

# THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS IN PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

The paper looked into principals' leadership practices for quality education delivery in secondary schools in Rivers State. It takes the position that effective leadership which brings about quality education delivery in secondary schools is a product of administrative mechanisms and practices employed by principals; hence the paper is on instructional leadership practices of principals, such as vision and goal setting practices, decision-making practices, instructional supervisory practices, transformational leadership practices, and administrative disciplinary practices. The paper explored how these practices are carried out in schools by principals and how they impact on the quality of education delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The paper concluded that the quality of education delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State greatly depends on the leadership practices adopted by the school principals. In other words, leadership practices play significant role in principals' vision of seeing that quality education is delivered in Public secondary schools in Rivers state. The paper suggested among others that principals of public secondary schools should ensure the adoption of transformational leadership practices as to ensure quality educational delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Principals, Leadership Practices, Vision and Goal-Setting, Decision-Making, Instructional Leadership, Instructional Supervision, Disciplinary Practices.

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## INTRODUCTION

Secondary schools are established basically for effective and efficient teaching and learning which culminate in effective curricular and extracurricular achievements of students. All the processes that would make this possible are well articulated in relevant sections of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) in the National Policy on Education, inclusive of the goals of education at the secondary level, curricular contents, and directives for teachers and Principals to enable them realize the goals effectively. The extent to which the programmes and policies are realized defines quality of education at this level. Knowing the importance of leadership to the realization of organizational goals and objectives, Principals have the responsibility of piloting the affairs of secondary schools. From various literatures reviewed, it has been found that the leadership practices employed by Principals in the discharge of their duties have implications on performance of their schools with respect to goal attainment. Unfortunately however, situations in public secondary schools in Rivers State do not suggest that Principals have been effective in their leadership responsibilities.

The performance of teachers and students as shown by students' outcomes in both internal and external examinations clearly suggest that public secondary schools in Rivers State are not living up to instructional expectations. Most public schools in the state are apparently run without a clear vision and set goals for both teachers and students. Most teachers complain of not being carried along by their Principals in the making of important decisions that affect the school community, and as such, they do not feel motivated to give out their best. At some other quarters, Principals hardly show instructional leadership, and supervision of instruction appears passive, leading to poor instructional delivery. Besides all these, indiscipline appears to be the order of the day on the part of teachers. Absenteeism from school, lateness to work, checking in and out of the school premises during work hours and several other expressions of deviant behaviours which place question marks on teachers' commitment have become hallmarks of public secondary school teachers in the state. The situation indeed poses great threats to the quality of education dispensed in these schools.

In attempts to tackle such unwholesome situations, principals of public secondary schools in Rivers State thus employ various administrative strategies also referred to as leadership practices. Some prominent practices identified from literature and from interaction with some principals include having a clear vision setting instructional goals for the school; decision-making; providing instructional leadership; adoption of transformational leadership practices; and the adoption of some forms of administrative disciplinary strategies. These practices are hoped to bring about transformation in the system for the good of all stakeholders – teachers, students, parents, the immediate community and the nation at large. The researcher therefore embarks on this study to investigate the extent to which these leadership practices ensure and assure quality education delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

It has become common knowledge that leadership plays critical role in the success or failure of the school organization. Leadership according to Stogdill in Abraham (2013) is a process that involves influencing the activities of an organized group of people towards goal setting and goal achievement. The school administrator as a leader is given the responsibility of coordinating and directing the activities of the school towards accomplishing set goals. This responsibility however defines more of management, but the icing on the management cake that turns it to leadership is “influence”. The Principal's ability to influence the stakeholders of the school, thereby inspiring them to run with the school's vision is what makes him more than just a

school administrator to a school leader. It would therefore not be out of place to say that the Principal is an administrator by position, and a leader by his influence. This influence comes by how he does what he does and how he relates with the people, in other words, through his leadership practices. As such, the paper examines principals' leadership practices.

Principals' leadership practices refer to what Principals do as instructional leaders and how they do them. According to Ebete and Ejims (2020), these leadership practices are directly related to how the Principals interact with and create interaction between teachers and students. They affect decision-making, teaching and learning, and the entire administration of the school and are instrumental to the realization of the aims and objectives of establishing the school as an institution. Some of the significant practices found which possess the potential of greatly influencing school outcomes include: establishing a clear focus on student learning by having a vision, clear learning goals and high expectations for learning for all students; decision-making; instructional supervision; transformational leadership practices; administrative discipline; ensuring cordiality in school-community relationship; facility management; and every other behaviour that would inspire whole-hearted followership in the school community (Brewster & Klump, 2015; Ebete & Ejims, 2020; Nthakyo et al., 2016).

The whole essence of the various leadership practices of the school principal is to achieve quality education in the school. Quality is however a relative term which often needs a basis for assessment as what is considered quality to one party may not be considered quality to another. As such the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) in the national policy on education becomes the basis for assessing quality in education delivery in Nigeria. It meticulously articulates the goals and objectives of every level of education and gives vivid outlines of the roles of Principals and every other stakeholder of the school system. The level to which secondary school outcomes align with the specifications therein is what defines quality of education, as quality is generally seen as the level of compliance with client's specification(s).

