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## Enhancing Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices in Secondary Schools in Anambra State: The Teachers' Perception.

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### Abstract

*This paper focused on enhancing principals' instructional leadership practices in secondary schools in Anambra State. It adopted a descriptive survey design. We formulated two research questions and four null hypotheses to guide the study. The population consisted of all public secondary school teachers in the state's Education Zones. A simple random sampling technique was used to pick two education zones from the six Education Zones in the State. From the sampled Zones, twenty schools were picked based on a simple random sampling technique. The sampled schools were categorised into four groups based on four variables: age, gender, year of experience, and area of specialization. From each of the four categories of schools, fifty teachers were selected using purposive sampling (twenty-five teachers in each group of the variables). The total sample consisted of two hundred respondents. Mean, standard deviation, and t-test statistical analysis were employed to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses, respectively. The instrument was a 16-item researcher-developed questionnaire titled Teachers' Perception of Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices in Secondary Schools Questionnaire (TPPILPQ). Its content and face were validated by four experts from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, Tansian University Umunya, Anambra State. The reliability coefficient is 0.82, established using the spearman rank order (spearman rho) reliability method. The results, among others, showed that for principals to improve*

## **Introduction**

The development of any country depends on the quality of education made available to its citizens. This is because education not only builds human capital and the economy, but also provides means for the country's sustainability and continuity. In Nigeria, secondary education is regarded as the most important stage in the educational cycle of a child. It is the level at which learners are expected to acquire proficiency in both academic and applied subjects (NPE, 2004). Secondary school education is important because it is the foundation for further education, training, and work (Allen, 2015). Secondary education in Nigeria is an important factor in national and individual development. It plays a vital role in creating a country's human capital. One of the indicators of high-quality education is the cognitive achievement of learners (UNESCO, 2004). According to Adediwura & Tayo (2007), academic achievement is designated by test and examination scores or marks assigned to the subject by the teachers. It could also be an expression used to represent students' scholastic standing. Abeya (2004) stated that secondary school instructional leadership is a major determining factor for quality education and school performance. Instructional leadership practices are critical to improving school management and raising educational standards. The quality of education depends on the nature of the instructional leadership practices provided by the school principal, as well as his or her ability to control, direct, and guide teachers and students. The quality of instructional leadership practices also plays a vital role in students' performance as it relates to teachers, students, rules, regulations, and policies that govern the school (Farr, 2011).

For this reason, educational stakeholders, administrators, policymakers, and curriculum planners work tirelessly to ensure quality educational outputs. Educational leaders play a pivotal role in affecting the climate, attitude, and reputation of their schools. They are the cornerstones on which learning communities function and grow. With successful instructional

leadership practices, schools become effective incubators of learning places where students are not only educated but challenged, nurtured, and encouraged. On the other hand, poor instructional leadership practices can undermine the goals of the educational system. When schools lack a strong foundation and direction, learning is compromised, and students suffer. According to the Wallace Foundation Study (2013), leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on students learning.

In Anambra State secondary schools, educational stakeholders bear the burden of inculcating appropriate skills and competencies in the students. This calls for effective and dynamic instructional leadership practices because human capital is borne in the classroom. According to Cotton (2003), a clearly defined understanding of instructional leadership practices is imperative for effective leadership, and this leadership rests with the school principal.

Based on the foregoing reasoning, the principal, who is regarded as the instructional leader, must come to grips with the proper management of all affairs related to academic activities so as to promote teaching and learning in the school. The principal is the person responsible for managing the instructional activities of the secondary school. With the resources at his or her disposal, he or she ensures the achievement of the school's educational goals and objectives. He or She is the Chief Executive and responsible for all that happens in his school. That is to say, the principal is the key person responsible for creating a conducive school climate and learning environment that encourage the professional development of teachers and the academic performance of students. He or she sets clear goals, allocates resources, manages curriculum, monitors lessons, evaluates teachers, and organizes and implements plans, policies, and programs meant to achieve school objectives (Fagbamiye 2004). His role is both complex and demanding to the extent that, by his action or inaction, educational goals have to be judged. It is therefore expected that the principal, as the school instructional leader, will engage in a variety of effective instructional

leadership practices that are concerned with the elements of the instructional process.

