AWARENESS OF EDUCATION LAWS AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

Ayeerun, Michael Sunday *Ph.D.*
Office of the Registrar,
AdekunleAjasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria
&
Unachukwu, Glad O., *Prof*
Department of Educational Management and Policy
Faculty of Education,Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka,
Anambra State

Abstract
Ignorance of the law is not an excuse for any form of infraction relating to the development of minds for the future. This study examined awareness of education laws and school effectiveness in secondary schools in Ondo State,Nigeria. One research question guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. The study adopted descriptive correlational survey design. The population comprised all the principals,teachers and students in the 304 public secondary schools in Ondo State. A sample of 4,743 participants which include 135 principals, 1530 teachers and 3060 students from nine LGAs in the state composed using the multistage sampling procedure were involved in the study. Data were collected using a researcher developed questionnaire titled "Principals'Awareness of Education Laws and School Effectiveness Questionnaire" (PAELSEQ). The questionnaire was validated by experts. The internal consistency of the instrument was ascertained using the Kuder-Richardson formular. Data were analyzed using mean scores to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using Multiple Regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that there is a significant relationship between principals' awareness of education laws and school effectiveness (R=0.91). Findings also showed that there is a significant relationship (r=0.65) between principals' awareness of education laws in school decision making and school effectiveness. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that teachers should be trained on education laws and procedures as well as carried along through regular briefings about likely changes in laws in the nation.

Introduction

Over the years, observations of the factors that influence the extent to which schools achieve their objectives have attracted the interest and concern of teachers, counselors, researchers and school administrators in Nigeria. This seems to have

emanated from the complaints by members of the public concerning the productivity of the education industry in the country secondary schools inclusive.

Secondary schools established in Nigeria are categorized as either public, or private. Their varied ownership, notwithstanding, they are, expected to operate on similar curricular, employ qualified teachers, admit pupils, provide necessary teaching-learning facilities and conducive environment for learning. These schools are also expected to be administered according to laid down rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education and other regulating bodies for secondary schools in the nation.

Observations reveal that the Nigerian education industry is on a daily basis becoming more litigious. The rate at which education stakeholders are being dragged to court for alleged breaches, actions, inactions, omissions or commissions appear to be increasing. Perhaps, school authorities and teachers in Nigeria do not take enough care in exercising their role *in loco parentis* and to safeguard students' interests within the school system probably because they are not aware of their rights, let alone those of students.

Given the climate of the times, it appears not only prudent but also necessary for teachers and educational administrators to understand their own rights and limitations, as well as the legal implications of what they do, particularly in dealing with students in educational matters so as not to infringe on the students' rights in the schools (Nakpodia, 2010).

Legal awareness of education laws as conceptualized by the American Bar Association, Committee on Public Understanding About the Law (1989), is the ability to make critical judgments about the substance of the law, legal process, and available legal resources and to effectively utilize the legal system and articulate strategies to improve. The Canadian Bar Association (1992), conceptualized it as legal literacy of education law, and defined it as "the ability to understand words used in legal contexts, to draw conclusions from them, and to use those conclusions to take actions.

The importance of law cannot be sufficiently substantiated as it is on the increase on a daily basis. Legal awareness can empower people to demand justice, accountability and effective remedies at all levels of education. Without legal literacy, people can get intimidated and alienated. This was described by Adeboyeje (2001) as highly perturbing. In the opinion, of the author, employers, school owners, teachers, school authorities, government functionaries and students are not sufficiently familiar with appropriate education laws and procedures in the management of education in Nigeria today. With the nascent changes and spur in information and communication technology (ICT), the school system has become more complex, requiring a deep knowledge of education laws, enactments and rules and court decisions in order to stand the legal risk of being an actor in the school system and to help in the delivery of service as legally as possible for school progress.

