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Principals' Gender and the Utilization of Legal Provisions in Administration of Secondary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study investigated the influence of principals' gender on the utilization of legal provisions in secondary school administration in cross river state, Nigeria. The sample consisted of four hundred and twenty-six principals from both private and public secondary schools in cross river state. One hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 426 principals from public secondary schools, were drawn from a population of 780 principals using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Principals utilization of legal provisions in secondary schools Administration Questionnaire (PULPSSAQ). The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using independent t-test. The results of the data analyzed showed that female principals utilized legal provisions more than their counterparts'. The principals' sex did not have any influence on staff administration and school community relation. It was concluded that sex of the principal was critical in some aspect of utilizations of legal provisions should be made for in service training, regular workshops and seminars for principals especially males to help upgrade their knowledge with modern techniques of utilizing legal provisions in secondary school administration.

Keywords: Principal's gender, legal provisions, utilization, administration of secondary schools, cross river state

1. Introduction

In Nigeria, the issue of law, order and discipline in school system is becoming more pronounced due to the phenomenal growth in school size and population. The effect of education in providing a suitable environment and new knowledge, attitudes and skills to individuals to be useful to themselves and the society is well recognized and acknowledged. In fact, the system and quality of education provided by a nation determine its developmental status. For education to achieve its objectives at all the levels, effective and efficient administration in strict compliance with the fundamentals legal objective establishing the school must be ensured. Similarly for the goals of secondary school to be achieved there are rules and regulations that should be followed. Legal provisions have been established in Cross River State to guide the effective and efficient administration of secondary schools (Maduewesi, 2005).

One of the responsibilities of the head of a school irrespective of gender status is to ensure that neither teacher nor students suffer any form of racial or religious discrimination, thus the law provides for religious freedom in the mandatory..."assembly for collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the institution..." (Education Laws of Cross River State, 2004). This law, however, does not exempt a student or staff from partaking in activities that depict national loyalty.

Furthermore, the law describes punishment regimes for students, specifying which school officials is authorized to administer which punishment. As stipulated by (Obi 2004), there are two ways of controlling students in the school, viz (a) Rules and regulations, and (b) punishment for violation of the rules and regulations. Rules and regulations can be established by the board of Education, the Local Government Education Authority, the principal or even the classroom teacher. It is expected that all rules must be reasonable and not in conflict with the National constitution or the State Educational laws.

Legal provisions depend on implementation; their inappropriate existence notwithstanding, principals should have to utilize them for the purpose for which they were enacted to be achieved. Therefore, this study is specifically designed to investigate principal gender and the utilization of legal provisions in secondary school administration in Cross River State. Variables in administrative capacity used for this study are staff administration, students' administration, school community relations, school plant management and school finance.

The researcher was moved to research on this topic because despite the provisions of constituted rules and regulations to guide principals, there is still a lot of discontent among parents, and community. There is an outcry of decay in education. This study is designed to determine whether principals' gender influence their utilization of legal provisions in secondary school administration.

Various and conflicting research findings centered on the relationship between the sex of the principal in utilization of legal provisions in the administration of secondary school, does not give room for a convincing inference on the subject. The principal whether male or female exert some influences on his administrative capability and skills.

Various researches have been carried out by researchers on principals' sex as they relate to other aspect of administration in secondary school. The majority of past research on the topic of gender and administration looked into certain areas; numerous studies have been geared on the behavioral pattern of the man and the woman administrative position in an overall summation with very few distinctions, there are for instance no consistent male-female gender differences in problem solving ability analytical skills, competitive desire, motivation, sociability of learning ability.

Researchers have attempted to understand attitude that individual hold towards women in administrative positions. Although generally, attributes are becoming more positive towards female administrators, employees still place preference on male authority to that of female. Most traits associated with administrative functions are generally considered masculine. Some researchers hold the belief that the teaching profession was making show progress in achieving the status of a recognized class due to women large number in it. Research by (Coffie 2007) conducted on demographic characteristics and principals' administrative effectiveness in CRS showed that male principals were more effective in school management (administration) as compared to their female counterpart.

2. Statement of the Problem

Schools generally are creatures of laws which reflect social, political and economic decisions which are complex as with a legal consideration sustaining their operations. There are legal curves of all sorts still exist in our schools, such as sex-related, violence-related offences and battery cases happen daily. Cruel and inhuman punishments are inflated on both staff and students without fair hearing. Lives and property are not adequately protected (Tella 2004). All these are not within the limits of legal provisions. From observation and reports from various electronic and print media, lack of commitment and dedication to duty among principals is responsible for the retrogression in the system. Staff and students in such schools take undue advantage of this lose situation and go to school late, refuse to attend classes and some even abscond from school and indulge in all forms of truancy (Opkata 2001). The principal whether male or female exert some influences on His or Her administrative capability and skills. When principals do not adhere to laid down educational guidelines in secondary schools there is negative results, various research have been carried out by researchers on principals' sex as they relate to other aspect of gender and administration in secondary schools.

This study attempts to contribute to the awareness of constitutional laws of Cross River State of Nigeria; as regards, secondary school administration in accessing principal gender in the utilization of legal provisions in secondary school administration.

2.1. Research Question and Hypothesis

This study is to investigate to what extent does the sex of principals' influence the utilization of legal provisions in secondary school administration while the research hypothesis is that there is no significant difference.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design adopted for the study as ex-post facto design. In this study the researcher chose ex- post facto design because the independent variable which is principals' sex had already been in existence. The research had no control over it and did not manipulate it.

3.2. Sample

Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample for the study. The sample comprised 426 from both public and private secondary schools in Cross River State.

