



WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This study investigated workforce diversity and secondary school administration in Rivers state. The design for the study was the descriptive survey. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised to guide the study. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test statistics. A sample size of 667 respondents, representing 90% of the entire population of 741 principals and vice principals from all the 247 public senior secondary schools in Rivers state was drawn using the stratified random sampling technique. A researcher-designed instrument titled Workforce Diversity Management Questionnaire (WOFDIMQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in the area of measurement and evaluation at the University of Port Harcourt. The reliability index determined for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha was 0.82. The findings of the study revealed that secondary school administrators do have some administrative strategies put in place for the management of the diversities among teachers. It was therefore recommended among others, that the government should make some specific provisions that will guide school administrators in the management of diversities among teachers. Also, school administrators should develop operational plans and strategies that are based on their specific peculiarities that will help maximize the advantages of diversities among teachers, while at the same time, minimize the inherent disadvantages.

Keywords: Workforce, Diversity, Management, School, Administration.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

One of the most significant indicators of social progress is education, which also plays a decisive role for a society to achieve sustainable development. It is therefore believed that any investment in the education of an individual is a worthy investment towards the development of the nation. Investment in education is therefore necessary for human resource development or human capital formation through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that increase the productivity level of an individual, his or her income earning capacity, standard of living and the capacity to contribute to national development. It not only increases the economic value of the individual, it also helps him to contribute to the socio-economic development of the society. Education is a major springboard for the development of an individual's innate capabilities and a means of assisting him/her acquire societal, technological, cognitive skills and knowledge [1]. All these objectives cannot be achieved without the teacher who is at the centre of the teaching and learning process.

A teacher, according to Olaitan (2010) is someone who has undergone the necessary and recommended training in a teacher preparatory programme and is charged with the responsibility of managing the classroom in such a way as to enhance the learning behaviour of the students [2]. The teacher, in the education process, occupies an indispensable position and is a recognized academic leader with potentials to determine the nature, scope and content of learning. He is the facilitator of the teaching-learning process. He is the implementer of the curriculum and the significant other of the learner. Teachers are arguably the most important members of our society. They give children purpose, set them up for success as citizens of our world, and inspire in them a drive to succeed in life. The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, and teachers are the critical point that makes a child ready for their future. Teachers have the ability to shape leaders of the future in the best way for society to build positive and inspired future generations and therefore design society, both on a local and global scale. It is a fact that teachers have the most important job in the world. Those who have an impact on the children of society have the power to change

lives. Obviously, teachers act as a support system that is lacking elsewhere in the lives of students. They can also be role model and an inspiration to go further and to dream bigger. Teachers hold students accountable for their successes and failures. At the same time, good teachers will not let their talented students get away with not living up to their full potential [3]. In the functional description of a teacher, he plays a crucial role in shaping the lives of young people by encouraging and motivating them and guiding them to make a positive impact in the world around them. School teachers help their students to be passionate about learning and understanding the importance of lifelong education. The teaching profession is exciting and challenging.

More so, a teacher's role is to shape the life chances of young people by imparting knowledge- bringing the curriculum to life. The teacher job role is expansive. It ranges from imparting knowledge to safeguarding children's welfare, inspiring critical thought and moral values [4]. The role of a teacher is multi-dimensional but complementary. It requires great professionalism and dedication. It is more of a vocation than a profession. It is therefore on this premise that Cox (2020) clearly pointed out that although the primary role of a teacher is to deliver classroom instruction that helps students learn [5], however, it involves much more than that. Due to sheer amount of time that the school is in session, teachers are tasked with being positive role models and mentors to their students every day. Students learn much more than the subjects, they learn social skills like how to be kind to others and make friends, when to ask for help or be independent, how to distinguish between right and wrong and other life lessons that parents tend to echo. Teaching and learning are also part of the administrative activities that go on in the school.

Administration is an integral part of management that operationalizes the strategic plans and actions, organizing the human and material resources of the organization in order to realize the set goals and objectives. Similarly, Igwe (2001) stated that administration could be described as the day to day running of the system [6]. It is the process of responsibly carrying out decisions and routine functions towards the realization of organizational goals. School administration makes use of administrative principles, theories and procedures in ensuring that educational policies, programmes and projects are effectively and efficiently implemented. The administration of schools is significant in determining the quality of the education system [6]. In secondary schools therefore, the principal who is the administrator, directs and coordinates his subordinates, defines objectives, evaluates performances of both staff and students. He provides a conducive environment for teaching and learning to effectively take place, as well as maintain peace and stability in the institution. School administration requires the co-operation of the principal and the teachers in the smooth day to day running of the school. As already stated, the teacher is the implementer of the curriculum and the facilitator of the teaching-learning process, whose performance significantly determines the outcome of the process. The teacher is also, to an extent, involved in the administration of the school. However, these teachers are of diverse backgrounds. The areas of diversity include: gender, age, religion, culture and educational qualifications.

