

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR MANAGING FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Functional education is no doubt a tool for potential leadership development in any nation. Educational institutions may not achieve its goal without instructional leadership. This paper examined instructional leadership practices for managing functional education in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. Three (3) research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 1067 public secondary school teachers which were also used as sample. No sampling technique was adopted. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha Method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.77. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings showed that principals define school mission to a high extent; the extent principals manage instructional programmes is high; and the extent principals promote a positive school learning climate is low. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that principals should create a reward system, and also give support to staff initiatives which will help to improve the school climate.

Keywords: Instructional leadership practices; Functional education; Secondary Education

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1 Introduction

Education is no doubt a major tool for national development in any country. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) one of the specific goals of education is to promote functional education can be conceptualized as the transmission, acquisition, creation, and adaptation of information, knowledge, skills and values for the purpose of self-reliance and sustainable development of a nation (Okon & Ezekiel, 2014). Kayode and Sunday (2014) defined functional education as a type of education that equips the recipient with the knowledge and skills needed for the performance of productive task. Unachukwu (2009) is of the opinion that functional education takes cognizance of the dynamics of the labour market, equips its graduates with occupational skills, and competencies to enable them to be self-reliant. Functional education therefore is any education that education that can offer students the opportunity to acquire skills which will enable them to be relevant to the technological changes existing in the world.

One of the objectives of secondary education according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) is to offer diversified curriculum that caters for the differences in talents and opportunities which prepares students for a useful living after graduation, and to provide entrepreneurial, technical, and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development. The secondary school curriculum shall consist of four fields of studies in Science and Mathematics, Technology, Humanities, and Business Studies. The subject offerings at secondary school level to include English Language, General mathematics, Trade and Entrepreneurship subject, and Civic Education as compulsory subjects in addition to the field of studies. The purpose of this diversified curriculum is to enable students acquire functional skills and competencies necessary for self-reliance. The result of dysfunctional education is that secondary schools produce graduates without useful knowledge and skills, and these graduates become alienated from their own environment.

Globally, researchers agree that instructional leadership is one of the most useful tools for creating an effective teaching and learning environment (Hallinger & Walkerm 2014). Functional education therefore may not be achieved without instructional leadership in secondary schools. Instructional leadership is a form of leadership that emphasizes the

improvement of teaching and learning in the school. Hoy and Miskel (2008) define instructional leadership as an educational leadership that focuses on the core responsibility of a school (teaching and learning) by defining the school mission, visions and goals, managing the instructional programmes, and promoting the school climate. They are of the view that it involves setting clear goals, allocating resources, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers. Therefore, instructional leadership is a form of leadership carried out in the educational system that focuses on the leader monitoring the teaching and learning processes which includes the teachers, the learners, and the learning environment so as to ensure that the set goals and objectives are achieved. An instructional leader has the ability to redefine his role to becoming a learner, the ability to know what is happening in the classrooms, works with the teachers to manage the instructional programme, and having a positive mindset for staff capacity building. Principal's instructional leadership is based on the assumption that students achievement depends on the nature and quality of instruction they encounter in the classrooms. A lack of leadership capacity might be a factor in the failure of secondary schools to systematically achieve the objectives of the curriculum (Colibie, 2013). Instructional leadership in schools demands that principals display commitments to improve teaching and learning through their practices.

Principal's instructional leadership practices involves monitoring students' progress, maintaining visible presence, engaging in teachers professional development, maximizing instructional time, curriculum implementation, and giving feedback on teaching and learning (Muhammad, 2017). Olibie (2010) is of the opinion that principal's instructional leadership practices entails planning with teachers, communicating clear visions and goals, giving support to staff initiative, discussing with teachers on how incentive should be made an explicit goal, brainstorming and implementing with teachers' strategies for improving students' achievement standards. Hallinger and Murphy (2009) identified that principal's instructional leadership practices involves defining the schools mission, managing the instructional programme, and promoting a positive school learning climate.