Quality in education delivery is an all-encompassing concept that includes quality of the inputs, the process and the outputs of the school system. The inputs may include standardized curriculum, high quality of teachers, efficient learners, appropriate resources, capable leaders and supportive parents, which are all essential for a quality delivery (Ekpo cited in Ebete & Ejims, 2020). The process on the other hand revolves round the administration of the school, which is where the Principal's leadership and leadership practices come in. The leadership practices are adopted to transform the educational resource inputs into desirable outputs, which include a conducive school environment and atmosphere that supports the process of instruction; a realized curriculum; and ultimately secondary school graduates found worthy in character and learning, with excellent academic outcomes. The leadership practices of Principals being considered in this paper for quality education delivery include: vision and goal-setting; decision-making; instructional leadership; transformational leadership practices; and administrative discipline. Although there exists a whole lot of them as found in literature, but the paper is delimited to these five practices.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The paper is anchored in Bass Transformational Leadership Model propounded by Bass in 1985 as cited in Osagie and Momoh (2016). This theoretical model came out of Bernard M. Bass' review of Burns theory of transforming leadership in 1985. Bass originally coined the word transformational leadership. In his work, he sought to analyze the psychological mechanisms that

underlie Burns' transforming and transactional leaderships. His model thus came up with how transformational leadership could be measured and these measures specify how a leader influences his/her subordinates (Bass cited in Osagie & Momoh, 2016).

The Bass transformational leadership theory propounded in 1985 proposes that leaders can influence their subordinates by expanding their understandings of the importance of tasks; making them realize to keep organizational and team goals above the individual interest; and incorporating their development needs. In so doing the transformational leader is able to transform the subordinate to staff that are capable of securing the future of the organization.

Bass transformational leadership theory identified four components of a transformational leader. These include: (1) intellectual stimulation, (2) idealized influence, (3) inspirational motivation, and (4) individualized consideration (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016; Tengi et al., 2017). Intellectual stimulation refers to the degree to which the leader solicits ideas from his subordinates, challenges assumptions and takes risks. By this, he is able to simulate and encourage creativity in them, thereby nurturing and developing staff who are capable of independent thinking (Sanchez-Cardona et al., 2017). Idealized influence means the leader's ability to act as a role model for high ethical behavior to the subordinates, instilling pride in them, thereby gaining their respect and trust. Inspirational motivation in the same vein is the degree to which the leader articulates an appealing and inspiring vision to the subordinates, challenging them with high standards, communicating optimism about the future goals of the organization, and providing meaning for the task at hand (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). This is required to give followers a sense of purpose that motivates them to act appropriately. Individualized consideration according to Bass refers to the degree to which the leader attends to the needs of subordinates. Empathy and support, open communication, mentorship and coaching, listening and attentiveness, respect and acknowledgement of each follower's contributions are hallmarks of this transformational leadership component (Rafferty & Griffin, 2016).

The Bass model of the transformational leadership theory is applicable to this discourse in several ways:

Firstly, quality education delivery is a collaborative effort of the school Principal and the school staff (his subordinate). Transformational leadership ensures that both the Principal and the staff support, inspire and motivate each other towards reaching their optimum potentials in task performance for the realization of school goals.

Secondly, a transformational Principal is one who stimulates the staff of the school intellectually. This raises staff who are objective, intuitive and innovative - capable of independent thinking, and who generate ideas and visions that help in realizing the goals and objectives of the school.

Thirdly, the idealized influence of a transformational Principal ensures that he act as a role model to his subordinates for high ethical behaviour. This is necessary for him to gain their respect and trust, which are required for quality education delivery.

Fourthly, a transformational Principal is an inspirational motivator who is able to sell his vision and goal to the subordinates, causing them to run with them like they were their own personal visions. The theory thus empowers the Principal with the know-how of how to raise an optimistic workforce capable of quality task delivery in the present and of securing the school's future.

Lastly, the individualized consideration component of the model stresses the need for cordial interpersonal relationship between the Principal and each and every staff of the school. It is popularly said that followers do not care how much a leader knows until they know that the

leader cares about them. The transformational Principal is one who cares about the personal welfare, growth and interests of the staff, and as such, the staff get fully interested and committed to the goals and visions of the Principal with respect to delivering quality education in all aspects of the school life. In summary, the mechanisms for achieving the goals of transformational leadership as elucidated by Bass are fully in line with Principals' leadership practices for the delivery of quality education in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

## **CONCEPTUALIZATION REVIEW**

### **Quality Education Delivery**

Quality is variously conceptualized in literature by various authors, as the criteria by which it is judged seem to differ from one person to another. Different disciplines also seem to express peculiar conceptualizations of the term. As such, quality is seen as a subjective term which means different things to different persons, as what is considered to be of quality to one person may not be adjudged the same by another. To come up with a general stand on the concept therefore, various authors have suggested that quality can only be judged with respect to a set standard; hence, quality becomes a measure of the level of compliance of an output to a set standard (Eze, 2018).

Orim et al. (2018) described the term quality as the total measure of the features and performance of a process, product or service in comparison to the clients' or customers' expectation of that performance. According to them, quality is not just a feature of a finished product or service rather; it involves a focus on internal processes and outputs and includes the reduction of waste and the improvement of high standard products. Quality according to them could be either high or low. As to the high side of quality in education, Dike cited in Orim et al. (2018) opined that quality in education has major hallmarks such as content relevance, access, efficient utilization of ICT and outcome. According to them, quality education delivery in a school system will always yield the full development of students' potentials in life, which is the hope of every parent.

