

EVALUATING THE DECISION-MAKING SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' PRINCIPALS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

Evaluating Principals decision-making skills in Anambra State was necessitated by the findings of Nwaobosi) in perestomode (1996) that most Principals in Nigerian Secondary Schools are poor decision-makers. The researcher sought to evaluate the decision-making skills of Principals in Anambra State, adopting the developed and validated decision-making inventory by Edkipa (2004). The survey research design was used. Data was analyzed mean and standard deviation for research question I and 2.

The result revealed that Principals in Anambra State are aware and they have decision-making skills. The findings of this study cancels that of Nwaobosi) in Perestomode (1996).

Introduction

Man's everyday life is embodied with series of decisions, achieved or not is immaterial. Decision-making is one of the major functions of educational administration. Nwana (1996) stated that decision-making is choosing between many alternatives. It implies that every decision is the outcome of flexible process which may be influenced by many forces. Ndu, Oclio and Okeke (1997) viewed decision as based on two premises: factual and value premises, factual premises are decisions subjected to empirical testing in order to ascertain their truth or falsity. While value premises are decisions that are not subjected to such test since they tire convinced not with what "is" but with what "ought" to be, what is good or preferable.

Decision-making was characterized into three dimensions, decision behaviour, decision role and decision involvement.

The decision behaviour analysis involves identifying the problems, determining alternatives, choosing a solution strategy, determining effectiveness. While decision role includes curriculum and instruction, staff personnel, student personnel, finance and business management, school plant, services and school community relations. Decision involvement deals with the board of education, superintendent of schools, central offices personnel, principals, teachers and students (Lipliam and lloeh, 1974).

The Principals struggle with these complex school decisions which at times lead them to make poor decisions. Nwaobosi in Perestmode (1996) noted that most Principals in Nigeria Secondary schools are poor decision makers. Poor decisions in the school system impairs teaching and learning which may be as a result of conflicts, poor administrative status, lack of co-operation, misunderstanding, distortions and lack of efficiency in the school (Edikpa. 2004). Teachers who do not participate in decision-making in schools find it difficult to implement the decisions reached. Participatory decision-making enhances the spirit of belongingness. It also ensures ease and cooperation in the implementation of the decisions reached (Nwankwo, 1981). Thus, the Principals who make decisions without adequate information frequently find themselves enmeshed in problems of their own making (Iipham and Hoeh. 1974).

The importance of decision-making in secondary schools are numerous, it guides the curriculum design or development. It aids in the financial management, staff and pupil's administration. It facilitates the teaching and learning process, aids in plant management and the organization of auxiliary services in the school It encourages the association of parents, teachers and enhances community development. As such, decision-making is indispensable in secondary schools. Edikpa (2004) supported this assertion that decision-making is the core of school administration, the modus operandi of every administration.

When Principals make decisions without adequate information, it gives the impression that they are unaware of the processes of decision-making. Often times some. Principals make decisions under risk and uncertain conditions, thereby making decisions that are irrational, autocratic, selfish and laissez affair in schools. Some of the Principals are influenced while making decision by their personal value, boss, relatives, friends and the community wish. Some

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Principals do not involve subordinates in decision-making even where it affects them. These irregular acts of the Principals indicate that they do not possess decision-making skills. Improving education should be based on a clear evaluation of individual skills of Principals decision making skills. Though, it has not been certain the extent such intervening variable as job experience could influence the measurability of such a vital skill of school decision-making. This variable will be looked at as mean difference.

In this vein, the Principals decision-making skills should be assessed on regular basis. Consequently, there is need to evaluate the Principals decision making skills. This exercise will help to assess the Principals' decision-making skills.

Statement of Problem

Nwaobasi in Perestmode (1996) found out that most Principals in Nigerian secondary schools are poor decision-makers. The researcher observed that often times Principals come to the staff meeting only to instruct teachers on what to do. Principals take decisions without adequate information. They impose decisions on teachers, etc. Thus with the instrument - developed and validated by Edikpa (2004), the researcher intends to replicate Nwobosi's findings in Perestmode (1996) in Anambra state by evaluating the Principals decision-making skills.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate decision-making skills of secondary school Principals in Anambra State.

- I. Evaluating the extent to which the Principals possess decision-making skills,
2. Assess the extent of job experience on the Principal's decision-making skills.

Significance of the Study

This study will help to expose Principals to decision-making skills. It will aid the supervisors in understanding and checking the Principals' decision-making ability. The instrument will form a useful loot for in-service training manual for Principals. This will alleviate the poor decision-making of the Principals to make better and rational decisions.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to evaluating decision-making skills of Principals in Anambra State. It will include the Principal's job experience, how it affects their decision-making.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do Principals possess decision-making skills.
2. To what extent do job experience influence the decision making skills of Principals.

Research Design

This study is survey research design. Area of study is the six education zones of Anambra State - Awka. Aguata, Nnevvvi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha.