The principal of a secondary school as an instructional leader is expected to define the school mission, manage instructional programme, and promote a positive school learning climate. In

defining the school mission, the principal has a clear vision of what the school is trying to accomplish, communicates the goal to the staff and students, and leads the staff to developing the goals. Leithwood, Seashore and Anderson (2004) found out that defining the school mission accounts for the highest proportion of a leader's impact on students' achievement. In managing instructional programmes, the principal develops the curriculum, implements it, coordinates it and ensures that students receive appropriate instruction in areas identified by the school. In promoting a positive school learning climate, the principal directly or indirectly creates a reward system that reinforces academic achievement, protect instructional time, and selects high quality staff development programmes. Hallinger and Murphy (2008) in their findings observed that most teachers do not receive sufficient monetary compensation for what they do in the classroom.

It has been observed that most principals in Abia State rarely engage in instructional leadership practices (World Bank, 2010). Their inability to demonstrate instructional leadership practices to a high extent in secondary schools influences teacher effectiveness which in turn affects students learning. This is evident in the graduates secondary schools are producing who upon graduation have not been able to engage in productive task that makes them self-reliant. Principals must be prepared to meet the challenges of and becoming involved in managing functional education by demonstrating instructional leadership practices which would be more relevant to the transmission of knowledge for developing the students the spirit of functional skills. It is this background that informs this research work to examine instructional leadership practices for managing functional education in secondary schools in Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine instructional leadership practices for managing functional education in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives.

- 1 To determine the extent principals define the school mission in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.
- 2 To ascertain how principals manage instructional programme in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

3 To determine the extent principals define the school mission in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1 To what extent do principals define the school mission in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone?

2 How do principals manage instructional programme in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone?

3 To what extent do principals promote a positive school learning climate in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone?

2 Research Method

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study was 1067 public secondary school teachers in Aba Education Zone. The entire population was used for the study; therefore there was no need for sampling. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Instructional Leadership Practices Questionnaire (ILPQ)". The instrument was structured on a response pattern of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). The face validation of the instrument was carried out by three (3) experts, two (2) from Educational Administration and Planning and one (1) from Measurement and Evaluation all from Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.77. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The interpretation of the mean and standard deviation was based on the limit of real numbers: 3.50-4.00 (VHE); 2.50-3.49 (HE); 1.50-2.49 (LE); 0.50-1.49 (VLE).

3 Results and Discussion

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation scores of teachers on extent principals define the school mission in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

n=1067

S/N	My Principal	Mean	SD	Decision
1	develops goals that are easily understood and used by teachers in the school.	3.42	0.70	High Extent
2	uses data on students' performance when developing the school academic goal.	3.21	0.78	High Extent
3	uses needs assessment method to secure staff input on goal development.	3.12	0.81	High Extent
4	develops a focused set of annual school wide goals	2.95	0.70	High Extent
5	frames the school goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them.	3.27	0.77	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.19	0.77	High Extent

Key: SD (standard deviation), 3.50-4.00 (VHE), 2.50-3.49 (HE), 1.50-2.49 (LE), 0.50-1.49 (VLE)

The data presented in table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of teachers' responses on the extent principals define the school mission in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone. All the items have a grand mean of 3.19 with a standard deviation of 0.77 which indicates a high extent. This means that principals define the school mission to a high extent.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation scores of teachers on how principals manage instructional programme in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

n=1067

S/N	My Principal	Mean	SD	Decision
6	ensures availability of relevant materials before resumption day	3.34	0.66	High Extent
7	distributes instructional materials to teachers before resumption day	3.09	0.84	High Extent
8	supervises the implementation of instructional programmes regularly through classroom visitation.	3.09	0.85	High Extent
9	ensures that classroom specific objectives of teachers are consistent with the goal of the school.	3.10	0.86	High Extent
10	ensures that school curriculum is based on practical needs of the society.	3.32	0.70	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.17	0.78	High Extent

