

INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' FINANCIAL AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) PROGRAMME IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *The study examined the influence of principals' financial and communication strategies on the sustainability of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in South Eastern Nigeria. It was guided by two (2) specific objectives. Two (2) research questions were raised and answered. Two (2) hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a survey research design. The study area was South Eastern Nigeria. The total population of the study is 19,645 teachers. This comprised all the teachers in all the 1352 junior secondary schools in South Eastern Nigeria. The sample size for this study is 386 and it was realized using Krejcie and Morgan Table for sample size determination. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Principals' Financial and Communication Strategies on the Sustainability of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme Questionnaire" constructed by the researcher." This instrument was duly validated by five experts and Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.89. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation and inferential statistics of Chi-square. The result of the findings revealed that principals' financial and communication strategies have positive significant influence on the sustainability of UBE programme in South Eastern Nigeria. The study concluded that Principals' administrative strategies of financial and communication positively influence the sustainability of UBE programme in South Eastern Nigeria. The study recommended among others that principals should establish clear priorities and goals that align with the sustainability of the UBE program. This can involve identifying critical tasks that directly contribute to the program's success and ensuring that they allocate sufficient time to these priorities.*

Keywords: *Principal, Financial, Communication, Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Management is a social process designed to ensure the cooperation, participation, intervention and involvement of others in the effective achievement of a given or predetermined objective. Educational management involves the process of planning and of forecasting, decision-making and formulating educational policies with the aim of attaining set education goals (Uko, 2015). It involves the application of the process of planning organizing, coordinating, controlling, supervising and evaluating human and material resources with the explicit purpose of achieving educational goals and objectives (Okorji&Unachukwu, 2014). Therefore, the principal as the school administrator is at the

helm of implementation of education policies. The principal is the person responsible for administrative practices of the school using the resources at his/her disposal in such a way that the school's objectives are achieved. The principal performs managerial functions such as planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, communicating and motivating both staff and students towards the realization of both instructional and educational objectives. The management of academic and administrative affairs of schools traditionally falls within the capacity of the principal. Formal education in Nigeria is rapidly changing and technically tailored towards meeting certain set goals, such as "education for all" (Nwaogu, 2013. pp.78). The requirements of these various goals from the principals as school administrators are centered on the advancement of teaching and learning through the implementation of school curriculum.

Principals' management strategies refer to the techniques and methods that school principals use to effectively manage their schools and ensure that they provide the best possible education to their students. Principals as the chief custodians of all academic and extracurricular activities in the secondary schools, employ various strategies in the management of the school. According to Odumodu (2011), principals occupy a central position in management of secondary education in Nigeria as far as education of the child is concerned. Principals by virtue of their positions are the managers of schools and their quality of managerial functions determine to a large extent the sustainability of school programmes. Principals provide teachers including other personnel in the school with the needed management supports to effectively function on their jobs. The principals in the secondary schools control the day to day activities of the school for achievement of educational objectives. The principals in essence carry out specific administrative functions or responsibilities which include staff-personnel functions, students-personnel functions, financial management function, educational facilities management function and school-community relationship functions for achievement of educational objectives as identified by Nwahaw (2011) and Akpakwu (2012). Principals' administrative strategies are multi-faceted constructs that include financial management strategy and facilities management strategy.

In educational institutions, the realization of desired educational goals and objectives depend largely on the efficient planning and management of school funds by the school administrators. One of the core responsibilities of the secondary school principal is the financial management of the school. Principals' financial management strategies refer to the methods and techniques used by school principals to manage the financial resources of their schools in a way that is effective and efficient. These strategies according to Umeh (2020) can include: Budgeting, Resource allocation, Financial reporting, Fundraising and Strategic planning. Effective financial management is essential for schools to operate efficiently and provide students with the resources they need to succeed. Principals who implement sound financial management strategies can create a strong foundation for their school's financial stability and long-term success. One of the most critical strategies that principals can use is creating and adhering to a budget. This involves planning and tracking expenses, monitoring revenue streams, and making strategic decisions about how to allocate resources. In addition to budgeting, principals can also seek out additional funding sources, such as grants or donations, to supplement their school's budget. They can also prioritize resources to ensure that they are being used in the most effective way

possible, such as investing in programs that have a proven track record of success. Furthermore, principals who maintain accurate financial records and report financial information to relevant stakeholders can build trust and transparency with their community, ensuring that everyone understands how the school's resources are being used. Overall, effective financial management strategies are crucial for principals to ensure that their schools have the necessary resources to provide high-quality education to their students. By implementing these strategies, principals can help create a stable financial foundation that can support their school's success for years to come. Where the principal is weak and ineffective in managing the resources of the school, success will be very hard and difficult to achieve most especially when effective communication is lacking and this may hinder the sustainability of UBE programme