The importance of legal awareness can be understood under the framework of the locus of control of reinforcement developed by Rotter (1966). The theory is used in personality psychology to refer to causation as perceived by individuals in response to personal outcomes or other events. The word, "locus" in the term is a Latin word which means a location or place. A locus of control is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do or on events outside our control (Shepherd, Owen, Fitch & Marshall, 2006). It was defined by Messer (1971) as a belief that one's destiny is controlled by oneself or by external forces such as fate, god or powerful others. Schulz and Schulz (2005) outlined factors that can influence locus of control as gender, age, family orientation, ethnic grouping, religion and socio-economic status.

Locus of control can be internal, external or bi-focal People who have internal locus of control believe that they have control over the events in their lives. When a person believes that his rewards or punishments depend on his own efforts (internal control), it is most likely that he will strive to do those things that bring about rewards and minimize punishment (Messer, 1971). On the other hand, people who have external locus of control believe that they have no control over the events in their lives and that there are other individuals or external forces that control events in their lives. People with external locus of control tend to be more stressed and prone to clinical depression. People that have the combination of the two types of locus of control are referred to as bi-focals. Those that have bi-focal characteristics are known to handle stress and cope with their diseases more efficiently by having the mixture of internal and external loci of control.

Roddenberry and Renk (1998) revealed that individuals who had external locus of control are vulnerable to external influences and thus have a higher level of stress. Onyekuru and Ibegbunam (2014) and Whyte (1978) investigated the relationship between locus of control and academic success of students enrolled in higher education courses and found that students with internal locus of control believed that hard work and focus would result in successful academic process and that they performed significantly better than students with external locus of control who believed that success depended upon luck or fate. Nowicki and Walker (2009) found out that there was consistent positive relationship between internal locus of control and achievement scores for males while for females, this result was inconsistent because social desirability effects confounded the results of the correlation between achievement and locus of control for females. Contrary to this Murray and Staebler (1973) failed to find achievement differences between internals and externals and suggested that locus of control was not necessarily a determinant of academic achievement.

Secondary schools are guided by the National Policy on Education, and other rules and regulations specified by the school authorities. From these, locus of control variables are derived which direct the teaching, non-teaching, and students' behaviours who are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There

is no gainsaying the fact that the contemporary education laws and edicts in Nigeria derive their sources from the regional laws, current Constitutional provisions and military decrees, particularly on education matters (Durosaro, 1997).

Issues of school effectiveness represent an enduring and fundamental challenge to researchers and educational administrators as it is often regarded as a complicated construct. First, there is no agreed definition of school effectiveness. Secondly, definitions of school effectiveness change overtime. A third challenge emerges from multiple stakeholders, such as parents, administrators, students, teachers, taxpayers, with each group often suggesting and frequently conflicting effectiveness preferences.

The term effectiveness originated from the Latin word "effectivus" which means "creative", "produvctive" or ëffective".When something is deemed effective, it means it has an intended or expected outcome, or produces a deep or vivid impression. Scheerens (2004) defined school effectiveness as effectiveness enhancing conditions at school level. It includes all the contextual variables related with school such as teaching, learning, administration, students' motivation and community involvement. In the early studies on school effectiveness, the emphasis was on enhancing conditions of schooling and output measures, mostly achievement of the student. Being effective means achieving a set goal, getting to an outcome even if it takes longer or consumes more resources. It is doing the right things. The question now becomes, what are the right things?

To attempt an answer to the question, Gray, Hopkins, Reynoids ad Wilcox (1999) described effectiveness as above-expectation pupil academic performance, and that for this to take place, requires visionary leadership, supervision and monitoring, planning and quality decisions, and performance indicators. It therefore becomes the responsibility of members of the school to identify priorities correctly and do them if effectiveness must be achieved.

The Nigerian education law guides the effective management, administration and implementation of education at all levels, Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013). In most States of the Federation Ondo state inclusive, educational provision is a political good. Education is operated within the legal framework of the nation (Constitution). This, therefore, warrants both theoretical and applied expositions in law from stakeholders (parents, teachers, school heads, community leaders, governments and corporate organizations) in their varying spheres of concern so as to enable them participate effectively.

