

Administrative strategies of the principal on the academic performance of students in Public Secondary Schools in Imo State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined staffing/staff development, provision of learning materials, and motivation of teachers as administrative strategies of principals on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Imo State. It employed a survey design. Three research questions were posed, while two hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis one showed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of the responses of principals and teachers on the examined staffing on students' academic performance. The second hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference between the mean perception of principals and teachers on the examined staff development on the academic performance of students. The population comprised twenty-six thousand two hundred and eighteen (26,218) teachers, principals, and students from public secondary schools in the 270 secondary schools in Imo State, with a sample size of 2,870 teachers, principals, and students. Data were collected using the "Principals' Administrative Strategies and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (PASSAPQ)," which was validated and had a reliability index of 0.92. Mean scores and z-test statistics were employed for data analysis. The study revealed that there was adequate staffing in Imo State. There was, however, no significant difference in the mean rating of the responses of principals and teachers on the impact of the provision of learning materials on students' academic performance. Another finding of this study shows that staff development impacts the academic.

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1. Introduction

The school is a social system and cannot operate without some form of structure, organization, and proper management, such as a social institution, to achieve its purpose through the efforts of people (Paglayan, 2022). Secondary education occupies a strategic position in the national education system (Oktavia et al., 2025). It bridges the gap between the primary and the tertiary levels of education in Nigeria (Agboro-Eravwoke, 2024; Angwaomaodoko, 2023). It is a formalized system of education usually organized for learners between the ages of 10 and 17 years. In the present Nigerian education system, it is organized into two sections of junior and senior secondary schools for the proper development of the students and the nation (Ukeje & Aisiku, 2022). The secondary school is an institution or a human industry established for refining human beings in terms of skills, behavior, and all-around excellence. To achieve these objectives, an efficient and effective administrator must head such an institution (Polishchuk & Horbatiuk, 2023).

The principal is the chief executive in the secondary school administration. The principal occupies the managerial position in the school. The principal is an administrative head, a manager, a public relations man, a supervisor, as well as a structural leader (Akpa, 2002; Gregory & Willis, 2022; Wiyono et al., 2023). That a principal is a curriculum innovator and a catalyst for planned revelation (Chidziwa et al., 2023; Sterrett, 2022). The principal is the manager who must plan, coordinate, and supervise the affairs of the school so that it runs smoothly (Babalola, 2024). Such personnel as a principal are supposed to have proven quality and the knowledge to achieve their complex administrative roles (Riani & Ain, 2022; Samad & Lashari, 2022).

Administrative strategies are those means, skills, and techniques that the school administrator should adopt to achieve better performance and attain effectiveness in school administration (Bwoi et al., 2025; Eze et al., 2023). Educational administrators at one time or another face six major strategies: manager, structural leader, disciplinarian, human relation facilitators, evaluators, and conflict mediators (Egwu et al., 2012). Some researchers have also shown that there are other issues the principal must be interested in, as noted by the American Association of School Administrators. They point out six major strategies that today's administrators should navigate. They include the areas of personnel administration, school-community relationships, curriculum and instructional development, financial administration, and school plant management (Ekwesianya, 2022; Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024).

Five major administrative strategies for achieving educational goals and objectives in Nigeria include instructional programs, staff personnel, student personnel, financial and physical resources, and school-community relationships (Nwosu et al., 2007). Hence, the driving force for this study was the fact that most researchers centered on exploring what the task areas are for the school administrators, without paying much attention to the academic performance of the students (Özdemir et al., 2024). Academic performance refers to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies. It is a yardstick for measuring the effects of the administrative strategies adopted by the principals. The principal is the head of the school; his or her levels of administrative achievement can only be qualified by the academic performance of the students (Pardosi & Utari, 2022; Samad & Lashari, 2022). The students' academic performance in both internal and external examinations has been used to determine the excellence of the principals and the teachers (Estrada & Gumban, 2024).

