

Professional Development Needs of Public and Private Secondary School Principals in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the professional development needs of public and private secondary school principals in Delta State. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. The design of the study is descriptive survey. A sample size of 525 is used for the study. It is selected through proportional random sampling technique from a population of 1,072 principals. A questionnaire titled: Staff Development Needs of Public and Private School Principals in Delta State (SDNPPSPDS) is used for data collection. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha with an overall coefficient of 0.74. The data obtained is analysed with the mean and standard deviation for the research questions and independent sample t-test for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results show that there is no significant difference between public and private secondary school principals on their communication skill needs; instructional supervisory skill needs; information and Communication Technology development skill needs and in their disciplinary skill needs. The study recommends that seminars, workshops and conferences be organized regularly as a way of training and retraining secondary school principals on professional skills which are needed to carry out their professional duties effectively, irrespective of their age, sex, academic qualifications and years of teaching experience.

Keywords: Effective Communication, Development needs, Discipline, Information Communication Technology, Instructional Supervision, Principals, Skills

INTRODUCTION

The school is a social system with various parts, students, teachers and non teaching staff, buildings, materials and financial resources. The Secondary School level lies between the basic and tertiary level of Education. The head of a Secondary School in Nigeria is called the Principal. He is usually appointed from among the most Senior teachers at the Secondary School Level to head a particular school. The National Policy on Education (NPE 2013) defines secondary education as the education a child receives after primary education and before the tertiary stage.

The broad goals of secondary education as spelt out in the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Education Policy document (2013) is to “prepare the individual for useful living within the society and higher education. And the objectives of post-Basic Education are provided as follows in the NPE (2013:12);

- a) Provide holders of the Basic Education Certificate (6 years primary and 3 years Junior Secondary) with opportunity for education for a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background.
- b) Offer diversified curriculum, to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles;
- c) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- d) Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- e) Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world’s cultural heritage;
- f) Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- g) Foster patriotism, national unity and security education with emphasis on common ties of our diversity; and
- h) Raise morally upright and well adjusted individuals who can independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour.

The first National Policy on Education was published in 1977, the second, third, fourth, fifth editions were published in 1981, 1998, 2004, and 2007 respectively and the sixth edition, 2013. Each of these editions had been prepared to update the previous one. In the process of these revisions, relevant developments, noticeable gaps in content, new opportunities, issues and challenges were accommodated in the Federal Government’s effort to transform and ensure a strategic plan for education in Nigeria. According to the then Hon. Minister of Education, Barr. Ezenwo Nyesom Wike (2013), these strategy plans in education “have engendered an expanded role for education as an investment for economic, social and political development.. an

effective means of developing the full capacities and potentials of human resource,.. a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies fit and relevant to the 21st century (p.ii).

The goals of secondary education as outlined in the national policy document are complex just as they are diverse. These no doubt had also not only expanded the roles but also the expectations from the diverse key stakeholders in education. The success of the schools in achieving these goals depends very much on the effectiveness of the leadership of the principal. The principal should be able to create the enabling environment for quality teaching and learning; he must be able to manage the available human and materials resources within the school in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

From the above analysis, it could be argued that the principal should be a transformational leader if he is to cope and adapt to the numerous societal changes that impact on the schools. But principals are not appointed on the basis of their proven leadership performance. As Oduro and Macbeath (2003) and Lahui-Ako (2001) rightly pointed out, principals in many countries are appointed on the basis of teaching record, or long service and experience and even on the basis of acquaintances rather than on the basis of their leadership skills.

Research findings (Mathide, 2007) have shown that pre-professional or pre-entry preparation of teachers into the teaching profession is inadequate. That is, teachers and principals are not adequately prepared for their positions. This has even become more serious in the light of globalization, knowledge explosion and the rapid changes taking place in all spheres of life in the 21st century. The ability to cope, or adapt to these changes is important because if school administrators are unable, then they may suffer from what the great American sociologist and futurist, Alvin Toffler (1970) called “future shock” - “the trauma resulting from having too much of too great a scope thrust upon you in too short a time frame”. If principals are key to “facilitating and overseeing that quality teaching and learning takes place in Schools (CCEM 2006, if their role is important in improving students academic achievement (Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005, Pashiardis, 2004) and if school leadership is significant (Crow, Lumby and Pashiardis, 2008), then it is crucial that Stakeholders should be concerned with how school leaders learn to do their jobs in ways that they can achieve their goals. They must help to determine their professional needs and provide answers to the professional renewal needs of school heads. Professional development should also continue and be sustained after principals have been appointed to their schools. This will help them to acquire current knowledge, skills, values and attitude beyond schooling.

