

INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY ON PRINCIPALS' EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of school accessibility on principals' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted census survey, using descriptive survey research design to analyze the result. The study was carried out among the principals in public secondary schools in Enugu State. The population for the study was two hundred and ninety-five (295) principals in public secondary schools in Enugu state comprising of one hundred and sixty-nine (169) principals in urban areas and one hundred and twenty-six (126) principals in rural areas. There was no sampling because the population is manageable. The instrument for data collections was a researcher-made questionnaire titled, "School Location Variables as Predictors of Principals Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaires (SLVPPAEQ)". The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts in the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha method and co-efficient of 0.81, and 0.84, were obtained for clusters A and B respectively. The overall reliability estimate obtained for instrument was 0.83. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 levels of significance. The findings of the study revealed among others that there is relationship between physical environment and principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State. Based on the findings, the researcher suggestions were made thus: Role of stakeholders in the rural areas in establishment and management of secondary education Government/community Partnership, a veritable tool for improved education system in Enugu state Nigeria

Keywords: Influence, secondary school, principalship, accessibility

Introduction

The development of every nation is technically aligned to the quality of its educational system, because education is a light that has always shown human race the appropriate direction for self-development. Education is an instrument of change. Every nation has a strong faith in the effectiveness of education as a powerful instrument for national development, and that is why most countries are attempting to adjust their educational philosophies and policies to match the changing economy and social structures (Elesike & Ogugua, 2016). Education is a process of impacting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the process of reasoning, judgment, and generally of preparing oneself and others intellectually for mature life. Education is considered the most effective means of bringing about total change that would ensure accelerated economic growth and national development for any country (Obasi&Osah, 2021). Education does not only impact knowledge, skills and inoculate values but is also responsible for building human capital which breeds, drives and set technological innovation and economic growth (Ezeagu, 2021). There are various levels of education which includes primary, secondary and tertiary levels, but for the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the secondary level of education.

Secondary education is the junction box that connects the present and the future of learners, especially those who want to attain great fit in the academic world. Secondary

education is aged in Nigeria having developed alongside western education which was introduced by the Christian Missionaries in 1842 (Adeniyi, 2016). Secondary education is critical to the education of a child, being the bridge between primary and tertiary education. The importance of secondary education in the educational system cannot be over-emphasised. Apart from serving as a link between primary and tertiary education, it provided an opportunity for a child to acquire additional knowledge, skills and traits beyond the primary level (Ige, 2017). Eziamaka, Enwezor, Okafor, Obilor, Nwogbo and Chukwu (2025) asserted that the broad goal of secondary education is preparation of the individual for useful living within the society and preparation into higher education. It is the level of decoction that equipped students for further academic pursuits and meaningful societal participation.

A major factor that necessitated the acquisition of secondary education in Nigeria is that the education being provided at the primary level is proven to be insufficient for a child to acquire permanent literacy, communicate and numeracy skills expected from him or her at the end of the training (Adeniyi, 2016). Moreover, government attention to secondary education started some decades after the development of primary education, particularly when the need for the outputs of primary schools to further their education in secondary schools became paramount (Uko, 2015). Adeniyi (2016), posited that the first secondary school (SMS Grammar School, Bariga Lagos) was established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1859. The colonial government, for a very long, did not complement the efforts of the Christian Missions in providing secondary education until 1909, when Kings College, Lagos was established as the first government's owned secondary school.

Secondary education was for a period of five years followed in most cases by two years higher school certificate, which also existed then. With the introduction of 6-3-3-4 system of education in 1982, secondary education consisted of three years of junior and three years of senior secondary schools (FGN 2013). With the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 2004, the educational system changed to 9-3-4 system of education that is nine years basic education, three years senior secondary education and four years of tertiary education (Duze, 2018). Secondary school that is effective is seen as one in which students' progress further than expected in their academic performance. An effective secondary school adds extra value to its students' outcomes in comparison with other schools serving similar intakes (Sammons & Bakkum, 2016). The management of academic and administrative affairs of the secondary schools traditionally falls with the purview of the principals (Uko, 2015).

The principal is the head of secondary schools. He is appointed by the post-primary school board to head school, and he learns on the job. As the administrative head of the school, he needs to be proactive to the day to day administration of the school. Edeniya (2016) stated that the principal is required to carry along the teaching personnel, the students, parents, members of the community, the school Based Management Committee, the old students association, government officials, post-primary boards and other governmental organisations interested in educational advancement. He coordinates the activities of these various groups and the scarce material resources available in order to achieve organisational goals. The effectiveness of the principals in administration is a function of diverse variables. It can be predicted, amongst others by school location variables.

