

# **PRINCIPALS' ROLES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined principals' roles in the implementation of senior secondary school curriculum in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State. The study was guided by five objectives from which five research questions and five null hypotheses were formulated. The study adopted an analytical descriptive survey design with a population of 1935 comprising 35 principals and 1900 teachers in the 35 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The entire principals were taken as census while the non-proportionate stratified sampling technique was adopted in selecting a sample of 350 teachers from the 35 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled "Principals Roles in the Implementation of Secondary School Curriculum Questionnaire. The Questionnaire was validated by the researcher's supervisor and two other experts. A test of internal consistency was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A cumulative reliability coefficient of 0.90 was obtained to show the instrument was reliable. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed among others that the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum are that they ensure teachers follow the scheme of work, plan their lesson in line with the scheme of work, cover all they are to teach in a term, use recommended textbooks and ensure learners are regular in class. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that public school principals should engage more in objective supervision of teachers and students alike as this has the potential of enhancing effective implementation of the curriculum.

**Keywords:** *Principals, Curriculum, roles, implementation*

## **Introduction**

Nigeria was a signatory to the universal declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1948 which guaranteed for the

individual a whole range of basic freedom with education serving as a basic right necessary for the achievement of all other freedom. Realizing the relevance of education as a powerful instrument for

national progress and development, Nigerian government adjusted her educational philosophy and methodology to suit the ideals and challenges of changing economic and social structure of modern society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This explains why every level and type of education in Nigeria has clearly defined philosophy as enshrined in the National Policy on Education. For example, the broad objective of secondary education in Nigerian educational system is to prepare students for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education (FRN, 2004). The achievement of these objectives depends on the stakeholders in the education sector such as the government, the parents, the principals and the teachers.

The position of a principal is well-established as contained in relevant education laws and policies in Nigeria. The principal is the chief executive who provides instructional leadership by coordinating curricula, co-curricular programmes and is responsible for the general administration of the secondary school (Igwe, 2015). The principals being instructional leaders are at the vantage positions to supervise, monitor, assess, evaluate and disseminate current information on educational issues and modern teaching techniques to teachers in order to stimulate them for scholarship and best practices in curriculum delivery. A school curriculum is divided into three which include programme of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance (Jeremiah & Alamina, 2017). Principals have the responsibility of providing guidance, expertise knowledge and experience needed for curriculum

development, teaching methods, and evaluation as well as supervision of human and material resources. For the school to function well, the principal must be in a position to exploit all possible means to keep a healthy environment for the students, staff, and the general public (Aina, 2011). A critical role of a principal is to mobilize the teaching and non-teaching staff towards the achievement of the school objectives.

The importance of principals in the implementation of secondary school curriculum cannot be over-emphasized in an education system that is geared towards eradicating illiteracy and develop high level manpower. Conceptually, curriculum implementation refers to how the planned or officially designed course of study is translated by the teacher into syllables, schemes of work and lessons to be delivered to learners (Babalola, 2014). The secondary school curriculum contains policy statements for teaching and learning. These statements explain how teaching should be done in terms of objectives, outcomes and assessment standards (Stringer & Houranic, 2015). The curriculum and instructional leadership provided by principals include: empowering staff to initiate and participate in decision-making on needed changes in curriculum; mandating subject heads to ensure that their teams implement school vision for curriculum innovations; insisting on high moral standard for curriculum implementation; planning with teachers to implement pilot curriculum materials; communicating clear visions and goals for instructional innovations; giving sufficient support to staff initiative and self-discovery on curriculum changes;

brainstorming and implementing with staff strategies to improve students' achievement standards; and conducting regular supervision to identify key principles and concepts that teachers need to learn as part of a core curriculum in any subject domain (Maringa, 2016). This means that implementation of the curriculum depends on the effectiveness of a school principal.

Principals according to Botha (2014) perform the following functions in curriculum implementation: they ensure all human and material resources needed for effective implementation of the curriculum are properly coordinated. This has to do with administration of schools. The principal ensures that teachers are at their best at all times in order to achieve the set objectives.

Principals also supervise teaching, ensuring that educators receive guidance and support to enable them to teach as effectively as possible. They are also involved in the monitoring and evaluation of teachers as well as learners progress. This is with the intention of ensuring the objectives of learning as stated in the curriculum are met. Principals are also involved in mentoring and providing advice for both experienced and less experienced teachers. Since principals have relatively longer years of experience, they stand a better chance to provide advice and mentorship needed to achieve the set objectives.