Principals' communication strategies refer to the methods and approaches that school principals use to effectively communicate with their staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders. These strategies encompass various communication channels, such as email, phone calls, newsletters, social media, and in-person meetings, as well as the tone, style, and content of the messages conveyed. Effective principals' communication strategies involve being clear, concise, and transparent in their messaging, actively listening to the concerns and feedback of their stakeholders, and using a variety of communication channels to reach different audiences. Additionally, principals' communication strategies may also involve establishing policies and protocols for communication within the school community, providing training and support for staff on effective communication practices, and leveraging technology tools to enhance communication and collaboration. Akinwale and Okotoni (2018) opine that for better communication in a school, the principal must first conceive ideas and relate such ideas to the staff and other stakeholders. According to Abbass (2014), effective communication strategy is vital because members of staff need to know what they are expected to do, what standards of performance are expected of them and how long they have to do any job assigned to them. Manafa (2018) in addition, asserted that poor usage of communication strategy by principal in secondary schools may be a great threat to the school management and sustainability of school programmes. The adoption of the above listed principals' administrative strategy may play significant role in the sustainability of school programmes like the Universal Basic Education.

The UBE programme is an education policy formulated to represent Nigeria government strategy for achieving Education for All (EFA). Okoro (2010) describes UBE programme as an expression of the strong desire of the government to reduce the level of illiteracy by raising the level of awareness and general education opportunities of the entire citizenry in Nigeria. The objectives of the UBE scheme as contained in the UBE Act (2004) include:

developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion; the provision of free, Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age; reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency; catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of Basic

Education; and, ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning (pp. 21).

In order to achieve these objectives, the Federal Republic of Nigeria through the UBE Act (2004) set out guideline standards/ benchmark for the implementation and sustainability of the programme. Sustainability refers to the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level. The guidelines for the implementation and sustainability of the UBE programme recognize that the scheme should be a collaborative one which involves the three tiers of government, civil society organizations, international donor agencies, international organizations, communities, private individuals among others. It embodies a funding arrangement which mandates the federal government to provide financial and technical assistance to the states of the federation as a supportive measure. The implementation and sustainability guideline of the Universal Basic Education programme (2004) proffers some strategies which are to aid effective implementation and sustainability. For the sustainability of the UBE programme to be achieved in a nation, the teacher (human resources) financial and instructional facilities (material resources) must be co-operatively managed by the principal through the adoption of various management strategies. Some indicators of the sustainability of this programme; are the extent to which the school staff have participated in professional development; the extent teachers and other members of staff gives maximum productivity in their task, the extent students perform well in their school activities, the extent the school curriculum supports the principles of education for sustainability; the extent to which the school community (examples students, teachers and other staff) has been educated to actively participate in the sustainable management of the school.

In reference to the sustainability of the UBE programme in South Eastern Nigeria, within the school system, virtually all the various aspects of the school programmes and activities are not well planned. The UBE programme is presently being faced with managerial challenges and as a result, the sustainability of the programme is in jeopardy (Udeze, 2011). However, the collective application of school management strategies like time management, instructional supervision, decision making, motivation, financial management and communication strategies by the school principals who happen to be major stakeholders in the UBE programme may have significant positive influence on the sustainability of the programme.

Statement of the Problem

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was created to ensure the acquisition of appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying solid foundation for life-long learning.

However, in the present day situation, the sustainability of the various objectives of the UBE programme may not be attainable as many children are still seen roaming on streets of major cities, towns and villages without being in school. A cursory look at all these aberrations to the aims and objectives of the UBE programmes, one would be left with no doubt that something is wrong somewhere. Some researchers have pointed at principals and teachers as critical stakeholders are saddled with responsibilities like the implementation of school programme and its sustainability. It is expected that school

principals as one of the major stakeholders in the UBE programme could adopt appropriate management strategies in running the day to day activities of the school. However, personal observation by the researcher as an indigene of South Eastern Nigeria has shown that principals in UBE schools in the area seem to exhibit poor management strategies. This is evident in the areas of poor instructional supervision, conflict among teachers, poor vision of the principals, poor principal-teacher relationship and poor administrative style of the principals among others. These situations appear to have led to poor academic achievement among the secondary school students, high drop-out rate, and high rate of examination malpractice, poor reading and writing cultures among others which are negative indications to the sustainability of the UBE programme.

