Managing Social Capital for Effective Public Secondary School Administration in Rivers State

Nelson, Mary Omonhenne

*Institute of Agricultural Research
and Development
University of Port Harcourt*

Keywords:

Social capital, School
Administration,
Public Secondary
School.

Corresponding Author:

Nelson, Mary Omonhenne

Abstract

This study examined managing social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state, Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided this study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised all the 542 public secondary schools in Rivers state, Nigeria. A sample of 230 principals representing 42% of the population served as the study respondents. This sample was selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A validated likert-modified 4-scale 15 item instrument titled: 'Managing social capital for effective public secondary school administration questionnaire (MSCEPSSAQ) was used for data collection and its reliability coefficient was established at 0.87 using the Cronbach Alpha Correlation coefficient. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions while the z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed that: principal's ability to get along with other members of staff, increased principal's appropriateness in gathering and sharing information in the school, school's active participation in community development such as providing possible employment for qualified community indigenes in schools, are some of the ways social capital can be managed for effective school administration in Rivers state, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended among others that in order to maintain good relationship among staff and educational stakeholders, public school principals should endeavor to hold regular meetings.

Background to the Study

The Latin origin of the term 'education' notwithstanding, it is a term that infers learning and synonymous to instruction, schooling, teaching, training, culture and improvement; amongst other terms. Overtime, scholars including Garba (2017), Adiele, Leigha and Abraham (2010) have defined education from different perspectives as proven by various literatures. However, education basically refers to the acquisition of 'necessary' knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities. It aims at the recipient's empowerment hence, serves as an important instrument to the economic and political growth of any nation. Generally, as stated by Ejiogu, Onyene and Egbagbara (2017), education is a people's processing industry which outputs are the major factors of production (labour and management) required for the success of other industries in every economy. This implies that education is the determining factor for societal change and development. Reviewing the foregoing however, it can be deduced that the role of education in the development of man and modern society cannot be overemphasized hence, the constant declarations, reformation and restructuring of educational system globally with the Nigerian educational system not an exception.

Nigerian educational system is specifically stratified into three (3) main levels – the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. Broadly, it takes into cognizance, basic and post-basic education. The basic education comprises the pre-primary, primary and junior secondary education while the post-basic education encompasses the senior secondary education, higher school and continuing education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Notwithstanding, the focus of this study, is on the secondary level of education. This is because this level of education has been proven to involve teenagers who can easily be influenced by happenings in their surroundings. Specifically, the secondary level of education is the character moulding and building stage for teenagers while they yet acquire knowledge and skills, therefore, the need for adequate catering both within and outside the school environment. This implies that the secondary level of education is a very critical level of education. Buttressing the afore-stated, Ejiogu, Onyene and Egbagbara (2017) described secondary level of education as that level where learners are prepared for integration into the mainstream of the society while also serving as the bedrock on which higher education is built.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that secondary education in Nigeria encompasses both junior and senior secondary schools. However, given to the established fact that Nigeria practices a mixed economy (an economic system combining private and state enterprise), secondary schools in Nigeria are either government owned (public secondary schools) or private individual owned (private secondary schools). Hence, the existence of public and private secondary schools in Nigeria. Ownership of secondary schools notwithstanding, in the course of achieving national development vis-à-vis education, Adesulu (2010), postulated that school administration play an important role in determining the outcome of secondary education especially public secondary schools which contribute in determining to a large extent, the standard of education in Nigeria. Basically, public schools are the indices by which a country's educational growth and development is measured thus, the need to constantly strive for excellence in public secondary education via adequate planning and proper

management of available resources achievable by competent teachers and school administrators in the course of school administration. The foregoing however suggests that school administration is inherent in a school aiming at achieving educational goals.

