

# Principals' Leadership Skills as Correlate of Students' Academic Achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in Edo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The study examined principals' leadership skills as correlates of students' academic achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in Edo State. The specific objectives of the study were to establish whether any relationship exist between principals' leadership skills (i.e. principals' involvement skills, principals' delegation skills and principals supervisory skills) and students' academic achievement in Edo State. Three research questions were raised and three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the correlational research design. The total sample for the study was 36 teachers in Senior Secondary School (SSS) in Edo State. The entire population was drawn for the study. The instrument titled: Principals' Leadership Skills (PLS) and Students' Academic Achievement Broadsheets (SAAB) were used for collection of data. The overall split-half reliability alpha for the instrument (SIVSI) was 0.91. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The result showed that the principals' leadership skill variables - principals' involvement skills, delegation skills and supervisory skills had positive correlation with students' academic achievement in Edo State ( $p < 0.05$ ). Based on the results of the analysis, it was recommended that the principal and other school heads such as Heads of Subjects should always endeavour to delegate, supervise and ensure subject teachers are duly involved in major decision making matters such as changes in syllabus, scheme of work and curriculum as it concern core subjects such as English Language.*

**Keywords:** Principals, Involvement Skills, Delegation Skills, Supervisory Skills, Academic Achievement

## I. Introduction

The curriculum for Senior Secondary Education emphasizes the need for four compulsory cross-cutting subjects English Language, General Mathematics, Trade and entrepreneurship subjects and Civics education at the Senior Secondary School level. These subjects (particularly English language) is considered a prerequisite for taking other subjects in higher institution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). For instance, students who want to offer courses like Law, Mass Communication and History must pass English language at credit level in the Senior Secondary School Examination to gain admission into any Nigerian tertiary institution. Unfortunately, Akinfe, Olofinniyi and Fashiku, (2012) noted that the academic achievement of students in English Language in the past one decade has been on the decline.

Buttressing this assertion, Fakeye (2012), submitted that the Chief Examiner for 2010, May/June National Examination Council (NECO) reported a poor performance of students in English language. The report had it that students failed because of the following deficiencies; weakness in skills of writing, construction of loose sentences, transliteration from the mother tongue and abuse of the basic rules of grammar. Many candidates scored zero under the mechanical accuracy aspect of the essay. Candidates' errors were listed to include

wrong spellings, wrong usage of concord, tense usage and wrong construction of verb. Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2014) noted that this situation has remained the same as the 2012, 2013 and 2014 November/December NECO also recorded mass failures in English Language. In the 2014 June/July NECO results, there was a marginal decline in the performance of candidates as 38.81 percent was recorded in 2013 and 36.57 percent in 2012. The Chief Examiner attributed this abysmal performance of students to: ignorance of the proper use of punctuation marks, proper use of capital letters and small letters; inability of students to appropriate the use of present and past tenses, wrong expressions, poor use of parts of speech and their functions in sentences and so on. He attributed this abysmal output (academic achievement of students) to leadership issues such as principals' leadership skills.

Principals' leadership skills are multi-dimensional construct that covers the judicious coordination of human and non-human resources required for the attainment of school goals and objectives. The former (human resources) covers all the teaching, non-teaching and administrative personnel of the school system, such as principals, vice principals, teachers, cleaners, and other administrative and non-administrative staff. The latter (non-human dimension) covers principals' involvement skills, principals' delegation skills and principals' supervisory skills needed in secondary schools. The latter can be said to be the paramount in the implementation of resources in the school system. Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2014) earlier submitted that one of the factors of production required for promoting the learning outcome of students in any educational enterprise is effective application of principals' leadership skills.

School principals, as heads of their institutions, are expected to perform the following tasks: provision of instructional and academic leadership responsibilities to staff and students, managing school fiscal and physical resources, managing the school community relations, and keeping of school and students' records. The principal carries out administrative functions, among which is the supervision of instruction on a regular basis, to enable teachers implement the provisions of the National Policy on Education in the curriculum, the syllabus, the scheme of work, and the lesson plan regarding school subjects into workable lessons for learners' learning (Adejumobi & Ojikutu, 2013). Principals in the course of discharging the aforementioned duties are seen to occupy a central position in principal's leadership.