Population of the Study

All the two hundred and sixty secondary school Principals in Anambra State make the population.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The entire population was used, there was no sampling.

Instrument for Data Collection

The researcher developed the instrument. The development was based on the theoretical, practical and empirical sources of information on the decision-making skills. The instrument was first validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning and Measurement and

Evaluation Department in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. The instrument was screened and the comments and amendments made by the specialists were reflected in the final draft which were administered to a sample of thirty Principals in Delta State. The Principals' responses were scored and subjected to construct validation using factor analysis. Out of the 40 items, four items (items 4, 15, 17 and 18) were loaded on more than one factor while one item (item 40) did not attain up to a minimum loading of 0.35 on any factor. Asika 2001 recommended that a loading of 0.35 should be accepted as the minimum factor loading for accepting any item. These five items were dropped leaving behind 35 items, the 35 items were used in the main fieldwork. The instrument yielded an internal consistency index of 0.79. After the main fieldwork, the responses were analyzed with the principal factor and normal varimax rotation of factor analysis. Cronbach Alpha estimates were used to assess the reliability index of instrument and it yielded an internal consistency index of 0.73. The 24 items were regarded as decision-making skills. As such the researcher adopted this developed and validated instrument by Pdikpa 2004, for this present study. It was a modified likert-type scale, based on a 4-point scale of very high (4) high (3) moderate (2) and low (1).

Method of Data Collection

The researcher adopted the spot method to ensure maximum recovery of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to Principals in one of their management meetings at Umudioka, Anambra State. Two hundred and sixty questionnaires were distributed to the secondary school Principals. Surprisingly, the whole questionnaire were recovered and used for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research question 1 and 2. The 4 point scale of very high, high, moderate and low were given values of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively giving a total of 10 and a mean of 2.5. Any mean above 2.5 is high and any mean less than 2.5 is low.

Result

Research Question 1

To what extent do principals possess decision-making skills.

Table 1: The Mean Rating of Principals Possession of Decision-Making Skills. N= 260

	Items	X	SD	Decision
I	How would you rate a Principal who considers social environment within the community when deciding an	3.3301	.7146	SA
2.	Avoid sentiments when decisions on critical administrative issues are being	3.4269	.7443	SA
-> j.	Has the skills in anticipating the intended consequences of decisions	3.4846	.7641	
4	Has the skills in anticipating the unintended consequences of decisions	3.2038	.6738	
5.	Is able to intellectually reflect on problem before making decisions.	3.496	.7698	
6.	Do not identify symptoms of	1.692	.2601	
7.	Gives due consideration to schools interest before making administrative	3.4038	.7379	SA
8.	Obtains all useful information upon which decisions are then made.	3.4923	.7672	SA
	takes initiative in making decisions no matter how difficult.	3.6500	.8202	SA
10	Considers individual differences of staff in all decisions.	3.2538	.6895	A
II.	Considers group interest as paramount	2.8884	.5756	A

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	decisions.			
12.	Seeks information on dominant attitude among staff and students before taking decisions.	2.8307	.5605	A
13.	Advocates for public hearing system of the P.T.A.	3.0576	.6272	A
14.	- considers involving teachers in decision making unnecessarily.	2.0038	.3330	D
15.	tries to find out if the decisions made are succeeding or failing.	3.4307	.7471	SA
16.	Selects decision, which will lead in achieving the goals of the organization.	3.5076	.7733	SA
17.	- do not obtain useful information before decisions are made.	1.4615	.2073	SD
18.	insures that decisions are not made prematurely.	3.3115	.7087	SA
19.	Neglects the need for collective bargaining in decision implementation.	1.8538	.2961	D
20.	Makes sure that every decision taken is a result of the group deliberation.	3.2653	.6931	A
21.	Recognizes employee suggestions.	3.0348	.6264	A
22.	takes the opinion of students into consideration in deciding some administrative policies.	3.2038	.6737	A
23.	Involves teachers and students in decisions that affect them.	3.4115	.7410	SA
24.	Uses students' grapevine about the problem before taking decisions that affect them.	2.5538	.4792	A

Data from table I reveal that the whole items in the table have mean rating ranging from 2.5538 to 3.6500 which has a high decision level of 2.50 and above except, items 6, 14, 17, and 19 which have no mean rating that range from 1.4615 to 2.0038 which are less than the decision

Research Question 2

level of 2.50. As such the researcher marks the items low and high respectively.

