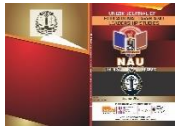


DIGITAL RECORD-KEEPING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS FOR EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the digital record-keeping management practices of principals for effective administration of secondary schools in urban and rural areas in South East, Nigeria. It was a descriptive study guided by one research question and one null hypothesis. The population of this study comprised 1,300 principals in the 1,300 public secondary schools in the five states in South East Nigeria. The sample size of this study comprises 750 principals selected using proportionate stratified sampling technique. Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Data Management Practices for Administration of Secondary Schools" (QDMPASS) developed by the researcher. The instrument has two main sections; A and B. Section A contains two items on the demographic data of the respondents covering school location while Section B contains five clusters on the variables of the study. The instrument is structured on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with nominal values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. To ascertain the face validity of the instrument for the study, the researcher submitted it together with the research topic, purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses to two experts in Department of Educational Management and Policy and one expert in the measurement and evaluation, all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a trial testing. Copies of the instrument were administered to 20 principals in 20 selected public secondary schools in Delta State in South-South, which was not part of the study population. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and reliability co-efficient values of 0.89 was obtained for the study. The researcher sent instrument through email to four Research Assistants which are colleague teachers in the five states of South East, those whom she briefed on the modalities of how to administer them to the principals using "on-the-spot" method. A period of four weeks was allowed for the principals to complete the survey. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and determine the closeness or wideness of the respondents' mean ratings. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test of independence. Findings indicated that principals disagreed on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration secondary schools in South East Nigeria. Accordingly, it was recommended, among others, that the Ministry of Education should organize intensive training programs and workshops to build principals' capacity on digital record-keeping tools and systems.



Keywords: Digital Record-Keeping; Management Practices; Principals; Effective Administration; Secondary Schools; Urban and Rural Areas.

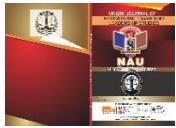
Introduction

Education has long been recognized as a fundamental pillar of national development, and the role of school administration in shaping the quality of education cannot be overstated. The history of secondary school administration in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era when British education policies introduced a structured system for managing schools. Initially, missionary bodies played a dominant role in running secondary schools, with minimal government intervention. However, following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the government took a more active role in managing secondary education. Policies such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 and National Policy in Education (NPE) in 1977 expanded access to education, necessitating more structured and effective administrative practices in schools.

In contemporary times, administration in senior secondary schools is essential for ensuring the holistic development of students and maximizing their potential. Administration is the systematic way of arranging educational resources to actualize the objectives of educational institutions. Operationally, administration is concerned with integrating the appropriate human and material resources that are made available and made effective for achieving the purposes of a programme of an educational institution. However, the effectiveness of school administration is not limited to internal operations alone; it extends to the broader interaction between the school and its external environment. This dual focus is critical because schools, as social systems, must engage with both internal and external stakeholders to create an environment conducive to teaching, learning, and the achievement of predetermined goals (Ukpong, 2020).

Externally, administrators from the Ministry of Education oversee the broader policies and regulations that guide secondary schools, ensuring alignment with national educational standards. Internally, principals, vice-principals, and administrative staff are responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including resource allocation, staff supervision, and student welfare. This interplay between internal and external administration highlights the collaborative nature of educational leadership, where the success of a school depends on the ability of its administrators to balance internal needs with external expectations. By effectively managing these dual responsibilities, school administrators can create a cohesive and supportive environment that fosters academic excellence and holistic student development. Within this structure, the principal plays a central role in bridging policy directives with school operations, making strategic decisions that align institutional goals with national education standards.

As the chief administrator, the principal is responsible for ensuring that the school operates effectively and that educational goals are met. The principal, as the head of a secondary school, is not just a leader but also a manager who oversees all aspects of school administration. This role involves strategic planning, decision-making, and ensuring that the school's mission and vision are realized. The principal serves as the liaison between the school and its external environment, including the Ministry of Education, parents, and the community. According to Onyekaza, Ezeaku

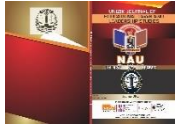


and Anyaeché (2022), the principal's role encompasses both instructional leadership and administrative management, making them pivotal to the success of the school. As administrators, principals are responsible for creating a conducive learning environment, managing resources, supervising staff, and ensuring compliance with educational standards and policies (Agogbua and Agu, 2021).

