PRINCIPALS' STAFF MENTORSHIP AND NETWORKING PACTICES FOR ENHANCING EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
This study examined principals' mentorship and networking practices for enhancing effective teaching in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 6,649 made up of 267 principals and 6,382 teachers. A sample of 939 consisting 267 principals and 672 teachers was drawn using stage sampling technique. Researchers' developed instrument titled "Principals' Mentoring and Networking Practices Questionnaire" (PMNPQ) which was validated by three experts was used for data collection. The internal consistency of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach's Alpha and this yielded reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.79, for the two parts of the PMNPQ and 0.80 for the entire instrument. Out of 936 copies of the questionnaire administered, 901 copies representing 96.3% were duly completed, retrieved and used for data analysis. Mean was used to answer research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study indicated that the extent to which principals provide staff mentorship for teachers for effective teaching in Anambra State secondary schools is high. Principals to a low extent promote staff networking among teachers for effective teaching. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that Principals should provide adequate staff network practices to enhance teachers' effective teaching.

Keywords: Staff mentorship, staff networking, networking practices, effective teaching

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria as in several countries of the world, there is increased attention on improving the quality of education offered to learners in schools. The reality of quality teaching and learning is that learners must be taught to develop a complex skill-set

that prepares them for further schooling, responsible citizenship, international competitiveness, the demands of the workplace and life-long learning (World Bank, 2013). This notion of being taught implies that it is the teachers who should teach the learners the 21st century skills. If teachers must teach learners the requisite skills for learners to become global citizens, then they must be enhanced and developed to the highest standards through Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Continuous Professional Development as explained by Youngs, (2013) is when teachers are given an opportunity to be knowledge generators and are provided with the tools to meet professional challenges, ensuring that they are up-to-date with information that will match the test of time. Teachers benefit from an injection of new ideas that enhances their own professionalism. It also requires a lot of technical information, materials, adequate financial outlay and commitment. CPD of teachers is the process by which teachers acquire and develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Principals play a key role in providing needed support and conducive environment for teachers' development. The Principal is primarily charged with the development of each and every member of the school, including the teaching staff (Nzonwu, as cited in Egwu, 2012). He provides learning opportunities for teachers to acquire veritable knowledge, skills and practices that are required to achieve agreed goals and expectations (Department of Education, 2005). Principal's support in essence improves the quality of individual teacher. The principal must be grounded as to what the focus and contents of teacher CPD are and strive to promote them in the school by providing and encouraging mentorship programs as well as networking among teachers.

Mentoring is seen as a relationship between a senior and a more junior person such as a master and an apprentice relationship. The process in which an experienced, senior colleague helps a novice colleague is called as a mentoring process. Daresh (2014) emphasizes that mentoring is a frequently used model providing personal and professional development in such sectors as education, industry, art and business. Mentoring as a learning partnership is one of the most effective ways to transfer skills and offer people the opportunity to learn needed skills that allow them to function at a more senior level. It provides workplace learning in a less stressful environment. This type of environment enables staff to work together on issues of mutual concern which can be referred to as networking.

Networking can be perceived as a process that fosters the exchange of information and ideas among individuals or groups that share a common interest. Operationally, networks mean a group of schools or group of teachers working together on issues of mutual concern. Staff networks therefore, means teachers from different schools

working together on issues of mutual concern. Therefore, it is the primary duty of principals to encourage teachers to participate in workshops and equally collaborate other teachers. Principals should encourage staff networks so as to promote effective teaching in schools.

Effective teaching is that teaching which leads to improved students achievement using outcomes that matter to their future success (Coe, Aloisi, Higgis & Elliot, 2015). According to Akilaiya (2001) effective teaching and learning is the ability of the teacher and the students to be in conformity with the education laws and policies which will at the end make the product of a school (students) to render useful services to the society and themselves. For Maduekwesi (2005), effective teaching is the process of ensuring that the degree of excellence specified is achieved.