Table	Items	what extent do job experience influence Principal's decision making skills?		Responses of Principals on Job Experience		Decision
		low	high	Mean	SD	
	1	will you rate a principal who	experience	260		
			Below 10			
			Above 10			
1	1	Considers social environment within community when deciding on issues.	Below 10	184	3.3424	u
			Above 10	76	3.3289	H
			Below 10			
			Above 10			
1	1	Avoids sentiments when decisions on critical administrative issues are being	Below 10	184	3.7554	II
			Above 10		.4903	

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1	decided.		76	3.7895	.4104	H
3	Has skills in anticipating the intended consequences of decisions made.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.5054 3.5658	.6096 .5735	H H
4	Has skills in anticipating the unintended consequences of decisions made.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.2011 3.3289	.8083 .7552	H H
5.	Is able to intellectually reflect on problem before making decisions.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.4837 3.5526	.6003 .6407	H H
6.	Do not identify symptoms of problems	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	1.5870 1.5789	.8828 .8208	f. L
7	Gives due consideration to schools interest before making administrative decisions.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.4022 3.4079	.7329 .7151	H H
8.	Obtains all useful information upon which decisions are then made.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.4891 3.5921	.6443 .5460	H H
9.	Is imitative in making decisions no matter how difficult.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	4.0870 3.9868	4.1755 3.5383	H H
10	Considers individual differences of staff in all decisions.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.2989 3.3421	.8382 .7755	H H
11	Considers group interest as paramount in all decisions.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	2.8641 3.0688	.9684 .8220	II H
12	Seeks information on dominant attitude among staff and students before taking decisions.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	2.9293 3.0658	.8873 .8693	H H
13	Advocates for public hearing system of the P.T.A.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.1359 3.1974	.7596 .6536	H H
14	Does not consider involving teacher in decision making unnecessary	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	1.7717 1.7895	1.0620 .9975	L L
15.	Tries to find out if the decisions made are succeeding or failing.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.9293 3.4211	4.1529 .6167	H H
16	Selects decision, which will lead in achieving the goals of the organization.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.7975 4.2800	3.0264 .6826	f1 H
17.	Do not obtain useful information before decisions are made.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	1.4511 1.5526	.8038 .8390	L L
18.	Insures that decisions are not made.	Below 10 Above 10	184 76	3.3641 3.3136	.7488 .8035	II H

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19.	Neglects the need for collective bargaining in decision implementation.	Below 10	184	1.8641	1.1679	U
		Above 10	76	1.8026	1.0069	L
20	Makes sure that every decision taken is result of (the group deliberation.	Below 10	184	2.9946	.9321	H
		Above 10	76	3.2237	.7229	H
21	Recognized employee suggestions.	Below 10	184	3.3043	.6814	II
		Above 10	76	3.8816	4.7045	H
22	Takes the opinion of students into consideration in deciding some administrative policies.	Below 10	184	3.1902	.7551	II
		Above 10	76	3.9868	4.5796	II
23	Involves teachers and students in decision that affects them	Below 10	184	3.5707	3.0200	H
		Above 10	76		.5767	II
24.	Uses student's grapevine about the problem before taking decisions that affect them.	Below 10	184	2.5380	1.0074	II
		Above 10	76	2.5474	.9294	II

Scale	2.50 - 4.00	0.00 - 2.49
Interpretation	high	low

Table 2 data reveals that the principals' mean rating for the two items of decision-making skills range between 1.45 to 4.28. 20 items emerged with high mean rating while 4 items 6, 14, 17, 19 have low mean rating. Through, those items are on the negative side.

Discussions

The result in table 1 indicated that most of the Principals consider social environment within the community when deciding on issues, avoid sentiments when decisions on critical administrative issues are being decided, etc. In fact, items 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 23 have scores that are very high under the 4 point scale, while items 1, 4, 11, 12, 13, 20, 21, 22, 24 have scores that are higher under the 4 point scale of high items 6, 14, 17, 19 had the highest scores under the 4 point scale of low which are item 6 (- do not identify symptoms of problems) item 14 (-considers involving teachers in decision making unnecessarily item 17 (- do not obtain useful information before decisions are made) item 19 (- neglects the need for collective bargaining in decision implementation). Though this low scores are in the negative and this called for a balance of the study (Pdikpa 2004). In the light of the above. Hoy and Misket (1987) observed that decision-making is sine qua non for all school administrators.

Results of data analysis on table 2 reveal that the two categories of job experience below 10 years and above 10 years have a high decision of the mean rating of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, while these items (6, 14, 17, 19) that are in the negative side had low decisions. The result shows that job experience does not affect the decision-making skills of the Principals. IJkegbu (1986) discovered that the more experience a Principal has and the more the number of staff personnel problems the Principal encounters, the fewer their problems of decisionmaking. Thus this finding cancels the earlier finding of Nwaobasi (1987) in Perestomode (1996) that most Principals in Nigeria secondary schools are poor decision-makers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The following conclusion and recommendations are drawn from this study. The study discovered that 20 items out of the 24 items developed and validated by F.dikpa (2004) have a high rating scale of very high and high respectively which indicates that the principals are aware of

decision-making skills. 4 items out of 24 items were on the negative side and they scored low rating scale.

Principals outside Anambra State should endeavour to use decision-making procedure in taking decisions especially where it affects teachers and students.

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