

Extent of Application of Information Management Principles by Secondary School Principals and Counselors for Quality Assurance

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Abstract

The study determined the extent principals and counsellors apply the identified information management principles in the administration of public and private secondary schools in Imo State for quality assurance. Four research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The population for the study was 800 principals and 100 counsellors in public and private secondary schools in the state. Proportionate, stratified random sampling technique was used to get a sample of 80 respondents from using 10% proportion on principal's stratum making a sample of 80 principals. The instrument for data collection was a researcher made questionnaire, validated by 3 experts, one in the area of measurement and evaluation and two in the area of educational management. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the responses from 15 principals and 10 counsellors in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics. The findings of the study revealed among others that people who are not concerned with the utilization of information are involved to a great extent. Recommendations were made among others that principals and counselors should try as much as possible to avert any possible means of people who are not concerned with the utilization of information to get involved in it.

Keywords: Information Management, Principles, Secondary Schools, Principals, Counselors, Quality Assurance.

Introduction

Education is lifelong learning that begins from birth till death. It is therefore, the process, which assists learners to acquire knowledge, skills, attitude, habits and moral behavior which is usually obtained in the school setting to make learners useful members of the society (Federal government in Uche & Romanus, 2021). Education however, is a social process by which children are trained to be self-reliant and leaders of tomorrow. It is the process by which individuals develop their potentials through which the knowledge and skill acquired makes them functional member of the society (Jacob, 2016). Development of potentials through knowledge and skill acquisition is primarily done through secondary education.

Secondary education is a formal education with organized curriculum. It occupies strategic position in the Nigeria education system. It is the education children receive after primary education and before tertiary stage, (FGN, 2014). Hence, secondary schools occupy strategic position in the Nigeria education system. They are specifically concerned with preparing citizens for useful living within the society and for higher education. Secondary education inspires the youths for self improvement, achievements and overall development both in trade, craft, commercial and academic areas. There are two types of secondary schools in Nigeria. They include the public and private secondary schools. The public secondary schools are owned, financed and managed by government while the private secondary schools are owned, financed and managed by individuals, group or organizations.

In each of these types of secondary school there is always a principal, counselors and teachers. According to Chigbu, Chukwu and Nwobodo (2022) the teacher is a person who controls the classroom management; initiate techniques for teaching, providing useful information for the optimum development of vocational, educational, personal-social areas of learners. Joshi and Gupta (2017) define a teacher as a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, competence or virtue. However, teachers take the place of parents in school; they guide and mould the character and personality of the students. They influence the early years of the students through modeling of good conduct, fostering good moral values and creating an enabling environment for self development and improvement. Nonetheless, the above functions may not be accomplished without the existence of a professional counselor. A school counselor is a professional trained person who uses his/her skills and strategies to help students in their working environment to resolve and ameliorate their problems in all spheres of life (Chigbu, Ngwaka & Onu 2020) Chigbu, Nwobi, Ngwaka & Mokwelu in Chigbu, Suleh, Nnadi & Mokwelu (2022) see the counselor as a person whose vocation inclines towards building the reputation, inspiration, aspiration, personality and skills of students through counseling. Counselors are usually privileged to gather sensitive information about students, teachers and school environment and relate that information to the school principals for proper adjustment and easy flow of administrative functions.

According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (2014) the principal is the administrator who guides, controls and provides leadership in a way that supports the aims and objectives of the school education. Udo and Akpa in Ani (2019) see the principal as the executive head of the secondary schools, who takes decisions on issues of the schools to achieve quality and maintain standard. This principal needs adequate information and guide by the school counselors for proper decision making. However, to achieve maximum objectives the information must be properly managed by principal to achieve the desired results. Information is a type of data required by every administrator to aid the decision making for optimum performance in the process of the administration (Wikipedia in Ani, 2019). Information management is the collection of information from one or more source (counsellors, teachers, and students) concerning the individuals, materials or programme of an organization (school) and distributing same to one or more audience. Bedescu and Moisescu (2012) noted that, for the management of this information to be effective, certain principles must be observed by the administrator they include:

1. Only people who are concerned with the utilization of the acquired information will be involved.
2. Only people who will ensure the safe storage of the information will be involved.
3. Involving only the people that will be effective in the disposal of the information.
4. Making the information available only to people who need it for decision making.

