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## **Principal's Ethical Practices as Predictors of Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined principal's ethical practices as predictors of effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three objectives with corresponding research questions and hypotheses. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of 3,946 teachers of all the 216 public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The sample size of the study was 395 respondents drawn from the entire population through stratified sampling technique. The instruments titled: Principal's Ethical Practices Scale (PEPS) and Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools Scale (EAPSSS) were used for this study. The instruments were validated and reliability coefficients of 0.87 and 0.84 for the two instruments. Research question 1 to 3 were answered with simple linear regression, while hypotheses 1 to 3 were tested with t-test associated with simple regression at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that selflessness as principal's ethical practice significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State to a high extent, integrity and accountability to a low extent predict effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State but significantly. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government who is the sole employer of public employee should employee and consistently train principals to be selfless in the discharge of their duties for effective administration of secondary school system. Also, principals should show a high level of integrity while carrying out their managerial duties in school in order to boost teachers' contribution towards teamwork for effective administrative school system.

**Keywords:** Principal, Ethical Practices, Administration

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### **Introduction**

Education has been identified as an instrument par-excellence and the means of developing human intellect, technical skills, character and effective citizenship for self-reliance and effective national development (FRN, 2013). A simple way of appreciating education is that it is a tool or a necessary weapon that is needed by every human being in order to effectively navigate this complex world. Education in essence is the most effective tool for academic progress, social mobilization, political survival and effective national development of a country, it constitutes the single largest enterprise in Nigeria. The educational policy of any nation is to achieve education for all (E.F.A.). The priority is to ensure equitable access and improvement in the quality and efficiency of all level of education.

Despite the importance of the educational sector to the entire economy of any nation identified above, there are human resources in the system such as the school that assist in the achievement of educational goals and objectives. The principal as well as the teachers under his or her control form part of this important human resource in any school system. While the principal has the duty of managing the affairs of the school, the teachers are saddled with the responsibility of implementing the policies and programmes instituted by the principal as directed by the government for effective administration of the school. This is because the education sector particularly the school system is known for and forms a vital part of the activities of any education system (Ugochi, 2017).

However, it is a known fact that in any school system where there are no administrators (principals), the quality of educational services provided will be lopsided. This is because while some teachers will put in their best in the school with little or no supervision from the principal, others will make no effort in contributing to the actualization of the goals and objectives of the education system in the school where they have been employed. This is why the principal must be up and doing if the desired quality of education must be achieved. The principal is known and addressed as the administrative head of any secondary level of education and a lot of responsibilities are saddled on him or her as the head of the school. If the desired quality of education must be achieved in any school, a lot needs to be done by the principal.

According to Hoy and Miskel as cited in Jones et al (2020), one of the things expected from the principal who is working towards the achievement of educational goals and objectives in his or her school is that he or she must be able to effectively manage the teaching force to be able effective administration. The principal must ensure that the teachers are putting in their best for the school to be able to achieve her goals and objectives. Similarly, the principal must also adopt all positive measures to ensure that teachers improve continuously in their level of task performance in order to sustain effective administration in the school. This can be achieved when the principal adopts workplace ethical practices or measures.

Ethical practices of principal are very crucial for general development of the school organization. Principal ethical practices are moral principles and techniques expected of him to apply or put up in the discharge of his duties as stipulated by educational law. It is a whole new scientific area because it combines law, theory and politics as much as philosophical and historical documents. Ethical practices of principal provide guidelines for acceptable behaviour by organizations in both their strategy formulation and day-to-day operations. It has to do with all aspects of school workplace conduct put by the principal in ensuring proper administration of the school system. Principal ethical practices consist of a set of moral principles and values.

Jones, et al (2020) stated that principal ethical practices govern the behaviour of the organization school with respect to what is right and what is wrong in the school. It spells out the basic viewpoint and priorities of the school in concrete terms. It also contains the prohibitory actions at the school. It provides a framework on which the school could be legally governed. In other words, how well the school adhere to ethical standards and practices of the principal, obviously, determines the well-being of all the stakeholders, the school performance and the subsequent profitability in the administration of the school, as well as the macroeconomic growth and development of the nation the school finds itself.

No organization succeed without focusing on goals and principles, values and ethics in the performance of task. Principal ethical practices help in enhancing decision making in the school by providing the management with the suitable available clarification to the problems they are challenged with. For the long term survival of the school system, principals are required to conduct it operations ethically. There are various ethical practices that principals can adopt to control and direct what happens in the school for effective administration. The types of ethical practices adopted by the principal goes a long way in determining if the school performance will retrogress, remain static or progress. This goes a long way in affecting the general administration of the school which is the overall duty of the principal. The principal must therefore be familiar and apply all positive ethical practices as enshrined in educational law. Some of these practices according Amadi and Udisi (2021) are selflessness, integrity and accountability.

