

# THE EXTENT OF PRINCIPAL-STAFF COLLEGIALITY IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EBONYI, SOUTH EAST OF NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Principal-teacher collegiality is a foundation for effective school administration. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which principal-staff collegiality exists in secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted. A questionnaire with twenty items was used to collect data for the study. A sample size of 90 respondents was used. The instrument for data collection was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest procedure using pearson product moment correlation coefficient which yielded 0.83. Data collected were analyzed using mean, indicate that secondary schools principals in Ebonyi State have not been able to foster collegiality among their staff, hence there was a low extent of principals-staff collegiality in the schools. The study ended with some recommendations, such as that principals should improve on their abilities to foster collegiality among staff in secondary schools; principals to show concern for their staff needs; staff participation in decision making should be encouraged etc.*

The importance of cordial human relationship in school administration needs not to be over emphasized. In every human organization, cooperation is needed for good result to be achieved. According to Puchta and Porter (2004), collegial relationships among school principals and teachers determine to a large extent, the success or failure in the administrative system of a school.

Principal – staff collegiality is the existence of good working relationships between principal and staff of a school (Little, 2002). The focus is on what should be done to improve school processes and students' learning. Nhengu (2005) described it as an interactive relationship that exists among school administrators and staff whereby they discuss problems and seek solutions together, advise one another learn from one another, exchange ideas, and think about school improvements in terms of communal action rather than individual actions.

Mugunda (2003), noted that the interaction between the principal and teachers helps greatly in bringing about a mutual understanding which is a necessity to effective school administration. A collegial relationship between the principal and teachers could bring about opportunities that will allow human and material resources to be used effectively for the promotion of educational programmes.

Developments in the field of organization theory support this move towards collegial relationship in organizational management. Kurt Lewin's principle in Smith (2003:4) opined that we are likely to modify our own behaviour when we participate in problem analysis and solution, and likely to carry out decisions we have helped to make is central to principal-staff relationship in school management. Participative approaches emphasize management processes rather than outcomes only, and "high involvement" is seen as the ultimate key to the shift from autocracy to participation (MC Lagan and Nel 1995:105). Hargreaves (1994) shared the same sentiment and argued that the increasing emergence of collegiality as participative management in school reflects the widely shared beliefs that flattened management and decentralized authority structures carry the potential for achieving the outcomes unattainable by the traditional top-down bureaucratic structures of schools.

Collegial relationships in school management are also at the heart of Bush's (2003) collegial model of management. According to Bush (2003), collegial models include all those theories which emphasize that power and decision-making should be shared among some or all members of the organization. Okonkwo (2005) also argued that one of the factors that contribute to the success of any organization is the quality and strength of its staff. Therefore, a good principal should regard his staff as colleagues and partners in the pursuit of a common purpose.

Fostering a culture of collegiality in schools demands that the principal must obtain maximum co-operation of his staff in order to effectively administer his school. This is very important because the principal as the head of institution according to Molo: Grobler and Grarett (2002), is the most important administrator in the school system. The principal should possess the ability to foster collegial relationship between them and the staff working under them (Sagie, and Kowlosky, 2000).

Thurlow, Bush and Coleman (2003), emphasized that the fact that the principal is a status official does not imply that he should carry out his duties without suggestions and consideration of others. But if he does that conflicts are bound to occur. He should recognize and delegate some responsibilities to the staff and strive to foster collegiality among staff. Grimmatt and Grehan (2003:50), found that as teachers and principals work together to discuss and share their practices, they will continue to encourage one another to try new ideas. They described this process as the joint action that flows from

the group's purpose and obligations as they shape the shared task and its outcome. Despite the indispensable value of principal-staff collegiality in schools, Udoezika (2005) and Chukelu (2007) reported the prevalence of conflict and disagreements between principals and staff in Ebonyi State secondary schools. Poor decision making skills of principals such as not involving teachers and non-tutorial staff in communication, non- utilization of reliable information sources and decision to teachers have been reported (Udoye, 2004). Other researchers such as Uzochina (2004) and Egboka (2007) found that there were several acts of teacher non-compliance with the principals' directives, which greatly hinder administration effectiveness. Where teachers fail to comply with the principals' directives, teacher's indiscipline soar and students' learning are hindered. Where this situation applies, teachers and principals often clash and fail to achieve the school objectives. It then appears that collegial relationships have not been achieved in many secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria and this may be a major reason why conflicts and poor communication characterize most secondary schools.