School location refers to the geographical area or community where the school is established. In Nigeria, schools are established in both rural and urban settings (Oyeleye, 2023). It is a place where a school is situated, which could be urban area or rural areas. Awodun and Oyeniyi (2018) describe school location as the community in which the school is located such as a town, village, hamlet or rural areas. Describing the disparity between schools located in urban and rural areas, Ellah (2020) asserted that principals in urban areas have easier access to information on educational policies and procedures, necessitated by widespread use of the internet in schools. Due to availability of professional institutions in urban areas offering school

administration courses or school principle training programmes, urban school principals are viewed as more informed than their rural counterparts. On the other hand, principals in rural areas are often viewed as lacking in interpersonal skills due to persistently held cultural beliefs that male school principals should avoid interacting with employees and female instructors in order to preserve their authority. As an added bonus, those who live in the rural area tend to be more mindful of their time. These differences in conditions of services in urban areas and those in rural areas necessitate different approaches from school principals. Specifically, there are different school location variables that could affect the administrative effectiveness of principals. They include accessibility to school, physical environment, school plant, availability of instructional facilities, school-community relationship, class size, availability of electricity and water, poverty levels, population density, safety and security, amongst others. However, this study focused on accessibility to school, physical environment, school plant, availability of instructional facilities, school-community relationship.

School accessibility is a very important school location variable. Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz and Ustinova (2019) noted that the principle underlying good school location selection is accessibility. The school should be in a central location that is easily accessible and convenient to the area from which the majority of the school population will be drawn. Even though this is desirable, it may sometimes be necessary to modify the location in order to satisfy other conditions, as when land is unavailable in the center of the service area. Schrader (2017) asserted that the educational policy may affect the principle of centrality. For instance, courses in the natural sciences may be important enough in some school systems to warrant it location close to areas with botanical, biological or geological features. If vocational agriculture courses are stressed, then a site near farm land must be considered.

The accessibility of a school is usually measured in terms of the time taken by students from home to school, and the quality of the route environment. A school located far from the homes of its students, thereby requiring them to walk inordinate distances and to cross many busy public roads, is a badly located school. School stakeholders must therefore agree on policy relating to walking distance, travel time, and use of private and public means of vehicular transportation (Munthe&Conway, 2017). It is also important to note that these determinants of school accessibility - walking distance and travel time will vary according to the planned school enrollment figures. If the maximum walking distance for some local schools for instance is one-half mile, but one of the schools has to serve more students than the recommended standard for the community, then some of its students may have to walk farther or use some form of vehicular transportation to reduce travel time (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz&Ustinova, 2019).

Accessibility of school in terms of physical proximity and ease of entry can significantly influence principal's effectiveness, because it mounts less stress and pressure on him while carrying out his daily administrative responsibilities in the school. Eziamaka, Enwezor, Okafor, Obilor, Nwogbo and Chukwu (2025) averred that principals' ability to manage resources, surprise staff, and foster a positive learning environment is influenced by how accessible the school is to various stakeholders and how effectively they can interact with the school community. Urban schools generally offer better accessibility due to higher population density, more developed infrastructure, and greater proximity to resources, while rural schools often face challenge related to transportation, limited facilities and a smaller pool of qualified teachers. The difference further suggests that rural and urban school principals may have different approaches to school activities and learning due to their locations and accessibility. Physical environment as a school location variable has been found to be a strong factor in principal's administrative effectiveness.

The physical environment of the school has a variety of effects on teachers, students and the learning process in general. The physical environment can be referred to as a healthy

and safe school place which promotes and enhances learning by ensuring the health and safety of students and staff personnel. School physical environment comprises the school buildings, school plants, aesthetic designs, fences, the lands on which the school is suited the topography of the area, and the areas surrounding it (Adebayo, 2018). Frazur (2015) averred that poor lighting, noise, high levels of carbon dioxide in classrooms and inconsistent temperature makes teaching and learning difficult. Poor maintenance and ineffective ventilation system lead to poor health among students as well as teachers, which leads to poor performance and higher absence rates.