The present system of public secondary schools in Imo State and Nigeria at large poses a lot of new and additional challenges to the secondary school principals. To meet these challenges, the school administrator will have to equip himself with the knowledge, skills, and attitude that will make him proficient in the implementation of administrative skills and professional duties and help him achieve the goals of the institution. Hence, effective administrative strategies are a significant predictor of student academic achievement (Al-Abyadh & Abdel Azeem, 2022). Therefore, this study aims to examine the administrative skills of principals and the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Imo State. The following research questions were posed to guide the study: (1) To what extent does adequate staffing influence the students' performances?; (2) To what extent does staff development influence the academic performance of students?; and (3) To what extent does the provision of learning materials influence the academic performance of students?

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.5 level of significance to guide the study. HO1: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of the responses of principals and teachers on the impact of staffing on students' academic performance in Imo State, Nigeria. And then HO2 is that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of responses of teachers and principals on the impact of the provision of learning materials on the academic performance of students in Imo State, Nigeria.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study adopted a survey approach to study the administrative skills of principals and the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Imo State. It was carried out as a descriptive survey because the events had already taken place, and the researcher could not manipulate the dependent variable.

2.2. Sample

The sample for this study was made up of 2,870 teachers, principals, and students. The researcher selected through a proportionate stratified random sampling technique of 50% each of the teachers' and principals' of the population and used a multi-staged sampling technique to sample 35 students per education zone.

2.3. Instrument

The study used two instruments to collect the data for this study: a questionnaire. The researcher structured a questionnaire titled "Principals' Administrative Skills Questionnaire" (PASQ) as the instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire contains the modified 4-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) and is weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 points, respectively. The questionnaire consists of 2 sections, Section A and Section B. Section A seeks information on the personal data of the respondents, while Section B contains 20 items that were used to assess the personal opinion of the respondents on the administrative skills of principals and the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Imo State. The questionnaire contains 20 items of a research-structured questionnaire.

After developing the instrument, its face and content validity were established by subjecting it to critical assessment by an expert in educational administration and planning and 2 experts in the field of education measurement and evaluation. They helped to ascertain that the content of the instrument was in line with the purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses. The researcher sought the help of two trained research assistants to administer the copies of the questionnaire. The collected questionnaire was used for the analysis.

2.4. Data Analysis

For the purpose of analyzing the data that were collected after the administration, the researcher used mean scores and standard deviations in answering the five research questions. Equally, the researcher adopted a "mean" of 2.50, and the mean above, as agreed, meanwhile, below 2.50 was seen as a disagreement. The research hypotheses for this study were tested using z-test statistics to establish the significant differences between the variables in the study. There was a $p < 0.05$ level of significance for all of the hypotheses, while the acceptance or rejection of null hypotheses was based on the calculated value of the Z-test analysis. The z-test was used because it is more robust and can be applied when the sample size is more than 30.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The first analysis examined staffing adequacy and its impact on student academic achievement, focusing on staff availability in supporting learning outcomes. The results from questionnaire items 1–5 were used to answer this research question. The data were analyzed to identify relationships between staffing adequacy and academic performance. The findings are summarized and presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Mean score analysis of principals and teachers on how adequate staffing influences students' academic performance

S/N	Item Statement	Principals' responses			Teachers' Responses		
		N	X	Decision	N	X	Decision
1	There is adequate staffing, which can improve the students' performance in examinations	135	2.67	Agreed	2525	2.66	Agreed
2	There are adequate qualified teachers in specific subject areas	135	2.48	Disagreed	2525	2.46	Disagreed
3	There are adequate teachers for all the classes	135	2.67	Agreed	2525	2.66	Agreed
4	Adequate non-reaching staff helps to coordinate the resources to	135	2.59	Agreed	2525	2.59	Agreed
5	Improve the academic performance of students	135	2.63	Agreed	2525	2.64	Agreed
Pooled Mean X			2.61			2.60	