Despite the critical role that principals play in the administration of secondary schools, they encounter numerous challenges that hinder their effectiveness. In South East Nigeria, these challenges are often compounded by socio-economic and infrastructural factors. According to Osuji (2022), one of the most significant challenges is the lack of adequate funding for secondary schools. Many schools in South East Nigeria operate with limited financial resources, making it difficult for principals to provide necessary instructional materials, maintain school facilities, and implement programs effectively. Poor infrastructure, including dilapidated classrooms, inadequate laboratory facilities, and lack of access to modern technology, poses a significant challenge to school administration in South East Nigeria. Principals are often left to manage schools with substandard facilities, which can negatively impact student learning and overall school performance (Amajuoyi, 2021). Political interference in school administration is another major challenge in South East Nigeria.

Despite these challenges, there are also opportunities for improvement and growth in educational administration in South East Nigeria. Ironkwe, Okechukwu and Joseph (2024) averred that, efforts to enhance leadership training, increase funding for education, improve infrastructure, and incorporate management practices can help address some of the existing challenges and elevate the quality of educational administration in South East Nigeria. Therefore, management practices in the context of secondary schools in South East Nigeria encompass a wide range of activities and strategies aimed at ensuring the effective and efficient operation of educational institutions. Ironkwe et al stressed further that these practices involve planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, and controlling various aspects of school administration to achieve educational goals and objectives. Effective management practices in secondary schools require strong leadership, clear communication, strategic decision-making, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and challenges (Amajuoyi, 2021).

Linking management practices to data management practices in the administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria is essential for enhancing overall effectiveness and efficiency. When it comes to data management practices, the focus shifts to the systematic collection, storage, analysis, and use of data to inform decision-making and improve administrative processes in secondary schools. According to Owan and Basse (2019), data management practices involve establishing mechanisms for gathering data related to student performance, attendance, behaviour, teacher effectiveness, resource allocation, and other key indicators. Miller, Miller, Moran and Dai (2018) defined data management as the systematic collection, storage, analysis, and dissemination of information to support decision-making processes. In this study, data management practices refer to the systematic frameworks and procedures used to collect, organize, secure, and analyze educational data, including student performance, attendance, behavior, academic progress, teacher efficiency, and resource distribution. By maintaining accuracy, accessibility, and security, these



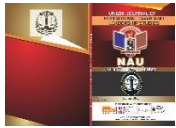
practices enable school administrators to make informed decisions, streamline operations, and enhance overall school management.

Effective data management empowers school administrators to make data-informed decisions, track progress towards educational goals, identify areas for improvement, and allocate resources strategically (Ngdata, 2018). By integrating data management practices into their overall management approach, administrators can leverage data to drive evidence-based decision-making, improve accountability, and enhance the overall performance of their schools. In the opinion of Owan and Bassey (2018) and Predal, Akullah, Bazarova, Devare and Gardiner (2017), they provide school administrators with accurate information to make informed decisions, identifying trends and challenges and to promote accountability and transparency within secondary schools by maintaining comprehensive data records and sharing insights.

Data management practices in the administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria encompass various dimensions that utilize modern technologies and strategies to effectively collect, store, analyze, and utilize data. In this study, the researcher will explain the dimensions of data management practices in secondary schools using the following proxies: digital record-keeping management practice, learning management system management practice, financial management practice, personnel management practice, and communication management system. These dimensions of data management practices are in line with the studies of (Ironkwe et al., 2024; Olalere, 2021; Owan and Bassey, 2018).

Digital record-keeping management practices involve the use of electronic systems and technologies to create, store, organize, manage, and retrieve records and documents. These practices are essential for maintaining accurate and accessible records in a digital format, which facilitates efficient administrative operations. It involves transitioning from traditional paper-based records to digital formats, enabling administrators to organize, update, and access data more effectively. Babalola, Akinwumi and Alegbeleye (2021) emphasized that digital record-keeping enhances data accuracy, reduces redundancy, and improves data retrieval in educational settings. In South East Nigeria, the adoption of digital record-keeping management practices among secondary school principals is still in a developing phase. While some schools have embraced digital tools for managing records, many are still grappling with the transition from traditional paper-based systems to more modern, digital solutions. By implementing digital record-keeping systems, administrators in South East Nigeria can maintain comprehensive and up-to-date records of student information, academic performance, and administrative processes, facilitating streamlined data management and decision-making.

Data analysis management practices involve utilizing tools and techniques to analyze and interpret educational data, derive actionable insights, and inform decision-making processes. Mustapha, Abubakar, Ahmed and Mohammed (2021) noted that data analytics enable administrators to identify trends, predict outcomes, and evaluate the impact of interventions on student performance and educational outcomes. Implementing data analysis management practices in secondary schools in South East Nigeria enhances the capacity of administrators to make evidence-based



decisions, track progress towards goals, and drive continuous improvement through data-informed strategies.

