

Lecturers' Ethical Conduct and Effective School Administration in Public Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract: *This study was designed to critically examine lecturers' ethical conduct and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the correlational survey research design. The population of the study consists of 4,598 lecturers from the three public universities in Rivers State (RSU=1,346, IAUE= 204, Uniport= 1,248). 10% of the population (460) was used as the sample size of the study. A self-structured questionnaire titled "Lecturers' Ethical Conduct and Effective School Administration Questionnaire" was used in generating data for the study. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt, while a reliability index of 0.75 was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha Method. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions, t-transformed was used to test the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The study found that communication, behavioural and transparency have strong positive relationship with effective school administration among tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Given the above, it was recommended among others that school administrators should adopt ethical school leadership style in school administration. This will actually enhance teachers' performance not only in the classroom but also in their individual lives*

Keywords: *Ethical Conduct, School administration Tertiary Institutions, Rivers State.*

Introduction

The term ethics is a fashionable term and it is possible to see it in almost every profession. Ethics in education especially in school administration deals with educational actions which take place in school. Schools are educational organizations and school administrators have the vital role in managing schools. The success of a school and the degree of reaching educational aims depends on the administrator and his/her effective governance. To be able to create an effective school and manage it fairly, is possible with codes of ethics. The word ethics may be simply defined as the science of right and wrong, the science of moral principles, the science of moral judgment and conduct. It not only analyzes, classifies, describes and explains human actions as good or bad but also helps us know why and on what bases our judgment of human action is justified (Kizza, 2017). Ethical issues are part of everyday life in schools. They frequently arise from decisions which require value judgments about doing the right thing, or saying the good or best thing in a particular situation. Although doing the right thing seems easy enough most times when an ethically difficult situation arises, it may cause individuals to examine their ethics in practice (Campbell, 2014).

It is important to remember that schools have never been islands, able to ward off the effects of trends emerging in the wider society. However, it is equally important to understand that schools now are subject to the impact of global changes to which their stakeholders require rapid local responses. Schools are subject to a lot of changes today, and with schools becoming increasingly self-managing environments, administrators have started to feel more pressure on their shoulders when dealing with ethically complex situations (Dempster & Berry, 2013). In recent years, the ethics of practice has been a popular discussion topic in many professional fields, including education. Dozens of articles and chapters have been written during the past 20 years on the ethics of practice in education, including debates about the desirability and feasibility of developing codes of ethics (Gordon & Sork, 2011). Today many professional communities have developed a code of ethics to make more specific the moral code that specifically applies to their situation. The code must be idealistic and also be practical, so that it can apply reasonably to all educational administrators. Some professions have certain and detailed codes of ethics that they sometimes take place of law (Haynes, 2018).

All school personnel, of course, are responsible for creating and maintaining a community conducive to academic, emotional and social learning, but the administrator is the primary architect and promoter of the values and standards that ensure everything and everyone in the school building function according to the highest ethical standards (Harsh & Casto, 2017). The educational programme housed in a school organization is supposed to serve moral purposes (the nurturing of human, social and intellectual growth of youngsters). Thus, although educational administrators do many generic things common to all administrators, these activities are aimed at promoting the educational goals of the institution (Starrat, 2019). Today, moral leadership is essential for every organization of all types and in all corners of society. Administrators play a significant role in society as leaders and role models for today's students but future's leaders. To create a morally virtuous community, those who manage today's schools and business departments must invest in a continuing dialogue about their ethical duties to society and thoughtfully examine both their roles and the benefits that can come from honoring the responsibilities of ethical leadership (Caldwell & Jeane, 2017).