### **The Problem of this Study**

The problem of this study is poor collegial relationship between principal and staff in secondary school in Ebonyi State of Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this study are:

- 1) to determine the extent to which there is a collegial relationship between principals and staff in Ebonyi State secondary schools.
- 2) The abilities of secondary school principals in Ebonyi State to foster collegial relationships with their staff.

### **Research Question**

This study was guided by the following two research questions:

- 1) To what extent have secondary school principals in Ebonyi State been able to foster collegial relationships with their staff?
- 2) To what extent does a collegial relationship exist between principal and staff in secondary schools in Ebonyi state?.

### **Research Design**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in carrying out this study. This design enabled the researcher to collect factual information which helped to find the extent of the existence of collegial relationships between secondary school principals and teachers in Ebonyi State.

### **Population for the Study**

The population for the study is made up of 90 principals and 900 teachers, that is, 990 respondents. (Source: SEB Ebonyi State 2014).

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A sample of 90 principals and 900 teachers were selected from the three education zones in Ebonyi State. Thus, 30 principals were randomly selected from each of the three education zones. Also 300 teachers were randomly selected from each of the three education zones. Finally, a total number of respondents selected for this study was 990.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument that was used in collecting data for this study was questionnaire. The title of the questionnaire is Principal–Staff Collegiality Questionnaire (**PSCQ**). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items designed to collect information for the purpose of answering the research questions. The items were structured on a four point scale of Very Great Extent (VGE) Great Extent (GE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE).

### **Validation of the Instrument**

Three experts from the Department of Educational Foundations of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, face validated the instrument. These experts after scrutinizing the instrument suggested and corrected the instrument.

### **Reliability of Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was tested using the responses of (5) principals and (10) teachers from secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The data collected were analyzed using pearson product moment correlation coefficient method to determine the reliability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was reliable.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher personally went to the sampled schools, distributed and collected the copies of the questionnaire with the help of three research assistants. Each of the research assistants was assigned to an education zone. They visited the schools with the researcher, distributed and collected the copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. A hundred percent return rate of the questionnaire was obtained.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were according to the research questions organized and analyzed to answer the research questions using mean statistics. The items in the questionnaire were scored as follows:

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Very Great Extent	4 = 3.50 – 4.00
Great Extent	3 = 2.50 – 3.49
Low Extent	2 = 2.00 – 2.49
Very Low Extent	1 = 1.00 – 1.99

Based on the 4 – point rating scale, the mid –point for the scale is 2.50 therefore, only ratings of 2.50 and above were accepted as an indication of great extent while average mean ratings below 2.50 were regarded as an indication of low extent.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

Research question one: To what extent have secondary school principals in Ebonyi State been able to foster collegial relationships with their staff? Mean ratings generated from the responses of principals and teachers to questionnaire items 1 – 10 were used in answering this research question as presented in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Mean Rating of Items on Principals Ability to Foster Collegial Relationships Among Staff.**

S/N	ITEM	X	DECISION
1.	Ability to delegate jobs to staff	1.8	Very low extent
2.	Ability to tolerate each staff	1.3	Very low
3.	Ability to carry out instructional supervision friendly and effectively	1.7	Very low extent
4.	Ability to manage conflicts effectively in the school	2.1	Low extent
5.	Ability to adjust to multiple demands and priorities from staff	1.8	Very low extent
6.	Ability to involve staff in decision making	2.3	Low extent
7.	Ability to show understanding of staff needs	2.4	low extent
8.	Ability to recognize and reward staff achievement	1.9	Very low extent
9.	Ability to offer individual support to staff	2.0	Low extent
10.	Ability to encourage to work under pressure	2.3	Low extent
	Average mean	2.00	

A look at table 1, shows that all the 10 items scored below average of 2.50 indicating that the principals have not been able to foster collegial relationship with their staff. So, it is to a low extent that the principals of secondary schools in Ebonyi State have been able to foster collegial relationship with their staff.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does a collegial relationship exist between principals and staff in secondary schools in Ebonyi State? Mean ratings of principals

and teachers responses to questionnaire items 11-20 were used in answering this research question as presented in table 2:

**Table 2: Mean Ratings of Items on Collegial Relationships Among Principals and Staff**

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	DECISION
11.	Principals and staff advise one another on personal problems	2.1	Low extent
12.	Staff discuss and exchange ideas on innovations with principals	1.7	Very low extent
13.	Principals and staff encourage one another to register for in-service training	2.3	Low extent
14.	Teachers and principals work as a team to achieve school goals	2.4	Low extent
15.	Teachers share journal and conference papers with principals.	1.1	Very low extent
16.	Principals and teachers often negotiate on conflict issues and reach compromise	3.4	Great extent
17.	Principals and staff visit one another during weddings, child delivery, bereavements	2.6	Great Extent
18.	Principals and teachers share in teaching the students	1.4	Very low extent
19.	Principals and teachers always disclose schools' vital information among themselves	2.3	Low extent
20.	Teachers often, willingly accept extra responsibilities assigned to them by the principals	2.8	Great extent
	Average mean	2.21	