It is important to note that despite the growing emphasis on data-informed practices in educational settings globally, there appears to be a significant gap in the adoption and utilization of modern data management practices within secondary schools in South East Nigeria (Nayon, 2017; Ironkwe et al., 2024). These authors lamented that the educational landscape in South East Nigeria faces various challenges related to data management, including limited access to technology infrastructure, inadequate training on data management systems, reliance on manual record-keeping processes, and a lack of comprehensive data analytics frameworks. These factors contribute to inefficiencies in data collection, storage, analysis, and utilization, hindering the ability of school administrators to make informed decisions, optimize resource allocation, and drive continuous improvement within the educational system.

Furthermore, the absence of a robust data management culture and the underutilization of modern data management practices create a gap in the effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria. This is why Okoye and Okorji (2021) stressed that the disparity in data management practices between urban and rural secondary schools is largely influenced by differences in resources, infrastructure, and access to technology. This calls for the introduction of moderator variable of location into the study. Therefore, secondary schools in urban area generally have better access to resources and infrastructure, which enables them to adopt more advanced data management practices. In these schools, data management often involves the use of digital tools and systems, such as Student Information Systems (SIS), Learning Management Systems (LMS), and other software designed to handle various administrative tasks. These tools allow urban school principals to efficiently manage student records, track academic performance, monitor attendance, and generate reports (Ololube, 2016). The justification for the more advanced data management practices in urban schools lies in their better access to technological infrastructure, such as reliable electricity, internet connectivity, and computer facilities.

In contrast, rural secondary schools in South East Nigeria face significant challenges that limit their ability to adopt sophisticated data management practices. The rural schools often rely on traditional, manual methods of data management, such as paper-based record-keeping. While these methods are less efficient than digital systems, they are more practical for rural schools due to the lack of necessary infrastructure, such as consistent electricity and internet access (Ezeocha, 2020). The justification for the continued use of manual data management practices in rural schools is largely due to the constraints imposed by their environment. While urban schools are often more technologically advanced, rural schools' data management practices have their own advantages. The manual systems used in rural schools, though less efficient, and require less technical expertise to manage. This simplicity can be beneficial in environments where technological infrastructure is lacking or unreliable.

The disparity in data management practices between urban and rural secondary schools in South East Nigeria highlights a significant gap that this study aims to address. While urban schools are moving towards digital systems, rural schools are still heavily reliant on manual methods. This



dichotomy suggests that there is a need for a more balanced approach to data management that considers the unique challenges and advantages of both urban and rural schools. It is therefore against this background that this study determined data management practices of secondary school principals for effective administration in South-east Nigeria.

Research Question

One research question guided the study:

1. What are the digital record-keeping management practices of secondary school principals in urban and rural areas for effective administration in South East Nigeria?

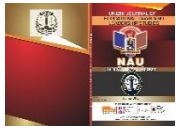
Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural areas on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria based on school location.

Research Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It was carried out in the South-East Nigeria. The population of this study comprised 1,300 principals in the 1,300 public secondary schools in the five states in South East Nigeria. The sample size of this study comprises 750 principals selected in South East Nigeria. The proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample size. Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Data Management Practices for Administration of Secondary Schools" (QDMPASS) developed by the researchers based on insight gained from reviewed literature and the specific purposes of the study. The instrument has two main sections; A and B. Section A contains two items on the demographic data of the respondents covering school location while Section B contains items on the variables of the study. The instrument is structured on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with nominal values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. To ascertain the face validity of the instrument for the study, the researchers submitted it together with the research topic, purpose of the study, research question and hypothesis to two experts in Department of Educational Management and Policy and one expert in the measurement and evaluation, all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a trial testing. Copies of the instrument were administered to 20 principals in 20 selected public secondary schools in Delta State in South-South, which was not part of the study population. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and reliability co-efficient value of 0.89 was obtained for the study. The researchers sent instrument through email to four Research Assistants which are colleague teachers in the five states of South East, those whom she briefed on the modalities of how to administer them to the principals using "on-the-spot" method. A period of four weeks was allowed for the principals to complete the survey. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and determine the closeness or wideness of the respondents' mean



ratings. Decisions on the research question were based on the cluster mean score relative to the real limits of numbers below:

Responses	Rating Scale	Real Limits of Number	
Strongly Agree	(SA)	4	3.50 – 4.00
Agree	(A)	3	2.50 – 3.49
Disagree	(D)	2	1.50 – 2.49
Strongly Agree	(SD)	1	1.00 – 1.49

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test of independence. Where the p-value is equal to or greater than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was not rejected. On the other hand, when the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question: What are the digital record-keeping management practices of secondary school principals in urban and rural areas for effective administration in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Respondents’ ratings on digital record-keeping management practices of secondary school principals in urban and rural areas for effective administration; (N 663)