Ethics deals with actions that are commonly seen as right or wrong. The school administrator whose behaviour is consistent acts morally and therefore he/she values social justice (Glanz, 2016). If the school administrator is inconsistent and behaves arbitrary, this causes him to lose his reliance among the other school staff and as a natural out-come of this the decisions taken by the administrators become controversial. Administrators who are seen as unfair, unjust, inhumane, or capricious in their decisions usually buy themselves a great deal of trouble in their jobs. Indeed, it has been our experience that administrators are just as likely to fail because they are seen as unjust as they are to fail because they are seen as inefficient. The administrator who is unfair will soon be faced with a hostile faculty and an angry community. Ethics is part of the job. Indeed, it is an essential part of the job. Administrators deal with fairness, equality, justice, and democracy as much as they deal with test scores, teachers' salaries, parents, and budgets (Strike, 2015). It is important for the reputation of schools that they have an ethical culture. When viewed from the perspective of staff, their satisfaction and motivation will indisputably be enhanced when they feel that they are working at a school that is run with an ethical approach. Therefore, administrators should mind their ethical

responsibilities for their teachers; should respect their individual rights and should be just (Karaköse, 2017).

Every teacher should show an equal level of dignity to every person as an individual starting with their first common lesson. Teachers' respect towards the dignity of their students should also be manifested through how they fulfil their professional obligations; one of which is to clarify to the students, at the very beginning, the details of their study, the criteria of evaluation, the dates of their sessions, etc. Each lecture or seminar should start on time, and provide students with help or advice if necessary. Teachers at all levels of education should ensure the cognitive, intellectual and moral progress of their students and show them appropriate respect and appreciation. Keeping the set rules and requirements for fulfilling students' obligations and making sure that they do not change in the course of the term or school year merely through the teacher's wilful decisions is also a way of showing respect for the human dignity of students on the part of the teacher. However, a **teacher's ethical** stance is important in how they instruct and assess students, interact with colleagues, administrators, and the community. Ethical knowledge allows teachers to display moral and **ethical** values, including treating others with respect, being objective, patient, and compassionate. Teachers must respect the dignity and rights of students, deal with them justly and impartially, and recognize differences in aptitude and capabilities. Teachers have a responsibility to adhere to the highest **ethical** standards and recognize the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The **ethical** aspect of the teaching profession includes teacher professional development, quality of teaching, evaluation and monitoring, and respecting laws, regulations, collective contracts, and student rights.

The measures of ethical conduct operationalized in this study are; communication ethics, behavioural ethics and transparency. The relevance of effective communication ethics in nurturing acceptable attitudes among the teachers in the school is evident in our educational sector today. Attitudes such as job satisfaction, effectiveness, commitment and improvement, relationship, duty discharge among others have being identified to be nurtured through effective communication ethics by the administrators. Men (2015) noted that leaders' communication ethics is one of the major instrument used for productive relationship between the leaders and the followers. In the school as a social system, there exist the need to communicate effectively with the teachers, students other members of the staffs, parents, supervisors, and many more, good ethical conduct in communication would seems to enhance the effectiveness of the information being passed to the sub-ordinate and act accordingly. Communicative ethics is seen as a tool for maintaining appropriate balance between employees' responsibility and privileges. In his view Yuki (2016) said leaders are preferred sources of information of the employees and in relaying employees' grievances to the top management.

Ethical school leaders show clear behavioural boundaries within the school especially when dealing with sub-ordinate. In the school system, school administrators set behavioural boundaries for both self and the teachers with the school environment and encourage teachers to leave by the principles in their personal lives. Teachers are exceptional role models to students in the society; they tend to influence a child's behaviour next to the parent. Ethical characters leaved by a teacher could therefore drastically mutate a child's behaviour. This could be one reason why ethical school leaders should encourage and develop teacher in ethical conduct. Based on the massive

social responsibilities of school leaders; for instant they have in their responsibilities to interact with many people, including students, teachers, other member of staff, parents and external inspectors. One of the most important keys for effective school administration is the creation of a relaxed, comfortable and desirable workplace (Yirci, 2014). However, Vaman (2010) explained the ethical characters that school leaders should possess as follows: raising awareness of values, mentoring common values regularly and making sure that these are internalized, sharing responsibility, supervising himself and others with whom he shares responsibility so that they act ethically, being a role model, being honest and admirable regarding values while making decision in all procedure, training about ethics and values- Helping colleagues to acquire trust and necessary skills. Behavioural ethics of school leaders is crucial because it sets rules and customs that are acceptable within oneself and the entire organization. This focus may enhance the achievement of educational goals of producing students with standard societal values