If this is left unchecked, it may hamper the implementation and sustainability of the UBE programme. It is on this basis that the present study sought to examine influence of principals' administrative strategies on the sustainability of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine influence of principals' administrative strategies on the sustainability of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in South Eastern Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were to find out whether principals;

1. financial management strategy influence the sustainability of UBE programme
2. communication strategy influence the sustainability of UBE programme

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What is the influence of principals' financial management strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme?
2. What is the influence of principals' communication strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Principals' financial management strategy does not significantly influence the sustainability of UBE programme
2. Principals' communication strategy does not significantly influence the sustainability of UBE programme

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research design. The study was carried out in South Eastern Zone, Nigeria. The total population of the study is 19645 teachers. This comprised all the teachers in all the 1352 junior secondary schools in South Eastern Nigeria (Universal Basic Education Board, South Eastern Zonal Officer Unit, 2021). The sample size for this study was 386. The sample size was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan Table for sample size determination. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure. The study used a structured questionnaire as instrument for data collection. The instrument is titled "Influence of Principals' Financial and Communication Strategies on the Sustainability of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme. The instrument was designed and structured on a four-point rating scales with the response continuum of Strongly Agree for 4 points, Agree for 3 points, Disagree for 2 points and Strongly Disagree for 1 point for positively worded items and 1, 2, 3, 4 for negatively worded items. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used to obtain

the internal consistency of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient obtained for the instrument was 0.89. Data for the study were collected using the direct delivery and retrieval approach. Data collected for the research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation while the hypotheses formulated were tested using Chi-square goodness of fit. A criterion Mean of 2.50 was established such that a mean score of 2.50 and above were for agree while a mean score below 2.50 was for disagree. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance such that Asymp sig. value of 0.05 and below were for rejecting the hypotheses while a Asymp sig. value above 0.05 was for not rejecting the hypotheses.

RESULTS

The results of the study were presented according to research questions answered and hypotheses tested as follows:

Research Question One

What is the influence of principals' financial management strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on the influence of principals' financial management strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Do not involves experts like the school bursar or accountant in the preparation of school budget	386	2.68	0.78	Agree
2	Ensures that various departmental needs are forwarded by heads of department or subject coordinator for inclusion in the school budget	386	2.84	0.93	Agree
3	Do not seek the input/advice of teachers on the most needed capital project(s) to be included in the school budget	386	3.03	0.89	Agree
4	Considers the expected revenue and the source(s) it is to be derived before preparation of budget	386	2.73	0.71	Agree
5	Set up financial monitoring team in the school	386	2.92	0.68	Agree
6	Source for funds from PTA/private sectors for project implementation	386	2.59	0.91	Agree
7	Prepares a supplementary budget when the need arises	386	2.52	0.74	Agree
8	Makes provision for unforeseen expenditures in the school budget	386	2.98	1.00	Agree
9	Analyse income on monthly basis to ascertain the financial status of the school	386	2.79	0.68	Agree
10	Analyse expenditure on monthly basis to ascertain spending antecedents of the school	386	3.10	0.75	Agree
11	analyse costs and expenses to identify areas where savings can be made, while still maintaining quality and effectiveness	386	2.67	0.82	Agree
12	Do no allocate resources strategically, prioritizing areas that will have the greatest impact on student achievement and success	386	2.55	0.68	Agree
13	seek and manage grants to support school programs and initiatives, ensuring that funds are used effectively and efficiently	386	2.95	0.76	Agree

14	develop partnerships with local businesses and organizations to access additional resources and support	386	2.81	0.88	Agree
15	ensure that funds are allocated for ongoing maintenance and repair of school facilities and equipment	386	2.63	0.93	Agree
Grand Mean			2.67		

1.0-1.99=Strongly Disagree, 2.0-2.49=Disagree, 2.50-3.00=Agree, 3.01-4.0=Strongly Agree

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that all the 15 items on influence of principals' financial management strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria had their mean values ranged from 2.52 to 3.10, indicating that their mean values were above the cut-off point of mean 2.50. The grand mean of 2.67 shown in the Table indicates that the respondents agreed that principals' financial management strategy has positive influence on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria. The Table further showed that the standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.68 to 1.00, indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from the opinion of one another in their responses on the influence of principals' financial management strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria

Research Question Two

What is the influence of principals' communication strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on the influence of principals' communication strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
16	maintain an open-door policy, making themselves accessible to staff, students, and families for feedback and input	386	2.58	0.81	Agree
17	communicate in a timely manner, providing updates and information as soon as possible	386	2.70	0.91	Agree
18	communicate clearly and effectively, using language that is easily understood by all stakeholders	386	2.96	0.75	Agree
19	maintain transparency in their communication, sharing information openly and honestly	386	2.52	0.82	Agree
20	actively listen to the concerns and perspectives of stakeholders, seeking to understand their needs and perspectives	386	2.83	0.72	Agree
21	engage stakeholders in the decision-making process, providing opportunities for input and feedback	386	2.66	0.94	Agree

22	Use memorandums to pass information to the staff	386	2.75	0.78	Agree
23	Do not write weekly reports to teachers on essential school resolution	386	2.92	1.00	Agree
24	Do not provide school manual that spell out roles expected by the teachers and students	386	2.50	0.72	Agree
25	Send memos to staff	386	2.78	0.88	Agree
Grand Mean			2.62		

