
Principals Demographic Variables and Promotion of Skill Acquisition among Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess the influence of principal's demographic variables on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted an Ex-post facto research design. The study was conducted in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised principals and vice principals (administration and academics) in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom state. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 60 principals and 120 vice principals (60 in administration and 60 in academics), thus, giving a sample size of 180 respondents as the sample size for the study. The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Principals Demographic Variables and Promotion of Skill Acquisition Questionnaire" (PDVPSAQ). Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as independent t-test to test the hypotheses. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study concluded that female principals, urban principals, and older principals significantly promote skills acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State than their counterparts. One of the recommendations made was that State ministry of education should regularly give advanced principals update on innovative administrative techniques and skill acquisition.

KEYWORDS: Principals, Demographic Variables, Age, Gender, School Location, And Skill Acquisition

Introduction

Educational institutions such as secondary schools, require the right caliber of administrators to achieve the objective for which they were established. In the planner's view, all principals in spite of the demographic skew, are expected to engage in the functions of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, controlling and motivating. As explained the principal is

saddled with the responsibilities in secondary schools of ensuring effective use of resources allocated to schools bearing in mind that ultimately education is seen and regarded as a source of investment in human resources and manpower development. Goal attainment of every organization including the school system depends on a lot of factors including the demographic variables of the principals. In fact, first identifying the educational and demographic variables that affect principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools is paramount to achieving the educational goals in the Nigerian's National Policy on Education (Ogbonnaya, 2010).

A study by Okolo (2001) on school administrators' performance showed that aged principals as school administrators spend more time to gain new techniques of school administration. As a matter of fact, in some cases aged principals resist any change from their already known methods; or ways of doing things. Contrary to this, the study by Sawat, Anwas and Majoka (2013) had it that it is commonly believed that age, experience, and school location may have positive impact on the administrative (leadership) role of principals. Explaining further that Pakistan and African cultures share same myth that experience, as a function of age makes older persons to be given preference in terms of administrative (leadership) positions in organizations (Ahiazu cited in Sawali, Anwas and Majoka (2013). The issue of gender influence on principals' administrative effectiveness is not really sacrosanct. No wonder Timilehin (2010) observed on investigating the increasing argument of gender role in principalship that there are various factors that affect negatively or positively the administrative activities of principals which are not solely gender specific; concluding that what matters is the total development of the principals in various domains. A comparative study of male and female principals' supervisory roles showed that male principals superseded their female counterparts in their respective supervisory roles (Adegwu, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The products of the nation's contemporary secondary education system seem not to be performing up to the society's expectations. With the increase in the number and size of secondary schools in Akwa Ibom state, the problems of management by school principals could obviously become more complex. Some schools experience more conflicts than others in management of staff and financial resources and this may be attributed among other things to the gender of the principal and his/her level of leadership. Could it be that the demographic variables of principals affect promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State? This constituted the problem of the study.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the influence of principal's demographic variables on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The study specifically sought to:

1. Examine the influence of principal's gender on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Find out the influence of principal's age on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

3. Determine the influence of school location on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of principal's gender on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What is the influence of principal's age on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What is the influence of school location on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Hypotheses

- H01: There is no significant influence of principal's gender on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
- H02: There is no significant influence of principal's age on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
- H03: There is no significant influence of school location on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Concept of Demographic Variables of Principals

Demographic variables are non-cognitive, non-personality factors such as age, gender, educational qualification, working experience and marital status that may impact on the performance of the principals in the management of secondary schools. Age is the number of years a person has lived. Age may not be a determinant of a man's sense of good judgment. Feldman (1996) asserted that the general proposition is that younger principals in their fifties exhibit better management capabilities than the older principals since individuals tend to gradually disengage from active work with age. It may as well be that older principals will be more effective than younger ones, due to vitality and innovativeness associated with being young. Gender is described as the behavioural characteristics distinguishing between males and females in any society.

Gender according to Onyeonoru (2005), refers to the differentiation in roles between men and women construed by society through socialization. Sex is the biological differentiation between the roles of men and women. Thus, while sex is biological and fixed, gender is varied in space and time and is culturally determined. Scholars have given contrasting views about gender differences in performance effectiveness among school administrators. Daresh and Male (2000), reported that female principals are more effective and efficient in school administration because they extend their motherhood roles to the school environment. Uko (2002) noted male superiority over females as male principals usually apply their domineering capabilities to achieve the school goals. The assumption according to Ezech (1997), is that males are superior to females in most things that count. Females are assumed to be dependent on males for taking initiatives and for leadership. Since principalship involves exercising the role of a leader or

administrator in secondary schools, one is not sure whether the socio-cultural influences that expose males to different problems solving situations and place females in subordinate position would affect the performance of the different genders in school administration.