As an ethic that spans science, engineering, business, and the humanities, transparency is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. Transparency implies openness, communication, and accountability (Yukl, 2016). Transparency is practiced in companies, organizations, administrations, and communities. For example, in a business relation, fees are clarified at the outset by a transparent agent, so there are no surprises later. This is opposed to keeping this information hidden which is non-transparent. A practical example of transparency is also when a cashier makes changes after a point of sale; they offer a transaction record of the items purchased (e.g., a receipt) as well as counting out the customer's change. In information security, transparency means keeping the arcane, underlying mechanisms hidden so as not to obstruct intended function an almost opposite sense. It principally refers to security mechanisms that are intentionally undetectable or hidden from view.

The importance of ethics in education constitutes the repository of their social and cultural values, and the medium of their historical memory. In common usage multicultural education generally refers to education about different ethnic groups. As dialogue on cultural difference and education has spread to other nations, it has become more sharply focused on complex issues of identity, diversity, and citizenship. The relationships between democracy, citizenship, and education cannot be treated in isolation from the question of multiculturalism. Several vectors of globalization have converged to raise the topic of multicultural education to the level of public, or at least professional, debate around the world today. The increasing cross-national mobility of people and the transnational communication of ideas that took place in the twenty-first century has fed into the contours of diversity around the world. It has also led to international dialogue. With increased human mobility and increasingly thick networks of communication, the common social fact of unequal educational experiences and outcomes is increasingly the subject of transnational dialogue.

Based on this premise, one could ask, is the Nigerian School system focused on normative behaviour enforced by rules and regulations led by morally driven school administrators who perform their responsibilities of moral consciousness to effect improvement in the system, or is there a sense that the school community places a value on democratic participation and on a positive, affirming relationships among all members of the school community under the school leader above any other considerations? In

order words, this study is designed to critically examine ethical conduct and effective school administration among tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian educational system today has been battered by several unethical conduct in our schools ranging from sorting, sexual molestations of varying degrees, absenteeism from work, hindering academic promotion of junior colleagues, disrespect to colleagues dignity and abuse of students' rights, amidst dealing with them unjustly and partially, among others as such do not recognize differences in aptitude and capabilities. The challenge in this research is basically obvious on the grounds that among the unethical and educational crisis against the background of rising expectations for schools and schooling in a century featured by great technological innovations, migration and globalization, there is a gap when connecting points between ethical conduct and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. Given the above the researchers sought to examine lecturers' ethical conduct and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to examine lecturers' ethical conduct and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the objective of the study includes to:

1. Investigate the relationship between lecturers' communication ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State.
2. Determine the relationship between lecturers' behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the relationship between lecturers' transparency ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

1. What is the relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significant.

1. There is no significant relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

The population of the study consists of 4,598 lecturers from the three public universities in Rivers State (RSU=1,346, IAUE= 204, Uniport= 1,248). 10% of the population (460) was used as the sample size of the study. A self-structured questionnaire titled "Lecturers' Ethical Conduct and Effective School Administration Questionnaire" was used in generating data for the study. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt, while a reliability index of 0.75 was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha Method. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions, t-transformed was used to test the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table: 1. Relationship between Communication Ethics and Effective School Administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value	Decision
Communication Ethics (X)	460	26109	695317	874931	0.82	Positive (Strong)
Effective School Administration (Y)	460	28440	726641			

Table 1 reveals the relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. The calculated $r = 0.82$ shows a strong positive relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. In essence, communication ethics ensures effective school administration improves activities in public Universities in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table: 2. Relationship between Behavioural Ethics and Effective School Administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value	Decision
Behavioural Ethics (X)	460	37035	585328	736734	0.79	Positive (Strong)
Effective School Administration (Y)	460	34622	517703			