1.0-1.99=Strongly Disagree, 2.0-2.49=Disagree, 2.50-3.00=Agree, 3.01-4.0=Strongly Agree

Data presented in Table 2 revealed that all the 10 items on influence of principals' communication strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria had their mean values ranged from 2.50 to 2.96, indicating that their mean values were above the cut-off point of mean 2.50. The grand mean of 2.62 shown in the Table indicates that the respondents agreed that principals' communication strategy has positive influence on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria. The Table further showed that the standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.72 to 1.00, indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from the opinion of one another in their responses on the influence of principals' communication strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in schools in South Eastern Nigeria

Research Hypothesis One

Principals' financial management strategy does not significantly influence the sustainability of UBE programme

Table 3: Chi-square goodness of fit on the influence of principals' financial management strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in South Eastern Nigeria

	Observed N	Expected N	df	Chi-square	Asym p.sig	Sig. value
SD	78	96.5	3	22.497	0.000	0.05
D	76	96.5				
A	134	96.5				
SA	98	96.5				
Total	386					

df= degree of freedom

The data presented on Table 3 shows that the Asymp. Sig value of 0.000 is less than the set significant value of 0.05 and this shows that the test of hypothesis is significant. This implies that Principals' financial management strategy significantly influences the sustainability of UBE programme. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Research Hypothesis Two

Principals' communication strategy does not significantly influence the sustainability of UBE programme

Table 4: Chi-square goodness of fit on the influence of principals’ communication strategy on the sustainability of UBE programme in South Eastern Nigeria

	Observed N	Expected N	df	Chi- suar e	Asym p.sig	Sig. value
SD	19	96.5	3	164.3 2	0.000	0.05
D	50	96.5				
A	158	96.5				
SA	159	96.5				
Total	386					

df= degree of freedom

The data presented on Table 4 shows that the Asymp. Sig value of 0.000 is less than the set significant value of 0.05 and this shows that the test of hypothesis is significant. This implies that Principals’ communication strategy significantly influences the sustainability of UBE programme. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that Principals’ financial management strategy has positive influence on the sustainability of UBE programme. However, the findings showed that principals sometimes do not involve experts like the school bursar or accountant in the preparation of school budget; Source for funds from PTA/private sectors for project implementation; analyse expenditure on monthly basis to ascertain spending antecedents of the school; do not allocate resources strategically, prioritizing areas that will have the greatest impact on student achievement and success. The findings of this study is consistent with that of Ojekudo (2019) who conducted a research on fund management strategies for effective administration in public secondary schools in Rivers State and found that fund management strategies of principals influence the effective administration in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings of this study also agree with that of Titus and Ukaigwe (2018) who conducted a study on fund management strategies for effective Administration in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State and found that good fund management strategies by principals enhance effective administration of schools in the area.

The findings of this study revealed that Principals’ communication strategy positively influences the sustainability of UBE programme. The findings of the study showed that principals communicate clearly and effectively, using language that is easily understood by all stakeholders; Do not write weekly reports to teachers on essential school resolution; maintain an open-door policy, making themselves accessible to staff, students, and families for feedback and input; Do not provide school manual that spell out roles expected by the teachers and students. The findings of this study agree with that of Kaluki (2019) who conducted a study on influence of principals’ communication strategies on students’ discipline in public secondary schools and found that principals’ communication strategies help in reducing most of the students’ related indiscipline issues. The findings of this study also agree with that of Nwosu (2017) who conducted a study on the relationship between principals’ communication strategies and teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in Ikenne Local Government area of Ogun State and found

a positive significant relationship between principals' communication strategies and teachers' job performance. The finding of this study is a justification that if the principals' management strategies are used, it can effectively impact on the sustainability of UBE programme.

Conclusion

The Universal Basic Education programme is key to the eradication of illiteracy and consequently aid in the development of the nation. As such, the sustainability of the programme is critical and can be achieved through appropriate use of administrative strategies by school principals and other relevant stakeholders in the educational sector like teachers, government and parents. In view of this and as evident from the findings of this study, it is thus, concluded that the adoption of administrative strategies of financial management and communication by Principals can have positive influence the sustainability of UBE programme in South Eastern Zone, Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Principals and other relevant stakeholders should Implement a system for recognizing and rewarding the achievements of teachers and students within the UBE program. This can include public acknowledgment, certificates of appreciation, awards, or other incentives that recognize and reinforce positive contributions. Recognizing accomplishments boosts motivation and encourages continued efforts.
2. Principals should establish clear and consistent communication channels to effectively share information with teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders involved in the UBE program. This can include regular newsletters, email updates, notice boards, social media platforms, or dedicated communication apps. Ensure that all relevant information regarding program goals, activities, policies, and opportunities are readily accessible.

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