Concept of Skill Acquisition

Skill acquisition is an activity which involves the discovery, examination and exploitation of opportunities to bring into existence new goods and services, different ways of organizing, markets, process, and raw material organizing efforts that previously had not existed (Usman and Tasmin 2015). It is a well-known fact that effective training in skill acquisition has immensely contributed to the technological excellence and economic self-reliance of the industrialized nations. It is for this reason that Ezeji and Okorie (1999) while stressing the importance of skill acquisition in the national growth, emphatically contended, “that Nigeria’s social and economic problems will be drastically reduced if people are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment”. It is only with skilled men that materials can be harnessed, manipulated and transformed into products. An importance factor in skill acquisition process is exposure to practical situations where these skills are displayed. In such case, the individual might face challenges. Challenges concretize the efforts to acquire theoretical and practical skills. Challenges bring about rapid development. The students Industrial Training Programme is a programme where they are exposed to practical steps in the right direction, (Ali, 1998). It is important to be mindful of the general level of different skills in an economy so as to achieve a balanced development and high productivity in skill acquisition. To achieve skill acquisition, there is need to monitor all areas to ensure that effective linkages exist between attempts to develop theory and practical skills at various levels.

Gender of Principals and Promotion of Skill Acquisition

Ezeh (1997) suggest that there could be fundamental differences in the leadership, beliefs and practices of male and female principals. Ezeh further stated that it has been frequently claimed that female leaders are more collaborative and relational. This means that female principals relate friendlier with teachers and students as well as the community where the school situates. There are indications that these assumptions may not be true always. Recent gender discourse, according to Fadekemi and Isaac (2011), reveals growing skepticism with the validity of gender typecast of men as instrumental, bureaucratic and competitive and women as nurturing, relational and collaborative. To this extent, the performance of principals in the task areas of management of secondary schools could depend on gender. Gray (1993) distinguishes between feminine and masculine features in school management with female paradigms to be caring, intuitive, tolerant, creative, informal, non-competitive and subjective and male ones as disciplined, competitive, objective, formal, highly regulated, conformist and normative (as cited in Coleman, 2003). Chisholm (2001) also describe women’s leadership qualities and values as maternal oriented, deriving from “family influences as well as their educational and life experiences” (as cited in Lumby & Coleman, 2007).

Recently, Krüger (2008) notes that unique stereotypical styles are attributed to each gender with women to be dependent, cooperative, passive, emotional, kind and helpful and men to be independent, active, rational, aggressive, dominant and strong (as cited in Sanchez and Thornton, 2010). The gender differentiated qualities breed the adoption of different styles in leadership roles with women to embrace a more transformational, and nurturing approach while men a more transactional and authoritative one (Bass and Avolio, 1994, as cited in Coleman, 2011). That is, the former focuses their job performance on maintaining relational goals and sustaining collaboration with the stakeholders involved in the educational process through sharing information with them and transforming their ideas into organizational goals whereas the latter

view it as a series of transactions with subordinates mainly on accomplishing task goals and using formal authority.

Age of Principals and Promotion of Skill Acquisition

Age is the number of years a person has lived. Age may not be a determinant of a man's sense of good judgment. Feldman (1996) asserted that the general proposition is that younger principals in their fifties exhibit better management capabilities than the older principals since individuals tend to gradually disengage from active work with age. It may as well be that older principals will be more effective than younger ones, due to vitality and innovativeness associated with being young. A research study was conducted by Rahim in Janet (2015) to examine relationship between principal's age and his conflict management styles on teachers' job performance. Result showed that compromising management style was the dominant conflict management style of secondary school principal while competing management style was less preferred conflict management style among secondary school principals. It was also concluded in the research study of Janet (2015) that principals having different age had different dominant conflict management styles at secondary schools in Nigeria. It was found in this research study that there was insignificant relationship between principal's age and his conflict management styles. When principals were asked about the effect of conflict on school progress, many respondents declared that it had significant influence on the daily management activities in the school (Berger, Benatov, Abu-Raiya, & Tadmor, 2016). The findings of a study carried out by Ibukun (2011) revealed that there was a significant difference between principals' age and their leadership effectiveness. That the older the principals were perceived to be more effective in school's leadership. Okolo (2001) research on primary school head teachers' performance also showed that age tended to affect the head teachers' administrative and supervisory performance. That older head teachers had generally spent more years on the job, attended more seminars and participated in relevant professional discussions that exposed them to new techniques of administration and supervision.