Principals' instructional leadership practices include: checking of teachers' lesson notes, schemes of work, students' notes, and teachers' punctuality; teachers' regularity in class; classroom observation; and moderation of examination papers and marking schemes, among others (Nelson and Sassi 2005). Instructional supervision helps to ensure that instructional delivery is painstakingly planned, effectively executed, and properly evaluated. The school principal, as the instructional leader, is entrusted with the responsibility of improving the quality of instructional delivery through adequate supervision of teachers (Nnebedum & Akinfolarin, 2017). Unfortunately, school principals in Anambra State seem to give little attention to instructional supervision. Regular and timely supervision of teachers and the provision of professional guidance and assistance will not only minimise instructional time wastage but also encourage timely discharge of their duties, thereby ensuring effective instructional delivery in the school.

The principal's instructional leadership practices are critical to the success of a school's improvement initiatives and overall effectiveness. The principal's primary responsibility is to encourage all students' learning and success. School principals can accomplish this goal by focusing on learning, encouraging collaboration, using data to improve learning, providing support, and aligning curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

According to Harvey (2013), effectiveness is the ability to produce a desired result or a desired output. It is a desirable change in performance, whether student or institutional. It is measured through the data gathered by the instruments used to collect information on student learning and development. An effective principal provides a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. They prioritise and focus the attention of staff on what is important and do not let them get diverted and side-tracked with

initiatives that will have little impact on the work of the students. They know what is going on in their classrooms. They have a clear view of their employees' strengths and weaknesses. They know how to build on their strengths and reduce their weaknesses. They can focus their staff development programme on meeting the real needs of their staff and school. They gain this perspective through a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation. Their clarity of thought, sense of purpose, and knowledge of what is going on mean that an effective principal can get the best out of their staff, which is the key to influencing work in the classroom and raising student standards. An effective instructional leader is knowledgeable about research-based, student-centred instruction, models the use of these strategies, and requires the implementation of appropriate research-based strategies within the classroom and as a component of continuous improvement plans.

In Anambra State, secondary school principals as instructional leaders seem to be lagging behind the expectations of educational stakeholders and the general public in terms of their instructional leadership practices. Teaching and learning and other classroom activities are hampered. It becomes imperative to identify ways in which principals instructional practices could be enhanced for better student performance.

### **The Importance of the Study**

Secondary school students in Anambra State seem to perform below stakeholders' expectations, which is an indicator of school ineffectiveness. This ugly situation may be attributed to the inability of the principals to provide effective instructional leadership practices to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Supervising and evaluating instruction are functions that are central to the principal's leadership task to ensure that the goals of the school are being translated into practice at the classroom level.

Personal observation by the researchers revealed cases of inadequate coverage of the scheme of work, teachers' persistent lateness, missing class

lessons, absenteeism, and truancy among students in secondary schools in Anambra State. Educational stakeholders and administrators have lamented about the poor performance of students in external examinations like SSC examinations, the ill behaviour of students and teachers towards learning, and their hope to make good grades through examination malpractices. The State Government has warned and threatened to dismiss principals who have not been monitoring instructional delivery in order to improve student performance, but the situation has persisted. This problem may stem from the principal's ineffectiveness in instructional leadership practices. In light of the above, there is a need to identify means of enhancing principal's instructional leadership practices in secondary schools in Anambra State. This is the aim of this work.

### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study focused on Anambra State. The population was all the teachers in public schools in the six education zones in the state. A simple random sampling technique was used to pick two education zones from the six education zones. From the sampled zones, twenty schools were picked based on a simple random sampling technique. The sampled schools were categorised into four groups based on four variables: age, gender, years of experience, and area of specialization. From each of the 4 categories of schools, 50 teachers were selected using purposive sampling (twenty-five teachers in each group of the variables). The total sample consisted of two hundred respondents. The instrument was a 16-item researcher-developed questionnaire titled Teachers' Perception of Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices in Secondary Schools Questionnaire (TPPILPQ). It was content and face validated by four experts from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, Tansian University Umunya, Anambra State. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Spearman rank order (spearman rho) correlation coefficient method, and a coefficient value of 0.82 was obtained. The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section A is comprised