The benefits of staff development through the determination of their development needs are legion. It helps ongoing skill development, understanding of latest technology development and help the staff to be comfortable with technology and its full potential. It thus could help the principal keep up with technological changes and avoid being left behind. Further, it enables you to stay ahead of competitors, identify skill gaps, and build upon basic level of technological skills (Gill, 2014). It also

forces the staff to be proactive, future oriented, attract and retain good employees and increase a school reputation. Finally, it could enable the school to elevate the existing professional skill, knowledge, competencies and abilities of the principal and in improving on their practices (Bhasin, 2018).

The NPE (2013) also recognized the significance of training and re-training of educational leaders when it stated;

Leadership capacity building for education sector planners and managers is the strengthening of the leaders skills in effective resource mobilization and management (human, material, financial and time) as well as adequate work practices. There shall therefore be mandatory continuous training before and during the period of services for all planners, managers (and administrators) in the education system (p.41).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Change is one of the constants in life. We now live in a fast changing world because of science and smart technology. Principals as educational leaders are faced with the onerous task of managing resources and executing and administering policies and strategies in order to make schools more efficient and effective. But there are some basic skills they needed to acquire to improve team work among staff who in turn would improve the academic performance of students to meet the goals of education. These skills include communication, instructional supervision, information and communication technology and disciplinary skills. Salazar (2007) had proposed an analytical model of professional development needs of school principals to include mastery of ICT utilization, mastery of effective communication, instructional supervision and leadership skills. Whether these are areas of development needs among principals in public and private schools in Delta State of Nigeria is not known.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify the Communication, instructional supervisory, ICT and disciplinary skill needs of principals in public and private secondary schools in Delta State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posted to guide the study

- 1) What are the communication skill needs of principals in private and public secondary schools in Delta State?
- 2) What are the instructional supervisory skill needs of principals in private and secondary schools in Delta State.

- 3) What are the information and Communication Technology (I.C.T) development skills needs of principals in public and private secondary schools in Delta State?
- 4) What are the disciplinary skill needs of principals of public and private secondary schools in Delta State?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated and then tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- 1) There is no significant difference between the communication skill needs of principals in public and private secondary schools.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the instructional supervisory skills development needs of principals of public secondary schools and those of private schools.
- 3) There is no significant difference between principals in public schools and those in private schools in their ICT development skill needs.
- 4) There is no significant difference between the disciplinary skill needs of principals of public schools and those of private schools.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. It was aimed at ascertaining the staff development needs of principals in public and private secondary schools in Delta State. According to Peretomode and Peretomode (2015), the survey research is used to enable systematic gathering of information from respondents with the aid of a questionnaire on prevailing situations for the purpose of describing and interpreting the present phenomenon.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprised 1,072 principals in public and private secondary schools in Delta State. Six hundred and twenty (620) of this number were principals of private secondary schools and the others 452 were principals from public schools.

A sample size of 525 principals of public and private secondary schools in the 3 senatorial districts of Delta State was used for the study. Fifty percent of principals in each senatorial district were randomly selected in order to achieve a proportional representation in the sample.

Table 1: Sample Retrieved Questionnaires

S/N	Senatorial District	No of Principals			
		N	Sample Size	N	Sample Size
1	Delta Central	180	88 (48.89)	361	180 (49.86)
2	Delta North	161	76 (47.20)	130	64 (49.23)
3	Delta South	111	53 (47.75)	129	64 (49.61)
TOTAL		452	217	620	308

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Research Instrument

The research instrument used for this study was a questionnaire titled “Staff Development Needs of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Delta State (SDNPPSSDS). It was divided into five sections. Section A comprised the Demographic variables of the respondents. Section B comprised the Communication skill needs of the principals, Section C the Instructional Supervisory Skill needs, section D the ICT skill needs and Section E the skills needed by principals to handle students disciplinary problems. Sections B,C,D and E consisted of ten (10) relevant items each.

The respondents were asked to choose one alternative responses from each item that was patterned according to the four-point-Likert type Scale. Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, and strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point, in all the sections.

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire was validated by three professors, two from the Department of Educational Management and Foundations and one, an expert in test construction, Department of Guidance and Counselling, Delta State University. They reviewed the various items of the instrument in terms of relevance, clarity, appropriateness of language and response pattern as they relate to the study. Their suggestions were incorporated in the final questionnaire before they were administered on the principals in the selected secondary schools.