Furthermore, the inability of principals to provide a high-level curriculum and instructional leadership might have adverse impact on curriculum and instruction in education for all. This is because where principals who should

direct teachers pay less attention to curriculum issues, there is the tendency for teachers too to pay less attention on curriculum issues (Okebukola, 2014). Where this situation persists, less is achieved in terms of efficient curriculum delivery in schools. An examination of the learning environment reveals that factors that affect principals in effective curriculum implementation are numerous. The environment is characterized by inadequate instructional material: education has less than 10% of annual budget in Nigeria leading to poor funding, the absence of teachers in decision making related to curriculum implementation, the inadequate motivational strategies or teachers and the traditional method of teaching and learning without adoption of the modern learning information and communication technology affect implementation of secondary school curriculum in Nigeria. However, this study examines the roles principals play in the implementation of secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Secondary school principals have challenging task of ensuring that curriculum is well implemented to achieve the broad national education plans. According to the guideline of national department of education, principals are curriculum leaders.

The curriculum is designed to achieve a high level of proficiency in the Nigerian students' performance in secondary education and serve as means of preparing students for tertiary and vocational education. It is also designed to

prepare students for the world of work after leaving school.

Unfortunately, there has been claims by employers of labour in Nigeria that graduates of Nigerian education system are unemployable. These employers most times expend resources to train prospective employees before they can function efficiently in the world of work. Similarly, lecturers and management of tertiary institutions have been complaining of the crop of students been admitted into universities in Nigeria. They seem to lack the prerequisite knowledge, skills and character for higher education. Consequently, there has been increasing cases of examination malpractice, buying of grades, cultism and other deviant behaviors in tertiary institutions.

In the same vein, the West African Examination Council Chief Examiner's report (2012) laments students' poor performance and states that candidates' proficiency seems to be rapidly declining in the neighbourhood of 70-75% annually. All these are attributable to the poor implementation of secondary school curriculum.

Furthermore, even though principals are saddled with the enormous task of providing the right leadership for curriculum implementation at secondary school level, they are meagerly paid. In order to keep up with harsh economic realities in the country, some resort to engaging in petty businesses such as trading, commercial cyclists, farming during working hours (Okonkwo & Agwu. 2014). These seem to make curriculum implementation in secondary schools really difficult.

The question now is will there be proper implementation of secondary school curriculum in public schools in Rivers State if principals carry out their roles effectively? Providing answers to this question, therefore, is the problem of this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine principals' roles in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. find out the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the advisory roles principals' play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.
3. Determine the mentoring roles of principals in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State?
2. What are the advisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State?
3. What are the mentoring roles of principals in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State?

## **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of principals and teachers on the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on the advisory roles principals' play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State
3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on the mentoring roles of principals in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.

## **Method**

The research design adopted in the study was a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 1985 principals and teachers comprising 35 principals and 1950 teachers in the 35 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State. of the population. The sample size of the study was 385 respondents comprising 35 principals and 350 teachers in the 35 public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. The entire 35 principals were taken as a census because of the manageable size of the population while the non-proportionate stratified sampling technique was adopted in selecting 10 teachers from each of the 35 schools to make a total of 350 teachers. A researcher-designed questionnaire titled:

“Principals Role in Curriculum implementation Questionnaire (PRCIQ) was used for data collection in the study. The instrument had two sections (A and B). Section A was designed to elicit responses on respondents' demography while section B contained statement items drawn from the research questions. The responses to the items in the questionnaire were structured on a four-point summated rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) =2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The instrument was duly validated by two experts in the field of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation respectively. A test of internal consistency was carried out using Cronbach to determine the reliability of the instrument. Reliability coefficients of 0.91, 0.81 and 0.84 were obtained for the three clusters of the instrument which showed the instrument was reliable. Copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researchers with the help of some of two trained research assistants. Out of the 385 copies of the questionnaire administered 380 (33 for principals and 347 for teachers) (98%) copies were valid and used for the analysis of the research questions and test of hypotheses. Data collected were analyzed using mean statistics and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 and above was used in taking decisions on the research questions. Any item in the research instrument with less than 2.50 mean score indicates “Disagree” while mean scores of 2.50 and above indicates “Agree”. Similarly, the null hypotheses

were rejected and the alternative hypotheses accepted if the computed value is greater than the critical table value at the significance level of 0.05. While the null

hypotheses were not rejected and the alternative hypotheses rejected if the computed value is less than the critical table value.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Principals and Teachers on Supervisory Roles Principals Play in Curriculum Implementation