Table 2 reveals the relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration among tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State. The calculated $r = 0.79$ shows a strong positive relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration among tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State. In essence, behavioural ethics ensures effective school administration improves activities in tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 3: Relationship between Transparency Ethics and Effective School Administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value	Decision
Transparency Ethics (X)	460	38125	863138	954722	0.76	Positive (Strong)
Effective School Administration (Y)	460	356791	841059			

Table 3 displays the relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. The calculated $r = 0.76$ shows a strong positive relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. This entails that teachers' transparency ethics enhances effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 5: t-transformed of Relationship between Communication Ethics and Effective School Administration in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Df	r-cal	t-trans	t-crit	Decision
Communication Ethics (X)	460	26109	695317	874931	458	0.82	24.77	1.96	H_0
Effective School Administration (Y)	460	28440	726641						Rejected

* Significance at 0.05 level.

In Table 4, the t-transformed value of 24.77 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 for 299 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis that "there is no significant relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration among tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State" is hereby rejected and the alternate is accepted. Thus, there is a positive relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration among tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 5: t-transformed of Relationship between Behavioural Ethics and Effective School Administration in Public Universities in Rivers State

Variables	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Df	r-cal	t-trans	t-crit	Decision
Behavioural Ethics (X)	46	3703	58532						
	0	5	8	73673	45	0.7	22.3	1.9	H_0
				4	8	9		6	
Effective School Administration (Y)	46	3462	51770						Rejected
	0	2	3						

* Significance at 0.05 level.

Table 5 displays the t-transformed value of 22.3 which is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 for 299 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State” is hereby rejected and the alternate is accepted. The implication is that there is a positive relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 6: t-transformed of Relationship between Transparency Ethics and Effective School Administration in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Variables	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Df	r-cal	t-trans	t-crit	Decision
Transparency Ethics (X)	46	3812	86313						
	0	5	8	95472	45	0.76	20.22	1.96	H_0
				2	8				
Effective School Administration (Y)	46	3567	84105						Rejected
	0	91	9						

* Significance at 0.05 level.

Table 6 displays the t-transformed value of 20.22 which is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 for 299 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State” is hereby rejected and the alternate is accepted. The implication is that there is a positive relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis of data, the research question 1 revealed the relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. Table 1 reveals the relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. The calculated $r = 0.82$ shows a strong positive relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in

public Universities in Rivers State. In essence, communication ethics ensures effective school administration improves activities in in public Universities in Rivers State. The corresponding test of hypothesis 1 established that the t-transformed value of 24.77 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 for 299 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State” is hereby rejected and the alternate is accepted. Thus, there is a positive relationship between communication ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. In line with this finding, the relevance of effective communication ethics in nurturing acceptable attitudes among the teachers in the school is evident in our educational sector today. Attitudes such as job satisfaction, effectiveness, commitment and improvement, relationship, duty discharge among others have being identified to be nurtured through effective communication ethics by the administrators. Men (2015) noted that leaders’ communication ethics is one of the major instrument used for productive relationship between the leaders and the followers. In the school as a social system, there exist the need to communicate effectively with the teachers, students other members of the staffs, parents, supervisors, and many more, good ethical conduct in communication would seems to enhance the effectiveness of the information being passed to the sub-ordinate and act accordingly. Communicative ethics is seen as a tool for maintaining appropriate balance between employees’ responsibility and privileges. In his view Yukl (2016) said leaders are preferred sources of information of the employees and in relaying employees’ grievances to the top management.