The situation in most secondary schools in Anambra State appears to suggest that some principals undermine teaching effectiveness in their schools. They do not encourage teachers' networking and collaboration, attendance to conferences and workshops. Principals in some cases appear less concerned in providing mentorship to teachers. This situation corroborates Egwu, (2012) assertion that principals do not perform their instructional functions as regards supporting staff development programmes. This goes contrary to the stipulations of the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) (2010) in organizing teacher Continuous Professional Development. TRCN (2010) assigned to principals among other bodies, the role of promoting and organizing mentorship and networking programmes for teachers. It however appears that principals of secondary schools in Anambra State are not playing their expected roles in this area.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Staff mentorship and networking programmes allows teachers the opportunity to be abreast with latest innovation in the teaching profession. Principals as leaders of the schools are expected to enlighten, encourage and promote their teachers as well as encourage them to network among themselves in order to remain relevant in the profession.

However, most principals in Anambra State seem not encourage teachers' attendance to conferences and workshops, teachers' networking as well as teachers' collaboration. Principals in some cases appear less concerned in providing the needed mentorship to their teachers. Consequently, most teachers appear not to be equipped with relevant and up-to-date knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies needed to meet their professional challenges and provide meaningful education to students. One therefore wonders the extent to which principals promote mentorship and networking practices in the school for enhancing effective teaching.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do principals promote staff mentorship for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools?
2. To what extent do principals promote staff networking for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools?

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals promote staff mentorship for effective teaching in secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals promote staff networking for effective teaching in secondary schools in Anambra State.

METHOD

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study which was carried out in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. From a population of 6649 (267 principals and 6,382 teachers) a sample of 939 consisting 267 principals and 672 teachers was drawn using stage sampling technique. A researchers' developed instrument titled "Principals' Mentoring and Networking Practices Questionnaire" (PMNPQ) which was validated by three experts was used for data collection. The questionnaire was structured on a four point scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE) Low Extent (LE) Very Low Extent (VLE) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1. The internal consistency of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach's Alpha and this yielded reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.79, for the two parts of the PMNPQ and 0.80 for the entire instrument. The instrument was considered reliable in line with Nworgu (2015), who stated that if the co-efficient obtained for an instrument is up to 0.70 and above, the instrument should be considered good enough to be used for a study. The direct administration and retrieval method was used for data collection. Mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test all the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For the research questions, a mean rating of 2.50 and above was interpreted as high extent while mean rating of less than 2.50 was interpreted as low extent. The null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value associated with the t-cal was less than 0.05 whereas the null hypothesis was not rejected where the p-value was greater than 0.05.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which principals promote staff mentorship for teachers for effective teaching

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Provides face-to-face communication with teachers on issues relevant to work and career for effective teaching	3.10	.71	HE
2. Provides constructive feedbacks in a manner that supports learning for effective teaching	3.09	.70	HE
3. Assesses teacher's needs and target opportunities for growth for effective teaching	2.90	.84	HE
4. Delegates action to teachers to promote professional growth for effective teaching	2.81	.75	HE
5. Provides teachers' group discussion on work and career issues for effective teaching	2.82	.78	HE
6. Supports teachers to participate in community functions for effective teaching	2.96	.76	HE
7. Educates teachers on school discipline for effective teaching	2.55	.95	HE
8. Supports the on-going appraisal of new teachers for effective teaching	2.54	.86	HE
Mean of means	**2.85**	**.79**	**HE**

Table 1 shows the aggregated mean and standard deviation of 2.85 and .79 which indicates that the extent to which principals provide staff mentorship for teachers for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools is high. The item by item analysis indicates that the respondents perceived the extent to which principals promote staff mentorship through the eight listed items as high. The mean ranged from 2.54 to 3.10.

Table 2: Mean ratings of Respondents on the extent to which principals promote staff networking for teachers for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
9. Gets information about good networks for teachers for effective teaching	2.36	.87	LE
10. Develops an on-line network where teachers connect with teachers from other schools for effective teaching	2.23	.73	LE
11. Fosters room for sustained conversation about teacher practice in staff networks for effective teaching	2.29	1.18	LE

12. Ensures that enough time is given to diagnosing problems and situations within staff networks for effective teaching	2.19	.81	LE
13. Emphasis active participation by ensuring that teachers contribute to discussions in staff networks for effective teaching	2.39	.77	LE
14. Obtains and disseminations information within the staff networks for effective teaching.	2.54	.68	HE
15. Sources experts from beyond the school to enrich school-based programs for effective teaching	2.66	.47	HE
16. Invites experts from other schools to educate teachers on instructional improvement for effective teaching	2.64	.48	HE
17. Introduces teachers to groups where they reflect on the use of active learning strategies for effective teaching	2.73	.45	HE
Mean of means	**2.45**	**.72**	**LE**

The analysis in Table 2 shows the aggregated mean and standard deviation of 2.45 and .72 indicating that principals to a low extent promote staff networking for teachers for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools. The analysis of the items indicates that the respondents rated five items (item, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) out of the nine listed items as low, while the remaining four items (item 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17) were rated as high.

