



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between principals' leadership practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State. The study was guided by five research questions, and five null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 alpha level. A correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 15,612 teachers in 1,177 private secondary schools in Delta State. The sample for this study consisted of 390 principals drawn using the multistage sampling technique. Two questionnaires, titled "Principals' Leadership Practice Questionnaire (PLPQ)" and "School Performance Management Questionnaire (SPMQ)," were used for data collection. The instruments were face-validated by three experts. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the instruments, yielding overall coefficient values of 0.847, 0.841, 0.830, 0.861, and 0.885, respectively. The instruments were administered by the researcher and five research assistants, and a 96% return rate was recorded. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that principals' communication practices, accountability practices, decision-making practices, motivation practices, and staff development practices are strong and significant predictors of school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that principals should maintain open, transparent, and consistent communication with teachers, parents, and students to foster trust and enhance management in the school. Training programs are recommended for principals to strengthen their skills in accountability, decision-making, and staff development, as these were shown to directly influence school performance. Principals should implement both financial and non-financial reward systems to sustain teacher motivation, which is vital for improved student outcomes, and prioritize continuous professional development for teachers by organizing regular workshops, mentoring programs, and refresher courses.

Keywords: Principal, leadership, practices, school, performance, management, Communication.

Introduction

Education Is the process through which knowledge and skills are passed on while personal qualities and character are shaped. Nworgu B.G (2016) defined education as a planned and



systematic process aimed at bringing about desirable changes in learners' behaviour through teaching, training, and guided experiences. He emphasized that education focuses on measurable learning outcomes and personal development. In Nigeria, where educational institutions face numerous challenges, the effectiveness of a principal significantly impacts the overall school environment, teacher motivation, and student performance. According to Eze (2016), Nigerian principals must engage in classroom observations, lesson planning reviews, and the adoption of innovative teaching methods to improve academic standards. Principals ensure that teachers have access to adequate teaching resources to enhance their effectiveness.

Principals are not just administrators; they are instructional leaders, motivators, decision-makers, and vision setters who shape the culture and performance of a school through their daily practices. One key area of a principals' leadership practice is instructional leadership. This involves monitoring classroom instruction, ensuring curriculum delivery, and promoting teaching quality through teacher supervision and professional development. Effective principals support continuous learning among staff and lead curriculum reforms that align with educational standards. Another vital component is goal setting and vision articulation, principals are expected to set clear, measurable goals for the school, communicate these goals with stakeholders, and inspire commitment towards achieving them. This shared vision helps build unity and direction within the school community, they regularly assess teacher performance, observe classes, and provide feedback that supports professional growth, through structured appraisal systems, these leadership practices ensured by the principals' help identify areas for improvement and provide targeted support.

Principals' leadership practices involve the various strategic actions, behaviours, and administrative approaches adopted by the principal to effectively direct the operations of a school and influence teachers' performance and students' outcomes. According to Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2015), Leadership practice is the active, purposeful process by which school leaders influence people and resources to improve teaching and learning. It is the actions, behaviours, and strategies school principals employ to guide, manage, and improve the functionality of a school. It encompasses how principals influence teaching and learning, manage staff and resources, set visions and goals, and create an environment conducive to student achievement and school improvement. Principals' foster a positive school climate by recognizing teachers' effort, addressing their welfare, and creating a supportive work environment, these actions enhance job satisfaction, commitment, and teacher performance. Agu, Okonkwo and Okeke-James (2024) accounted that effective staff development initiatives by principals lead to increased teacher engagement and a willingness to go beyond formal job responsibilities. Principals' leadership practices include staff supervision, delegation of duties, effective communication, motivation, decision-making, accountability and staff development. Fashiku (2016) outlined leadership practices to include decision-making, communication, motivation, staff supervision, delegation of duties and staff development. Obuah and Nwaeke (2018) outlined that principals' leadership practices include; motivation, accountability and staff development (via delegation and performance support mechanisms). These practices enable principals to manage emergencies and sustain schooling during crises.



Effective communication practices are fundamental to school performance management, as it ensures clarity, transparency, and alignment of goals across all stakeholders. Fashiku (2016) emphasized that effective communication between principals and teachers is crucial for building trust, cooperation, and mutual understanding. He found that open and consistent communication by principals leads to a better working relationship with staff. Teachers perform better when they understand school goals, expectations, and policies clearly. Lack of communication often results in confusion, resistance to leadership, and reduced productivity. Leaders who communicate effectively are better equipped to make informed decisions that address the needs of the entire school community.

Accountability practices play a central role in school performance management, Adebayo and Ezeanya (2021) observed that accountability in Nigerian schools often breaks down due to a lack of clear policies and follow-through. However, principals who provide clear performance expectations, conduct regular reviews, and offer feedback cultivate a culture of professionalism. Leadership effectiveness is also measured by how well a principal can uphold ethical standards, ensure staff compliance, and promote fairness as emphasized this, in turn, sets a standard for teachers and students to emulate, promoting a performance-driven environment.