It is not known the extent principals and counselors of public and private secondary schools apply these principles in the management of information available to them concerning the individual's materials and programs of the school. Though, Rachel, Renae, Kendra, Marilynn, Lori, Jungnam, Nicholas & Kaylee (2022) note that information spread through gossip in the school settings and tend to cause problem and disunity in the school environment especially among members of staff. Ani (2019) noted that both the principals and teachers agree that people who are not concerned with the utilization of information are involved to a great extent. Ocho (2010) also believed that principals appoint investigative committee through favouritism.

Badescu and Moisescu (2012) observed that when information is not well managed it can lead to disorderliness. Badwscu et al (2012) posit that some principals are so careless with words that they don't know when the disclose sensitive information to the public.

There are cases of conflicts between principals, counselors, teachers, students and the community within the secondary schools. Perhaps such situation could be as a result of mismanagement of information among members of staff especially the principal and counselor. This study is designed to determine the extent principals apply the identified principles in the management of information available to them as to ensure quality in their administrative functions.

Statement of the problem

Information is a vital tool needed by every administrator whether in the church, family, school or organization. Information is necessarily needed to plan, co-ordinate, control and take a genuine decision on the smooth running of any organization and total formation of a client. However, this information must be well managed if it should achieve the desired result of modification, adjustment, cooperation, unity of purpose and quality output. When information is mismanaged there is bound to be crises, mistrust and disunity. Despite the pitfall observed as the outcome of information mismanagement there is still cases of conflicts in secondary school today in Imo state. Ani (2000) observed that, there are cases of conflicts in secondary schools today especially in Imo state. The conflict could be between the principal and the counselor, teachers, the government where the school is located. Some principals do not have the capacity to manage the information available to them effectively. Perhaps, these conflicts could be traced to the information management ability of the principal and the counselor as well. It is very worrisome and problematic on how principals and counselors manage the information related to them concerning students, teachers, government and school community. Most students, teachers and parents confine on principals and counselors with secrets not knowing the extent such information could be secured and mismanaged. There are obvious problems of poor management of information by school administrators (principals and counsellors). Based on the forgoing, it becomes imperative to put the problem of this study in a question form; to what extent do the principals and counselors in secondary school in Imo state apply these principles in their information management practices?

Purpose of the study

The objective of this study was to determine the extent principals and counselors of secondary schools apply the guiding principles in their information management practices. Specifically the study was designed to:

1. Determine the extent people who are concerned with utilization of the acquired information are involved.
2. Establish the extent people who will ensure the safe storage of the information are involved.
3. Find out the people who will be effective in the disposal of the information are involved.
4. Determine the extent the information is made available to people who need it for decision making.

Methodology

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent principals and counsellors apply the identified information management principles in the administration of public and private secondary schools in Imo State for quality assurance. The design of the study was descriptive

survey. The population for the study was 800 principals and 100 counsellors in public and private secondary schools in the state. Proportionate, stratified random sampling technique was used to get a sample of 80 respondents from using 10% proportion on principal's stratum making a sample of 80 principals. However, the population of counselors was small and manageable so no sampling was done. The instrument for data collection was a researcher made questionnaire titled (EPCAIMP), validated by three experts, one from measurement and evaluation and two in the area of guidance and counseling. The reliability of the instrument was determined, using cronbach alpha on the responses of 15 principals and 10 counsellors in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State. The research questions were answered using Mean and Standard Deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics. Data collection was done with the help of four research assistance.