S/N	Items	Principals=33			Teachers =347		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	Principals ensure teachers are following the scheme of work drawn from the curriculum.	2.87	0.71	Agree	2.79	0.67	Agree
2	Principals supervise teachers to ensure they plan their lessons in line with the scheme of work drawn from the curriculum.	3.16	0.99	Agree	3.03	0.89	Agree
3	Principals supervise teachers to ensure they cover the content to be taught for each term as specified in the scheme of work.	2.72	1.0	Agree	2.66	0.67	Agree
4	Principals supervise students attendance registers to ensure learners are regular in class.	3.26	0.89	Agree	2.89	0.71	Agree
5	Principals ensure the recommended text books are used by teachers to teach the content as stated in the scheme of work	2.71	0.98	Agree	2.75	0.69	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.94</b>		<b>Agree</b>	<b>2.82</b>		<b>Agree</b>

The analysed data in table 4.1 for research question one revealed that items I- 5 have mean scores that are higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. This means majority of the respondents agree with the items. With grand mean scores of 2.94 and 2.82 for principals and teachers respectively, the answer to research question one is that the supervisory roles

principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum are that they ensure teachers follow the scheme of work, teachers plan their lessons in line with the scheme of work, teachers cover all they are to teach in a term, teachers use recommended textbooks and ensure learners are regular in class.

**Research Question 2:** What are the advisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State?

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Principals and Teachers on the Advisory Roles Principals Play in the Secondary School Curriculum

S/N	Items	Principals=33			Teachers =347		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
6	Principals advise teachers on measures to take to ensure effective teaching	2.95	1.0	Agree	2.78	0.67	Agree
7	Principals encourage collaboration among teachers to ensure information sharing on how best to teach.	2.55	0.97	Agree	2.53	0.88	Agree
8	Principals provide counsels to motivate teachers to give their best in teaching in spite of the challenges they face in teaching	3.09	1.01	Agree	3.05	0.98	Agree
9	Principals give suggestions to educational managers on how to surmount challenges in implementation of the curriculum	2.61	1.03	Agree	2.59	0.89	Agree
10	Principals provide a hospitable work environment for teachers to motivate them in teaching.	2.71	1.19	Agree	2.45	0.50	Disagree
11	Principals counsel deviant learners and encourage them to improve their learning	3.00	1.01	Agree	2.97	0.91	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.82</b>		<b>Agree</b>	<b>2.73</b>		<b>Agree</b>

The analyzed data in table 4.2 for research question two revealed that majority of the principals and teachers agreed with items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11. This is seen in the mean scores of these items which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. However, the result in item 10 showed that while majority of the principals agreed with item 10 with mean score of 2.71, majority of the teachers disagreed with the item. With grand mean scores of 2.82 and 2.73 for

principals and teachers respectively, the answer to research question two is that the advisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum are advising teachers on effective teaching method to adopt, encouraging collaboration among teachers, giving feedback to educational managers, motivating teachers to give their best, providing hospitable work environment and counseling deviant learners

**Research Question 3:** What are the mentoring roles of principals in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State?

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Principals and Teachers on the Mentoring Roles of Principals in the Implementation of School Curriculum

S/N	Items	Principals=33			Teachers =347		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
12	Principals guide inexperienced teachers on teaching strategies that are most suitable for effective lesson delivery.	2.55	0.66	Agree	2.57	0.67	Agree
13	Principals guide teachers on new methods in writing their lesson plan so as to enhance	2.85	0.76	Agree	2.59	0.82	Agree

	quality teaching.						
14	Principals sometimes pair less experienced teachers with experienced ones for mentoring in order to deliver curriculum content effectively.	3.05	1.00	Agree	2.95	0.98	Agree
15	Principals visit the classroom of teachers periodically when teaching and provide guidance to teachers on the best teaching method or materials to use.	2.71	0.89	Agree	2.53	0.76	Agree
16	Principals give teachers feedback on their performance in teaching to encourage improvement.	2.96	0.89	Agree	2.57	0.53	Agree
17	Principals provide a supportive environment that encourages teachers to always ask questions when faced with difficulties.	2.50	0.61	Agree	2.55	0.65	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.77</b>		<b>Agree</b>	<b>2.63</b>		<b>Agree</b>

The analysed data in table 3 for research question three showed that majority of the respondents (both principals and teachers) agreed with all the items (12-17) in the table. This is seen in the mean scores of these items that are above the criterion mean of 2.50. With grand mean scores of 2.77 and 2.63 for principals and teachers respectively, the answer to research question three is that the ways principals' mentoring of teachers enhance the

implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State are that principals guide inexperienced teachers to use appropriate teaching strategies and new methods in planning their lessons, they pair inexperienced teachers with experienced ones, give feedback to teachers on their progress and create a supportive environment for teachers to always ask questions.