Decision-making is a fundamental aspect of school performance management, as it determines policies, strategies, and day-to-day operations that influence teaching, learning, and overall school administration. Fashiku (2016) emphasized the importance of participative decision-making where teachers are involved in planning, policy, and problem-solving processes. Fashiku discovered that principals' who make decisions unilaterally often face resistance or low commitment from staff. Decision-making promotes a sense of ownership, teamwork, and cooperation and it also leads to greater transparency, innovation, and alignment between leadership goals and classroom realities. Involving stakeholders in decision-making fosters a sense of ownership, leading to improved commitment and collaboration in implementing school policies.

Motivation practices is another crucial factor in school performance management, as it influences the dedication, enthusiasm, and productivity of both teachers and students. Motivation was found to be a core leadership practice that significantly influences teachers' willingness to perform their duties enthusiastically. Fashiku (2016) reported that recognition, praise, and incentives (even non-financial) help to boost teacher morale. Teachers who feel valued and appreciated by their principals are more committed and productive. Motivation practices include delegation, promotion opportunities, performance feedback, and staff involvement in school activities. Motivation, in this context, is seen as the force that propels individuals and groups to perform their tasks with energy, commitment, and a sense of purpose.

Staff development practices play a crucial role in enhancing school performance management by improving teacher effectiveness, fostering professional growth, and ensuring that educational standards are met. Fashiku (2016) highlighted that staff development is a key leadership responsibility, and principals must prioritize continuous professional training for their teachers. The study noted that teachers are more effective when they are equipped with new teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and curriculum innovations. When principals organize, recommend, or sponsor workshops, seminars, and in-service training and schools with



active staff development programmes, they see greater teacher motivation and commitment. Continuous staff training and capacity-building initiatives are essential for addressing the dynamic challenges within the education sector, such as curriculum changes, technological advancements, and the need for improved teaching methodologies.

A school is often defined as an organized institution designed to provide education to students, typically under the supervision of trained educators, to promote intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. A School performance management is a comprehensive and continuous process through which schools monitor, evaluate, and improve all aspects of their operations to achieve set educational objectives. It is rooted in the idea that effective schooling requires deliberate planning, consistent assessment, and strategic improvement. This process focuses not only on academic performance but also on the overall development of students, the professional growth of teachers, and the smooth operation of administrative systems which is greatly determined by school performance management.

School performance management include, goals and planning, teacher performance management, Student performance management, Resource management, School infrastructure. Goals and planning are essential elements of school performance management, serving as the foundation for aligning all school activities with its vision and mission. Shittu, & Oladejobi (2020) discovered that financial, physical facilities, and human resource planning are significantly associated with improved student academic outcomes. Teacher performance management is a vital aspect of school performance management, as the effectiveness of teachers directly influences the quality of instruction and student achievement. It refers to the structured process of setting expectations, monitoring instructional delivery, evaluating teacher effectiveness, and supporting professional growth. This process helps ensure that teachers are not only performing their duties but are continuously improving in response to student needs, curriculum changes, and school-wide goals. Student performance management is a central variable in school performance management, as it directly reflects the effectiveness of the educational system. In essence, a school's overall success is ultimately measured by how well its students perform academically, socially, and behaviorally. School performance management is not a static process, it encourages a culture of continuous improvement, where schools consistently review and refine their practices. This may involve embracing innovation, adopting evidence-based strategies, or rethinking traditional methods to better meet the needs of learners.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. What is the relationship between the principals' effective communication practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State?
2. What is the relationship between the principals' accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State?
3. What is the relationship between the principals' decision-making practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05% level of significance.



1. There is no significant relationship between the principals’ effective communication practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state.
2. There is no significant relationship between the principals’ accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state.
3. There is no significant relationship between the principals’ decision-making practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state.

Methods

Correlational Research Design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 15,612 teachers in 1,177 private secondary schools in Delta State. The sample for this study consisted of 390 principals drawn using the multi stage sampling technique. Two questionnaires, titled "Principals' Leadership Practice Questionnaire (PLPQ)" and "School Performance Management Questionnaire (SPMQ)," were used for data collection. The instruments were face-validated by three experts and tested for reliability. Cronbach's alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded reliability indices of 0.847, 0.841, 0.830, 0.861, and 0.885, respectively. Pearson product moment using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used to answer the research questions and to test the null hypotheses at 0.05% level of significance.

Results

Research Question one: What is the relationship between principals’ effective communication practices and school performance management in private secondary school in Delta state

Table one: Pearson r on relationship between principals’ effective communication practices and school performance management.

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Principals’ effective communication Practices	373	0.847	Very High Positive Relationship
School performance management			

Data in Table one showed that there is very high positive relationship existing between principals’ effective communication practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state. This is evidenced by the size of Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient r, which is 0.847.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between principal’s effective communication practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Table Two: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between principals’ effective communication practices and school performance management.

Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Principals’ effective communication practices	373	0.847	0.00005	Sig
School performance management				

Analysis in Table two showed that there is significant relationship between principals’ effective communication practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state. The calculated r (0.847) has P-value <0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis one was rejected.



This implies that principals’ effective communication practices increase performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between principals’ accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Table Three: Pearson r on relationship between principals’ accountability practices and school performance management.

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Principals’ accountability practices	373	0.841	Very High Positive Relationship
School performance management			

Data in Table three showed that there is very high positive relationship existing between Principals’ accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state. This is evidenced by the size of Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient r, which is 0.841.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between principal’s accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State

Table Four: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between Principals’ Accountability practices and School Performance Management.

Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Principals’ Accountability Practices	373	0.841	0.00005	Sig
School Performance Management				

Analysis in Table four showed that there is significant relationship between principal’s accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state. The calculated r (0.841) has P-value <0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis two was rejected. This implies that Principals’ Accountability practices increases performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between principals’ decision-making practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Table five: Pearson r on Relationship between Principals’ decision-making practices and School Performance Management.

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Principals’ Decision-Making Practices	373	0.830	Very High Positive Relationship
School Performance Management			

Data in Table five showed that there is very high positive relationship existing between Principals’ decision-making practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state. This is evidenced by the size of Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient r, which is 0.830.



Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between principal’s accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta State

Table eight Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between Principals’ Decision-Making Practices and School Performance Management.

Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Principals’ Decision-Making Practices	373	0.830	0.00005	Sig
School Performance Management				

Analysis in Table six, showed that there is significant relationship between Principals’ Decision-Making Practices and schools Performance Management in private secondary schools in Delta state. The calculated r (0.830) has P-value <0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis three was rejected. This implies that Principals’ Decision-Making practices increases performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study revealed that a high positive and significant relationship existed between principals' effective communication practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state. This means that the stronger the effective communication practice between principals, teachers and other stakeholders, the higher the school performance management. In other words, school performance management is optimized when principals maintain an effective communication with teachers and stakeholders. The findings of the current study are in collaboration with that of Fashiku (2016), who found that principals’ effective communication practices is a central element in school performance management. He explained that when principals communicate clearly with teachers, they are able to define roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations in ways that reduce misunderstandings and foster alignment with school goals. Azhar as (cited in Sofia, (2023), highlighted that effective communication between school principals and teachers is an important factor in building trust and mutual support. School principals are expected to be able to communicate well, listen empathetically, and provide constructive feedback to teachers.

The findings of the study revealed that a high positive and significant relationship existed between principals' accountability practices and school performance management in private secondary schools. This means that the stronger the accountability between principals and teachers, the higher the school performance management. The findings of the current study are in consonance with that of Fashiku (2016), who found that there is a direct link between accountability and performance management in Nigeria. He observed that principals who demand accountability from teachers through supervision, monitoring, and performance evaluation enhance teacher productivity and, by extension, school effectiveness. Importantly, he argued that accountability should not only be imposed but also modeled by principals, as their personal accountability sets the tone for the entire school. This result is also consistent with the theoretical expectations, as principals’ leadership accountability is fundamental to effective school management. Principals who exhibit clear goal-setting, staff performance monitoring, and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns help to cultivate a culture of transparency, commitment, and continuous school improvement. Leadership accountability facilitates better decision-making, equitable task delegation, and improved



alignment between school activities and educational objectives. These qualities collectively promote the realization of institutional goals. Thus, it can be inferred that principals' leadership accountability is instrumental in promoting staff morale, school effectiveness, and goal achievement.

The finding of the study showed that a high positive and significant relationship existed between principals' decision-making practices and school performance management in private secondary schools in Delta state. In other words, high relevant decision-making practice of the principal is capable of bringing about high school performance management in the school. In education, the quality of principals' decision-making directly influences teacher performance, student achievement, and overall school effectiveness. The findings of the current study are in collaboration with those of Fashiku (2016), who underscored that principals' decision-making practices significantly influence teachers' job performance, which in turn drives school effectiveness. His findings show that inclusive and consultative decision-making enhances accountability and productivity, particularly in secondary schools. Similarly, Adeyemi (2010) concludes that effective decision-making is indispensable for the attainment of educational goals in Nigerian schools, where resource challenges demand careful and rational leadership choices. This aligns with the findings of Musengamana et al. (2024), who observed that involving teachers in school decision-making processes significantly enhanced their productivity. This resonates with the positive outcomes observed in some private secondary schools in Delta State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Principals should consistently adopt clear, timely, and open communication practices. Regular staff meetings, clear written instructions, and feedback mechanisms should be strengthened to enhance coordination and effective implementation of school policies.

Principals should maintain high levels of accountability in administrative and financial matters. Proper record-keeping, transparent use of resources, and regular supervision of staff activities should be encouraged to improve trust and organizational effectiveness.

Principals should involve teachers and relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes. Participatory decision-making should be adopted to improve cooperation, reduce resistance to policies, and enhance effective school management.

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