Results

Table 1

Research Question 1: To what extent are other people not concerned with utilization of information acquired in the information?

S/N	ITEMS	PRINCIPALS RESPONSES			COUNSELLORS RESPONSES		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
1.	In the school, every information is made available to all.	3.00	0.6	GE	3.31	0.8	GE
2.	In your school, every information is Placed on the notice board.	2.60	0.7	GE	3.01	0.9	GE
3.	People get to know about what concerns them through rumours in my school.	2.80	0.7	GE	2.96	0.8	GE
4.	Information are made available only to People who are concerned in my school	2.75	0.8	GE	2.57	0.7	GE
5.	Parents has access to information whether it concerns the person or not in my school	2.68	0.8	GE	2.82	0.6	GE
	GRAND MEAN	2.76	0.7		2.95	0.7	

Table 1 above has a grand mean 2.76 and 2.95 respectively with standard Deviation of 0.7 and 0.7. The grand means of 2.76 and 2.95 are above the table mean of 2.5 and this shows that both the principal and counselors agree that people who are not concerned with the utilization of information are involved to a great extent. Some of them get the information through gossip, notice board or interaction with the source of the information.

Table 2: To what extent are people who will not ensure the safe storage of the information involved?

S/N	ITEMS	PRINCIPALS			COUNSELLORS		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
	To what extent do you agree that:						
6.	Issues concerning individuals are discussed during staff meetings.	2.68	0.6	GE	3.02	0.7	GE
7.	Issues concerning individuals are discussed in the staff rooms.	3.00	0.8	GE	2.80	0.8	GE
8.	Issues concerning individuals are discussed only with the individuals.	3.25	0.7	GE	2.50	0.6	GE
9.	counsellors and their clients discuss matters concerning them.	3.00	0.8	GE	2.35	0.7	LE
10.	Principals set up panels to investigate matters concerning individuals.	3.52	0.7	GE	3.00	0.7	GE
	GRAND MEAN	3.03	0.7		2.73	0.7	

Table 2 shows a grand mean of 3.03 and 2.73 respectively which were found to be above the table mean of 2.5. This indicates that both the principals and the counsellors are of the view that people who will not ensure the safe storage of information are involved to a great extent. The implication of this finding is that people who are flippant and who are not involved in the storage of information do come across the information and make it go viral.

Table 3: To what extent are people who will not be effective in the disposal of information be involved.

S/N	ITEMS	PRINCIPALS			COUNSELLORS		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
	To what extent do you agree that:						
11.	Principals appoint members of investigation panel based on relationship.	2.35	0.8	LE	3.23	0.7	GE
12.	Only capable counselors are appointed to handle information	3.25	0.8	GE	2.56	0.7	GE
13.	There is no qualification for people appointed to dispose information	2.57	0.7	GE	3.00	0.8	GE
	GRAND MEAN	2.72	0.7		2.97	0.8	

From table 3, it could be seen that the grand means of the principals and counselors responses are 2.72 and 2.97 respectively. These grand means were found to be greater than the table mean of 2.5, this means that both the principals and counselors agree to a great extent that people who will not be effective in the disposal of information are involved.

Table 4: To what extent is information made available to people who need it for decision making?

S/N	ITEMS	PRINCIPALS			COUNSELLORS		
	To what extent do you agree that:	\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
14.	Heads of schools keep good custody of information.	3.51	0.7	GE	2.40	0.8	LE
15.	People in authority in my school, most of the time takes decisions based on rumours.	2.35	0.9	LE	2.02	0.7	GE
16.	People in my school always get Correct information before passing Judgment.	2.64	0.7	GE	2.30	0.8	LE
17.	Teachers investigate matters before punishing children.	2.54	0.6	GE	2.46	0.9	LE
	GRAND MEAN	2.76	0.7		2.29	0.8	

Table 4 above shows that principals have a grand mean of 2.76 which is greater than the table mean of 2.5 while the counselors have a grand mean of 2.29 which is less than the table mean of 2.5. the deduction from this is that while the principals agree to a great extent that information available to people who need it for decision making, the counselors have contrary view. They agree that information is made available to people who need it for decision making to a little extent.