Reliability of the Instrument

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, it was administered on 50 principals in Delta State who were not part of the study. The data was analysed using Cronbach alpha and the following coefficients were obtained: 0.72 (for the Communication Skill Needs subscale, 0.78 (for the instructional supervisory skill needs sub-scale), 0.73 (for the Information Communication Technology Skill Needs

sub-scale), and 0.71 (Disciplinary Skill needs of Principals sub-scale). According to Pallant (2005), ideally, a Cronbach alpha coefficient of scale should be above 0.6. It is therefore safe to conclude that the questionnaire and its sub-sections used for the study were reliable.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected with the use of questionnaire designed for the principals. The researchers visited all the secondary schools selected for the study. They administered the questionnaire personally to the respondents with the aid of four other trained research assistants. The researchers also waited for them to fill the questionnaire and therefore collected them immediately from the principals in order to avoid loss of some of the data.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis. Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions at a cut-off point of 2.50, while an independent sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis was done using statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.

Table 2: Communication Skill Needs of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Delta State.

S/N	Communication Skill Needs of Principals	School Ownership					
		Public			Private		
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
1	Effective Communication	217	2.65	0.76	308	2.69	0.73
2	Effective Listening	217	2.79	0.56	308	2.87	0.41
3	Understandable reports Writing	217	2.76	0.58	308	2.80	0.48
4	Writing clearly and concisely	217	2.77	0.54	308	2.82	0.47
5	Providing effective feedback	217	2.81	0.49	308	2.83	0.45
6	Speaking English Fluently	217	2.78	0.51	308	2.73	0.53
7	Politeness in conversation	217	2.78	0.52	308	2.79	0.49
8	Conflict resolution skills	217	2.74	0.57	308	2.76	0.52
9	Ability Communication audibly	217	2.76	0.57	308	2.77	0.53
10	Ability to control emotions	217	2.76	0.55	308	2.76	0.51

Table 2 addressed research question 1 which was aimed at identifying the communication needs of principals of public and private secondary schools. The mean score for each of the ten items of communication needs for both principals in public and private secondary schools was greater than 2.50. This implies that the principals perceived these items as areas of deficiencies and therefore areas of development needs. In order to test Ho1, if significant difference existed between public and

private school principals in their communication skills needs, an independent sample t-test was used to further analyse the data. An examination of Table 3 showed that Public School Principals have a mean score of 2.76 with a standard deviation of 0.34 while their counterpart in private schools had a mean score of 2.78 with a standard deviation of 0.28. From the result, the P-value of 0.40 was greater than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. We therefore concluded that there was no significant difference between public and private school principals in their communication development skill needs.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between public and private secondary school principals on their communication skill needs.

Table 3: Analysis of the Difference between Public and Private School Principals on their Communication Skill Needs.

Ownership of School	N	Mean	SD	T	P	Decision
Public	217	2.76	0.34	0.06	0.40	Not Significant
Private	308	2.78	0.28			

Table 4: Instructional Supervisory Skill Needs of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools.

S/NO	Instructional Supervisory Skill Needs of Principals	School Ownership					
		Public			Private		
		N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD
1	Ability to ensure adequate preparation of lesson notes by teachers on weekly basis	217	2.75	0.55	308	2.73	0.54
2	Ability to assist teachers prepare scheme of work and records on weekly basis	217	2.67	0.62	308	2.74	0.53
3	Ability to monitor teachers attendance during lessons on daily basis	217	2.77	0.53	308	2.71	0.53
4	Ability to monitor students class attendance on a daily basis	217	2.69	0.62	308	2.64	0.62
5	Ability to ensure availability of adequate instructional materials and textbooks to improve the teaching – learning process.	217	2.78	0.52	308	2.80	0.49
6	Ability to provide regular feedback to teachers after classroom monitoring and evaluation of lessons	217	2.80	0.50	308	2.80	0.49
7	Ability to provide feedback on students' academic performance with teachers	217	2.80	0.45	308	2.78	0.51
8	Ability to assist the teacher with classroom management and methodology	217	2.76	0.53	308	2.67	0.60
9	Ability to ensure that teachers are carrying out duties assigned to them	217	2.81	0.48	308	2.70	0.60
10	Ability to decide whether a teacher should be transferred, promoted, retained or dismissed	217	2.72	0.54	308	2.69	0.60

Table 4 contained ten items related to the instructional supervisory skills of principals in public and private secondary schools. All items have mean rating above 2.50. This implied that the principals perceived each of the items as areas of deficiencies and therefore common areas of professional development needs.

Table 5: Analysis of the Difference between Public and Private Principals on their Instructional Supervisor Skill Needs.