Selflessness literally means placing less importance on yourself than on others. It is a state of mind in which you put an equal, or more amount of consideration towards other people's interest rather than towards your own. Selfless people recognize the needs and feelings of others and try to show kindness in their actions. In view of this, selflessness of a principal is an ethical practice that is inevitable if the aim is to improve the teacher performance and general administration of the school. When a principal is not selfless or does not display such ethic in school, it will lead to decrease in the effectiveness of the staff and the administration of the school. Integrity is also a very essential issue in any kind of workplace like the school; it is a part of principal ethical practices that may have a positive significant impact on administration of the school.

Integrity as define, has to do with doing the right thing through words, actions and beliefs when none is watching. The principal in the school needs to be upstanding in character traits and work ethics including sound judgment, honesty, dependability, and loyalty. Principals therefore are expected to use such ethical practice to control the way activities are carried out in the school. The act of planning and execution of school daily routines by the principal and his team calls for ethical behaviour like integrity to enhance school development. Integrity fortunately is a necessity for principals as well as the teachers to discharge their duties professionally.

School principals can also apply accountability as an ethical practice. Accountability refers to having obligations to others in the organization. These obligations involve specific actions that a principal should complete in order to fulfill his role as a manager and member of the school organization. This practice helps the principal in providing guidance and mentorship to the teachers. In this case, the principal makes proper forecasting of how work must be done by the teacher or any other staff so as to ensure that quality service delivery is achieved. The teacher in collaboration with other experts can draw the work schedule of the teacher and ensure that the teacher works in line with the plan on ground. Doing this will help the teacher to improve in their task performance since the end product of the plan is that the quality of service provided by the teacher meets with best practices. The principal however must be accountable to his staff by ensuring that the plans made in the school are adhered to by all staff so as to ensure that the goals and objectives of the plan are achieved as they relate to the school system.

Consequently, this paper examined the topic: "principal's ethical practices as predictors of effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

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## Statement of the Problem

Ideally, secondary school administration is expected to promote quality assurance in education of the citizens for national development. It is the expectation of the government, parents and even students that quality education is received by students in Nigeria secondary schools through the adoption of appropriate administrative process/ethical practices by the principals. Over the years, emphasis has been laid on how teachers can be assisted to become more effective and efficient in their service delivery. This is because the quality of service provided by the teacher does not only affect the performance of students but also the general administration of the school. This is why parents have continued to give financial and non-financial support to the teachers of their children both directly and through the Parents Teachers Association. Similarly, the government has also contributed through various capacity building programmes and other incentives. However, these investments have not been justified in terms of the task performance of teachers.

There are cases of parents complaining of poor performance of students despite their investment in the teachers. Equally, the government has also had to query teachers for failing in the discharge of their administrative duties. One is therefore left to wonder if the principal has been able to put measures in place to put this situation under control especially by putting up positive ethical practices required of him for effective administration of the school. However, observations have shown that there seems to be poor principals' ethical practices which have led to poor administration in secondary schools in the State. This can be seen in the areas of lack of principal's selflessness in dealing with issues, lack of accountability to staff, lack of openness in some school matters, dishonesty, lack of respect for teachers and other member staff, and integrity issues which have marred administrative processes among others.

These situations seem 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, cultism related issues among the students and many more. The above situation should not be allowed to continue, hence the study sought to examine the extent principal's ethical practices predict effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

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### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study was to examine the extent principal's ethical practices predict effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

1. determine the extent selflessness of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
2. ascertain the extent integrity of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
3. fine out the extent accountability of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

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### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does selflessness of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does integrity of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?
3. To what extent does accountability of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

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### **Hypotheses**

1. Selflessness of principal does not significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
2. Integrity of principal does not significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
3. Accountability of principal does not significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

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### **Methodology**

This study adopted a correlation design to ascertain if the independent variable predict the dependent variable. The population of this study the consisted of 3,946 teachers (i.e. 2,076 male and 1,870 female) of all the 216 public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The sample size was 395 respondents representing 10% of the entire population of 3,946 was drawn for the study. The 10% was considered appropriate by Kpee (2015) to serve as an acceptable sample for a population running into thousands. A stratified sampling technique was adopted to select 22 schools spread across the 3 Senatorial District in Bayelsa State (Bayelsa East, Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa West), from which the sample size was drawn. The research instrument for the study was a two set questionnaire titled: Principal's Ethical Practices Scale (PEPS) and Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools Scale (EAPSSS). The instruments have sections A, B and C. The section A consisted of the demographic information of the respondents, while section B dealt with questionnaire items on PEPS which are made up of three parts. Each has 5-items with a total number of 15 items. The second instrument EAPSSS was section C, it consisted of 20 items. Both PEPS and EAPSSS were structured after the 4-point Likert rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points, High Extent (HE) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point. Cronbach alpha reliability statistics was used to test the reliability of the two instruments. The reliability coefficients of both instrument are 0.87 and 0.84, while the reliability coefficients for the subscales: Selflessness, Integrity, and Accountability are 0.82, 0.89 and 0.85 respectively. For the data that were analyzed, research question one to three were answered using simple linear regression, while hypotheses one to three were tested using t-test associated with simple linear regression.