In the opinion of Nasiru and Kasimu (2018), quality is the measure to which a product or service meets criteria of client satisfaction, fit for use, meeting specifications and standards, and aesthetic appeal. To this regard, quality education delivery would mean the delivery of education services which meets the criteria of stakeholder satisfaction; is useful to the end users (the students and the society at large; meets specifications and standards stipulated in the national policy on education for the given level of education; and is delivered in such a way that is appealing to relevant stakeholders (parents, sponsors and the government).

For Ibara (2015), quality in education delivery is a measure of the extent to which educational services in the school and the products of education meet the goals of education at the given level under consideration. He sees quality education delivery as that which deals with issues of relevance of the administered education, its validity, functionalism and excellence, and the efficiency in the actualization of educational goals and priorities. For Ojekheta cited in Ibara (2015), quality of education is the summation of: the quality of the teachers in the school; the quality of the learners; the quality of the content of subjects being taught; the quality of infrastructure and resources in the school; the quality of management and planning in the school; and the quality of teaching and evaluation methods being adopted. In other words, quality of education encompasses the totality of the educational program and the physical and human

resources of the school. Any lapses in any aspect of the school's operation would demean the wholeness of the school system.

For Coombs cited in Ibara (2015), the quality of an educational system must be viewed in relation to criteria that are both internal and external to the system. While the internal criteria would involve students' performance in standard external examinations like the Senior School Certificate of Examination (SSCE) and the likes, the external criteria would involve the performance of the school system in relation to relevance to the society. This means that the delivery of quality education in senior secondary schools will result to exceptional products (graduates) who are useful to the society. For this to be possible therefore, the curriculum of senior secondary education must reflect the needs and aspirations of the society, and the Principals and teachers must put in due diligence in ensuring that the curriculum is excellently delivered as to raise students that the educational system would be proud of.

In the opinion of Achor (2013), quality refers to the worth of something; its goodness; its acceptability; its strength, taste and durability; and the desirability of its general attributes. This corroborates with the eight components of quality standards which form the concerns of the National Educational Quality Standard Assurance Policy as articulated in the National Policy on Education of FRN (2014). These include (i) learner achievement and standards; (ii) learners' welfare and participation; (iii) care guidance and support; (iv) leadership and management; (v) school community relationship; (vi) learning environment; (vii) teaching and learning; (viii) curriculum and other activities. Ensuring quality in all eight areas of concern becomes the responsibility of the Principal in the school, and he must necessarily employ leadership practices that gain the teachers buy in into his philosophies and visions for the school.

### **Elements of Quality Education**

Although various authors seem to express different views on the concept of quality education, some common themes appear in the existing literature on the concept. These are referred to as elements of quality education, or simply features/attributes of quality education (Eze, 2018). Eze (2018) opined that one cannot claim to be administering quality education if certain conditions are not visibly in place. These conditions include:

- Healthy and well-nourished learners who have the full support of their families and communities and are willing and ready to participate in the instructional process;
- A healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive environment in which adequate instructional resources and facilities are provided;
- A rich curriculum with relevant contents and materials that support the acquisition of basic skills in numeracy and literacy, social and relational skills, health and life skills, and all such skills that support peaceful coexistence in the community.
- Processes that enable trained teachers to adopt teaching approaches that are learner-centred within classrooms that are well-managed and supportive of skillful assessment which facilitates learning; and
- Instructional outcomes encompassing knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be linked to the national goals of education and meaningful participation in and contribution to the society.

## **Principals' leadership practices**

Principals' leadership practices are mechanisms employed by Principals in their administrative role of managing and administering schools for effective and efficient realization of the internal and external goals of the schools. They are the strategies adopted by Principals in leading the school community from a present position per time to where they are envisaged to be in the near and far future. They are modalities or things Principals do to realize their personal and collective goals for their schools. The leadership practices are different from leadership styles in that while leadership styles relate to how leaders lead, leadership practices relate to what leaders do (Oshagbemi & Gill, 2014). Besides, different leadership styles can still adopt the same leadership practices.

The leadership practices of Principals are directly related to teachers-students interactions, decision making, instruction (teaching and learning), and the entire administration of the school (Ebeta & Ejims, 2020) - all aimed at ensuring that the aim and objectives of the senior secondary level of education are achieved in the school. The attainment of school goals is fulcrum on the quality of education delivery in the school which is a function of the effectiveness of the leadership practices employed by the Principal who is the instructional leader of the school. To this end, Principals need to provide the appropriate leadership practices that can positively impact on quality education delivery in their schools. This necessitates the examination of and review of the leadership practices prominently adopted by public secondary school Principals in Rivers State and how they relate with quality education delivery in the state. From literature, the prominent and dominant leadership practices of Principals were identified, and include vision and goal-setting; decision-making; instructional leadership/supervision; transformational leadership; and administrative discipline (Owan & Ekpe, 2019). These are comprehensively reviewed below.

## **Principals' Leadership Practices and Quality Education Delivery**

This section explores the relationship between the examined leadership practices of principals and quality education delivery in secondary schools in Rivers State, and by extension to Nigeria as a whole. The leadership practices of interest in the paper include vision and goal setting practices, decision-making practices, instructional supervision practices, transformational leadership practices, and administrative disciplinary practices. These are examined in the proceeding subheadings and paragraphs.