Albeit, school administration proposes the need to galvanize the actions of the human resource (personnel) to achieve pre-determined goals, using material resources as tools. According to Abraham (2013), school administration can be defined as the coordination of the human and material resources within the school for optimal achievement of the pre-determined objectives of education. It involves managing all school operations including the learning environment, staff and school budget. Nonetheless, it is a known fact that in secondary schools, the principals are at the helm of affairs with regards to school administration thus, are charged with the responsibility of implementing educational policies and programmes. This major role of a principal serves as a determinant for effective secondary school administration. The implication of this assertion however is that effective secondary school administration is dependent on principals' efficient implementation of educational plans, policies and programmes (Peretomode, 2014).

Effective secondary school administration therefore refers to the process of principals overseeing the affairs of the school aimed at improving the professional growth of teachers, the school's curriculum and improving the techniques of teaching in the classroom (Okendu, 2012). It involves principal's operational role of directing and coordinating his subordinates, defining objectives, evaluating performances of both staff and students, providing a conducive environment for both teaching and learning as well as maintaining peace and stability in the school. Clearly, it can be deduced that effective secondary school administration is anchored on a democratic interaction between the principal and teachers of a secondary school. The existence of such interaction or relationship between principal and teachers in a school indicates the existence of a networking or interacting system referred to as 'social capital'.

Social capital is the auspices of all networks of relationships among people who work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Bourdieu (1986), defined social capital as the sum of potential benefits brought on by communication and relationships within purposeful long-term social networks. In a similar vein, Nelson (2018) described social capital as a form of economic and cultural resources in which social networks are dominant; school activities are marked by trust and cooperation among principals, teachers, students and all other school workers within the school. Viewing social capital in respect of existing relationships in schools, it can be asserted that social capital refers to links, shared values and understandings that enable individuals and groups within the school trust each other while working together. Nevertheless, Halpern (2005) identified three types of social capital: bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital.

Bonding social capital describes the links between like-minded people or the reinforcement of homogeneity (Schuller, Baron and Field, 2000). It describes the ties between people in similar situations (Woolcock 2001:13). Examples of bonding social capital relationships

include family members, neighbours and friends. Bridging social capital can be referred to as building of connections between heterogeneous groups which are likely to be more fragile but more likely also to foster social inclusion (Schuller, Baron and Field, 2000). This type of social capital covers distant ties of like persons such as colleagues at workplaces (Woolcock 2001:13). Linking social capital reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations such as those who are entirely outside members; to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community. (Woolcock 2001:13). Example is creating social relationship with leaders or government officials.

Reviewing the afore-definitions of social capital and description of its types in line with secondary school administration, it can be asserted that in the course of school administration, social capital impacts on secondary school goals through the rudiments of relationship including effective communication, trust, cooperation and cohesiveness among principals, teachers, parents, students and other members of school staff thus, the need to manage social capital. Managing social capital in secondary schools involves managing groups within the school, maintaining trust among staff, advocating for cooperation among staff, maintaining social cohesion and maintaining effective communication among members of staff in the school. It is the act of managing all forms of social networks and resources for the smooth running of a school. Basically, managing social capital in secondary schools involves managing all bonding, bridging and linking relationships within the school and her community thereby fostering effective secondary education. This paper therefore examined the ways social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Statement of the Problem

The existence of social capital in organizations is undisputable. However, conscious efforts to duly recognize its functions and benefits in school administration, leading to its management particularly in public secondary schools, is arguable. This is evident in the weak administrative role and decision-making processes of a large number of principals in Rivers state public secondary schools including Government Girls Secondary School, Rumuokwuta; Government Secondary School, Emohua; Sancta-Maria Boys Secondary School, Omoku; Government Secondary School, Okoro-nu-odo amongst others. These schools hitherto, are bedeviled by conflicts such as students-students clash, school-community clash, teachers-students clash, parents-teachers clash amongst others. Consistent re-occurrence of these conflicts as observed and reported by primary sources, prove the need for effective secondary school administration in Rivers state where relationships at all levels are recognized and involved in decision-making processes. This paper therefore aimed at examining how social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Theoretical Framework