The physical environment of the school ought to be inviting or welcoming, conducive and accommodating for adequate and effective learning to take place. This is because the factors that derive from an unconducive physical school environment adversely affect student behaviour and lead to high levels of frustration among teachers and principals' administrative effectiveness (Ajayi, 2016). Beyond, the direct effects that poor facilities have on principals administrative effectiveness and student ability to learn, the combination of poor facilities which creates an uncomfortable and uninviting workplace for teachers, combined with frustrating behaviour by students, including poor concentration and hyperactivity, lethargy, or apathy, creates a stressful set of working condition for principals. Stress and job dissatisfaction which are common precursors can lower principal enthusiasm. It is, however, possible that the aforementioned characteristics of school physical environment have an effect upon the administrative effectiveness of principals. It is against this backdrop, that this study was embarked to examine the extent to which school accessibility influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The role of principals in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. Principals work to ensure that effective leadership that promotes the improvement of the school is provided. Despite the importance of principals' managerial effectiveness in achieving educational goals, many schools in Enugu State had continued to experience administrative setbacks linked to their location. For instance, principals in rural schools may struggle with irregular staff attendance, delayed supervision, and limited stakeholder participation due to poor access to school. Conversely, principals in urban areas may face issues of overcrowding, indiscipline, and high demand for accountability. Such contrasting realities raise concerns about whether location-related factors – such as accessibility, road condition, proximity to educational services, and availability of infrastructure – significantly influence principals' effectiveness. The above submission is based on the observation of the researcher. This gap in knowledge has created uncertainty for policymakers, educational planners, and stakeholders who aim to improve school administration across different locations in the state.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which school accessibility Influence Principals' Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Enugu State. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. determine the extent to which school location influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. ascertain the extent to which school physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. to what extent does school location influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school?

2. to what extent does school physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary schools?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the extent to which school location influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the extent to which school physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.

Methods

The design for this study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Enugu State Nigeria. Population for the study was two hundred and ninety five (295) principals in public secondary schools in Enugu state. The researcher made use of the whole population because it is manageable. Therefore, census sampling technique was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument was developed by the researcher. It was structured in four points rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points, High Extent (HE) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point respectively. The instrument was subjected to validation by three research experts from the field of education. Two from Department of Educational Management and one in Measurement and Evaluation, unit of the department of Mathematics and Computer, all of the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Agbani. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out among fifty respondents. The instrument was administered to 14 principals in the urban area and 36 in the rural areas among the public secondary schools in Anambra State, which is outside the study area. Cronbach Alpha coefficients of .81, and .84, were obtained respectively. The overall reliability estimate obtained for the instrument is .83. Direct delivery method was used to administer and collect the instrument by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. The research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation. In rating the computed means scores, any mean score from 2.50 and above was high extent, while items that fall below mean score of 2.50 was rated low extent.

Result

Research Question 1: to what extent does school location influence principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean scores of principals in the urban and rural areas on the extent to which school location influence principals' effectiveness

S/N	Items	Urban n = 169			Rural n = 126		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
	school location can influence principals' effectiveness through:						
1	Construction of school close to the community	2.62	0.85	HE	2.58	0.99	HE
2	Locating school close to the road	2.53	0.92	HE	2.60	0.89	HE
3	Schooling located in a conducive environment.	2.58	0.98	HE	2.55	0.85	HE
4	Reducing Students long distance to school	2.61	0.91	HE	2.50	0.90	HE
5	Locating School close to motor park	2.51	0.90	HE	2.54	0.91	HE
6	Locating school close to market	2.59	0.80	HE	2.50	0.95	HE
7	Having terrain that is environmental friendly.	2.52	0.96	HE	2.55	0.91	HE
8	having good network to access the school	2.53	0.87	HE	2.58	0.85	HE
9	Provision of Security in the school	2.54	0.99	HE	2.61	0.88	HE

10	The school having strong barricade	2.51	0.95	HE	2.68	0.95	HE
	Cluster Mean	2.55	0.91	HE	2.56	0.91	HE

The result of the data analysis on table one above shows that all the items have mean ratings that are higher than the cut-off point of 2.50. The principals in the urban area mean range from 2.51 – 2.82, while those in the rural area mean range from 2.50 to 2.61 respectively. The values of the grand means are 2.55 and 2.56 for both principals in the urban and rural areas. They also have standard deviation of 0.91 and 0.91 respectively. Since the grand mean is more than the cut-off point, it is considered high extent. This indicates that school location to a great extent, has high influence on principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Question 2: to what extent does physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean scores of principals in the urban and rural areas on the extent to which physical environment influence principals' effectiveness.