In table 2, the mean ratings of items 16, 17 and 20 are above 2.50. This is an indication that principals and teachers agreed that the collegial relationships reflected in those items exist among them. The rest of the items have mean ratings less than 2.50. The average mean for the entire items is 2.21 indicating that there was a low extent of collegial relationship among principals and teachers in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

### **Discussion of Findings**

One of the major findings from answer to research question 1 is that secondary school principals in Ebonyi State have been able to foster collegiality among staff to a low extent. This finding is in line with Okonkwo (2005) who found that secondary school principals did not engage in leadership behaviours that promote staff collegiality. This finding suggests that principals lack ability in fostering staff collegiality. It is stressed that without fostering collegiality among staff, it is likely that principals would limit staff team participation and contributions to school management. In a similar

study, Munguda (2003) found that collegial culture does not exist in many south African secondary schools as teachers have had relatively little influence over the broader spectrum of school life and have experienced little involvement in decision – making. This finding might be because there are some moments when the school principals find themselves solely taking some actions and making unilateral decisions due to time constraints and other reasons. The time factor was acknowledged in a study by Tyala (2004), which found that a reason most often given by principals for failing to encourage team work in South African school management is time. Granted that the decision making process, for instance, may be elongated by the search for compromise, but it is regarded as an acceptable price to pay to maintain the aura of shared values and beliefs ushered in where a culture of collegiality exists.

This finding is also in support of Chukelu (2007) who reported a low extent of principal staff relationship in Anambra State secondary schools. This study found that principals and teachers do not advise one another on instructional problems, do not discuss personal problems, do not share in teaching students, do not share adequately in decision making, among others. Poor principals – staff collegiality does not augur well for efficient school administration because the inability of principals to inform their teachers of policy issues and decisions affecting the overall progress of the school or to involve them in decision making is likely to inhibit the development of a collegial culture which in turn would hinder the quality of the implementation of such decisions. This has the tendency to induce what Fagbamiye (2004) called communication breakdown, hoarding of vital information, and information misinterpretation that has been identified as some of the major causes of inefficiency in secondary school administration. Okonkwo (2005) found that some principals rarely, want to discuss with their teachers because they are always too busy with visitors or business transactions. Whenever a teacher approaches such principal, the principal would refer him/her to either the vice-principal or the school guidance counselor. How then can a culture of collegiality exist between secondary school principal and teachers in Ebonyi State and be yond for efficient and effective school administration? This question took the author to the following recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

Collegiality exists in a school management with an open door policy (open climate) where principals are capable of involving all relevant stakeholders in the school administration. It allows for the kind of administration which is based on democratic values which allows other people’s opinions, ideas and views. This kind of administration allows sharing of views and information. Principals’ inability to foster collegiality (cooperation) with teachers is not good for effective school administration. It is thus, a challenge for principals to create a culture of collegiality between them and their staff as this could encourage staff to care for the well-being of others, facilitate the

removal of interpersonal bias among staff, make principals accessible to staff and help staff to work collectively towards achieving school objectives and goals with ease. So, Creation and utilization of principal staff collegiality is a panacea for inefficient, ineffective and unproductive school administration in Ebonyi State and beyond.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. Regular seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for principals and teachers aimed at explaining and inculcating in them, the importance of a collegial culture for school administration.
2. Staff should cultivate good communal relationships among themselves, and between them and the principals.
3. Principals and teachers should learn to make their staff rooms a place where collegial culture thrives to improve staff performance rather than a place where gossips and grapevine information destroys schools image and even personal image.
4. Principals should see that effective communication and good principal – teacher relationships are the foundations of effective administration. Thus, they should use good communication skills to foster collegiality among staff in secondary schools.
5. Principals should ensure that there is always staff participation in decision making for smooth implementation of decisions and goals achievement.
6. Principals should always show recognize staff achievements. This would enable him or her operates in an environment full of trust, acceptance, support, confidence, respect and free from tension and hostility.
7. Adoption of participatory or participative theory in a school administration is recommended if effective, efficient, peaceful and high productivity should be achieved by the school principals.



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