The data in Table 1 show the responses of principals and teachers regarding how staffing adequacy affects student academic achievement. The table shows that respondents unanimously agreed with items 1, 3, 4, and 5 because their average scores were above 2.50, the cutoff value. Meanwhile, respondents disagreed with item 2 because its average score was below the cutoff value of 2.50. The combined average scores of 2.61 for principals and 2.60 for teachers were above the cutoff value of 2.50, indicating that most of the items were agreed with by respondents. The analysis, therefore, indicates that there is no significant difference between the average perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the impact of staffing adequacy on student academic achievement. Details of the data analysis are summarized and presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Summary of the z-test analysis of the mean response scores of principals and teachers on the impact of adequate staffing on the academic performance of students

Respondents	N	X	S.D	Df	Z _{cal}	Z _{crit.}
Principals	135	2.62	0.07	2658	0.2	1.96
Teachers	2525	2.60	0.08	2525	2.46	Disagreed

Data in Table 2 show that the mean ratings and standard deviation scores of the 135 principals were 2.62 and 0.07, respectively, while 2525 teachers had a mean rating of 2.60 with a standard deviation of 0.08. The data in Table 2 also indicated that the z-calculated value of 0.2 is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 2658. The null hypothesis, which indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean perception of principals and teachers on the impact of adequate staffing on students' academic performance, is retained. This finding suggests that both groups share a similar view regarding the role of adequate staffing in supporting students' academic outcomes. It also implies consistency in perceptions across different professional roles within the school system. And then items 6-10 of the instrument were used to answer this research question. The results of data analysis are summarized and presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mean score analysis of principals and teachers on how staff development influences the academic performance of students

S/N	Item Statement	Principals' responses			Teachers' responses		
		N	X	Decision	N	X	Decision
6	The principal encourages teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and conferences.	135	2.71	Agreed	2525	2.70	Agreed
7	The principal organizes team teaching and micro-teaching for teachers.	135	2.44	Disagreed	2525	2.41	Disagreed
8		135	2.39	Disagreed	2525	2.39	Agreed
9	The principal organizes inter-school visitation and demonstration teaching by experts in different fields of knowledge.	135	2.69	Agreed	2525	2.67	Agreed
10	The principal encourages teachers to go for higher educational programs like Ph.D., master's, and part-time programs.	135	2.56	Agreed	2525	2.48	Agreed
Pooled Mean			2.56			2.53	

Table 3 above indicates the opinion of principals and teachers on how staff development influences the academic performance of students. The table shows that the principals agreed on items 6, 9, and 10 since the calculated mean score for these items was above the 2.50 cut-off mean but disagreed on items 7 and 8 with mean scores below 2.50. While items 6, 9, and 10 were agreed upon by the teachers since the calculated means were above the cut-off mean of 2.50, they disagreed on items 7 and 8, with mean scores below the 2.50 cut-off mean. The pooled mean of 2.56 and 2.53 is above the cutoff mean for principals and teachers, respectively. This finding suggests that both principals and teachers generally perceive staff development as having a positive influence on students' academic performance. However, the disagreement on certain items indicates that some aspects of staff development may not yet be fully effective or consistently implemented. Then, to what extent does the provision of learning materials influence the academic performance of students. Items 11-15 of the instrument were used to answer this research question. The result of data analysis is summarized and presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean score analysis of principals and teachers on how the provision of learning materials influences the academic performance of students

S/N	Item Statement	Principals' responses			Teachers' Responses		
		N	X	Decision	N	X	Decision
11	Classrooms are adequate.	135	2.48	Disagreed	2525	2.47	Disagreed
12	There are adequate textbooks in the school for students.	135	2.49	Disagreed	2525	2.48	Disagreed
13	There is an adequate teacher's playground for the students.	135	2.66	Agreed	2525	2.65	Agreed
14	The school is equipped with adequate laboratories.	135	2.43	Disagreed	2525	2.45	Disagreed
15	The school has a functional and well-equipped library.	135	2.48	Disagreed	2525	2.44	Disagreed
Pooled Mean		2.61			2.60		