of the demographic information of the respondents, while Section B is comprised of items intended to elicit responses from the respondents. It was structured on a four-lickert rating scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) and weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The categories of respondents are: teachers between the ages of 30 and 35 (young) and between 40 and 50 years old;; male and female teachers; junior and senior teachers; science and art teachers. Research question one was administered to teachers based on age and gender, while question two was administered to teachers based on experience and area of specialization. Copies of TPPILPQ were administered by the researchers and two other research assistants. The direct delivery technique (DDT) was used in the administration of TPPILPQ to ensure a 100% return. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistical analysis was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was 2.50. SA and A were treated as agreeing, while SD and D were treated as disagreeing. Mean scores of 2.50 and above are treated as agreeing and high, while scores below 2.50 are treated as disagreeing and low.

### **Findings Derived from Administered Questionnaires**

**Research Question One:** How do teachers perceive principals' instructional leadership effectiveness in secondary schools?

**Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviation ratings of teachers, (based on age and gender) perceptions of principals' instructional practices**

Sn	Items	Old teachers=25			young teachers=25		
		male teachers=25female teachers=25					
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Facilitating variety of training opportunities for teachers to improve their professional knowledge and skills	2.80	1.17	Agree	2.91	1.20	Agree
		2.50	1.10	mod	2.72	1.12	Agree
		2.70	1.12	Agree	2.67	1.11	Agree
2	Make the best use of both formal and informal ways to reward and motivate teachers.	2.63	1.12	Agree	2.67	1.11	Agree
3	Monitoring of teachers instructional delivery to render suggestions for enhancement	2.72	1.11	Agree	2.61	1.12	Agree
		2.50	1.00	Agree	2.50	1.00	Agree
		2.68	1.12	Agree	2.79	1.14	Agree
4	Checking of staff school attendance to ensure regular instructional delivery	2.60	1.12	Agree	2.56	1.13	Agree
		3.02	1.92	Agree	2.52	1.13	Agree
5.	Checking of teachers record of work done to monitor their progress	2.56	1.10	Agree	2.62	1.11	Agree
		2.19	1.16	Disagree	2.52	1.16	Agree
		2.23	1.00	Disagree	2.00	1.07	Disagree



progress	2.19	1.16	Disagree	2.52	1.16	Agree
	2.23	1.00	Disagree	2.00	1.07	Disagree
6 Monitoring of staff participation in school meeting						
7 Monitoring teachers compliance to school rules and regulations	2.98	1.18	Agree	2.00	1.07	Disagree
	2.00	1.07	Disagree	2.13	1.09	Disagree
	2.00	1.04	Disagree	2.45	1.12	Disagree
	2.22	1.00	Disagree	2.36	1.12	Disagree
8 Monitoring staff participation in school moral instructions						

On Table 1 above, it could be seen that items 1–5 were rated highly by the teachers. Item 6 was rated low by old, male, and female teachers. It has a mean score of 2.19, 2.23, and 2.00; only a young teacher rated it moderate. Items 7 and 8 were rated low by all categories of respondents. They have a mean score and standard deviation below the decision rule of 2.50. This implies that all the categories of teachers agreed that making the best use of both formal and informal ways to reward and motivate teachers, facilitating a variety of training opportunities for teachers to improve their professional knowledge, competence, and skills, checking teachers' records of work done to monitor their progress and monitoring staff participation in school activities, checking teachers lesson notes to provide assistance for improvement, and checking staff school attendance to ensure regular instructional delivery are the principals instructional leadership practices as perceived by teachers. The teachers disagree on monitoring teachers' participation in school moral instruction, monitoring teachers' compliance with school rules and regulations, and participating in school moral instruction as part of the principals' instructional leadership practices for high school students' academic attainment.

