied by school managers include; formulating of mission, visions, goals, values and targets for effective operation of the school. The agreement in the two findings could be as a result of the fact that the two studies were conducted in secondary schools in African Continent. The possible explanation for the strategic planning practices adopted by secondary school principals recorded in this study could be as a result of education sector strategic plan formulated by Anambra State Government in 2011. The State Government plan serves as a guide line toward principals' strategic planning practices in secondary schools in Anambra State. The strategic planning practices adopted by secondary school principals provide a sense of direction in running the affairs of secondary schools in Anambra State. Furthermore analysis revealed that there was no significant difference

in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic planning practices adopted for effective administration schools in Anambra State. Oyewole (2013) reported that there was no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of urban and rural based principals. The similarity in the two findings could be attributed to the fact that the two studies were conducted in the same country. The result appears this way, probably because principals respective of their school location might have access to the State Government education sector strategic plan to guide their actions.

It was reports that urban and rural principals apply strategic implementation practices for effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. These strategic implementation practices include; constitutes a team to execute strategic plans for improvement of administrative efficiency, motivates members of staff to apply the stated strategies in the school plans to improve their job performance, disburses the available resource to implement the plans for properly management of school facilities and assigns duties to members of staff with commensurate authority to execute the tasks in accordance with the school plans. Part of the reason for the strategic implementation could be attributed to effort of the State Ministry of Education in monitoring the strategic plan implementation process across secondary schools in Anambra State. This affirmed with the finding of Kariuki, Maiyo and Ndiku (2016) which revealed that strategic implementation practices applied by school managers include; developing communication channels, building team to ensure sustained momentum in implementation of strategic plan, provision of incentives and timely provision of critical resources. The possible reason for the agreement in the two findings may be attributed to the questionnaire utilized by the two studies. This is also consonance with the finding of Senyurt and Nuri (2017) who reported that school administrator to a high level apply strategic implementation in schools. The importance of such strategic implementation practices cannot be overemphasized in the current period that the State Government is making serious effort to re-gain first position in WAEC across the country. It was also found out that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural secondary schools on the strategic implementation practices adopted for effective administration schools in Anambra State. The possible reason for this finding is because the urban and rural secondary school principals in Anambra State apply similar educational policy in managing their schools. They are also exposed to similar kind of training.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that secondary school principals in Anambra State apply strategic management strategies for school effective administration. Through theses strategic management practices, secondary school principals in Anambra State take advantages of the existing threats to school by turning them into opportunities. Thereafter, use the school resources to utilize the opportunities. Secondary school principals in urban and rural areas were not significantly differed in their strategic management practices for effective school administration in Anambra State.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Secondary school principals should as a matter of priority explore possible ways of enhancing their strategic planning practices through capacity building workshops.
2. Post Primary School Service Commission should constantly organize seminar for principals to enrich their knowledge and up-date their skills so as to improve on their strategic implementation practices.

7. References

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