Workforce diversity is the multitude of the individual differences and similarities that exists among the people working in an organization [7]. It is all about the similarities and differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. No two human beings are alike. They differ in many respects. They are different in not only gender, culture, race, social and psychological characteristics, but also in their perspectives and prejudices [8]. Diversity of workforce recognizes the heterogeneity of the human resources of an organization. It refers to a variety of differences between individuals in an organization. Diversity not only includes how individuals identify themselves, but also, how others perceive them. Diversity within a workplace encompasses race, gender, ethnic groups, age, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship status, mental and physical conditions, as well as other distinctive differences between people. In the coming years, organizations that understand how to manage diversity in the workplace effectively will hold a distinctive advantage when it comes to recruiting and hiring talents [8]. Today's managers are responsible for both leading employees and responding to the needs of customers who are more ethnically and culturally diverse, older and in greater need of child and elder care. Diversity includes all characteristics and experiences that define each of us as individuals.

A common misconception about diversity is that only certain persons or groups are included under its umbrella, when in fact, exactly the opposite is true. Diversity includes the entire spectrum of primary dimensions of an individual, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and disability. It is a simple fact that each of us possesses unique qualities along each of these dimensions. Experience and recent research indicate that when recognized and valued, diversity enhances individual productivity, organizational effectiveness and sustained competitiveness. To achieve success and maintain a competitive advantage, we must be able to draw on the most important resource- the skills of the workforce. With the increasing richness of diversity in the world and in the workforce, we need to expand our outlook and use creative strategies to be successful. Employees can provide this resource. Diversity is more than a moral imperative, it is a global necessity [9]. Workforce diversity represents both a challenge and an opportunity for business. A growing number of progressive organizations are realizing the need for valuing diversity in the workforce, so as to ensure strategic utilization of human resources for the accomplishment of strategic goals. When an organization has people of different caste, religion, minorities, differences in age and gender, naturally, the question arises as to how to reconcile the differences between these employees without causing too much friction in everyday interactions.

Workforce diversity has significant implications for the management. The managers will be required to shift their approach from treating each group of workers alike to recognizing differences among them and following such policies so as to encourage creativity, improve productivity, reduce labour turnover and avoid any sort of discrimination. When workforce diversity is managed properly, there would be better communication, better human relations and congenial work culture in the organization [10]. The advantages of effective workforce diversity management are enormous. It brings to the organization a variety of different perspectives which is highly beneficial to the planning and implementation of a business strategy. It also brings increased creativity, this is because, people with diverse backgrounds tend to have different experiences and thus different perspectives. In a diverse workplace, employees are exposed to multiple perspectives and worldviews. When these various perspectives combine, they often come together in novel ways, opening doors to innovations. In the same vein, when employees with different backgrounds and perspectives come together, they come up with more solutions, which leads to the more informed and improved decision-making processes and results [11]. Obviously, the school is one those organizations that boast of the reality of diversity in the workforce, specifically, among the teachers. This implies that workforce diversity is the acceptance and respect for recognizing commonalities as well as the richness of differences among the teachers in the school. It means understanding that each individual is unique. Diversity can be along the dimensions of age, gender, religion, culture, and so on.

Age: Age based diversity is the inter-generational behaviour among old and young employees which can account for differences in observed work place behaviour [12]. This is based on the assumption that employees who grew up in different times and periods have different world views, expectations, values and preferred modes of communication and interactions with one another [13]. In this respect, teachers who grew up and are employed in different times may have different perceptions of what the profession is all about, their expectations, values, mode of communication, content of curriculum and method of teaching delivery. The transfer of experience from old worker to new worker, as noted by Rose (as cited in Okogbaa, 2005), leads to more effective problem solving since a more diverse workforce in terms of age provides a wider variety of perspective and consequently a higher number of alternative are evaluated [14]. Several studies have shown that the choices, tastes, likes, dislikes, perceptions, skill-set, experience and productivity of teachers change as their age changes. Age diversity can be effectively managed by ensuring that the school in all her dealings and policy take into consideration the different needs of the various age groups. The issue of diversity in the age of teaching staff member is one that school administrators are expected to manage cautiously in order to guard against any form of discrimination and intimidation [15].