Every school system has abstract rules and regulations (Weber, 1946). Therefore, the administration of education law is held to consist in application of these rules in particular cases (Hoy,Miskel & Tartar, 2013). The authors explained further that rules and regulations help to coordinate activities in the hierarchy of authority, describe the rights and duties inherent in each position, provide continuity for school operations, and ensure uniformity and stability within the school system.

There is so much emphasis on the promulgation and existence of law as the basis or fundamental framework for authority and acceptable social action, especially in heterogeneous societies that are characterized by ethnic and tribal complexities such as the case of Nigeria. With the rapid growth in the Nigerian education system, students and other stakeholders in the school system are more aware and conscious of their rights. It is realized that school laws, rules and regulations are not absolute in themselves. However, it can be subjected to the law court or the reading of the Constitution.

There are allegations from the public on the falling standard of secondary education in Nigeria. This could partly be attributed to the inadequacies in the compliance of school authorities, teachers and students to the provisions of education laws which might have caused poor instructional supervision, lack of instructional leadership, recurrence of unilateral decision making in school administration. Others include serious disregard for school rules and regulation and discipline in behaviours and conducts of affairs within the school system which have impacted school effectiveness.

The problem of the secondary school system particularly in relation to administration and consequent effectiveness could be partly related to the inadequacies in the level of awareness and application of the extant laws required to guide the system.The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between education laws and effectiveness of public secondary schools in Ondo State Nigeria. In specific term, the study aimed to determine the level of awareness of education laws in public secondary schools by principals, teachers and students in Ondo State, Nigeria;

Research Question

The research question that guided the study is:

What is the level of awareness of education laws in public secondary schools in Ondo State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between awareness and compliance with education laws and effectiveness of public secondary schools in Ondo State
2. There is no significant relationship between awareness of education laws and decision-making process in public secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design.A researcher developed questionnaire was used to collect data from principals, teachers and students.The

population for the study consisted of all the principals, teachers and students in the 304 public secondary schools in Ondo State as at 2016.

A sampled of 4,743 participants consisting of 153 principals, 1530 teachers (10 from each school) and 3060 students (20 from each school) from 153 public secondary schools participated in the study.

Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to compose the sample. In the first stage, nine out of the existing 18 Local Government Areas in the State were sampled. The process involved the use of simple random sampling to draw three Local Government Areas from each of the three Senatorial districts in Ondo State resulting to nine local government areas.

In the second stage using simple random sampling technique, 50% of public secondary schools in Ondo state, giving a total of 153 schools out of the 304 schools in the state were drawn from the nine L.G.As already sampled.. The principal of each school sampled was automatically sampled, thus 153 principals of the sampled schools were drawn.

The next stage involved the use of simple random sampling to draw 10 teachers and 20 students respectively from each of the 153 schools sampled. This yielded 1530 teachers and 3060 students. These results to a total sample size of 4743 respondents, comprising 153 principals, 1530 teachers and 3060 students.

A researcher developed instrument titled Principals' Awareness of Education Laws and School Effectiveness Questionnaire (PALESEQ) was used to collect data. The instrument was structured on a four point scale of Not Aware, Low Level of Awareness, Moderate Level of Awareness and High Level of Awareness, weighted1,2,3,and 4 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three experts. The internal consistency of the instrument was ascertained using Kuder Richardson Formular. This yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.91 for the instrument. The instrument was thus deemed reliable in line with Nworgu (2015) who recommended that a reliability co-efficient of 0.50 and above is adequate for a research instrument.

Data relating to the research question was analysed using mean scores. Hypothesis one was tested using multiple regression while hypothesis two was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, both at the 0.05 level of significance. In making decisions the real limits of the scale were used Thus mean scores of 0.5 -1.49 were regarded as not aware, from 1.5-2 49 as low level of awareness, from 2.5 – 3.49 as moderate level of awareness and from 3.50-4 .00 as high levei of awareness.

For the hypothesis testing the critical and tabulated values were used. Where the critical value of F or r as the case may be is smaller than the tabulated value the null hypothesis was accepted and vice versa.