Ownership	N	Mean	SD	T	P	Decision
Public	217	2.75	0.30	0.77	0.44	Not Significant
Private	308	2.73	0.33			

The result in table 5 depicted an independent sample t-test which was conducted to compare public and private principals on their instructional supervisory skill needs. The result showed that there was no significant difference between public and private school principals on their instructional supervisory skill needs. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained meaning that there was no significant difference between the public and private school principals in terms of their instructional supervisory skill development needs.

Table 6: ICT Development Skill Needs of Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools.

S/N	ICT Development Skills Needs of Principals	School Ownership					
		N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD
1	Ability to send text messages	217	2.79	1.01	308	2.80	1.08
2	Ability to retrieve text messages	217	2.79	1.02	308	2.99	0.97
3	Ability to send E-mail	217	3.04	0.99	308	3.11	0.98
4	Ability to retrieve E-mail	217	2.93	1.10	308	2.95	1.09
5	Ability to save documents on computer	217	2.97	1.02	308	2.93	0.98
6	Ability to file document on computer	217	2.98	1.02	308	3.06	0.99
7	Ability to scan document in computer	217	3.11	0.89	308	3.17	0.88
8	Ability to use the handset effectively	217	3.04	0.98	308	3.04	0.95
9	Ability to use the internet services	217	2.87	1.04	308	2.98	1.05
10	Ability to use the World Wide Web as an information system on the internet	217	2.83	1.11	308	2.92	1.02

In table 6 were presented data used to answer research question 3 which was, what were the ICT development skill needs of principals in public and private secondary schools in Delta State?. The analysis of data in table 6 showed that each of ten (10) items had a mean score above 2.50, meaning, that all principals of public or private schools perceived these ten items as areas of deficiencies for which they would like to develop their skills or talents. Hypothesis 3 was tested using t-test to determine if significant difference existed between the mean scores of the public and private school principals.

Table 7: Analysis of the Difference Between Principals in Public and Private Secondary Schools in their Information and Communication Technology Development Skill needs.

School Ownership	N	Mean	SD	R	P	Decision
Public	211	2.92	0.59	1.71	0.09	Not Significant
Private	308	3.01	0.58			

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of public and private school principals in their information and Communication Technology development skill needs. The result showed that the p-value of 0.09 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted. This implied that there was no significant difference between principals of public and private Secondary Schools in their information and Communication Technology development skill needs.

Table 8: Disciplinary Skill Needs of Principals in Delta State Public and Private Secondary Schools.

S/N	Disciplinary Skill Needs of Principals	School Ownership					
		Public			Private		
		N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD
1	Provision of rules which guides student conduct	217	2.94	1.01	308	3.09	0.94
2	Provision of exemplary leadership	217	2.99	1.05	308	3.15	0.94
3	Ability to inculcate virtues of self-discipline in students	217	2.76	1.13	308	3.01	1.08
4	Skills in counseling the students on the importance of self-discipline	217	2.84	1.09	308	3.02	1.00
5	Ability to encourage teachers to engage in self-development	217	2.94	1.00	308	3.06	0.94
6	Ability to take tough decisions	217	2.86	1.08	308	2.94	1.06
7	Ability to ensure that the school curriculum is made flexible in order to arrest the interest of the students	217	2.75	0.98	308	2.85	1.02
8	Ability to improve the quality of teachers through seminars, workshops and in-service programmes to ensure improved productivity in schools.	217	2.96	0.97	308	2.99	0.89
9	Ability to punish erring students who are found to be undisciplined for a short time following due process	217	2.88	0.95	308	3.02	0.84
10	Ability to set a good example for the pupils to follow	217	3.02	1.03	308	3.04	0.98

In Table 8 has been presented the disciplinary skill needs of principals in both public and private secondary schools. The result depicted that all the mean scores were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implied that principals in public and private secondary schools considered the items as areas of deficiency in which they would need to improve upon through development programmes.

Table 9: Analysis of the Difference Between Principals Disciplinary Skill Needs by ownership.

Ownership	N	Mean	SD	T	P	Decision
Public	217	2.92	0.67	1.66	0.10	Not Significant
Private	308	3.01	0.67			

Table 9 presented the analysis of data with independent sample t-test to compare the difference between principals disciplinary skill needs by ownership of school. From the results, the null hypothesis was retained. This means that there was no significant difference between the disciplinary skill needs of public and private secondary schools principals.