3.3. Instrumentation

Relevant data for this study were collected using research developed questionnaire called Principals' Utilization of Legal Provisions in Secondary School Administration questionnaire (PULPSSAQ). The items on the questionnaire were based on the review of literature and personal observations. The subjects were expected to respond to it, by marking (✓) from the options in the appropriate column according to the degree of agreement or disagreement to each of the items.

The questionnaire contains 40 items which measured the effectiveness of principals' gender in the utilization of legal provision in the administration of secondary schools each items have five response options ranging from always, often sometimes, rarely and never.

A trial testing split half method was carried out to ascertain the reliability of the instruments. The instruments were administered on 76 principals from schools not included in the study. The data obtained from the questionnaire were used for the estimation of the internal consistency indices. The reliability indices obtained for the questionnaire and its sub-scale ranged from 0.78 to 0.93 which were high enough for the instrument to be considered reliable.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher to the respondents in their schools with the help of Research assistants. The collection was done the same day personally to avoid any attrition. A total of 428 copies of the

questionnaire were administered and retrieved. Two copies of the questionnaire however, were poorly filled and were therefore, discarded. Thus, 426 were used for this study. Independent t-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance.

4. Results

The hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference between male and female principals in the utilization of legal provisions in secondary schools' administration.

The independent variable is the sex of principals, male and female. The dependent variable is utilization of legal provisions (with its five dimensions). The analysis was carried on each of the five dimensions of Secondary School Administration. The result is presented in Table1:

Variables	Sex	N	x	SD	t	P
Staff Administration	Male	225	115.54	10.74		
	Female	201	127.17	11.27	-10.87	<0.0001
Students Administration	Male	225	53.16	7.29		
	Female	201	57.33	7.57	-5.77	<0.0001
Community Relation	Male	225	25.67	5.06		
	Female	201	26.37	5.13	-1.41	0.1576
Plant Management	Male	225	37.78	6.14		
	Female	201	39.85	6.31	-3.42	0.0007
Finance Management	Male	225	31.58	5.61		
	Female	201	32.57	5.70	-1.80	0.0721

Table 1: Independent t-test Analysis of Influence of Principals' Sex on the Utilization of Legal Provisions in Secondary School Administration

N= 426

*Critical t-value = 1.96; *P< .05; df=424*

The dependent t-test comparison of male and female principals with the five dimensions of secondary school administration had produced t-values of -10.87 for staff administration; -5.77 for students' administration; -1.41 for school-community relations; -3.42 for school plant management; -1.80 for school finance management. The result indicated that out of the five dimensions of legal utilization, the t-value associated with three (students' administration, school plant management and financial management) were statistically significant, indicating that there is significant difference between male and female principals in the utilization of these legal provisions. Generally, females had higher mean scores than males suggesting that they tended to be superior to their male counterparts in the utilization of these legal provisions. That is, they tend to utilize the legal provisions more than their male counterparts.

On the other hand, the t-values associated with two dimensions (staff administration and school/community relations) were not statistically significant, indicating their utilization of legal provisions that relate with staff administration and school/community relations. In other words, the utilization of the legal provisions associated with staff administration and school community relations did not depend on gender of principals.

5. Discussions of Findings

It was found out that there existed a significant influence of principal's sex on utilization of legal provision on three of the five dimensions of the study which were students' administration ($t=-5.77$, $df=424$, $P=.05$); school plant management ($t=-1.80$; $df = 424$, $P=.05$). A higher mean of 57.33 for females showed that there were more likely to utilize legal provisions in secondary school administration than their male counterparts. This finding confirmed the psychological study of Galigan (1982), which found that women are more likely to disobey existing laid down rules and regulations in administrative positions. The findings agree that men and women differ in the way they perceived and administer legal provisions using laid down laws. The present finding also lend credence to Peterson and Erdeners' (2001) study which revealed that man and woman differed in the way they perceived and managed resources using laid down laws. (Umoh 2007), (Atson 2005) and (Coffie 2004) reported that 75 percent of male and female chief executive believed that leadership and management skills of women differed markedly from those of their male counterparts, with women seen as consensus builder, better able to "nurture strong interpersonal relationships' through obedience to laid down rules and work processes.

However, another finding of this study revealed that principals' sex had no significant influence on the utilization of legal provisions on two other variables used for this study, viz staff administration ($t=-10.87$ $df=426$, $p<.05$) and school community relations ($t=-1.41$, $df=426$, $p<.05$). In other words, the utilization of the legal provisions associated with staff administration and community relations did not depend on sex. The outcome of this study was in consonance with the findings of (Epoh, 2006) Arubayi (1986), Offiong (1994), Besong (2001), Umoh (2007) and Aguh (2003). However, this study retained that hypothesis but rejected sex as a parameter for utilizing legal provisions in terms of staff administration and school-community relations.

6. Conclusion

In the light of the findings of this study, it could be concluded that sex of principal to some extent affects principals' utilization of legal provisions in secondary school administration. While sex is critical to utilization of legal provisions associated with students' administration, school plant management and financial management, it was not critical to the utilization of legal provisions. Staff administration and school community relations aspects of secondary administration.

7. Recommendations

- Principals should be more acquainted with the various legal provisions concerning their employment so that they can know their obligations and duties as well as their rights and when these rights are being trampled upon.
- Provision should be made for in-service training, regular workshop and seminars of school principals especially male principals to help them upgrade their knowledge and be acquainted with modern techniques in utilizing legal provisions in school administration.
- Male principals should adopt a positive approach to utilization of legal provision and user it willingly in the administration of secondary schools regardless of self-interest and desires. They should read educational bye laws and also encourage the acquisition of such journals for staff and community to read.

8. Suggestions for Further Research

This study should be conducted in all other states of the country to strengthen is generalization to the whole country.

A comparative study on situational factors such as leadership style, school location and marital status of principals in the utilization of legal provisions in the administration of secondary schools should be carried out

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