Analysis in Table 4 shows the mean response of principals and teachers on how the provision of learning materials influences the academic performance of students. It was indicated that items 11, 12, 14, and 15 were scored below the 2.50 cut-off point and were regarded as agreed, while item 13 had a mean score above 2.50 and was therefore seen as agreed by the principals and teachers. A corresponding hypothesis formulated to address the research question is that there is no significant difference between the mean perception of principals and teachers on the impact of the provision of learning materials on the academic performance of students. The result of data analysis is summarized and presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Summary of the z-test analysis of the mean response scores of principals and teachers on the impact of the provision of learning materials on the academic performance of students

Respondents	N	X	S.D	Df	Z _{cal}	Z _{crit.}	Decision
Principals	135	2.57	0.11	2658	0.15	1.96	Accept
Teachers	2525	2.56	0.10				Ho

Data in Table 5 show that the mean ratings and standard deviation scores of the 135 principals were 2.57 and 0.11, respectively, while 2525 teachers had a mean rating of 2.56 and 0.10 standard deviation. The table also indicates that the z-calculated value of 0.15 is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 2658. The null hypothesis, which indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean perception of principals and teachers on the impact of provision of learning materials on the academic performance of students, is retained.

3.2. Adequate staffing influences students' academic performance in imo state

The study revealed that there were adequate teachers for all the classes, but no adequately qualified teachers in specific subject areas in public secondary schools in Imo State. There was, however, no significant difference between the mean perception of principals and teachers on the impact of adequate staffing on students' academic performance. There was also better management of human resources in rural schools than in urban schools. The reason for these discrepancies may be due to the size of the school's studies or the area where the studies were carried out (Huber & Helm, 2020; Toropova et al., 2021). These findings indicate that the number of teaching staff in secondary schools in Imo State is relatively adequate, but the quality or appropriateness of teacher competencies to subject areas remains a major issue. This situation indicates an imbalance between teacher distribution and subject-specific needs, potentially impacting the effectiveness of classroom learning. Although there was no statistically significant difference between principals' and teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of staffing on student academic achievement, this can be interpreted as indicating that both groups share a relatively similar view of the situation. However, this uniformity of perception does not necessarily reflect optimal learning practices, as teaching quality remains highly dependent on teachers' professional competence in their fields.

The finding that human resource management is better in rural schools than in urban areas provides an interesting perspective in the context of educational management. This could be due to several factors, such as smaller school sizes, which facilitate coordination, closer interpersonal

relationships among educators, and relatively lower levels of administrative complexity compared to urban schools (Mejia et al., 2025; Fana & Rohman, 2026). In rural areas, principals may have stronger control over task distribution and teacher performance monitoring (Barbosa Jr & Coneway, 2023; Hamka, 2023; Liu et al., 2024). In contrast, schools in urban areas tend to face more complex challenges, such as large student populations, heterogeneous learning needs, and high administrative burdens (Nation et al., 2020; Olsen et al., 2022; Urban et al., 2020).

The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of policies for equitable teacher distribution and placement based on competency, not just quantity. The government and education policymakers need to ensure that each subject is taught by teachers with relevant academic backgrounds (Buabeng et al., 2020). Continuous professional development programs need to be strengthened to increase teacher capacity in their specific fields (Edu, 2025; Saleem et al., 2021). Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education should not only focus on meeting the number of teaching staff but also on improving the quality and relevance of teacher competencies to students' learning needs.

3.3. Staff development influences the academic performance of the student

Another finding of this study shows that staff development influences the academic performance of students. This may be attested in the sense that the principal encourages teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and conferences, which have a great impact on the academic performance of students in Imo State. The study revealed that more workshops and seminars should be organized for teachers so as to sensitize school managers on the importance of learning organizations. The variations in these findings might be a result of the different statistical tools used. Hence, staff development is encouraged to be used by principals, as it will invariably improve the staff as well as the students' performance in school (Dimitropoulos et al., 2022).