S/N	In order to ensure effective administration, I:	X	SD	Remarks
1	use digital records to inform decision-making processes within the school	2.24	0.97	Disagree
2	easily share information with teachers and other staff	2.54	1.17	Agree
3	use digital record-keeping, it improves administrative efficiency in my school	2.04	1.08	Disagree
4	feel that digital record-keeping reduces paperwork	2.59	1.07	Agree
5	use digital record-keeping to help streamline processes	2.43	1.08	Disagree
6	use digital record-keeping to ensure accurate and current information	2.26	0.99	Disagree
7	am proficient that I can retrieve digital records when needed	2.47	1.03	Disagree
8	regularly back up digital records to prevent data loss.	2.41	1.13	Disagree
Cluster Mean		2.36		Disagree

Data presented in Table 1 reveals the item-by-item analysis of digital record-keeping management practices of secondary school principals for effective administration in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that items 2 and 4 with mean scores 2.54 and 2.59 were rated agreed while items 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 with their respective mean scores of 2.24, 2.04, 2.43, 2.26, 2.47 and 2.41 were rated disagreed. The cluster mean of 2.36 summarizes that, principals disagreed on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.97 – 1.17 means that the respondents’ mean scores of the respondents were closely related.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural areas on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria based on school location.

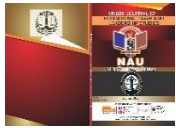


Table: t-Test analysis on no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural areas on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria based on school location

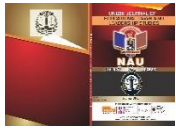
Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	α -value	Remark
Urban	409	18.49	4.38	661	0.175	0.000	0.05	Significant
Rural	254	18.56	4.36					

Data presented in Table 2 show the no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria based on school location. At 661 degree of freedom and t-cal value of 0.175; the p-value is less than 0.05 (df = 661; $p < 0.05$). This means that the null hypothesis is rejected therefore there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of principals on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria based on school location

Discussion of Findings

The finding in research question one revealed that principals disagreed on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration secondary schools in South East Nigeria. This means there is a lack of consensus among school leaders regarding how digital tools and systems should be used to maintain and manage school records. This disagreement can stem from the fact that some principals may be tech-savvy and advocate for advanced digital record-keeping (e.g., cloud-based systems, databases), while others may prefer traditional paper-based methods due to lack of training or resistance to change. This finding agreed with the finding of Nnorom and Okonkwo (2021) that 35% strongly supported digital systems for streamlining student data management, but 50% disagreed, citing high costs of software and hardware maintenance. Principals in underfunded schools felt digital adoption was impractical, leading to polarized opinions on its administrative benefits. The finding agreed with Elujekwute (2016) that principals disagreed on the effectiveness of digital records, with 45% of 120 respondents noting improved accountability but above average highlighting issues like data loss from poor backup systems and lack of technical skills. This finding also disagreed with the finding of Agunwa and Owan (2019) that 85% of principals and teachers agreed on the value of digital record-keeping for decision-making and accountability. Their correlational analysis indicated strong positive perceptions when ICT facilities were available, suggesting that disagreement diminishes in better-equipped settings. The difference between both findings could be as a result of varying opinions of respondents.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of principals on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria based on school location. This finding supported that of Ogunode and Agburu (2021) that urban principals rated digital systems higher than rural counterparts, attributed to better electricity, internet, and computer availability in urban areas. Rural principals reported frequent power outages and lack of devices, lowering their confidence in digital tools. Conversely, Olalere (2021) found no significant difference in ratings between



urban and rural principals across Nigerian Baptist Convention schools, including South East states. The difference between both findings could be as a result of varying opinions of respondents.

The finding revealed that principals disagreed on digital record-keeping management practices for effective administration of secondary schools in South East Nigeria. This implies that digital record-keeping practices are not uniformly adopted or effectively utilized among principals in the region. This lack of consensus may hinder efficient documentation, tracking, and retrieval of school records, which are crucial for informed decision-making and accountability. It also suggests a need for sensitization and standardized training on digital record-keeping across schools. The corresponding hypothesis implies that school location (urban vs. rural) significantly affects how principals perceive or utilize digital record-keeping tools. Urban schools may have better access to digital infrastructure and training, while rural schools may be lagging. This digital divide can result in administrative inefficiencies and inequalities in school management across locations.

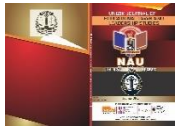
Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Ministry of Education should organize intensive training programs and workshops to build principals' capacity on digital record-keeping tools and systems.
2. There should be a statewide policy mandating standardized digital documentation for school operations to ensure uniformity.

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