### ***Principals' Vision and Goal-setting Practices and Quality Education Delivery***

The leader who succeeds is the leader who is visionary. Successful Principals are known to be visionary leaders who are able to see into the future of where the school ought to be. They are never complacent with present position or performance of the school even when the school appears to be doing well, but are always thinking of continuous performance and improvement. It is this vision that the staff run with. It takes a Principal who has a clear vision for the school to command the trust, respect and followership of staff. So vision is about having a clear sight or foresight of a desirable future for the school: a future which benefits the staff, students and the entire school community. Kantabutra cited in Kantabutra (2015) argued that it is the leader's vision that guides his/her actions.

Certain empirical attributes of vision as characteristic of Principals' leadership are identified by various authors in Kantabutra (2015), and include brevity, clarity, abstractness, challenge, future orientation, stability, and desirability or ability to inspire. These attributes have been found to have direct relationship with staff satisfaction. It was also found by Kantabutra (2015) that such visions play critical roles in nurturing a shared vision which is of utmost importance to effective leadership.

The Principal's vision must also be clearly stated and sufficiently communicated to the school. It has to be visible, and something that everybody is aware of. As a matter of fact, people are only able to run with a vision that they are knowledgeable about. This is why most organizations often have their vision statement publicly displayed in strategic places in their organizations where everyone coming into the organization can see it. As such, Principals must also have their visions well-articulated and displayed or publicized around the school. All stakeholders of the school need to be fully aware of the Principal's or school's vision.

Kantabutra (2015) offered operational definitions for the seven attributes of vision for school improvement. These are as presented below:

- *Brevity* is the degree to which a vision statement contains approximately 11-22 words;
- *Clarity* is the degree to which a vision statement directly points at a prime goal it wants to achieve;
- *Abstractness* is the degree to which a vision statement is not a one-time goal that can be met, resulting in the vision then being discarded;
- *Challenge* is the degree to which a vision statement motivates teachers to try their best to achieve a desirable outcome;
- *Future orientation* is the degree to which a vision statement indicates the long-term perspective of the school and the environment in which it functions;
- *Stability* is the degree to which a vision statement is unlikely to be changed by any market or technology change; and
- *Desirability or ability to inspire* is the degree to which a vision statement specifies a goal and how the goal directly benefits teachers.

An example of a vision statement characterized by the seven vision attributes is as stated below:

To be the leading public school in Rivers State by providing the most rewarding learning experience to students at an affordable price.

This vision statement is brief and clear since it points directly at a prime goal and contains 21 words. It is also abstract because the prime goal is not a one-time goal that can be met, and the vision is then discarded. *Aiming to be the leading public school in Rivers State* is also future-oriented as it indicates the long-term perspective of an organization and the future environment in which it functions. This vision is also stable. No matter how far it is projected into the future, the vision statement is unlikely to be affected by any market or technology change. This vision is also very challenging and desirable for organizational members.

Another aspect of the discourse on the Principal being a visionary leader is the aspect of goals and goal-setting. Goals are the concretized achievements that lead to the realization of the school visions. In a most simple term, Locke and Lotham cited in Sinnema and Robinson (2022)



defined a goal as something we consciously want to attain. They buttressed that goals signal a gap between current and future accomplishments or states of being. Contrasting goals from visions, they described a goal as being a functional and more narrowly drawn target, whereas a vision is vaguer and abstracted as seen above.

For Hallinger & Heck (2012), goals in the context of education describe the state a school wishes to achieve by the end of the school year in relation to student learning, graduation rates, school climate, or community satisfaction. In the same vein, Murin and Murdtadho (2020) defined education goals as statements that describe the skills, competencies and qualities that are to be possessed by learners upon completion of a course of program. Goal-setting according to Marzano et al. in Dotson (2016) is the process of establishing a direction for the school organization. Since school goals are not just about the learners alone, they could also be defined as statements of anticipated deliverables to be realized or accomplished in the school system within any definite set time. They cover every aspect of the school operation, inclusive of expectations for learners and educators, school-community relationship, etc. The Principal's goal-setting practices therefore entail defining objectives, selecting short-term targets that are feasible, and developing strategies that aid in realizing the goals.

A very strong link exists between goals and visions. It is the achievement of the goals that lead to the realization of the visions. School goals and missions, no matter how finely expressed, will remain ineffectual if they are not operationalized through relevant goals and action plans (Fullan cited in Sinnema & Robinson, 2022; Hallinger & Heck, 2012). Goals help to give priority and scale of preference to activities to be performed in the school. They provide a critical mechanism for coordinating the work of school members and making decisions about how to allocate scarce resources (Goldring & Pasternak cited in Sinnema & Robinson, 2022).

Goal setting is not sufficient on its own. If the set goals eventually do not get realized, then it was all a waste of time setting them. The realization of the goals of the school greatly depends on the collaborative efforts of both the Principal and the school staff. This therefore calls for Principals to make their goal-setting practices collaborative. The extent to which teachers are involved in the setting of school goals has significant implication on their commitment to see to the realization of the goals. Empirical evidences suggest that Principals who succeed in the leadership practice of goal-setting are those who: set goals that offer clear direction to where the school is going; involve teachers in the goal-setting process; set high quality goals that focus on student achievement; and set goals with SMART attributes (Brewster & Klump, 2015; O'Neil, 2020; Sinnema & Robinson, 2022). SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound.