At this junction, it needs to be added that there was also no significant difference between male and female principals, and between principals who had teaching experience of between 10 – 15 years in the one hand and those who have teaching experience of over sixteen (16) years and above and those who hold first degree and those holders of higher degrees in the four categories of development needs – communication skill needs, instructional supervisory skill needs, ICT development skill needs and disciplinary skill needs of principals from public and private secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. The finding on experience in this study was contrary to that reported by Pashiardis and Brauckman (2008). Their reports showed that professional development needs of new and experienced principals were not identical.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the development needs of principals of public and private secondary schools in four critical functional areas of communication, instructional supervision, ICT and disciplining of students. It also compared the development needs of the two categories of principals in relation to their gender, qualifications and years of teaching experience.

The first finding showed that the communication skill needs of principals in private and public secondary schools in Delta State included ability to communicate effectively, listening to others, writing understandable reports, writing clearly and concisely and developing feedback skills. Others included ability to speak English fluently, communicate audibly, control emotions, politeness in conversation and

conflict resolution skills. There was no significant difference between public and private school principals on their communication skill needs. This result suggests that both public and private secondary school principals have similar needs in terms of communication skills. This study agrees with Peretomode (2012) position that the purpose of communication included to persuade, instruct, direct, request, present, to serve as information input or exchange, to motivate staff, to clarify and express feelings and to control in order to achieve the goals of the organization which is the school.

The second finding showed that the instructional supervisory skill needs required by principals in private and public secondary schools in Delta State included ability to ensure adequate preparation of lesson notes by teachers on weekly basis, assisting teachers prepare scheme of work and records, monitoring teachers attendance during lessons, monitoring students' class attendance and ensuring availability of adequate instructional materials and textbooks to improve the teaching – learning process. Others included the ability to provide regular feedback to teachers after classroom monitoring and evaluation of lessons, provide feedback on students' academic performance and review performance with teachers, assisting the teachers with classroom management and methodology, ensure that teachers carry out duties assigned to them and decide whether a teacher should be transferred, retained, promoted, retained or dismissed. The results also showed that there was no significant difference between the public and private school principals in their instructional supervisory skill needs. This finding agrees with Onoyase (2007). According to the author, instructional supervisory skills are needed by principals and these include the ability to ensure public funds are properly spent in the school system, recognizing or approving a school for public examination and assisting the teacher with classroom management and methodology in order to improve his teaching effectiveness and consequently learning outcomes.

The third finding revealed that Information and Communication Technology development skill needs of principals in public and private schools in Delta State included ability to send and retrieve text messages, send and retrieve e-mails, and save documents on computer. Others included the ability to file documents on computer, scan documents in computer, use the handset effectively, use the internet services, browsing, uploading and downloading and using the World Wide Web as an information system. The result also revealed that there was no significant difference between principals in their Information and Communication Technology development skill needs. This finding is in line with the results of Folarani, (2007), who stated that the Information and Communication Technology skills needed by the principal include word processing skills, spreadsheet skills, database skills and electronic presentation skills. This findings of the study is also in agreement with the position put forth by the Ministry of Education (1998) that a requirement and a striking feature of secondary education curriculum in most countries of the world is the intensive use of ICT in classrooms and School Administration” (p.90).

The fourth finding showed that the disciplinary skills needed by principals of public and private secondary schools in Delta State included provision of rules which guide

students' conduct, exemplary leadership, inculcate virtues of self-discipline in students, counseling the students on the importance of self-discipline, and encourage teachers to engage in self-development. Others included ability to take tough decisions, ensure that the school curriculum is made flexible in order to arouse the interest of the students, improve the quality of teachers through seminars, workshops and in-service programmes to ensure improved productivity in schools, punish erring students who are found to be undisciplined for a short time and set a good example for the pupils to follow. This finding agrees with Dittimiya (2012) who stated that the disciplinary skills needed by the principal included the provision of enough facilities, equipment and infrastructure in order to ensure smooth administration and maintain discipline in public and private schools, suspend students who are found to be undisciplined for a short time and setting a good example for the pupils to follow.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, it could be concluded that all principals in Delta State of Nigeria irrespective of gender (male or female), type of school (public or private) being administered, academic qualifications (bachelor's or higher degree and years of teaching experience in required skill development in effective communication, instructional supervision, ICT, and disciplinary skills in order to be more effective in providing able leadership, bring about quality teaching and learning and consequently attain academic excellence and the goals of education. The findings also established the fact that teacher training programs do not seem to adequately prepare teachers for the position of the principalship. As a result there is the need for the continuing assessment of principals' areas of weaknesses and the need to regularly organize appropriate professional development programmes for them to be able to remedy the areas of deficiencies to meet up with changes and challenges of the times. Finally, the findings could be regarded as pointer also to inherent inadequacies in the pre-service curriculum for the training of teachers in tertiary education institutions in Nigeria. To the extent of these findings, there should be a needs to review the education curriculum at all levels of higher education in Nigeria.

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