### Test of Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of principals and teachers on the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.

**Table 4:** z-Test Analysis on the Supervisory Roles Principals Play in the Implementation of Secondary School Curriculum in Rivers State

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Principals	33	2.94	0.91	378			H <sub>0</sub>
Teachers	347	2.82	0.72		0.70	1.96	Failed to Reject

Table 4 revealed that the z-calculated value is 0.70 and the z- critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and a degree of freedom of 378. Since the z-cal (0.70) is less than the z-crit. value (1.96), the null hypothesis was not accepted

indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of principals and teachers on the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on the advisory roles principals' play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State

**Table 5:** z-Test Analysis on Advisory Roles Principals Play in the Implementation of Secondary School Curriculum in Rivers State

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Principals	33	2.82	1.04	378			H <sub>0</sub>
Teachers	347	2.73	0.81		0.49	1.96	Failed to Reject

The analysed data in table 5 revealed that the z-calculated value is 0.49 and the z-critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and a degree of freedom of 378. Since the z-cal (0.49) is less than the z-crit. value (1.96), the null hypothesis was

not rejected indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on the advisory roles principals' play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on the mentoring roles of Principals in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.

**Table 6:** z-Test Analysis on the Mentoring Roles of Principals Teachers Enhance the Implementation of Secondary School Curriculum in Rivers State

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Principals	33	2.77	0.80	378			H <sub>0</sub>
Teachers	347	2.63	0.74		0.86	1.96	Failed to Reject

The analysed data in table 6 revealed that the z-calculated value is 0.86 and the z-critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and a degree of freedom of 378. Since the z-cal (0.86) is less than the z-crit value (1.96), the null hypothesis was not rejected indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on how principals' mentoring of teachers enhances the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State.

### Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings from the analyzed data in research question one revealed that the supervisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum are that they ensure teachers follow the scheme of work, they ensure teachers plan their lesson in line with the scheme of work, cover all they are to teach in a term, use recommended textbooks and ensure learners are regular in class. The corresponding hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of principals and teachers on the supervisory roles principals play in

the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State. This indicates that both principals and teachers agree with the supervisory roles played by principals in curriculum implementation. This finding is in line with the findings of Obanya (2004) which revealed that principals as heads of schools are empowered to supervise teachers in effective implementation of the curriculum. The result of the analysed data for research question two revealed that the advisory roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum are advising teachers on effective teaching method to adopt, encouraging collaboration among teachers, giving feedback to educational managers, motivating teachers to give their best, providing hospitable work environment and counseling deviant learners. The corresponding hypothesis two also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on the advisory roles principals' play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State. This finding was supported by the findings of Clark (2007) which revealed that principals provide support and motivation for staff to enable them give their best in towards the implementation of the curriculum. Coleman (2003) also agrees with this finding when he revealed that at school curriculum implementation level, principals should advise educators to explore expansion and change in the curriculum.

The result of the analyzed data for research question three showed that the mentoring roles of principals in the implementation of secondary school

curriculum in Rivers State are that principals guide inexperienced teachers to use appropriate teaching strategies and new methods in planning their lessons, they pair inexperienced teachers with experienced ones, give feedback to teachers on their progress and create a supportive environment for teachers to always ask questions. Similarly, the corresponding hypothesis three revealed that There is no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on how principals' mentoring of teachers enhances the implementation of secondary school curriculum in Rivers State. This finding is supported by the findings of Chukwuemeka (2014) who revealed that as mentors principals must be reflective, innovative and forward looking leaders who are focused on student achievement and well-being. Ajayi (2012) also agrees with the finding when he revealed that principals must create the supportive environment for new teachers to be mentored in order for them to implement the curriculum effectively.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the roles principals play in the implementation of secondary school curriculum are supervisory, advisory, mentoring, monitoring and administrative roles.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. Public school principals should engage more in objective supervision of teachers and students alike as this has the potential of enhancing effective implementation of the curriculum.

2. Educational managers from the Ministry of Education and Education Boards should create a platform for feedback and advise from principals who are at the heart of implementation of the school curriculum. This way, they can identify areas of challenges and deal with them.
3. School principals should establish a sustainable mentoring programme that would allow for more experienced teachers to mentor new and inexperienced teachers as this will improve their efficiency in teaching and implementation of the school curriculum.

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