
Impact of Environmental Pressure on Principals' Management of Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District

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Abstract

The stud sought to examine the impact of environmental pressures on school management by principals of public secondary schools in the North West senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The need for the study was informed by the varying socio-economic conditions that interfere with the daily running of the secondary schools. Four research questions and four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A survey instrument titled Environmental Pressure and Principals' Management Style (EPPMS) using likert scale was developed by the researchers to collect data from 30 principals, randomly selected in the zone, to form the sample of the population made up of 86 principals. Descriptive statistic (mean) and the chi square were used in analyzing the data. The hypotheses were tested at 5% (0.05) level of significance. The study revealed pressures from the community, staff members, students and public agencies which in tackling the principals generally liaised with the board for secondary

education. Recommendations were made to raise managerial efficiency by increasing schools/communities interactions.

Day – to – day management of schools resides with the school heads with the support of their administrative assistants. In secondary schools, the principals are at the helms of management. Such managers are influenced by environmental pressures prevalent in the school system. Okoroma (2001:1) saw management and administration as being the same are thus used interchangeably. Agreeing with Okeke, Okoroma avers that “educational administration is a process of bringing men and materials together for effective teaching and learning.” He states that educational management is also a process which is concerned with using methods, principles and practices to establish develop and execute goals, policies, plans and procedures necessary to achieve the objective of education.

Just as in every organization, school management has to do with personnel management – the managing of human beings. The human resources of any school comprise the staff, students, parents and members of the community where the school is located.

Another factor in school management is finance. Management of school also has to do with physical materials produced and used by the school. In economics, management of finance and materials could be described as management of capital. As in any other industry, school manager manages both assets and liabilities. However, Spillane (2003:3) saw

Another factor in school management is finance. Management of school also has to do with physical materials produced and used by the school. In economics, management of finance and materials could be described as management of capital. As in any other industry, the school manager manages both assets and liabilities. However, Spillane (2003:3) saw personnel as capital and argue that a person's knowledge, skills and expertise acquired through the development of skills and capabilities and people to perform in new ways is capital.

Some schools, especially rural schools in the country are always short of staff. Some key subjects such as English, Mathematics and basic sciences do not only face shortage of teachers but also lack laboratory equipment. This kind of situation often exerts much pressure on the school management (Nwagwu, (1997). Onyejemezie (1991:67) agreeing with Wheeler, stated that a systematic integration in teaching learning process of variety of resources in a teaching-learning situation

produces appropriate learning experiences which in turn result in effective or meaningful learning.

Ikot Ekpene senatorial district, otherwise known as North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State comprises Abak, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Ika, Ikono, Ikot Ekpene, Ini, ObotAkara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun Local Government Areas. There are 86 secondary schools in the Senatorial District. Like in many secondary schools in the country, there are different Management styles in the various secondary schools as determined by the probe-and the dexterity of the principal.

Environmental pressure on the management of a school can arise from the needs of the environmental make-ups, agitation, power struggle, oppression, inequity or even attempts to correct misdemeanor. Efanga (2001:110) acknowledged that "where a school lacks adequate facilities, sufficient and qualitative members of staff, conducive learning environment etc, there is bound to be disorder in the system". He points out that administrative lapses bring about pressure on the management.

Environmental pressure does not, however, have to be seen as only opposition to the management. It does also have to do with the peculiarity of an environment, which in turn has a role to play on the principal's management style. The different environmental components with their peculiarities variously exert some kind of pressure on the management style of a school principal (Umoren 2001:99). Nwagwu (1997:88) observed that Nigerian educational system as a whole is vulnerable to environmental pressure because of the unorganized nature of the environmental and educational systems themselves.

The internal environment comprises the management staff, other staff (faculty and non-teaching), students and school facilities. All these groups, resources and infrastructure may in one form or another put pressure on the management of a school either collectively or individually. The school principal must be versatile in order to overcome environmental pressures since there are myriad of them from school to school.

Poor performance by the teachers can translate into pressure if the principal of a school fails in his job to embark on regular routine checks (Ladipo 2000:31). Such poor performance, if found in a number of teachers, is in itself a pressure on the management. In order to scale the pressure, an efficient principal must evolve methods of improving the teachers' performances. A serious principal must point out the poor performances of the teachers and proceed to effect remedial measures. Naturally, he may face stiff opposition from such group of poorly performing teachers (Menlo and Poppleton, 1990:245, Adegoroye 1999:62).

In Nigeria, cases of students' unrest have been reported in secondary schools. Students sometimes, confront school management because of alleged poor facilities. Some students enter into anti-social behaviour, deliberate act of defiance and sheer lack of respect for school authorities because of home background, social relationship etc. Efang (2001:109) classified these as "disruptive behaviour". In an institution where disruptive behaviours are among students, the likelihood is that such disruptive behaviours exert extreme pressures on the management. In order to deal with such pressures, a school principal has to evolve a style of management that is responsive to such pressures.