Gender: Diversity on the basis of gender in the workplace is the equal treatment and acceptance of both male and female in an organization [16]. Several agitations have been made to propagate the doctrine of gender equality/balance in the workplace. Robbins, *et al* (as cited in Okogbe, 2016) remarked that gender balance or imbalance affects organizational behaviour [17]. They however strongly recommended that organizational recruitment process should deliberately ensure that there is gender balance in the number of people recruited [17]. Robinson and Dechant (as cited in Mboya, 2009) argued that gender diversity increases creativity and innovation. The implication is that gender diversity in a workplace creates a richer flow of ideas and thus have the potential to increase creativity and innovation among the workforce in an organization [18]. Ipso facto, diversity in the workforce of any organization such as the school, is a critical management task that requires tactfulness and adequate knowledge of human resources management skill. This is to reduce to the barest minimum, the possible inherent negative effects, while at the same time, the positives are maximized. To that extent, Thomas (1985) remarked that managing the inevitable diversity of the changing workforce is an essential skill for both managers and leaders [19], better business results are the goal of diversity management. Diversity management allows everyone to contribute naturally to organizational goals [19]. Successful diversity management ensures that no group of employees is privileged to the disadvantage of others.

The study of Ordu (2015) on diversity in high schools and diversity management showed that the opinions of teachers highlighted the enormous advantages of workforce diversity when properly managed by the school administration [20]. In the same vein, the study carried out by Sayhk, *et al* (2016) diversity management and respect for diversity at schools showed that the school administrators and teachers agreed that the management of employee diversity in schools was above average [21]. There was also a study by Young, *et al* (2010) that examined Principals' perceptions of their role in carrying out the Mayflower Districts' strategic diversity plan [22]. With all the challenges the Principals faced, they reported their efforts to push the plan forward. In their push to make sense of their plan, two themes became apparent: (a) their leadership struggled during the implementation phase and (b) the need for an educational component to instruct the Principals about strategic diversity plans and diversity self-efficacy training [22].

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The teacher is at the center of the teaching-learning process which is the hub of any educational institution. He is the facilitator and the implementer of the curriculum. Out of logical necessity, he significantly, impacts on learning outcomes. Among these teachers exist diversities in different areas. The management of teachers with diverse backgrounds, to a large extent, determines their level of cohesion, cooperation, dedication, and by extension, productivity. Among these teachers, exist diversities in terms of age, gender, and so on. All these bear on their task

performance in the school. However, a close look at some secondary schools reveals frequent cases of mutual suspicion, cliquishness, discriminatory behaviours, favouritism and the like. All these lead to conflicts, disharmony, frustration and antagonism in an organization and consequently, impede on the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. Could these negative behaviours be the consequences of the diversities among the teachers?

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was aimed at investigating the level of management of the diversities among the teachers in the public senior secondary schools in Rivers state. Specifically, the objectives were to determine the following:

1. The administrative strategies adopted to manage age-based diversities among teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.
2. The administrative strategies adopted for managing gender-based diversities in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What are the administrative strategies for managing age-based differences among teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state?
2. What are the administrative strategies for managing gender-based differences among teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Principals with respect to the administrative strategies adopted for managing age-based differences among teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.
2. There is no significant differences between male and female Principals with respect to the administrative strategies adopted for managing gender-based differences among teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of this study consisted of all the 247 public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The population of the respondents was all the 741 Principals, Vice Principals (administration), and Vice Principals (academic) in the public senior secondary schools in River State. The sample size of this study comprised 222 schools. The sample size of the respondents was 667, which was 90% of the population. The instrument that was used for this study was a self-designed questionnaire titled "Workforce Diversity Management Questionnaire" (WOFDIMQ). The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha reliability technique with a reliability index of 78. Mean, standard deviation and z-test statistics were used for the analyses of the data.

RESULTS

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the administrative strategies adopted in managing age differences among teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state?

Table 1: Weighted mean, standard deviation and rank order statistics of male and female principals/vice principals on the strategies for managing age differences in public senior secondary schools administration in Rivers state

S/N		Male=251		Female=354		Weighted mean (xx)	Rank	Remarks
		X ₁	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂			
1	All age groups are always considered an asset to the school.	4.58	1.52	2.36	1.54	3.47	2 nd	Agreed
2	All age groups are treated the way they desire to be treated.	3.45	1.49	3.20	1.48	3.33	3 rd	Agreed
3	The different needs of the various age groups amongst the staff-pool are considered by the							

4	school. Administrators always pair the old and young teachers when assigning duties.	3.32	1.65	1.79	1.47	2.50	5 th	Agreed
5	The older and younger teachers are regularly trained to realize that both have significant contributions to make in the attainment of education goals.	3.39	1.39	2.50	1.23	2.95	4 th	Agreed
		3.55	1.56	3.57	1.52	3.56	1 st	Agreed
Cluster mean		3.62	1.52	2.69	1.45	3.15		

Table 1 showed that all the item had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which means that all the identified strategies are adopted in the schools.