The stakeholders' theory propounded by Edward Freeman in 1984 was used as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory asserts that stakeholders are groups and individuals who can affect and be affected by the achievement of an organization's mission; each of the stakeholder groups has a right not to be treated as a means to some end, therefore should and

must participate in determining the future direction of the company which they have a stake in. This theory provides a logical explanation to this study in that managing social capital for effective school administration recognizes the stakeholders' focus on participation, inclusion, involvement and partnership of school management (anchored by principals), teachers and all other stakeholders of public secondary schools in decision making processes aimed at bringing about a healthy relationship for achieving the goals of secondary education in Rivers state.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of this study was to examine managing social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.
2. Ascertain the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.
3. Determine the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the ways of managing bonding social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state?
2. What are the ways of managing bridging social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state?
3. What are the ways of managing linking social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided this study:

$H0_1$ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

$H0_2$ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals on the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

$H0_3$ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Methodology

This research adopted the descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Rivers state, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the public secondary schools in Rivers State consisting of 542 principals (328 male and 214 female principals; 385 experienced and 157 less experienced principals) (Source: Rivers state

Ministry of Education, 2022). A sample size of 230 principals (153 males and 77 females; 136 experienced and 94 less experienced) representing 42% of the population was selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A 15item 4-point Likert type scale researcher-structured questionnaire titled 'Managing Social Capital for Effective Public Secondary School Administration Questionnaire (MSCEPSSAQ)' was validated and used for data collection. A reliability index of0.87 was established using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the ways of managing bonding social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state?

Table 1: Weighted mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of male and female principals on the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

S/N	Ways bonding social capital can be managed include by	Male Principals =153		Female Principals=77		Mean set $(x_1 x_2)$	Rank	Remarks
		$\overline{x}_1$	SD_1	$\overline{x}_2$	SD_2			
1	Cultivating the trust that facilitates collaborative action in the school	4.33	1.82	3.22	1.70	3.78	1st	Accepted
2	Capitalizing on unstructured relationship-building moments like principals eating lunch with a group of students in the cafeteria	4.12	1.77	2.91	1.71	3.52	2nd	Accepted
3	Principals' ability to get along with other members of staff, students and parents	2.87	1.66	2.93	1.71	2.90	3rd	Accepted
4	Encouraging students to support one another in person	2.56	1.60	2.77	1.67	2.67	4th	Accepted
5	Engaging students in extracurricular opportunities	2.58	1.61	2.63	1.62	2.61	5th	Accepted
		16.46	8.46	14.46	8.41	15.48		
	Aggregate Mean	**3.29**	**1.69**	**2.89**	**1.68**	**3.10**		

The data on table 1 above shows that all the items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 with weighted mean scores of 3.78. 3.52, 2.90, 2.67 and 2.61 respectively are above the criterion mean of 2.50 hence, were adjudged as the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. Nevertheless, the aggregate mean score of 3.10above the criterion means of 2.50 however showed a high level of acceptance by principals on the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Research Question 2: What are the ways of managing bridging social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state?

Table 2: Weighted mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of experienced and less experienced principals on the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

S/N	Ways bridging social capital can be managed include by	Experienced Principals = 136		Less experienced Principals = 94		Mean set (x_1x_2)	Rank	Remarks
		$\overline{x}_1$	SD$_1$	$\overline{x}_2$	SD$_2$			
1	Increasing teachers' ability to gather and share information in the school	2.56	1.60	1.61	1.27	2.09	5th	Rejected
2	Enhancing principals' ability to better recognize new opportunities in handling issues that may arise among different groups in the school	3.81	1.75	3.34	1.76	3.58	1st	Accepted
3	Increasing tolerance and acceptance of different people, values and beliefs through contact with diverse others.	3.27	1.69	2.73	1.65	3.00	4th	Accepted
4	Allowing different groups to exchange ideas and innovation among staff	3.61	1.69	3.31	1.74	3.46	2nd	Accepted
5	Building consensus among groups representing diverse interests	3.82	1.70	2.42	1.52	3.12	3rd	Accepted
		17.07	8.43	13.41	7.94	15.25		
Aggregate Mean		**3.41**	**1.69**	**2.68**	**1.59**	**3.05**		

Result from table 2 above shows that items; 7, 9, 10 and 8 have weighted mean scores 3.58, 3.46, 3.12 and 3.00 above 2.50 hence, were adjudged as the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. Item 8 with weighted mean score of 2.09 below the criterion mean indicates that increasing teachers' ability to gather and share information is not a way of managing bridging social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. Nonetheless, the aggregate mean score of 3.05 is above the criterion mean score of 2.50 indicating that principals accepted the above items as ways of managing bridging social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Research Question 3: What are the ways of managing linking social capital for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state?