Principal's leadership can be defined as the ability of a school principal to get things done with the support and cooperation of others within an institution, organization, or system. It is the ability to influence others in a group or an organization through the involvement of significant teaching personnel and others in decision making, delegation of authority and supervision of various duties (Osagie & Umefefu, 2015). Consequently, principal's leadership may be seen as the principal's involvement of teachers in decision making, delegation of authority and supervision of their various duties. The task of the school principal as the chief executive officer and leader is aimed at coordinating all human and material resources in the attainment of school goals and promotion of students' academic achievement.

As a result of increased student enrolment in Nigeria's educational system, the required educational principals' are hardly enough for the use of the students. Schools in Edo State, depict a sorry state of affairs as adequate supply of qualified, experienced and specialized subject teachers is a rarity because teachers' distribution exercises are arbitrarily implemented. Alongside these, there are isolated complaints by teachers and school principals that they lack basic school facilities and equipment for performing their duties. In some cases, students are required to bring their tables and chairs and other learning materials from home to school for learning. All these could have an impact on the quality of the graduate-output from the system. Observations have also shown that students have not been able to measure up to expectation in terms of external examinations as a result of poor preparation for such examinations.

The report given at the end of every year on students' achievement at the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination has continued to record high failure rates. For, instance, the report on the June/July series of examinations conducted by National Examination Council (NECO) between 2011 and 2014 showed that the trend of failure has not improved. Dike and Oluwaseun (2014) reported that in 2011, only

30.7% of the students' who sat for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) had credit pass in five subjects including English Language while in 2012, just 38.81% of the students' who sat for the Senior School Certificate Examination (NECO) had credit pass in five subjects including English Language. Furthermore, they stated that in 2013, 36.57% of the students' who sat for the Senior School Certificate Examination (NECO) had credit pass in five subjects including English Language in 2014, a mere 31.28% of the students' who sat for the WAEC examination had credit pass in five subjects including English Language. The situation is worrisome as parents and stakeholders have from time to time questioned the efficacy of school practices in Edo state.

Strong administrative leadership can be regarded as one of the variables mostly needed in school effectiveness. Researchers have argued tirelessly on the link between principal's leadership and academic achievement (Adeyemi & Bolarinwa, 2013; Osagie & Umemefu, 2015; Suleiman, Mustapha & Bukar, 2016). The conclusions reached made some authors to believe that no school can be greater than their leaders and that a school is as good as its leadership (Yusuf, 2012). Effective school principals can promote high achievement by actively encouraging high expectation from students and promote teaching situations that allow the most effective and extensive instructional contacts.

Osagie and Umemefu (2015) examined the principal's leadership of principals who were successful in achieving good results consistently in the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in Edo State, Nigeria. The study showed principals' involvement skill is an important element of school improvement in Edo State, Nigeria. Oyegoke (2012) examined the relationship between school principal's leadership and effectiveness of secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study revealed that the Principals' Leadership style in the area covered was very encouraging. The study also showed that secondary schools were effective in the psychomotor domains, but need to improve on the cognitive domain of the students in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013) examined school principals' leadership and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It was found that the democratic style of leadership was the prevalent leadership style used by school principals in the State. The autocratic leadership style was found to be significantly related with students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Suleiman, Mustapha and Bukar (2016) examined the relationship between principals' administrative and students' academic performance in Taraba State secondary schools, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between principals initiative administrative styles and students' academic performance in English language in Taraba State secondary schools, Nigeria.

Obama, Akinyi and Orodho (2015) examined the effect of principals' leadership on students' academic performances in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Examinations in public secondary schools in Homa-bay County, Kenya. The result revealed that there was a significant relationship between the leadership styles applied by principals as perceived by teachers and students' academic performance in Kenya. Imariagbontua (2016) examined level of effectiveness of leadership and administrative competence of principals in secondary schools in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State. The study revealed that, autocratic and democratic leadership styles were highly effective. As well, the administrative competence and school administrators' skills of principals were effective in secondary schools in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State.

Jacobson, (2010) examined the relationship between principal's leadership and students' academic achievement WAEC in Lagos State public secondary schools. The findings revealed that principal's leadership is related to students' academic achievement in Lagos state senior secondary school WAEC examination. Nwogu. (2005) examined the school principals' instructional role and students' outcomes in external examination in American State Public schools. The study showed that the principal instructional role in the school has a significant relationship to students' academic achievement in American State Public schools.