Results

Research Question: What is the level of awareness of education laws by principals in public secondary schools in Ondo state?

Table 1: Level of Awareness of Education Laws by Principals of Public Secondary Schools in Ondo State

S/ Items	π	Remark
1. The teachers are inducted on the content of education laws.	2.33	Low level
2. The school rules and regulations are derived from the education laws.	2.84	Moderate level
3. All teachers have copies of education law in my school.	3.95	High level
4. All teachers operate within the context of the education laws.	3.64	High level
5. Teachers' workload allocation is in line with education laws.	3.29	Moderate level
6. Education law empowers the principal to deal with teachers' professional misconduct.	3.53	High level
7. Principal's power to deal with teachers' professional misconduct is curtailed by external influence of the Ministry of education and the school community.	3.89	High level
8. The parents are intimated with their responsibilities in the education laws.	3.16	Moderate level
9. Students' disciplinary problems are handled in accordance with the education laws.	3.88	High level
10. Teachers' demand is within the context of education laws.	3.74	High level
Overall mean on awareness by principals	**3.43**	

Data analysis on Table 1 show the level of principals' awareness of education laws in secondary schools in Ondo State. The results show that the respondents with a mean score of 2.33 agreed that principals were aware to a low level that teachers are inducted on the intent of education law. The respondents mean ratings of 2.84, 3.29 and 3.16 for items 2,5 and 8 show that the principals are aware to a moderate level on those items. Thus principals are aware to a moderate level that school rules and regulations are derived from education laws;thatt teachers workload allocation is in line with education laws and that parents are intimated with their responsibilities on education law. Finally, with mean scores of 3.95, 3.64, 3.53, 3.89, 3.88, 3.74 for items 3,4,6,7,9 and 10 the respondents agreed that principals are aware of those items to a high level.

Results on Table 1 further show a cumulative mean of 3.43 which indicates that the respondents agreed that principals have a moderate level of awareness of education laws in public secondary schools in Ondo state.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between awareness and compliance with education laws and effectiveness in public secondary schools in Ondo State.

Table 2: Relationship between Education Law Variables and School Effectiveness

Model	B	Std. err.	Beta	T	Sig. T	R	R^2	F
Constant	.166	.163	-	1.016	.311			
Awareness of education laws	.018	.004	.215	3.988	.000			
Decision making process	.020	.007	.188	2.911	.004	.910[a]	.823	142.5
Staff discipline	.021	.009	.226	2.293	.023			
Students' discipline	.025	.007	.223	3.290	.001			
Instructional Supervision	.017	.008	.183	2.040	.043			

Dependent variable: Students' academic performance

The result of data analysis on Table 2 show that R = 0.910; F = 142.54; and p= .000. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between awareness of education laws and school effectiveness. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

The Table further reveals that variables of education laws such as awareness of education laws, decision making, staff discipline, students' discipline and instructional supervision jointly made significant contribution to the prediction of school effectiveness. Awareness of education laws, decision making, staff, students' discipline and instructional supervision jointly accounted for 82.3% (0.823) of the total variables of school effectiveness. On the individual contribution, staff discipline was the best predictor, having accounted for 22.6% (0.226) of the variables. This is closely followed by students' discipline which accounted for 22.3% (0.223). This is also followed by awareness of education laws, which accounted for 21.5% (0.215), next to this is decision making, having a contribution of 18.8% (0.188). Instructional supervision was the least predictor of school effectiveness, with a contribution of 18.3% (0.183).

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between awareness of education laws and decision making process in public secondary schools in Ondo State.