Ho1

**Table 2: t-test of the mean rating of old (40–50 years) and young (30–35) teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional practice in secondary schools in Anambra State**

Group	N	X	SD	df	8	tcal	tcrit	Decision
Old teachers	25	2.39	1.10					
48	0.05	1.31	1.96					
Young teachers	25	2.59	1.11					

From table two, it could be observed that the t-calculated value of 1.31 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance and 48 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is not significant. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of old and young teachers on principal's instructional practices for high school students in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Ho2

**Table 3: A t-test of the mean rating of male and female teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional practice in secondary schools in Anambra State**

Group	N	X	SD	df	8	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Senior teachers	25	2.54	1.28					
					48	0.05	1.29	1.96
Junior teachers	25	2.41	1.15					

From table two, it could be observed that the t-calculated value of 1.29 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance and 48 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female teachers on principals' instructional practices for high school students in secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Research question two:** How could principals' instructional leadership practices be enhanced for better students' performance?

**Table 4: Mean scores and standard deviation ratings of senior and junior teachers' perceptions of how principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for better students' performance.**

Sn	Items	Senior teachers =25			Junior teachers 25		
		Science teachers=25Art teachers=25					
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
9	Translating the school goals into practice at the classroom level	2.62	1.14	Agree	2.61	1.04	Agree
		2.24	1.02	Disagree	2.34	1.02	Disagree
		3.21	0.96	Agree	2.67	1.05	Agree
10	Motivating teachers who are hard working by giving them incentives.	2.76	1.14	Agree	2.66	1.06	Agree
		2.70	1.14	Agree	2.60	1.14	Agree
		3.70	1.01	Agree	2.71	1.01	Agree
11	Providing instructional support to monitor classroom instruction by formal and informal classroom visits.	2.67	1.14	Agree	2.44	1.24	Disagree
		2.35	1.15	disagree	2.16	1.15	Disagree
12	Support curricular coordination by interaction among teachers	2.64	1.2	Agree	2.55	1.14	Agree
		2.34	1.34	disagree	2.22	1.21	Disagree
	within and across grade levels on instruction	3.89	0.92	Agree	2.52	1.13	Agree
		2.22	1.22	Disagree	2.00	1.23	Disagree
13	Support teachers to use both standardised and criterion reference test	3.42	0.95	Agree	2.66	1.13	Agree
		3.00	1.03	Agree	2.78	1.13	Agree

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14 Create condition to use	3.51	1.01	Agree	2.32	1.12	disagree
classroom test to monitor	2.38	1.04	Disagree	2.11	1.07	Disagree
students progress						

15 protection of instructional time,  
ensuring teachers punctuality  
and  
reducing students absenteeism.

16 Discouraging unnecessary and  
unscheduled visitors during school  
hours for steady instructional  
delivery

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Table 4 above revealed that items 9–15 are rated highly by senior and junior teachers, and they have mean scores between 2.65 and 3.89, which are above the decision rule of 2.50. Only item 16 was rated low by junior teachers. It has a mean score of 2.32. This implies that the perception of junior and senior teachers on enhancing principals instructional practices for better student performance involves translating the school goals into practice at the classroom level, aligning teachers classroom objectives with the school goals, Providing instructional support to monitor classroom instruction through formal and informal classroom visits, supporting curricular coordination through interaction among teachers within and across grade levels on instruction, and supporting teachers to use both standardised and criterion-based reference tests Invariably, science and art teachers have different opinions and do not agree with other respondents. They rated items 9, 12, 13, 14, and 16 as negative. The items have mean scores between 2.34 and 2.15, which are below the criterion rule of 2.50. Items 10 and 11 were rated highly by science and art teachers. The mean score falls between 3.70 and 2.66.

**Table 5: t-test of the mean rating of senior and junior teachers' opinions on how principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for better students' performance in secondary schools**

Group	N	X	SD	df	8	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Senior teachers	25	2.69	1.09	48	0.05	1.09	1.96	Ho(not significant)
Junior teachers	25	2.59	1.10					

Table 5 showed that the t-calculated value of 1.09 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance and 48 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of senior and junior teachers on how principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for better students' performance.

**Table 6: t-test of the mean rating of science and art teachers' opinions on how principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for better students' performance in secondary schools in Anambra State**

Group	N	X	SD	df	8	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Science teachers	25	2.13	1.94	48	0.05	2.02	1.96	Ho sig significant
Art teachers	25	2.19	1.98					

It could be seen from Table 6 above that the t-calculated value of 2.02 is higher than the critical t value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance and 48 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the mean rating of science and art teachers on how principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for better students' performance.