Roland and Galloway (2002:266-301) argued that a failure in teacher's management of class can lead to students bullying other students. Bullying has been with the school system for a long time. It creates unfriendly situation among students. One needs not to be told the kind of pressure, disaffection among staff and students can put on a school management. Omoregie (1992:276-277) saw lateness to school as a major administrative problem in Nigerian Secondary Schools, He stresses that in the case of lateness to school by both staff and students in the secondary school, much pressures are put on the administrative machinery of the schools. Some government policies are sources of pressures on management of school. Also, environmental pressure arising from economic perspective may evolve from how prudently a school principal manages the funds allocated to the school. Sometimes management of a school can be affected by the way the P.T.A. executive and the school principal agree or disagree over the use of funds. These are only few examples of economically induced environmental pressures.

Social environmental pressure can always be identified among students with their peers. Secondary school students are mainly found in the adolescent age bracket, which exposes them to various anti-social behaviours. Such social vices as smoking, rape, drug abuse and addiction, cultism and flagrant disloyalty to school authorities are issues that put pressure on the management of schools.

Statement of the Problem

In different places, managers of schools are daily faced with diverse environmental pressures Pressure sometimes can be internal or external. Any wrong management of pressure can lead to a crisis situation in any school. There are many instances of conflicts among staff, between management and staff, between staff and students, among students or even between school and community in North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. There are expressions of bewilderment among principals within the study area. Possibly, environmental pressure explains why some secondary school principals in the senatorial district have not performed as expected.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the impact of environmental pressures on management of public secondary schools in the North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria the objectives of the study were to:

- i. Examine the extent to which management of the school is influenced by pressure from the community that the school is located.
- ii. Determine how pressure from staff can determine a principal's style of management
- iii. Determine whether other public agencies exert pressure on the management by the principals of secondary schools.
- iv. Examine the extent to which pressure from students can affect a principals' management style.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

- i. What are the community factors that serve as environmental pressure on principals' management style of schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District?
- ii. What are the staff factors that constitute environmental pressure on principals' management style of schools in the North -West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. What are the students' factors that constitute environmental pressure on the principals' management style of schools in North - West Senatorial District of Akwa-Ibom State?
- iv. What are the public agency factors that serve as environmental pressure on the principals' management style of schools in North-West Senatorial District of Akwa -Ibom State?

Hypotheses

The following four hypotheses were tested at 5% alpha level.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between school principals' Management style and factors of environmental pressure from the community where the school is located in the North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between factors of environmental pressure from staff and principals' management style in schools in North-West Senatorial District in Akwa Ibom State.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between factors of environmental pressure from government agencies and principal's management style in schools in North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between factors of environmental pressure from students and principals' management style in schools in North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Method

The study adopted the opinion survey research method. The likert scale was adopted to prepare a questionnaire which was used to collect data from 30 school principals randomly selected from the target population of 86 school principals.

Instrumentation: Data for the study were collected using a Likert scale questionnaire. The instrument titled Environmental Pressure and Principal's Management Style (EPPMS) had 24 items, eight of which measured management styles while 16 measured the sources of pressure. The items were assigned a four points scale according to how significantly the principals weighed the items either as pressure sources or management styles. Strong agreement was assigned four and strong disagreement assigned one. Agreement was three, disagreement two and indecision assigned zero. Content validation was secured by scrupulous review of what constitutes management pressures and management options available to secondary school principals. Consultations with experts on survey instrument were made. To verify reliability, the instrument was administered on 20 persons including recently retired principals, vice principals and senior staff of Local Education Committee within the geo-political zone. The split-half test yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87 which was considered adequate for the study.

Data Analyses

Data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using means, percentages and chi-square. The means and percentages were used to answer the research questions while calculated chi-square values were used to test the hypotheses at 5% significant level as is applicable in the social sciences. .

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study that give answers to the research questions and are used to test the hypotheses are as contained in the following tables and comments.

Table 1: Principals Responses on Community Factors that Serve as Environmental Pressure

S/No	Item	Tot	SA(4	A(3)	U(0	D(2)	SD(1)	Me	Remark
(a)	Encroachment on school property	30	16 (64)	(30)	1(0)	2(2)	1(1)	3.3	Accepted
(b)	Resistance to enforcement of disciplinary measures	30	9(36)	5(15)	6(0)	8(16)	2(2)	2.3	Accepted
(c)	Communal conflicts and hostilities constitute pressure	30	3(12)	5(15)	4(0)	8(16)	10(10)	2.0	Accepted
(d)	Non attendance of meetings (PTA) to address issues about the school constitutes pressure on school Principals' management of the school.	30	7(28)	3(9)	6(0)	5(10)	9(9)	2.0	Accepted

The mean scores of 3.3, 2.3, 2.0 and 2.0 correspond respectively to 82.5%, 57.5%, 50.0% and 50.0% endorsement that the items were sources of pressure on the principals

Hence encroachment on school property, resistance to enforcement of disciplinary measures, communal conflicts and hostilities and non attendance of meetings called by the parents-teachers association were identified as community factors that serve as environmental pressure on principals.