Table 3: Relationship between Principal' Awareness of Education Laws and Decision Making Process

Variables	N	r-cal	r-tab	sig.
Awareness of Education Law Decision Making Process	153	0.695*	0.087	.000

p<0.05

Result of data analysis on Table 3 show that r-cal value (0.695) is greater than r-tab value (0.087). This means that there is a significant relationship between principal' sawareness of education laws and decision making process in public secondary schools in Ondo State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

The result of data analysis in hypothesis one on Table 2 showed that there is a significant relationship (R = 0.910) between awareness and compliance with education laws and school effectiveness at 0.05 level of significance. The finding means that education law variables in terms of principals', teachers' and students' awareness, decision making, staff and students' discipline, and principals' instructional supervision jointly contribute to school effectiveness. School effectiveness being the extent to which a school achieves its goal, which is the number of students who graduate with at least five credits and above including English Language and Mathematics in the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE).

First, compliance with education laws in dealing with staff discipline (22.6%) contributed more, being the highest determinant of students' academic performance. This may be because teachers are the major implementation agents of curriculum and therefore, how fairly and justly they are treated influence the performance of their task, personality and disposition in dealing with students. This finding corroborates the findings of Hernandez and Seem (2004) Jones and Rattray (2010), and Naeto (2013) Okumbe (1998). These scholars stressed that one way to know an effective school is through its demonstration of sound inclusive practices which includes emphasizing school discipline, collaborative leadership and their good practice.

The next best predictor of students' academic performance was students' discipline (22.3%). When there is adequate awareness and continuous exposition to education laws, students' rights are protected and guaranteed, and there is assurance of a friendly and supportive learning environment which therefore encourages high level of academic commitment, freedom and trust which are ingredients for effective learning outcome.

This finding supports Omenka and Otor (2015) who found out that students' discipline promotes an atmosphere for learning and that it is a critical part

of what secondary education is all about. They pointed out that teachers should mind their use of language when dealing with students especially in the classroom, as some raw or demeaning words whether intentional or not can erode a student's dignity of person, which can make him/her lose focus in his/her academic pursuit.

Awareness of education laws significantly contributed 21.5% to school effectiveness. In the absence of complete information and knowledge of education laws, effective compliance will be difficult to achieve as global trends through high technology, have proliferated and improved access and awareness of educational consumers. Thus, awareness of education laws has become a very important condition for effective administration of the school system because it is a tool for proper guidance in administrative actions and compliance on a daily basis so as to prevent infringements.

This finding corroborates Adeboyeje (2001), Maidabino (2010) Nakpodia (2011), and Uloma (2013), who found out that teachers, school authorities, government functionaries and students are not sufficiently familiar with appropriate education laws and procedures in the management of education in Nigeria. Nakpodia (2011) further argued that only 30% and 41% of principals and teachers respectively have knowledge of education laws. The study also showed that the mean level of principals' awareness of education law is moderate. However, the level of awareness of education laws by school staff is insufficient to combat the ever rising complexities of managerial issues in their schools.The finding also corroborates Akpofure and Ndupu, (2000) who stated that there is need for schools to be aware and comply with extant laws that can enable adherence to standards such as the maintenance of manageable carrying capacity in classroom utilization, libraries and laboratories to engender effective teaching and learning which results in improved academic performance of students and pave way for quality assurance in schools. This is similar to Ajayi and Yusuf (2009) who agreed that compliance with instructional space in classroom, library and technical workshop and planning have influence on students' academic performance.

Decision making process was the next best predictor of school effectiveness (18.8%). Decision making is the life-wire of school administration, and quality decisions are what keep the organization relevant. This means that daily decisions which concern curriculum planning, teaching and learning, discipline, supervision, school-community relations and resource management is a significant factor in the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system.

The findings are in agreement with Adewunmi (1993), Bossert et al (1982), Mauri (2008), and Okeke (1985) who stated that the realization of school goals is through decision making, which should be a collective bargaining process for effective implementation of decisions in the educational system.

This finding also tallies with the Teachers' Code of Conduct (Article VI, paragraph 7). That it is a commitment on the part of school heads to involve members of the school community such as Parents-Teachers' Associations (PTA),

School-Based Management Committees (SBMC), Students' Representative Council (SRC) and educational experts and enthusiasts in the decision making process FRN (1990) .In the same vein it confirms the assertion of Mauri (2008) that students' involvement in decision-making processes could promote discipline, better attendance, less delinquency and higher academic achievements. Also, this finding indicates that, involvement of teachers in making school decisions have positive influence on their job satisfaction, motivation and students' learning outcome hence, the effectiveness of schools.