Research Question 2: What are the administrative strategies that are adopted for managing gender-based differences among teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state?

Table 2: Weighted mean, standard deviation and rank order statistics of experienced and less experienced principals/vice principals on the ways gender differences are managed for the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.

S/N		Experienced 213		Less experienced 392		Weighted mean (xx)	Rank	Remarks
		X ₁	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂			
1	The experiences of the different gender groups are identified and harnessed.	3.55	1.53	3.55	1.53	3.55	1 st	Agreed
2	Duties are assigned according to the dispositions and orientations of each teacher.	2.50	1.23	1.69	1.38	2.10	5 th	Disagreed
3	Administrators always pair teachers with their opposite sex when assigning duties and responsibilities to them.	3.52	1.51	3.54	1.53	3.53	2 nd	Agreed
4	There is always equal treatment and acceptance of both genders in the school.	3.49	1.49	3.54	1.75	3.52	3 rd	Agreed
5	Gender discrimination among teachers is strictly prohibited.	3.58	1.55	3.38	1.54	3.48	4 th	Agreed
Cluster mean		3.33	1.46	3.00	1.55	3.24		

Table 2 showed that except item 2 that has a mean value of 2.10 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50, the other items had mean values above the criterion mean. They are therefore accepted as the administrative strategies adopted to manage gender-based differences among the teachers.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals and vice principals with respect to the administrative strategies adopted for managing age-based differences among teachers in public senior secondary schools administration in Rivers State

Table 3: z-test scores of the mean ratings of male and female principals and vice principals on the strategies for managing age differences in public senior secondary schools’ administration in Rivers. state

Category	N	X	SD	Df	z-cal	z-crit.	Remarks
Male	251	3.62	1.52	603	7.56	1.96	significant
Female	354	2.69	1.45				

Table 3 showed that the calculated value is higher than the critical value of 1.96, hence, the null hypothesis was not retained. The difference is therefore significant.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals and vice principals on how gender differences are managed for the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers state

Table 4: z-test scores of the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals and vice principals on how gender differences are managed for the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.

Category	N	X	SD	Df	z-cal	z-crit.	Remarks
Experienced	213	3.33	1.46	603	2.60	1.96	significant
Less experienced	392	3.00	1.55				

Table 4 revealed that the calculated value is 2.60 which is above the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. It was on this basis that the null hypothesis was not retained. Consequently, there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals and vice principals on how gender differences are managed for the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers state.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that the Principals have different administrative strategies to ensure the effective management of diversities among the teaching staff. This is very critical to human resource management to guarantee cohesion, collegiality, collaboration, effectiveness and efficiency. The findings of this study is in tandem with those of the study carried out by Ordu (2015) which showed that the opinions of teachers highlighted the enormous advantages of workforce diversity when properly managed by the school administration [20]. According to them, it impacts very positively on the students, it broadens the students’ horizon, looking from different perspectives, the development of their personalities and easing of their learning processes by seeing different methods and approaches [20]. As there are many advantages of diversities to organizations, there could be disadvantages as well, when they are not managed well. In the same vein, the study carried out by Sayhk, *et al* (2016) showed that the school administrators and teachers agreed that the management of employee diversity in schools was above average [21]. They strongly agreed that both the ideas that school administrators saw diversity as a source of richness [21]. There was also a study by Young, *et al* (2010) that examined Principals’ perceptions of their role in carrying out the Mayflower Districts’ strategic diversity plan. With all the challenges the Principals faced, they reported their efforts to push the plan forward [22]. In their push to make sense of their plan, two themes became apparent: (a) their leadership struggled during the implementation phase and (b) the need for an educational component to instruct the Principals about strategic diversity plans and diversity self-efficacy training [22].

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was therefore concluded that secondary school administrators in Rivers State, Nigeria, have deliberately put in place some strategies for the effective management of workforce diversities to ensure that the inherent advantages of diversities among the teachers are maximized in the pursuit of set educational goals and objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should make specific policies that will guide school administrators in the management of diversities among teachers for effective school administration.

2. School administrators should develop operational plans and strategies that are based on their specific peculiarities that will help in maximizing the advantages of the diversities among teachers, while at the same time, minimize the inherent disadvantages.
3. The Ministry of Education and her relevant agencies should as a matter of policy, regularly organize training programmes for school administrators to develop in them the professional capacity to effectively manage diversities among teachers.

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