School Location of Principals and Promotion of Skill Acquisition

Education serves as the backbone of development in any nation and improves the quality of life of a society through refinement of its potentials and as well enhances application of man's achievement towards improving his environment. This view was shared by Oboegbulem and Onwurah (2011) who asserted that education is the most important institution to produce a total man with the knowledge, attitude and skills required not only for the present world but also for the future generation. Secondary education does not only occupy an important place in the Nigerian education system, it serves as a link between the primary and tertiary levels; and because of its central position, its programmes have functional roles such as giving students access to higher education as well as preparing them for work. Enose (2010) summed it up that educational organisations such as the secondary school system exist in a symbiotic relationship with their environment, utilising both human and material resources for the production of educated socialised graduates. In fulfilling this role, a lot is expected to be done by the school head in the judicious coordination of human and material resources available to his/her school. Depending on the school contexts in which they work, principals face very different sets of challenges. School-level differences or contextual factors have important implications for their leadership practice. Leithwood (2005), in a review of the findings of case studies in seven countries, found features of the "organisational or wider social context in which principal's

work” that impact on their practices. These features include: student background factors, school location (e.g. urban, rural), school size, government or public versus non-government designation of schools, school type and school level (elementary, middle, secondary). Leithwood concluded that urban principals tend to exhibit effective leadership practices such as the promotion of skill acquisition among his students.

Method

The study adopted an Expost facto research design. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised principals and vice principals (administration and academics) in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom state. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 60 principals and 120 vice principals (60 in administration and 60 in academics), thus, giving a sample size of 180 respondents for the study. The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled “Principals Demographic Variables and Promotion of Skill Acquisition Questionnaire” (PDVPSAQ). Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as independent t-test to test the hypotheses. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of principal’s gender on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the hypothesis, independent t-test analysis was performed on the data (see table 1).

TABLE 1: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of principal’s gender on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State

GENDER	N	X	SD	t
MALE	90	17.00	1.42	20.90*
FEMALE	90	13.00	0.80	

***Significant at 0.05; df = 178; N = 180; critical t = 1.960**

The above table 1 indicates that the calculated t-value (20.90) was higher than the critical t-value (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance with 178 degrees of freedom. Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant influence of principal’s gender on the promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The result is therefore in agreement with the research finding of Ezeh (1997) who asserted that there could be fundamental differences in the leadership, beliefs and practices of male and female principals. He further stated that it has been frequently claimed that female leaders are more collaborative and relational. This means that female principals relate friendlier with teachers and

students as well as the community where the school situates. Also, Gray (1993) distinguishes between feminine and masculine features in school management with female paradigms to be caring, intuitive, tolerant, creative, informal, non-competitive and subjective and male ones as disciplined, competitive, objective, formal, highly regulated, conformist and normative (Coleman, 2003). The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of principal's age on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the hypothesis, independent t-test analysis was performed on the data (see table 2).

TABLE 2: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of principal's age on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

AGE	N	X	SD	t
OLDER	63	17.71	1.04	22.89*
YOUNGER	117	13.85	1.10	

***Significant at 0.05; df = 178; N = 180; critical t = 1.960**

The above table 2 indicates that the calculated t-value (22.89) was higher than the critical t-value (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance with 178 degrees of freedom. Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant influence of principal's age on the promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The result is therefore in agreement with the research finding of Feldman (1996) who noted that the general proposition is that younger principals in their fifties exhibit better management capabilities than the older principals since individuals tend to gradually disengage from active work with age. It may as well be that older principals will be more effective than younger ones, due to vitality and innovativeness associated with being young. Hence, principals having different age had different dominant conflict management styles at secondary schools in Nigeria (Janet, 2015). The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Hypothesis Three

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of school location on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the hypothesis, independent t-test analysis was performed on the data (see table 3).

TABLE 3: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of school location on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

LOCATION	N	X	SD	t
UBRAN	90	16.90	1.52	17.55*
RURAL	90	13.50	1.03	

***Significant at 0.05; df = 178; N = 180; critical t = 1.960**

The above table 3 indicates that the calculated t-value (17.55) was higher than the critical t-value (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance with 178 degrees of freedom. Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant influence of school location on the promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The result is therefore in agreement with the research finding of Oboegbulem and Onwurah (2011) who asserted that education is the most important institution to produce a total man with the knowledge, attitude and skills required not only for the present world but also for the future generation. Leithwood in his review noted that urban principals tend to exhibit effective leadership practices such as the promotion of skill acquisition among his students (Leithwood, 2005). The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Conclusion

The study concluded that: female principals, urban principals, and older principals significantly promotes skills acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom state. The study also concluded that there is significant influence of principal's gender, age, and school location on promotion of skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the recommendations made are that:

1. State ministry of education should regularly give advanced principals update on innovative administrative techniques and skill acquisition.
2. Both male and females public secondary school principals should be given same enhancing opportunities to improve their administrative potential.
3. Government and school management should provide urban and rural schools with adequate equipment and conducive environments to help promote skill acquisitions among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

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