Begun, (2013) studied the relationship between principal's leadership and students' academic achievement in North Carolina. It also revealed that principals' instructional role has serious significant impact on students' academic outcomes in North Carolina. Bolarinwa and Adeyemi (2013) studied principals' leadership role and academic achievement in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The result of the study revealed that the principals' delegation skill was the prevalent leadership style used by school principals in the State. Salwa and Aliff (2014) examined principal's leadership behaviour and its relationship to students' academic achievement in Brunei Darussalam. The findings revealed that there exists a significant relationship between principal's leadership and academic achievement of primary school pupils' in Brunei. Yi-Hsuan (2016) examined principal leadership practice as perceived by teachers and its possible effect on students' academic achievement in Texas, USA. The findings indicated that principal's collaborative working styles with teachers seem to have positive impact on students' academic achievement in Texas, United States.

Sass and Hariss (2008) in their study found that teacher qualification, and years of experience were strong variables in determining students' outcomes in any given subject. Isola (2010) and Ayodele (2009) conducted a research on the effect of instructional resource inputs and school facilities on students' performance in the WAS SCE examinations in ten (10) subjects and showed that the achievement in five (5) subjects was related to resource inputs and that it had a significant effect on students' achievements in each subject. Also, it was observed that inadequate school facilities and teachers in schools may be the cause of low students' academic achievement.

Osagie and Umemeifu (2015) found that principal's leadership skills who were successful in students' academic achievement in Edo State, Nigeria and found that principals' involvement skills, principals' delegation skills and principals' supervisory skills are important element of school improvement. In spite of what exist in literature on school resource and students' academic achievement; it is not to the researcher's knowledge that any study has examined the relationship between principals' leadership skills as correlate of students' academic achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in Edo State. This is the gap this study sought to fill.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- a) Is there any relationship between principal's involvement skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools?
- b) Is there any relationship between principal's delegation skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools?
- c) Is there any relationship between principal's supervisory skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

- a) There is no significant relationship between principal's involvement skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools.
- b) There is no significant relationship between principal's delegation skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools.
- c) There is no significant relationship between principal's supervisory skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools.

## II. Methods

The study adopted the *correlational* research design. The population of the study covered all the three hundred and fourteen (314) English Language teachers in the public Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) in Edo State as provided by the Department of Planning, Research and Statistics, Ministry of Education, Benin City. The total sample for the study was 36 (11%) English Language teachers in Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) in Edo State. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select two public senior secondary schools per local government and one English Language teacher per school at the senior secondary school level. The choice of one teacher per school was supported by scholars (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner, 2008; Sekaran, 2013) who noted that the perspectives on the ideal sample size vary and could be influenced by one or more factors namely; degree of accuracy needed by the researcher; proximity to respondent; extent of geographical openness of the study area and time factor among others. In this regard, the choice of one English Language teacher in the senior secondary schools was informed by the need to select a representative sample of one English Language teacher from each of the selected public schools in the study area.

The instrument used in the study was Principals' Leadership Skills (PLSQ). A reliability test was carried out on the questionnaire (SIVSI). The Split-half reliability method was used. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to twenty (20) English Language teachers in Edo State. The researcher along with two trained research assistants (who were university graduates) visited each of the secondary schools to administer the instrument to the respondents. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. O'Sullivan, Rassel and Berner (2008) submitted that the decision rule on the sign (direction of relation of either positive or negative) and size (which connotes magnitude of the relationship) of the Pearson r-coefficient are as follows.

Pearson r- coefficient  $\pm 0.00 - 0.39$  = Weak relationship

Pearson r- coefficient  $\pm 0.40 - 0.69$  = Moderate relationship

Pearson r- coefficient  $\pm 0.70 - 1.00$  = Strong relationship

## III. Results

The result from the analysis are presented below

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between principal's involvement skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools

**Table 1: Analysis on the relationship between Principals' Involvement skills and Students' Academic Achievement in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State**

Variables	$\bar{n}$	$\bar{X}$	S. D	Pearson r-coefficient	p-value	Remarks
Principals' involvement skills	36	2.75	0.906	0.330*	0.000	Null hypothesis
Students' academic achievement in English		2.97	1.028			

\*. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Result in Table 1 showed that the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard scores (S.D) for the variables are: 2.75 and 0.906 for principals' involvement skills (PIS) and 2.97 and 1.028 for students' academic achievement. The Pearson- r coefficient of 0.330 for the relationship between principals' involvement skills (PIS) and students' academic achievement was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This

clearly indicated that principals' involvement skill was weak and positively correlated with students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between principal's delegation skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools.