### ***Principal's Decision-making Practices and Quality Education Delivery***

The position of leadership in any institution is a decision-making position. The Principal is principally the chief decision maker or the chief preside over administrative decisions made in the school. The Principal as the head of the institution should ensure that his decision making leadership practice impacts positively in the students' academic performance and the entire administration process.

Successful Principals are known to be masters at sharing decision-making among their subordinates (Umar et al., 2021). Wahstron et al. in Gohlmann (2018) found that sharing decision-making and distributing leadership among staff raises the quality of education delivery thereby resulting in enhanced students' outcomes. This means that the more there is distribution

of leadership and sharing of decision-making responsibilities among staff of the school, the greater the capacity of all individuals within the school, and the more goals and objectives will be effectively achieved. Decision-sharing and leadership distribution thus enhances administrative efficiency and productivity.

Heck and Hallinger in Gohlmann (2018, p.48) also found that shared decision-making had a positive impact on the quality of student outcomes and that the reverse was the case in schools without shared decision making. Furthermore, Hitt and Tucker (2016) averred that when decision-making is shared, there is both the advantage of the principal benefiting from the varied perspectives of teachers and also the benefit of teachers' development. According to them, teachers who are involved in decision-making can see how their input is implemented and learn from the ultimate results of these shared decisions. This thus boosts such teachers' self-confidence and commitment to the vision of the Principal for the utmost good of the school.

Also, Abraham (2013:84) stated that "it has been found that participative decision-making stands out as the best way to achieve effectiveness and compliance in the school organization". He further noted that when teachers participate in decision-making, their satisfaction with the teaching profession is positively boosted. The opportunity to share in formulating policies according to Hoy and Miskel in cited in Abraham (2013) is an important factor in the morale of teachers and in their enthusiasm for the school organization. So, sharing decision-making or participative decision making not only results in better decisions, but also boosts the capacity of teachers and other leaders in the school organization, which in turns positively influences quality education delivery culminating in higher students' achievement.

### ***Instructional Supervision Practices and Quality Education Delivery***

Instructional supervision is arguably the most important function of Principals in senior secondary schools, accounting for why they are popularly referred to as instructional leaders in the school (Chiedozie & Victor, 2017; Gray, 2018). Unfortunately however, most Principals get carried away with other administrative responsibilities and activities, and also fail in delegating this duty to capable hands in the school, leading to decline in the quality of instruction in their schools (Ndubuisi et al., 2021; Ogunode et al., 2020; Suleiman et al., 2020). Successful Principals are known to place premium on instructional supervision practices as they realize the importance of this duty to their success as instructional heads in their schools.

The Principal as the instructional leader of secondary schools acts in four crucial areas – as a resource provider, as a teaching resource, as a communicator, and a visible presence at school who is always critical of whatever activities that are going on in the school (Andrews & Soder cited in Iqbal et al., 2021). His instructional leadership disposition includes behaviours that provide high expectations and outcomes and vivid policy objectives for the performance of students as well as the teachers. He supervises and provides feedbacks to the staff on the technicalities of the instructional (teaching and learning) process. He is also responsible for the provision and promotion of professional growth and development of the workers, all aimed at continuous improvement for sustained quality delivery of instruction in the school. Hoy and Hoy in Iqbal et al. (2021) are of the opinion that the Principal's vision of teaching and learning must be comprehensible and that he must have the professional development of his subordinates as a priority in mind if quality education really matters to him.

Supervision of instruction is variously conceptualized in literature. For Chiaha and Akubue (2013), supervision of instruction is the act of overseeing the teaching and learning

processes in schools so that schools are administered in such an efficient and effective manner that they are able to attain world-class status. It has to do with the effort of the school administration at ensuring that teachers teach and behave in the manner that they are expected to behave (in tandem with ethical standards of the profession), and that students learn as they are expected to learn, so as to attain the standard and quality of instructional output that are in line with the expectations of all stakeholders of the given level of education.

Instructional leadership practices according to Onyali and Akinfolarin (2017) entail ensuring high quality teaching and learning by supervising instructional programme and ensuring effective use of instructional time to foster the attainment of educational goals and objectives. Similarly, Onuma (2016) that “Principal has the primary functions of exhibiting effective instructional leadership practices for the improvement of diversified curriculum and quality of instructional programme for effective attainment of educational goals”.

Again, Nnebedum and Akinfolarin (2017) are of the view that instructional supervision is the actions taken to mentor and monitor subordinates or teachers and provide supportive and conducive atmosphere for improvement on the instructional process. Sule et al. (2015) stated that “Principals” supervision of instruction practices include; checking of teachers’ lesson notes, scheme of work, students’ notes, teachers’ punctuality, teachers’ regularity in class, classroom observation, moderation of examination papers and marketing schemes among others”. According to them, instructional supervision practices help to ensure that instructional delivery is painstakingly planned, effectively executed and properly eradicated. The Principals ensure that instructional time is managed to ensure that instructional time is not interrupted by other school activities which are not related to the instructional process (Mohammed & Muhammad cited in Onyali & Akinfolarin, 2017).