## **Discussion**

Findings from the results as presented on Table 1 revealed that teachers under the ages of 30-35 and 40-50 (old and young teachers), as well as female and male teachers agreed that making the best use of both formal and informal ways to reward and motivate teachers, facilitating a variety of training opportunities for teachers to improve their professional knowledge, competence, and skills, checking teachers records of work done to monitor their progress, checking teachers lesson notes to provide assistance for improvement, and checking staff school attendance to ensure regular instructional delivery are principals' instructional practices. These findings agree with Kiptum (2018) and Hayat (2015), who reported that the instructional leadership practices of supervising and evaluating instruction are highly performed by the principals to facilitate instructions. In agreement, Onwuasoanya et al. (2016) noted that achieving educational goals is dependent on effective instructional supervision by principals. This reinforced the fact that effective supervision of classroom instruction aids in the realization of educational goals and objectives.

Findings from the results of the tested hypotheses in tables 2 and 3 showed that there is no significant difference in the opinion of teachers based on age and gender on principals' instructional practices in secondary schools in Anambra State. This could be explained by the findings of Ross & Grey (2006) and Cotton (2003), who stated that the core role of the instructional leaders is to ensure the achievement of the established mission through creating a good environment for the school as well as establishing the frequency of the teacher's supervision of classroom activities, revision, pupils' homework, testing, and team building to contribute towards students better performance. Effective instructional leaders are heavily involved in curricular and instructional

issues that have a direct impact on student achievement.

Table 4 reveals that translating the school goals into practice at the classroom level, motivating teachers who are hardworking by giving incentives, and providing instructional support to monitor classroom instruction through formal and informal classroom visits; supporting curricular coordination through interaction among teachers within and across grade levels on instruction and protection of instructional time; ensuring teacher punctuality; and reducing student absenteeism. These findings are in line with Cardno and Collett (2004), who noted that coordinating curriculum, is a characteristic that stands out in instructionally effective schools. School curricular objectives should be closely aligned with both the content taught in classes and the school's achievement tests. This aspect of curricular coordination is often supported by greater interaction among teachers within and across grade levels on instructional and curricular issues. Therefore, managing the instructional programme helps improve classroom instruction if only the principal supports and supervises, monitors learning, and protects teachers from unfair treatment.

Also, it was found that protection of instructional time, which focuses on ensuring teachers' punctuality and reducing student tiredness and absenteeism, and that effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement, were supported. Hallinger (2003) and Harvey (2013) noted that principals are effective leaders when they protect instructional time, provide teachers with uninterrupted work time, and provide support for improving classroom management and instructional skills.

Findings in Table 5 of the tested hypothesis revealed no significant

difference exists in the perceptions of senior and junior teachers on how principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for students better performance. The findings are in line with Farhat et al.'s (2012) assertion that school principals must have or develop the competence to become knowledgeable in instructional strategies and effective methods of content delivery. They noted that the supervision of teachers should be viewed as instructional leadership's efforts to improve classroom management. In agreement, Leithwood (2010) noted that the principal serves as the team leader who assesses and evaluates improvements in instruction and student learning quality.

Findings in Table 6 showed that teachers based on their area of specialisation, science and art teachers, have a negative view on how principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for better student performance. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

## **Conclusion**

Findings revealed that teachers, based on age and gender, believe that principals' instructional practices are critical for curriculum implementation, evaluation and supervision, instructional delivery, and methodology. It was also found that junior and senior teachers perceived that principals' instructional practices could be enhanced for better student performance through a focus on strong instructional leadership abilities. The null hypotheses prove that there is no significant difference in the views of teachers based on age, gender, and experience. The implication is that instructional leadership is the responsibility of the principal to effectively manage resources and staff. Good instructional leadership practices are of great importance to school management and supervision. It emphasizes teachers' behavioral traits, which influence students' performance.



## Recommendations

1. The government should introduce instructional leadership training sessions for principals in schools.
2. The government should release adequate funds to school principals as financial support to attend instructional leadership workshops, seminars, and conferences.
3. Government and stakeholder groups in education should also create an environment conducive to the growth of principals' effective instructional leadership.

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