S/N	Items	Urban n = 169			Rural n = 126		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
	Physical environment can influence principals' effectiveness through:						
11	Creating natural drainage	2.55	0.99	HE	2.66	0.93	HE
12	The Provision of adequate classrooms	2.61	0.95	HE	2.63	0.95	HE
13	Having a functional medical facility	2.55	0.88	HE	2.59	0.99	HE
14	The Provision of exit route in case of emergency	2.60	0.98	HE	2.81	0.91	HE
15	Creating enough space for movement in the classroom	2.56	0.95	HE	2.54	0.96	HE
16	Maintaining the roofs of the building	2.61	0.98	HE	2.55	0.93	HE
17	Renovating students hostels when the need arises	2.55	0.96	HE	2.59	0.97	HE
18	Maintaining the school criteria	2.54	1.00	HE	2.60	0.89	HE
19	The provision of ICT facility	2.50	0.91	HE	2.59	0.95	HE
20	Maintaining dilapidated structure	2.52	0.90	HE	2.55	0.91	HE
21	Having adequate recreational facilities	2.58	0.91	HE	0.59	0.89	HE
22	The Provision of adequate teaching infrastructure	2.53	0.88	HE	0.56	1.00	HE
23	The Provision of adequate learning infrastructure	2.56	0.85	HE	0.59	0.99	HE
	Cluster Mean	2.56	0.93	HE	0.94	0.94	HE

The result of the data analysis on table two above shows that all the items have mean ratings that are higher than the cut-off point of 2.50. The principals in the urban area mean range from 2.50 – 2.61, while those in the rural area mean range from 2.56 to 2.66 respectively. The values of the grand means are 2.60 and 2.60 for both principals in the urban and rural areas. They also have standard deviation of 0.93 and 0.94 respectively. Since the grand mean is more than the cut-off point, it is considered great extent. This implies that there is relationship between physical environment and principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State to a great extent.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the extent to which school location influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of the principals in urban and rural areas on the extent to which school location influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State

Group	$\cap$	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Dec
Urban	169	2.55	0.91	293	.093	±1.968	No significant

Rural	126	2.56	0.91
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Table 3 shows that calculated t-value 0.93 is less than table value of .093 is ± 1.968 at .05 level of significance with 293 degree of freedom. This means that there is no significance difference between the mean scores of principals in urban and rural areas on the extent to which school location influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the extent to which school physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean scores of principals in urban and rural area on the extent to which school physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.

Group	$\cap$	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Dec
Urban	169	2.56	0.93	293	.362	± 1.968	No significant
Rural	126	2.60	0.94				

Table 4 shows that calculated t-value .362 is less than table value of ± 1.968 at .05 level of significance with 293 degree of freedom. This means that there is no significance difference between the mean scores of principals in urban and rural areas on the extent to which school physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Summary of Findings

The study made the following findings thus;

1. That urban and rural principals were of the opinion that accessibility to the school, to a high extent influence principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. That urban and rural principals were of the opinion that School physical environment, to a high extent contribute at influencing principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals in the urban and rural areas on the extent to which school location influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.
4. There is no significance difference between the mean scores of principals in urban and rural areas on the extent to which physical facilities in school contribute to influence principals' effectiveness in public secondary school, in Enugu State.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that accessibility to the school contribute at influencing principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State. The respondents were of the opinion that construction of schools close to the community, location of the schools being close to the road, school being located in a conducive environment, students not trekking long distance to schools, school being located near the motor park, location of schools near the market, the terrain of the schools is environmental friendly, good road network to access the schools, security is available in the school and the school has strong barricades among others, to a high extent influence principals' effectiveness in secondary schools. This is because accessibility to the schools has a great impact on secondary schools effectiveness. Principal becomes more proactive, punctual and motivated more in discharging his daily administrative duties within the school. Accessibility to the school creates room for both the students and principals to utilize facilities to enhance academic outcome. It is worthy to note that when a

school is accessible to students, it will positively affect the academic achievement and behaviour of a student which is part of effective secondary school of the principals. The hypothesis tested revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals in urban and rural areas on the extent to which physical environment influence principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State. The findings of the study revealed that physical environment has great influence on the principals' effectiveness in secondary schools. The respondents were of the view that creating natural drainage, providing adequate classrooms, having a functional medical clinic, providing exist route in case of emergency, creating enough space for movement in the classroom among others are parts of physical environment which their functionality influences the principals effectiveness in secondary schools. The findings are in correspondence with Chuma (2015) who found that physical environment has a great impact on secondary schools effectiveness. The hypothesis tested indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals in urban and rural areas on the extent to which physical environment influences the principals' effectiveness in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Recommendation

In view of the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations thus:

1. That accessibility to school should be considered before citing a school in any community, be it rural or urban community, since it contributes to the effectiveness of principalship and students educational outcome.
2. Communities should be involved in the administration of school which including school facility provision, maintenance and supervision.
3. Principals should be trained and retrained on how to effectively utilize school facilities to enhance educational outcome within the school system,
4. Communities should be involved in taking decision on the location of schools before such school is being sited. This is to ensure that best choice for the school location is made to for the achievement of the educational set goals.

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