It is therefore, the duty of school Principals to ensure quality and timely instructional delivery to facilitate school effectiveness through supervision and time management to foster coverage of scheme of work. The Principals’ personal observation of teachers will help to eliminate cases of inadequate coverage of scheme of work, teachers’ persistent lateness, missing of their class lessons, absenteeism and truancy among students in secondary schools. In this direction, Olele cited in Ebete & Ejims (2014) averred that it is the duty of the Principal to oversee the running of the school in terms of staff and student welfare, development and implementation of proper instruction, school-community relations, discipline and proper keeping of school records. Others include student admissions, proper documentation of school finances and the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere.

### ***Techniques of Instructional Supervision***

Peretomode cited in Archibong (2014) outlined practices of a skillful instructional supervisor (Principal) that can bring about an effective instructional process in the school. These include:

- Classroom observation: This involves the Principal visiting classroom sessions to observe and analyze teachers’ classroom practices: the instructional process, the personality and self-carriage of the teacher, the teacher-students interaction, the lesson note and the teacher’s presentation of the lesson. The Principal is present in the class to witness and make observations of the classroom session.

- **Demonstration:** This involves the supervisor's presentation of a pre-arranged series of events to a group of teachers for their view. This is used to initiate group discussions and stimulate teachers' growth.
- **Teacher visitation:** This activity also called "inter-visiting" or "reciprocal visitations". It involves one teacher visiting and observing another teacher in action in another class within the same school (inter-class visitation) or in another school (inter-school visitation). This method enhances proficiency especially if the beginning or inexperienced teacher watches experienced teacher in action. Principals make provisions for this activity as a way of encouraging teachers' professional development for improved service delivery.
- **Workshops:** In workshops, the Principal initiates a temporary gathering of small groups of teachers to discuss a specific topic or work on a common project or problem together as a team to proffer solution to the problem.
- **Micro-teaching:** This is a modular teaching exercise scaled down in terms of duration, class size and complexity to allow the teacher focus on a selected strategy of teaching. The class size is usually between 5-10 pupils and the duration is usually not more than 10 minutes. While the teacher teaches, he is being observed by the Principal/supervisor. Immediate feedback is given, evaluating the teacher's performance. When corrections are made, the teacher either re-teaches the lesson to the same group or a different group of learners for improvement.
- **Listening to tape, radio or recordings:** This involves using sound recordings to present ideas to one or more listeners in such way as to help develop understanding or skills. Also the use of visual presentations through the media film, television, or video tape is increasingly important in the supervisory process.
- **Guided Practice:** This supervision technique involves individualized or small group manipulative activities. It is an approach in which doing is emphasized rather than talking with practice activities arranged out of context.
- **Research:** Research is the systematic and objective collection and analysis of data in order to find solutions to identified problems. Here the supervisor works with and through teachers to finding solutions to problems of teaching/learning that confronts them instead of dictating solutions to or autocratically setting educational problems relating to teaching and teachers.

### ***Principals' Transformational leadership Practices and Quality Education Delivery***

The word transformation is all about change; hence, principals who are transformational leaders are principals who bring about desirable change in their schools. Transformational leadership practices have been found to motivate and stimulate followers or team members into productivity and as such, principals who adopt these practices are able to effectively and efficiently drive their teachers into effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of quality instruction in the school (Iroegbulam, 2021). The change that is brought about by transformational leadership is not just one that occurs in the system, but one that ultimately occurs in the people. The face of any school is a reflection of the staff in that school, and as such, transformational principals bring about the desired change in the teachers which consequently leads to desired change in every aspect of school performance. So transformational leadership involves a committed relationship between the leaders and the followers, one in which the leader and the followers raise each other's

awareness of the goals and aspirations of the organization and inspire each other to optimize their potentials in the organization (Kalu et al., 2019). According to Harris-Boundy (2015), transformational leadership nurtures innovation and originality, and improve job performance. Krishnan cited in Iroegbulam (2021) opined that the main premise of transformational leadership practice is the leader's ability to motivate followers to exceed expectations. A transformational leader is able to inspire the subordinates to go beyond their own personal targets and to prioritize the goal of the organization over their own personal goals.

Transformational leadership is seen with principals of public secondary schools when they empower teachers to develop and grow on their jobs. Although the Principal's work is to oversee school activities and ensure that the process is going as expected, but the transformational leader pays keen attention to the personal wellbeing of the teachers on the job to see that each teacher becomes the best he or she can become. He understands that the best way to build a school is by building the builders (the teachers). He develops the teachers to become leaders, too, so that they are able to work collaboratively with him towards the attainment of school goals. He stimulates and inspires the teachers to reach beyond their perceived potentials, and produce extraordinary instructional outcomes. He is a "people person", a "process person" and a "product" person. For Charry (2012), such transformational Principals are able to exercise such a level of influence on their teachers because they possess high moral and ethical standard. As such, they become role models to teachers, making it easy for them to replicate themselves in the teachers. Transformational Principals thus do everything within their ability to ensure continuous improvement and continuous progress of stakeholders of the school, and to create a desirable instructional environment that favours quality delivery of education at all times.

Furthermore, a transformational instructional leader is a visionary leader who is future oriented. He has a strong personality that is able to inspire the school staff to change expectations, perceptions and work motivations which lead to instructional excellence cum quality education delivery (Aneke, 2015; Thompson & Akudo, 2020). In the opinion of Iroegbulam (2021), the transformational Principal adopts practices which stimulate the effort of their followers to be creative, innovative, problem solvers and people who can reframe problems and look at old situations with new perspectives. Bernard Bass in 1985 identified four basic elements that are hallmarks of transformational leadership, and these include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. These are reviewed below as practiced by transformational Principals.