It is important to understand that effective staff development depends not only on the frequency of training but also on the relevance and sustainability of the program (Bilderback, 2024; Blanchard & Thacker, 2023). Professional development programs that are systematically designed, based on teacher needs, and accompanied by evaluation and follow-up will have a more significant impact on improving student academic performance (Didion et al., 2020; Sims et al., 2021). In this context, the principal acts as a facilitator of organizational learning, capable of creating a school culture that supports collaboration, reflection, and continuous innovation among teachers (Supriyanto, 2016).

The variation in findings that may arise due to the use of different statistical tools demonstrates the importance of appropriate analytical methods in educational research (Setianingrum & Da Costa, 2023). However, substantively, the results of this study remain consistent with the view that investment in human resource development is key to improving the quality of education (Wombo, 2023). Therefore, schools and the government need to expand access to quality training programs, including through partnerships with higher education institutions or professional organizations, to ensure that teachers possess the competencies appropriate to the demands of 21st-century learning (Brandt, 2020).

The implementation of staff development also needs to consider the practical challenges faced by teachers, such as time constraints, workload, and institutional support (Abonyi et al., 2020). Without supportive policies, such as reducing administrative burdens or providing incentives for teachers who actively participate in training, staff development programs have the potential to fail (Arikunto et al., 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive and sustainable approach is essential to ensure that staff development is not merely a formality but truly impacts the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes (Sutoyo & Supriyanto, 2015).

3.4. Provision of learning materials influences the academic performance of students

The provision of learning materials influences the academic performance of students, as revealed by the third objective of this study. Hence, this affects the academic performance of students in Imo State. There was no significant difference between the mean perception of principals and teachers on the impact of the provision of learning materials on the academic performance of students. Although there is a UBE program, the schools lack instructional materials. In this context, instructional resources provide a solid basis for conceptual thinking, increase the propensity of the brain to retain information, make learning more interesting, and take care of differences that may

exist among learners. In addition to all these benefits, it is important to note that the quality and the quantity of resources available to any education system provide a basis for assessment of the managerial abilities of an education manager. This is because even the most resourceful manager requires a resource base upon which to exhibit resourcefulness. It was also noted that most of the equipment, tools, and workshop facilities were either broken down, damaged, or dilapidated, and they were not replaced or renovated. Found that most of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) learning centers have no physical structures; they lack furniture, instructional materials, and a facilitative learning environment. This was, therefore, very demotivating learning and unattractive to learners, hence hindering students' performance.

Inadequate facilities and infrastructure, such as non-functioning laboratories, inadequate libraries, and damaged or poorly maintained learning facilities, pose a serious challenge to improving the quality of education (de Oliveira & Freitas, 2025). In this context, the availability of learning resources is not only assessed in terms of quantity but also in terms of their quality and functionality (Abdi et al., 2021). Good learning resources can increase student motivation, enrich the learning experience, and assist teachers in delivering material more effectively and contextually. Conversely, limited facilities can reduce student interest in learning and hinder the achievement of optimal learning outcomes. The implications of these findings emphasize that efforts to improve student academic performance must be balanced with the provision of adequate and high-quality learning resources. The government and schools need to regularly evaluate the condition of educational facilities and infrastructure, and ensure ongoing maintenance and upgrades (Ahmad, 2021; Herath et al., 2023). The use of educational technology can also be an alternative to addressing the limitations of conventional learning resources, for example, through the use of digital learning media and resource-based learning resources.

4. Conclusion

This study investigates the influence of the administrative skills of principals on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Imo State. From the study, staff motivation, staff development, and adequate staffing were improved in Imo State public secondary schools, while the provision of learning materials was on the negative side. Hence, school administrative skills involve the act of administering the curriculum and teaching, care, motivating, staff development, resource allocation and management, communication, conflict handling, running meetings, among others. All these activities are those of the school principal, who must ensure they are all directed towards effective teaching quality outputs and improved academic performance of students. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: adequate, qualified teachers in specific subject areas and more non-teaching staff should be employed in the school by the government so as to help coordinate the resources in the school. The principal should, from time to time, organize team teaching and micro-teaching for the teachers. The principal should also endeavor to organize inter-school visitation and demonstration teaching by experts in different fields of knowledge.

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