Table 3: Weighted mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of male and female principals on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

S/N	Ways linking social capital can be managed include by	Male Principals = 153		Female Principals = 77		Mean set (x_1x_2)	Rank	Remarks
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD$_1$	$\bar{x}_2$	SD$_2$			
1	Using linking social capital as an access to resources and power outside the school	2.65	1.63	3.09	1.76	2.87	3rd	Accepted
2	Recommending community members where schools are sited, for possible employment	4.02	1.74	2.77	1.67	3.40	2nd	Accepted
3	Opening up opportunities to be heard for those belonging to excluded groups	2.36	1.17	1.61	1.27	1.99	5th	Rejected
4	Enabling school's active participation in community development	4.18	1.78	3.14	1.60	3.66	1st	Accepted
5	Encouraging non-government organizations to implement projects	2.89	1.70	2.59	1.61	2.74	4th	Accepted
		16.10	8.02	13.20	7.91	14.66		
Aggregate Mean		**3.22**	**1.60**	**2.64**	**1.58**	**2.93**		

The result on table 3 above reveals that items 14, 12, 11 and 15 with mean scores 3.66, 3.40, 2.87 and 2.74 respectively were accepted by principals on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. Item 13 with mean score 1.99 was however rejected as a way linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. The aggregate mean score of 2.93 above the criterion mean score of 2.50 indicates that principals accepted that there are ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Test of Hypotheses

H0$_1$ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Table 4: z-test analysis on the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Category	N	X	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Remarks
Male	153	3.29	1.69				
Female	77	2.89	1.68	228	2.78	1.96	significant

The data on table 4 above reveals that at 0.05 level of significance and 228 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-value of 2.78 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96 hence, the null hypothesis was rejected indicating that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers State.

H02   There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals on the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Table 5: z-test analysis on the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals on the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Category	N	X	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Remarks
Experienced	136	3.41	1.69				
Less experienced	94	2.68	1.59	228	2.08	1.96	significant

The table 5 above reveals that the calculated z-value of 2.08 is greater than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals on the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

$H0_3$ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Table 6: z-test analysis on the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Category	N	X	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Remarks
Male	153	3.22	1.60				
Female	77	2.64	1.58	228	2.43	1.96	significant

Table 6 above showed that with a degree of freedom of 228 and at an alpha significant level of 0.05, the z-calculated value of 2.43 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96. This means that the null hypothesis was rejected. By implications, there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Discussion of Findings
Firstly, it was found that cultivating the trust that facilitates collaborative action in the school, capitalizing on unstructured relationship-building moments like principals eating lunch with a group of students in the cafeteria, principals' ability to get along with other members of staff, students and parents, encouraging students to support one another in person and engaging students in extracurricular opportunities are the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers State. Nevertheless, a corresponding finding from hypothesis one established that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of principals on the ways bonding social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. The above findings agree with Iheanacho (2002) who asserted that bonding social capital involves deepening existing relationship in schools as can be seen in teachers having game times with students and principals deliberately waiting and greeting students at the hallway amongst others. This implies that as proven by the above findings, ways bonding social capital can be managed in public secondary schools in Rivers state, advocates that principals adopt ways of deepening existing relationships between them, teachers and students.