Table 2: Principals Responses on Staff Factors that Serve as Environmental Pressure on Principals' Management Style

S/No	Item	Total	SA(4)	A(3)	U(0)	D(2)	SD (1)	Mean	Remark
a.	Absenteeism from school and official duties constitutes pressure from staff of the school	30	12 (48)	11 (33)	2(0)	3(3)	2(4)	2.9	Accepted
b.	Staff opposition to management decisions constitutes pressure on school principal's management of the school	30	9(36)	5(15)	4(0)	5(10)	7(7)	2.3	Accepted
c.	Staff incompetency in carrying out official duties constitutes pressure on principals' management of the schools	30	6(24)	3(9)	6(0)	7(14)	8(8)	2.0	Accepted
d.	Sexual harassment among staff and on students constitutes pressure on principals management of the school	30	3(12)	4(12)	5(0)	10(20)	8(8)	2.0	Accepted

The mean scores of 2.9, 2.3, 2.0 and 2.0 correspond respectively to 72.5%, 57,50%, and 50.% endorsement that the items were sources of pressure from members of staff. Hence the study showed that absenteeism from school, staff opposition to management decision, incompetency and sexual harassment among staff and students were strong factors that constituted environmental pressure on principals of schools within the Akwa Ibom North-West senatorial district. This answers research question number two.

Table 3: Principals' Responses on Student Factors which Constitute Environmental Pressure on Principals' Management Style

S/No	Item	Total	SA(4)	A(3)	U(0)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	Remark
a.	Students' lateness to school serves as pressure on principals management of schools	30	13(52)	9(27)	3(0)	2(4)	3(3)	2.9	Accepted
b.	Students loitering during school hours serves as pressures on principals management of students	30	9(36)	7(21)	2(0)	5(10)	7(2)	2.5	Accepted
c.	Students cult activities serve as pressure on principals' management of schools	30	0(0)	2(6)	7(7)	13(26)	8(8)	1.6	Rejected
d.	Students opposition to school rules serves as pressure on principals management of school	30	8(32)	4(12)	6(0)	5(10)	7(7)	2.0	Accepted
e.	Examination malpractice among students serves as pressure on principals management of schools	30	7(28)	7(21)	4(0)	3(6)	9(0)	2.1	accepted

The mean scores of 2.9, 2.5, 1.6, 2.0 and 2.1 correspond respectively to 72.5%, 62.5%, 40% and 50% endorsement of the items as sources of pressure from the students. Hence in answer to research question three the findings show students' lateness to schools, loitering among students, students' opposition to rules and examination malpractice were identified as students borne factors constituting environmental pressure on principals as they strive to manage public secondary schools in the senatorial district. Cultism among students was rejected as a source of pressure.

The Intuition

Table4. Principal’s Responses on Public Agency Factors Which Serve as Environmental Pressure on Principal’s Management Style

S/No	Items	Total	SA(4)	A(3)	U(0)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	Remark
a.	Insufficient staff posting and transfer constitutes pressure on principals management of schools	30	12(48)	10(30)	2(0)	4(8)	2(2)	2.9	Accepted
b.	Inappropriate disciplinary members meted to staff at defiant situations constitutes pressure on principals management of school	30	10(40)	8(24)	4(0)	3(6)	5(5)	2.5	Accepted
c.	Irregular position of government on management of schools serves as pressure on principals management of schools	30	16(64)	14(42)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3.5	Accepted

The mean scores of 2.9, 2.5 and 3.5 correspond respectively to 72.5%, 62.5% and 87.5% endorsement of the items as sources of pressure from public agencies. Accordingly, research question four is answered that staff insufficiency, inappropriate staff discipline and irregular position of government on school management were recognized as public agency environmental pressures on principals of schools in the zone.

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Table 5: The Calculated and Critical X² Values of the Responses

Source of pressure	Cal. X ²	Significance of critic X ²	Of
Community borne environmental pressure	26.03	7.81	3
Staff borne pressure	20.65	7.81	3
Pressure from government agency	28.16	9.49	4
Pressure from students	19.12	5.99	2

The table shows that the calculated X² values for the various sources of pressure exceeded the critical X² values at 5% level of significance. The null hypotheses formulated to guide the study were therefore rejected.

The study showed that depending on the source of pressure and its severity the principals adopted management styles reflected in the following table of responses.