**Table 2: Analysis on the relationship between principals' delegation skills and students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State**

Variables	$\bar{n}$	$\bar{X}$	S. D	Pearson r-coefficient	p-value	Remarks
Principals' involvement skills	36	2.75	0.774	0.378*	0.023	Null hypothesis
Students' academic achievement in English		2.97	1.028			

\*. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

Result in Table 2 showed that the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard scores (S.D) for the variables are: 2.53 and 0.774 for principals' delegation skills and 2.97 and 1.028 for Students' Academic Achievement. The Pearson- r coefficient of 0.378 for the relationship between principals' delegation skills and students' academic achievement was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This clearly indicated that principals' delegation skill was weak and positively correlated with students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between principal's supervisory skills and students' academic achievement in English Language in Edo State secondary schools.

**Table 3: Analysis on the relationship between principals' supervisory skills and students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State**

Variables	$\bar{n}$	$\bar{X}$	S. D	Pearson r-coefficient	p-value	Remarks
Principals' involvement skills	36	2.28	1.031	0.601*	0.000	Null hypothesis
Students' academic achievement in English		2.97	1.028			

\*. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*.

Result in Table 3 showed that the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard scores (S.D) for the variables are: 2.28 and 1.031 for principals' supervisory skills and 2.97 and 1.028 for students' achievement. The Pearson- r coefficient of 0.601 for the relationship between principals' supervisory skills and students' academic achievement was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This clearly indicated that principals' supervisory skill was moderately and positively correlated with students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State.

#### IV. Discussion

The result clearly indicated that principals' involvement skill was weak and positively correlated with students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State. The result



is in consonance with that of Osagie and Umemefu (2015) that principals' involvement skill is an important element of school improvement in Edo State, Nigeria. The result is in agreement with that of Oyegoke (2012) that secondary schools were effective in the effective and psychomotor domains, but need to improve on the cognitive domain of the students.

The result showed that principals' delegation skill was weak and positively correlated with students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State. The result was in consonance with that of Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013) that the principals' delegation skill was the prevalent leadership style used by school principals in the State. The result was in disagreement with that of Suleiman, Mustapha and Bukar (2016) that there were no significant relationships between principals' delegation skills and students' academic performance in English Language. The result concurred with that of Obama, Akinyi and Orodho (2015) that there was a significant relationship between the principals' leadership styles applied by principals as perceived by teachers and students' academic performance.

The result showed that principals' supervisory skill was positively correlated with students' academic achievements in English Language in senior secondary schools in Edo State. The result confirmed that of Imariagbontua, (2016) that principal' supervisory skills were highly effective. As well, the administrative competence and school administrators' skills of principals were effective in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State. The result agreed with that of Jacobson (2010) that principal's leadership skills was related to students' academic achievement in Lagos state senior secondary school W.A.E.O examination in Lagos State public secondary schools. The result agreed with that of Nwogu (2005) that the principal supervisory skills as a role in the school have a significant relationship to students' academic achievement in external examination.

## **V. Conclusion**

Principals' leadership skills variables (involvement, delegation and supervisory) are assets of inestimable value, required for the attainment of secondary school goals and objectives. Based on it, it was clear that principal's leadership skills are variables that have positive relationship with students' academic achievement in English Language in secondary schools in Edo State.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- a) The principal and other school heads such as Heads of Subjects should always endeavour to delegate, supervise and ensure subject teachers are duly involved in major decision making matters such as changes in syllabus, scheme of work and curriculum as these concern core subjects such as English Language. This is to make them well-informed about possible instructional changes they need to make in the performance of their instructional duties in classroom.
- b) Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary (ANCOPPS) should ensure periodic and mandatory leadership workshop, seminars and conferences are organized for principals to update their knowledge on how to effectively use delegation and supervisory skills to promote students' academic achievement and school effectiveness.

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