Table 3: t-test comparison of principals' and teachers mean ratings on the extent principals provide staff mentorship for teachers for effective teaching

Source of variation	N	Mean SD	df	t-cal	*P*-valu	Decision
Principals	257	2.95 .79	699	2.87	.004	Sig
Teachers	644	2.83 .69				

The t-test analysis in table 3 shows that the mean for principals (*M=2.95, SD=.79*) was significantly greater than that of the teachers (*M=2.83, SD=.69*); *t (699) 2.87, p=.004*. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on

the extent to which principals provide staff mentorship for teachers for effective teaching was therefore rejected.

Table 4: t-test comparison of principals' and teachers mean ratings on the extent principals promote staff networking for teachers for effective teaching

Source of variation	N	Mean SD	Df	t-cal	*P*-valu	Decision
Principals	257	2.70 .66	699	9.41	.000	Sig
Teachers	664	2.40 .71				

Table 4 shows that the mean for principals (*M=2.70, SD=.66*) was significantly greater than that of the teachers (*M=2.40, SD=71*); *t (699) 9.41, p=.000*. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on the extent to which promote staff networking for teachers for effective teaching was therefore rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study found that the extent to which principals promote staff mentorship for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools is high. This could be seen in the respondents'ratings of principals' provision of staff mentorship through the eight listed items which was high. This means that principals maintain a learning relationship with their teachers with the view of improving teachers' effective teaching in schools. This finding is in line with Holland (2009) who submitted that principals provide teachers with instructions on specific details and examples of teaching techniques that constitute excellent practice and also provided demonstration lessons. The finding also aligned with Walter (2010) who posited that principals provided both formal and informal mentoring practices for teachers. However, the finding is contrary to Tulu (2019) who evidenced that mentoring activities for teachers were not practically implemented by school leaders. Tulu's work was carried out in Ethiopia which is a different location with different respondents while this study is in Anambra state, Nigeria. This may account for the difference in the findings.

The study also found out that Principals to a low extent promote staff networking for teachers for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools. This finding is not desirable as it may hamper effective teaching in schools. Dean, Rachel and Bri (2018) evidenced that teachers reported benefits to their own instruction because of network training and learnt how they can incorporate learning materials in the classroom to make students more interactive with the learning materials. Since the result showed that principals promote staff network for teachers to a low extent, then

teachers may not be tapping the benefits of staff network and this will not promote effective teaching in schools. This finding conforms to Aydin, Hakan and Bulent (2015) that principals are in the circuit of official work and so had no time for providing staff networks. Though the principal is saddled with lots of administrative duties, he is still expected to give adequate attention to teachers' professional growth since they (teachers) are the core implementers of the curriculum. Aware of the need for principals to support teacher professional development, Ezeugbor, Onyali and Okoye (2018) enthused that principals are expected to assist teachers to undertake professional development, keep them abreast with innovative strategies in teaching to bring about effective teaching. Staff networks provide avenues through which teachers can have sustained conversation about teacher practice for effective teaching. When principals do not provide such avenues, effective teaching in schools may be a mirage. This finding is against the submission of Chin (2018) that principals created teaching groups where teachers learn together through their interactions. The disparity in the finding may be attributed to difference in the area of the study. This study was carried out in Nigeria but that of Chin (2018) was not conducted in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that principals to a high extent promote staff mentorship for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools. Principals however, promote staff networking for effective teaching in Anambra state secondary schools to a low extent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should be continually mentored by principals for effective teaching.
2. Principals should provide adequate staff network practices for teachers for effective teaching.
3. Seminars and workshops should be conducted by the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria and the state Ministry of Education for principals to enlighten them on the importance of staff networks for teachers' effective teaching.

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