Table 6: Management Styles or Strategies of the Principals

S/No	Item	Total	SA(4)	A(3)	U(0)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	Remark
a.	Principals report to the state secondary education board regularly	30	10(40)	16(48)	2(0)	2(8)	-	3.2	Remark
b.	Principals hold management meetings at local education committees to brainstorm on common or specific problems	30	25(10)	5(15)	-(0)	-(0)	-(0)	3.8	Accepted and used
c.	Principals summon P.T.A and leaders of thought meetings to deal with thorny issues	30	8(32)	10(30)	2(0)	5(10)	5(5)	2.57	Accepted
d.	Staff meetings are held regularly as the		3(32)	10(30)	2(0)	6(12)	4(4)	2.6	Accepted and used

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	need arises to rub minds and inform members of government policies								
e.	Suggestion boxes are maintained to solicit public opinion		2(8)	6(18)	6(0)	10(20)	6(6)	1.73	Rejected and unused
f.	School maintain students' consultative assemblies		0(0)	4(12)	5(0)	11(22)	10(10)	1.47	Rejected and unused
g.	Principals maintain interactive meetings with students, staff and community members individually or in small groups		6(24)	10(30)	4(0)	7(14)	3(3)	2.4	Accepted and used
h.	Discipline according to rules are administered when necessary		4(16)	8(24)	4(0)	10(20)	4(4)	2.1	Accepted and minimally used

The table shows the managerial preference of principals towards liaison with the State Secondary Education Board and its Local Education Committees. These two scored 3.2 and 3.8 respectively on a scale of 4. Principals use the Parents Teachers Association and staff meetings that scored 2.57 and 2.60 respectively to manage appropriate situations. However the principals failed to use some admirable management styles that scored below 2.0 marks.

Discussion of the Findings

The study showed that principals in the zone are confronted with managerial pressures from the communities that the schools are located, from members of staff, from students and from other public agencies. The major pressure from the communities the schools are located was encroachment on school property which scored 82.5%. From staff members, the study identified absenteeism as the primary pressure and this was scored 72.5%. Lateness to school was identified as a key source of pressure from students. This scored 72.5% while irregular position of

government on management of schools that scored 87.5% was the prime pressure from public agencies.

Encroachment on school land among other facilities fit with the largely agrarian nature of the communities that make up the geo-political zone. This agrees generally with Umoren (2001:99) earlier cited. Lateness and absenteeism by students and staff members together with irregular position of government lend credence to the unorganized nature of the society in the words of Nwagwu (1997:88) Irregular position of government has to do with such items as staff recruitment, emoluments, posting and supply of material inputs.

What stops land boundaries from being properly marked and offenders punished to deter future misdemeanors? Can boarding schools be positively re-visited and quarters provided for key staff members? Answers to these, if positive, will minimize the pressures and raise efficiency. Having to commute long distances to school relates to lateness though not necessarily causal. The paper opines that some felt pressures can be minimized by properly co-ordinated policies and actions.

Summary of Findings

There exist managerial pressures confronting secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district. Pressures come from the immediate community where the schools situate, students, staff members and other government agencies. Generally the principals liaise with the state board for secondary education to resolve serious issues.

Conclusion

The study has proved that principals of secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North West senatorial district do have pressure from communities where the schools are sited. This pressure can be seen from diverse angles including encroachment on school property and resistance to enforcement of disciplinary measure by school authorities on students from the community. Also principals in secondary schools in the senatorial district face pressure from staff of the institutions where they manage. Such pressures, among others include opposition to management decisions and sexual harassment towards female students. More importantly, the study has revealed that all the principals in the senatorial district experience in almost similar ways, interference from government agencies and school communities. This emanates from who should take what administrative decisions - principals, government agencies or school communities. Such decisions mostly border on levies, postings, transfers and discipline of staff and students. The study shows that lateness to school, loitering during school hours and examination malpractice are chief sources of pressure from

students faced by principals of secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Recommendations

Since environmental pressure as a determinant of a principals' management style should be better seen as a management strategy, the following are recommended to guide the principals so that they adopt management styles which suit the types of pressures.

1. Principals of schools in the senatorial district should have adequate interaction with the communities where schools are sited in order to create awareness on issues that border on good relationship between the communities and the school management.
2. Regular staff meetings where issues affecting staff and management are addressed can help reduce opposition from staff. Principals of secondary schools should know that as managers of schools, they are responsible for the day-to-day running of the schools. As such, whatever seems interference with the management of the schools, from any quarter should be sorted out appropriately through, the due process.
3. Matters of student discipline should be adhered to strictly. This is to say that secondary school principals in the senatorial district should not compromise on standard of discipline. When this is done students would be able to appreciate the outcome of their misbehaviour.
4. More interactive arena should be set up whereby one on one meetings, small group meetings, suggestion boxes, hotlines are available for the free flow of information.

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