### ***Idealized influence of transformational principals***

This is characterized by the principal's display of charismatic personality which serves as a role model to the staff, influencing them to be like him. It articulates high expectations and confidence in the subordinates. Transformational Principals practice idealized influence by role modeling and graciously granting unrestricted access to teachers. He displays high moral and ethical principles that are worthy of emulation. Through idealized influence, the Principal is able to build trust with his teachers, which is also reciprocated. Such Principals do not act like they know it all. They seek teachers' opinions and make teachers feel important as well. They are quick to admit when they are wrong and apologize appropriately, ensuring that a healthy and socially friendly working climate is always created in the school and promoting an atmosphere of respect and regard.

### ***Inspirational motivation and ability to inspire confidence***

This element of transformational leadership refers to the leader's ability to articulate a clear vision for the future, communicate expectations to his subordinates and demonstrate commitment to set goals through one-on-one coaching and mentoring of the subordinates (Iroegbulam, 2021). In the context of secondary schools, inspirational motivation refers to the ability of the Principal (instructional leader) to inspire confidence, motivation and a sense of purpose in his staff. Principals who demonstrate this attribute are known to be supportive of teachers' professional development through in-service training, so that teachers grow and become fulfilled in their jobs. They understand that quality education delivery relies greatly on teachers' competence per time, and hence inspire and motivate teachers to reach for their optimum potentials at all times.

### ***Intellectual stimulation and creativity***

This element of transformational leadership refers to encouraging followers to challenge existing approaches, reframe problems, and think in new ways. The transformational leader is able to convey his vision in such a way that followers see the big picture and this helps them to succeed in their endeavours. Anjali and Anand (2015) averred that intellectual stimulation leads to the development of employee commitment to the organization. They further stated that this has implications for the ability of the organization to achieve goals based on the dedication and hard work of employees. The Principal's practice of transformational leadership achieves intellectual stimulation when staffs are made to be part of decision-making and are granted autonomy to demonstrate leadership within their own spheres of influence. By this, the teachers become innovative and creative in their task performance in school, which has implications for quality delivery of instruction.

### ***Individualized consideration of group members***

The transformational leader recognizes the personal needs and aspirations of his subordinates. He understands that meeting the personal needs of employees is one way to motivate them towards commitment and high level performance. He takes into account the differences in perspectives of followers and becomes a coach and mentor to them rather than acting as a boss. A Principal whose leadership approach is transformational is able to recognize what motivates each staff through meticulous observations and through eavesdropping. He seeks to see that their personal needs and desires are met, knowing that personal problems and burdens can affect teachers' job quality. Warrilow cited in Iroegbulam (2021) and Egbezor cited in Iroegbulam (2021) noted that satisfied workers are more effective and perform much better on their jobs than unsatisfied workers. They are also more committed to duty, which is predictive of quality task delivery. Satisfaction in this context refers to the extent to which workers' personal needs are met. As such, it becomes imperative for public secondary school Principals to practice personalized consideration in dealing with their teachers as this has been found to influence teachers' delivery of quality services to schools.

### **Principals' Administrative Discipline practices and Quality Education Delivery**

Administrative disciplinary strategies of public secondary school Principals in River state in the context of this study refer to modalities or measures put in place by the school Principal to

ensure that teachers maintain disciplined conducts in the discharge of their duties. Disciplined conduct of teachers in instructional delivery, attitude towards work, and in general idiosyncrasies in the work place is, as a matter of fact, a prerequisite for effective job performance (An, 2022; Buchtova et al., 2015; Khatun & Siddiqui, 2018; Rahimi & Karkami, 2013; Rohyani et al., 2021) and has implications for quality education delivery. These administrative disciplinary strategies fall within the purview of teachers' disciplinary management.

As humans, erring is inevitable and this happens either deliberately or unintentionally in the workplace. This reality is amplified in scenarios where one serves as a subordinate, or is a follower, working by laid down rules or within a formal organization where certain professional way of life is expected. Sometimes, even best intentions of the employee when judged in the light of organizational modalities, end up becoming unacceptable. The organization's code of ethics/conduct therefore becomes the checklist by which all activities and performance of the employee are vetted. Teachers, therefore, beyond just making efforts to be committed to the school and in the discharge of their instructional duties, have professional conducts that are in tandem with the goals of the school, and ensuring that they do not deviate from the right track is the responsibility of the Principal. Principals thus employ disciplinary strategies to ensure that teachers continually act in manners that are in line with quality education delivery in the school.

Bacal cited in Owan and Ekpe (2019) averred that the disciplinary measures which can be used by the Principal to control the discipline of teachers include development of a code of conduct; warnings, reprimand, dismissal, suspension, deprivation of privileges, salary deductions, query, and demotion. For Ezeugbor and Eboatu (2018), the types of disciplinary strategies adopted by Principals on infracted teachers include warning, interdiction, suspension, termination, dismissal, compulsory Retirement, and demotion. However, all of these identified measures mainly apply in cases of confirmed infraction. Principals' administrative disciplinary strategies act both as preventive and corrective tools for teachers' acts of indiscipline. Prominent disciplinary practices identified in literature include: ensuring compulsory signing of attendance register; ensuring that teachers prepare and submit lesson plans/notes; use of warning; and the use of suspension. These are buttressed below.