The analysis of data on research question 2 revealed the relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. The calculated $r = 0.79$ shows a strong positive relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. In essence, behavioural ethics ensures effective school administration improves activities in tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State. The corresponding test of hypothesis 2 revealed that the t-transformed value of 22.3 which is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 for 299 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State” is hereby rejected and the alternate is accepted. The implication is that there is a positive relationship between behavioural ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. In supporting this finding, Yirci (2014) opined that ethical school leaders show clear behavioural boundaries within the school especially when dealing with sub-ordinate. In the school system, school administrators set behavioural boundaries for both self and the teachers with the school environment and encourage teachers to leave by the principles in their personal lives. Teachers are exceptional role models to students in the society; they tend to influence a child’s behaviour next to the parent. Ethical characters leaved by a teacher could therefore drastically mutate a child’s behaviour. This could be one reason why ethical school leaders should encourage and develop teacher in ethical conduct. Based on the massive social responsibilities of school leaders; for instant they have in their responsibilities to interact with many people, including students, teachers, other member of staff, parents and external inspectors. One of the most important keys for effective school administration is the creation of a relaxed, comfortable and desirable workplace (Yirci, 2014). However, Vaman (2010) explained the ethical characters that

school leaders should possess as follows: raising awareness of values, mentoring common values regularly and making sure that these are internalized, sharing responsibility, supervising himself and others with whom he shares responsibility so that they act ethically, being a role model, being honest and admirable regarding values while making decision in all procedure, training about ethics and values- Helping colleagues to acquire trust and necessary skills. Behavioural ethics of school leaders is crucial because it sets rules and customs that are acceptable within oneself and the entire organization. This focus may enhance the achievement of educational goals of producing students with standard societal values.

The analysis of data on research question 3 revealed the relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. The calculated $r = 0.76$ shows a strong positive relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. This entails that teachers' transparency ethics enhances effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. The corresponding test of hypothesis 3 revealed that the t-transformed value of 20.22 which is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 for 299 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that "there is no significant relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State" is hereby rejected and the alternate is accepted. The implication is that there is a positive relationship between transparency ethics and effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State. In line with this finding, Yukl (2016) asserted, transparency is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. Transparency implies openness, communication, and accountability. Transparency is practiced in companies, organizations, administrations, and communities. For example, in a business relation, fees are clarified at the outset by a transparent agent, so there are no surprises later. This is opposed to keeping this information hidden which is non-transparent. A practical example of transparency is also when a cashier makes changes after a point of sale; they offer a transaction record of the items purchased (e.g., a receipt) as well as counting out the customer's change. In information security, transparency means keeping the arcane, underlying mechanisms hidden so as not to obstruct intended function an almost opposite sense. It principally refers to security mechanisms that are intentionally undetectable or hidden from view.

Conclusion

Educational administrators are advised to manage not simply an organization but an educational organization and its ethics. Hence the administrator should have moral responsibility and the desirable ethical standards. Having moral responsibility and ethical standards are essential elements; however without practice they have no meaning. A code of ethics in itself, of course, cannot guarantee ethical practice or to be cure-all for other problems in a profession. To have such expectations is to mistake the main purpose of a code. Finally, school administrators have a key role in managing schools and must follow codes of ethics and always think of students first in decision making. In such an ethical school environment success is a definite outcome of the educational process. Thus, the communication and behaviour of school administrators have significant influence on the performance of the teachers and in the improvement of effective school administration. The study shows that teachers tend to perform effectively when school

administrators' appropriately observe the ethics of conduct in the school. In summary, communication, behavioural and transparency have been found to have strong positive relationship with effective school administration in public Universities in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. School administrators should adopt ethical school leadership style in school administration. This will actually enhance teachers' performance not only in the classroom but also in their individual lives.
2. School administrators management effectiveness should be constantly verified by the rating of subordinate staff, those found to have low rating should undergo relegation. This will enable administrators to invest their best in teachers and school improvement.
3. Government should improve professional development such as administrators, conference, seminars, and workshops among school principals to ensure constant improvement in secondary schools.
4. Ethical school leadership should be adopted as one of the measures in determining the effectiveness of a teacher in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

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