Secondly, it was revealed that the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration include enhancing principals' ability to better recognize new opportunities in handling issues that may arise among different groups in the school, increasing tolerance and acceptance of different people, values and beliefs through contact with diverse others, allowing different groups to exchange ideas and innovation among staff and building consensus among groups representing diverse interests. Similarly, a corresponding hypothesis finding established a significant difference between the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals on the ways bridging social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state. These findings agree with Anderson (2019) who asserted that in managing bridging social capital in schools, experienced male and female principals adopt a vertical positive relationship between schools, inter school relationships while also ensuring a weak and divisible ties between schools in avoiding conflicts.

Finally, the finding of this study on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary administration in Rivers state is in consonance with Sunday (2020) in her study on the relationship between classroom learning outcomes and principals' administration. It was however found that the ways of managing linking social capital for effective public secondary school administration include using linking social capital as an access to resources and power outside the school, recommending community members where schools are sited, for possible employment, enabling school's active participation in

community development and encouraging non-government organizations to implement projects. Similarly, a corroborating finding from hypothesis testing established a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the ways linking social capital can be managed for effective public secondary school administration in Rivers state.

Conclusion
This study has revealed that managing social capital has a positive influence on public secondary schools' administration in Rivers state, Nigeria. The vertical and horizontal relationships that exist in public secondary schools if not adequately managed, cannot be attributed to the effectiveness of principals which often than not, is evident in students' academic performances and conflict management. This implies that managing social capital is one of the determinants of effective school administration hence, the need for principals in Rivers state to keep working out modalities or ways of managing bonding, bridging and linking in secondary schools.

Recommendations
1. Public school principals should endeavor to hold regular meetings with staff and secondary school stakeholders in order to establish and maintain good relationships.
2. Principals should encourage increased tolerance and acceptance among themselves and teachers in relating with their colleagues from other schools.
3. Educational stakeholders should encourage community-school development through government and non-government organizations' interventions.

References
Abraham, N. (2013). *Educational administration in Nigeria,* Port Harcourt: Pam Unique Publishing Coy. Ltd.

Adesulu, D. (2010). Who cares for public schools in Nigeria? *Vanguard Newspaper.* Retrieved from http://www.vanguardngr.com/who-cares-for-public-schools-in-Nigeria/amp

Adiele, E. E., Leigha, M. B., & Abraham, L. N. (2010). *Introduction to teaching profession.* Port-Harcourt: Harey Publications Coy.

Anderson, M. (2019). *Managing principal-student's relationships on secondary schools' performance in Bayelsa state,* Unpublished M.Sc. Dissertation, Delta State University, Abraka.

Bourdieu, P (1986). The forms of social capital. In J. Richardson (Eds.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* (241-258). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Ejiogu, A., Onyene, V & Egbagbara. A (2017.) Principals' emotional intelligence for the effective management of secondary schools in an era of economic recession. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development, 9* (3), 111-119.

Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2014). *National policy on education,* Abuja: NERDC Press.

Freeman, E. N. (1984). Social capital and nonprofit leaders. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership Journal, 14* (4), 471 – 487.

Garba, A. M. (2017). Managing secondary education in an era of economic recession in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development, 9* (2), 55-62.

Halpern, D. (2005). *Social capital,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Iheanacho, G. U. (2002). *Relationship between managing educational resources and organizational climate in the administration of secondary schools in Rivers state,* Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Port-Harcourt, Port-Harcourt.

Nelson, M. (2018). *Managing social capital for effective secondary school administration in Lagos state,* Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Port-Harcourt, Port-Harcourt.

Okendu, J. N. (2012). The role of school board, school heads and parent-teacher's association in the effective management of public schools, *Journal of Education and Practice 3,* 8-15.

Peretomode, V. (2014). *Theories of management: Implications for educational administration,* Abraka: University Printing Press.

Schuller, T., Baron, S. & Field, J. (2000). *Social capital: A review and critic.* In S. Baron, J. Field & T. Schuller (Eds.), *Social capital.* Oxford: Oxford Univac Press.

Sunday, A. (2020). *Classroom learning outcomes and principals' administrative performance in secondary schools in Rivers state,* Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt.

Woolcock, M. (2001). The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes, *Isuma Canadian Journal of Policy Research, 2* (1), 1-27.