Several studies have established the existence of relationship between administrative disciplinary measures and teachers' performance cum quality of education at various levels of education. Owan and Ekpe (2019) carried out a study to examine disciplinary management in public primary schools and teachers' job effectiveness in Yakurr Local Government Area, Cross River State. The study revealed that warning, suspension, and dismissal have significant relationships respectively, to primary school teachers' job effectiveness. In the same vein, Ahiri et al. (2019) conducted a study which aimed at analyzing and describing the effect of teachers' work discipline on teachers' performance. The study results showed a positive and significant effect of teachers' work discipline on teachers' performance. From reviews of several other studies on the subject matter, it is deduced that administrative disciplinary measures influence teachers' job performance in the following ways:

- Improved classroom management: Administrative disciplinary measures can promote a well-managed classroom environment, leading to improved teacher performance.
- Increased accountability: Disciplinary measures can hold teachers accountable for their actions, promoting a sense of responsibility and improving performance.
- Enhanced professionalism: Administrative disciplinary measures can encourage teachers to maintain high levels of professionalism, leading to improved performance.

- Reduced teacher burnout: Fair and consistent disciplinary measures can reduce teacher burnout by promoting a sense of security and stability.

### **Barriers to Principals' Effective Implementation of Leadership Practices for Quality Education Delivery in Public Schools in Rivers State**

Various studies and authors express consensus on certain factors that have seriously constrained principals' administrative effective in public secondary schools in Rivers State (Adeniran, 2020; Chapi & Adio, 2020; Puyate, 2018). Some of these factors include:

- **Financial Constraints:** It is no more news that Nigerian public schools are grossly underfunded, and this is having serious limiting impact on administrators' ability to implement their plans, visions, and goals which would bring about quality delivery of education in their schools. Finance is acknowledge as the livewire of any school system (Urmar et al., 2021) because the availability of finance within the principals' control ensures to a high extent his ability to purchase resources, and support teacher development programs which could boost the instructional process of the school. The common situation where principals hardly have money for spending on well-meaning intentions borne out of decision-making practices in the school will always be a serious barrier to principals' implementation of leadership practices. Even transformational leadership practices of the principal depend on the availability of finance to a high extent because it also involves meeting teachers' needs.
- **Bureaucratic constraint:** Principals' ability to elicit desired level of performance from teachers through the application of disciplinary practices is limited by reason of the fact that their power over teachers is highly limited. They cannot suspend nor fire deviant teachers. Because of this, there is the possibility that teachers take principals for granted, especially those teachers who have connections in the Schools Board.
- **Infrastructural facilities constraints:** The state of infrastructure is poor in some public schools, and as such, principals may be incapacitated in their efforts to lead schools effectively despite their application of leadership practices. For example, instructional supervision practices of principals become futile where the school physical environment does not support effective teaching and learning.
- **Administrative competence constraints:** Principals are effective in implementing leadership practices to the extent of their administrative skills, knowledge, and competence. Where principals lack the requisite knowledge and competence, it becomes a barrier to their effectiveness in school administration.
- **Stakeholder participation constraints:** In a school community where stakeholders like parents and community members are not lovers of education, their participation in school decision-making and in school activities may not be supportive of principals' administrative efforts.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the foregone discourse, it is concluded that the quality of education delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State greatly depends on the leadership practices adopted by the school Principals. In other words, leadership practices play significant role in Principals' vision



of seeing that quality education is delivered in Public secondary schools in Rivers state. To ensure that quality education delivery is achieved in the schools, Principals adopt variety of leadership practices, the most significant ones being: vision and goal setting; engagement of teachers in the decision-making process; supervision of instruction; transformational leadership practices; and the adoption of administrative disciplinary strategies. Irrespective of the style of leadership adopted by the Principal, these practices must necessarily be imbedded in their daily operations. Visions and goals must be set and properly communicated to the school community; teachers must be involved in the school's decision-making processes as this is the only thing that makes them to wholly commit to the realization of the outcomes of such decisions. Teaching and learning need the askance eyes of the Principal who by default is the instructional leader (the number one teacher and the number one learner) in the school; and the need for the Principal to always be futuristic in his approach, whilst ensuring that teachers' satisfaction, growth and development are enhanced can simply not be overemphasized. Finally are the disciplinary practices which ensure that all teachers do what they are supposed to do at the right place, in the right time, the right way and with the right attitude. All of these culminate in the delivery of education that meets standards, satisfies the stakeholders, and leads to improved students' performance.

## **Suggestions**

The paper therefore makes the following suggestions:

- The government should increase funding of public secondary schools to be able to enable principals to work effectively towards ensuring quality education delivery in these schools.
- Greater autonomy and support should be granted to principals by the schools board in the area of exercising control over teachers for quality education delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
- The government and well-meaning stakeholders of public secondary schools should partner in the provision of requisite physical facilities to compliment the efforts of principals towards ensuring quality education delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
- The Ministry of Education should periodically organize leadership training and development programs for principals for regular up-skilling of their leadership competences and practices towards effective delivery of their administrative mandates in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
- The schools board and the Ministry of Education should create awareness through jingles on the necessity for stakeholder participation and support in school administration in order to compliment the administrative efforts of principals for quality education delivery in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

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