Key: SD (standard deviation), 3.50-4.00 (VHE), 2.50-3.49 (HE), 1.50-2.49 (LE), 0.50-1.49 (VLE)

The data presented in table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of teachers' responses on how principals manage instructional programme in secondary schools in Aba

Education Zone. All the items have a grand mean of 3.17 with a standard deviation of 0.78 which indicates a high extent. This means that principals manage instructional programme to a high extent.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation scores of teachers on the extent principals promote a positive school learning climate in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

n=1067

S/N	My Principal	Mean	SD	Decision
11	promote professional development in my school.	2.52	1.21	High Extent
12	provides incentive for learning.	2.35	1.21	High Extent
13	creates a reward system that reinforces academic achievement.	2.16	1.14	High Extent
14	gives support to staff initiative.	2.38	1.18	High Extent
15	participates in high quality staff development programmes consistent with the school mission.	2.64	1.12	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.41	1.17	Low Extent

Key: SD (standard deviation), 3.50-4.00 (VHE), 2.50-3.49 (HE), 1.50-2.49 (LE), 0.50-1.49 (VLE)

The data presented in table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of teachers' responses on the extent principals promote a positive school learning climate in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone. All the items have a grand mean of 2.41 with a standard deviation of 1.17 which indicates a low extent. This means that principal promote a positive school learning climate to a low extent.

3.1 Extent principals define the school mission in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

Results in table 3 showed that principal to a high extent develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers in the school, uses data on students' performance when developing the school academic goals, uses needs assessment method to secure staff input on goal development, develops a focused set of annual school wide goals, and frames the school goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them. Findings also revealed that principals define the school mission to a high extent in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. The implication is that the teachers are encouraged to be more reflective in their teachings which may lead to them adjusting their instructional techniques so as to address different learning needs of students. This

supports the finding of Leithwood et al (2004) that defining of school mission accounts for the highest proportion of a leader's impact on students' achievement.

3.2 How principals manage instructional programme in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

Results in Table 2 showed that principals to a high extent ensures availability of relevant materials before resumption, distributes instructional material to teachers before resumption, supervises the implementation of instructional programmes regularly through classroom visitation, ensures that classroom specific objectives of teachers are consistent with the goals of the school, and ensures that school curriculum is based on practical needs of the society. Findings also revealed that principals manage instructional programmes to a high extent in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. The implication is that teachers will be motivated to apply higher-order thinking which will enable them to deliver their lesson notes effectively. This agrees with the view of Colibie (2013) that a lack of leadership capacity might be a factor in the failure of secondary schools to systematically achieve the objectives of the curriculum.

3.3 Extent principals promote a positive school learning climate in secondary schools in Aba Education Zone.

Results from Table 3 showed that principals to a high extent promotes professional development in the school, and participates in high quality staff development programmes consistent with the school mission while principals to a low extent provides incentive for learning, creates a reward system that reinforces academic achievement, and gives support to staff initiative. It also revealed that principals promote a positive school learning climate in secondary schools to a low extent. The implication is that it leads to a negative school learning climate which does not provide for teacher innovation, and continued growth in the classroom. It aligns with the findings of Hallinger and Murphy (2008) that most teachers do not receive sufficient monetary compensation for what they do in the classroom.

4 Conclusion

Based on the results and discussions of the findings, it was observed that the extent principal's engage in instructional leadership practices in secondary schools were high and also low in some areas in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. In the area of principals defining the school mission and managing instructional programmes, it was high while the extent the principals promote a positive school learning climate was low.

5 Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals should create a reward system, and also give support to staff initiatives which will help to improve the school climate.
2. There should be training and retraining programmes for principals to equip themselves with the appropriate skill for instructional leadership practices.
3. Teachers should be sufficiently rewarded as motivation for good job.

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