Instructional supervision happens to be the least predictor of school effectiveness, with a total contribution of 18.3% (0.183). This finding supports Ayeni (2012) who argue that achieving effectiveness in schools using external supervisory mechanism is inept, which requires the delegation of such roles to principals at the school level. It appears that a school-based instructional supervision is easier for principals to monitor, assess and evaluate teachers, students, the instructional process as well as other resources in the school on a daily basis, and providing opportunities for teachers to improve for effective service delivery and students' academic performance.

The finding also tallies with Usman (2015) that regular classroom visitation by principals is so strong in the determination of students' academic performance and that his/her positive comments in the presence of students build teachers' confidence and development on the job. When teachers are motivated on the job, students are motivated as well because their teachers will go the extra mile by employing various facilitative means within reach to enhance learning. Hence, principals' instructional supervision constitutes a leverage point for instructional improvement, teachers' development and efficiency of the educational system.

Another finding of the study is that there is a significant relationship ($r= 0.695$; $p<.05$) between awareness of education laws and quality decision making in public secondary schools in Ondo state. School decisions bother on curricular/instructional programmes, transportation/communication systems, staffing, students/staff welfare, students/staff discipline, school plant maintenance, accommodation/ health facilities, admission policy, budgeting, purchasing, gaming and other extra-curricular activities. This finding is in agreement with Duze (2007), Hoy, Miskel and Tarter (2013), and Peretomode (1992) who opined that the result of decisions on issues as those stated above foster effectiveness of the school through quality instruction and learning opportunities in a pleasant and conducive atmosphere. Hence, to effectively attain an enabling environment for teaching and learning in secondary schools, principals as school administrators and instructional leaders must possess a high level of legal literacy as they exercise their authority in decision-making.

Findings of this study also tally with Duze (2007), Ikediugwu (2007), Ndeto (2013),Ofojebe (2007), Ogundele (1995),and Oluchukwu (1998) in stressing that decision making processes that are not guided by existing education

laws are often non-participatory of stakeholders and lead to litigation. This is also in line with the decided case of *Salamotu v BayoOjo (HIK/9/89)* of a teacher who unilaterally took an uninformed decision to beat and lock up goats that encroached the school premises. In this case, the defendant took a hasty decision because first, he was not in the position to take such decision and was not delegated in that regard. Secondly, he took the decision without due consultation which consequently made him liable.

Duze (2007) stressed that principals tend to be authoritative in making decisions, thus, denying subordinates the right to exercise meaningful control over the purposes and final social results of their academic endeavours. This deprivation, as viewed by scholars; Duze, (2007); Ikediugwu, (2007); Ndeto, (2013) Ofojebe, (2007); Ogundele, (1995), and Oluchukwu, (1998); is the foundation of oppression, which sometimes degenerates into vandalism, hooliganism, violent protests and incessant strike actions and further breakdown of law and order in schools.

Conclusion

The study has shown that awareness of education laws determines effectiveness of public secondary schools in terms of students' academic performance. It has also shown that the level of awareness of education laws by principals influence compliance in all ramifications, particularly in decision making process.

Implication of the Findings

The findings of the study disclose a moderate level of awareness of education laws, cutting across principals, teachers and students in secondary schools in Ondo State. Therefore, there is need for personal, collective or institutional intensification of efforts for the improvement of awareness of education laws because this appears to be the anchor and major determinant of school effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

1. In order to improve stakeholders' awareness of education laws, the Ministry of Education and the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) should restructure the curriculum of Colleges of Education and education programmes in Universities to accommodate courses in law that are relevant in school administration.
2. The Ministry of Education, should also on a periodic basis sponsor as well as organise lectures and seminars on education laws and emerging legal matters/issues in the educational system so as to update teachers' and

principals' knowledge of the laws relating to the teaching profession and school administration.

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