Test of Hypothesis

Table 5: There is no significant difference in the mean response of principals and counsellors on the extent that other people who are not concerned with the utilization of the information are involved.

CASES	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t-crit	t-cal	DECISION
PRINCIPALS	82	2.76	0.70	486	1.65	0.08	Not Significant
COUNSELLORS	312	2.95	0.70				

Table 5 above shows that the t calculated in the test of significant difference between the opinion of principals and teachers on the extent other people who are not concerned with the utilization of information are concerned is 0.8 which is less than the t table of 1.65. This means that the difference in their opinion is not significant, therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6: There is no significant difference in the mean perceptions of the principals and counsellors on the extent people who will not ensure the safe storage of the information are involved.

CASES	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t-crit	t-cal	DECISION
PRINCIPALS	82	3.03	0.7	486	1.65	1.66	Significant
COUNSELLORS	312	2.73	0.7				

In table 6 above, the t-test calculation of no significant difference between the mean perception scores of principals and teachers show that the calculated t is 1.66 which is greater than the table t of 1.65 at 466 degree of freedom. This means that there is a significant difference in the opinion of the counselors and principals; therefore the hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the study show that in our schools today people who are not involved in the utilization of information get to know about the information to a great extent. Some get informed through gossip, interaction with others and they also tend to blow the information out of proportion not minding the negative impact of their actions. The finding is in agreement with the findings of Ani (2019) who noted that both the principals and teachers agree that people who are not concerned with the utilization of information are involved to a great extent. Some of them get the information through gossip, notice board or interaction with the source of the information. Perhaps the agreement in the findings may be that some of the principals are not well exposed to the principles guiding information management. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of principals and teachers on this issue.

Another finding of the study is that people who cannot ensure safe storage of information are involved to a great extent. When information gets to a teacher, there is always the tendency for the teacher to tell another teacher ‘did you hear that.....?’ that the teacher will carry the gossip to another and before you know it the information has gone viral. This finding is in consonance with Rachel, Renae, Kendra, Marilynn, Lori, Jungnam, Nicholas & Kaylee (2022) who note that information spread through gossip in the school settings and tend to cause problem and disunity in the school environment especially among members of staff. The findings show that there is no significant difference in the opinion of teachers and principals.

Another finding of the study is that people who will not be effective in the disposal of information tend to be involved. It is common to see that in a school setting some principals tend to appoint investigative committees based on relationship and not based on competence. When such incompetent individuals are involved in the disposal of a case, either that their judgement is delayed or may be very subjective. This finding is in agreement with the findings Ocho (2010) who believed that principals appoint investigative committee through favouritism. This findings is in agreement with the findings of Badescu and Moisescu (2012) who believed that justice delayed is justice denied and such delay in justice happens only when incompetent ones are charged with disposal of information.

Finally, it was found that while counselors agree that information are usually made available to people who need for decision making to a great extent, principals disagreed with the view. Perhaps the counselors have a different view because in most cases they are the custodians of vital information, especially as it concerns the students and teachers.

Conclusion

Based on the results of study it can be concluded that some (members of staff, parents, and community members) get informed through gossip, interaction with others and they also tend to blow the information out of proportion not minding the negative impact of their actions. Therefore, there should be proper guide to checkmate the information from disseminating to the wrong users.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

1. Principals and counselors should try as much as possible to avert any possible means of people who are not concerned with the utilization of information to get involved in it.
2. School heads should secure sensitive information from spreading through gossip in the school settings.
3. School heads should maintain peace and harmony in the school environment especially among members of staff.
4. Information should be made available for those that needed it for proper decision making in the school setting to be achieved.

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