## Results and Discussion

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does selflessness of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Showing the Extent Selflessness of Principal Predicts Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	.705 <sup>a</sup>	.511	.510	51.1%	High Extent

**Decision Rule: 100%- 75% (Very High Extent), 74% - 50% (High Extent), 49%-25% (Low Extent) and 0% - 24% (Very Low Extent)**

Table 1 revealed that the regression ( $r$ ) and regression square ( $r^2$ ) coefficients are .705 and .511 respectively, while the adjusted  $r$  square is .510. The extent of prediction (coefficient of determinism) was calculated to be 51.1% (.511 $\times$ 100). The result shows that selflessness of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State to a high extent by 51.1%.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does integrity of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Showing the Extent Integrity of Principal Predicts Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	.661 <sup>a</sup>	.404	.403	40.4%	Low Extent

**Decision Rule: 100%- 75% (Very High Extent), 74% - 50% (High Extent), 49%-25% (Low Extent) and 0% - 24% (Very Low Extent)**

Table 2 revealed that the regression ( $r$ ) and regression square ( $r^2$ ) coefficients are .661 and .404 respectively, while the adjusted  $r$  square is .403. The extent of prediction (coefficient of determinism) was calculated to be 40.4% (.404 $\times$ 100). The result shows that integrity of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State to a low extent by 40%.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does accountability of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Showing the Extent Strategic Accountability of Principal Predicts Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	.654 <sup>a</sup>	.424	.423	42.4%	Low Extent

**Decision Rule: 100%- 75% (Very High Extent), 74% - 50% (High Extent), 49%-25% (Low Extent) and 0% - 24% (Very Low Extent)**

Table 3 revealed that the regression ( $r$ ) and regression square ( $r^2$ ) coefficients are .654 and .424 respectively, while the adjusted  $r$  square is .423. The extent of prediction (coefficient of determinism) was calculated to be 42.4% (.424 $\times$ 100). The result shows that accountability of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria to a low extent by 42.4%.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Selflessness of principal does not significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Table 4: t-test Associated with Simple Linear Regression Showing the Extent Selflessness of principal Predicts Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	5.857	1.641		3.570	.000		
1 Selflessness	.807	.047	.614	17.201	.000	0.05	Ho <sub>1</sub> Rejected

**a. Dependent Variable: Effective Administration of Public Secondary School**

Table 4 revealed that standard beta value and t-test are .614 and 17.201. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, selflessness of principal significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** Integrity of principal does not significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Table 5: t-test Associated with Simple Linear Regression Showing the Extent Integrity of Principal Significantly Predict Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	9.974	1.790		5.572	.000		
1 Integrity	.060	.029	.061	13.445	.000	0.05	Ho <sub>2</sub> Rejected

**a. Dependent Variable: Effective Administration of Public Secondary School**

Table 5 revealed that standard beta value and t-test are .061 and 13.445. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, integrity of principal significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 3:** Accountability of principal does not significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Table 6: t-test Associated with Simple Linear Regression Showing the Extent Accountability of Principal Significantly Predict Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	2.299	.077		29.928	.000		
1 Accountability	.162	.030	.154	5.332	.000	0.05	Ho <sub>3</sub> Rejected

**a. Dependent Variable: Effective Administration of Public Secondary School**

Table 6 revealed that standard beta value and t-test are .154 and 5.332. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, accountability of principal significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Discussion of Findings**

The first finding of the study revealed that selflessness of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State to a high extent by 51.1%. Also, a corresponding finding from test of hypothesis establishes that selflessness of principal significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. These findings agree with Fowers (2019), Abdulrahman (2019), Arvey and Jones (2020), Maxwell, et al., (2021) who found out in their studies that selflessness displayed by principals of secondary school to a great extent influences the proper administration in the school. Brooks (2021) argues that leaders motivated by virtue, as opposed to values, are guided toward ethical behaviour and decision making which yield better result. According to Brooks, selflessness as principal's ethical practices at the school is an optimistic determination and efforts which assists in developing certain traditions for guiding individual's feelings, conducts, behaviours, thoughts, activities and habits. These

individuals has to do with students, teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as other stakeholders of the school. Maxwell, et al (2021) asserted that selfless attitude put up by school managers (principals) at school can be sustained by making sure that teachers are cleared about performance expectations in order to sustain their focus towards the accomplishment of work assigned to them. More so, Arvey and Jones (2020) concurred that selflessness as an ethical practice of principal increases greater commitment of teachers and other staff to work without being coerced, compelled and intimidated; which in turn promotes an effective administration of the school.

The second finding of the study showed that integrity of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State to a low extent by 40%. Also, a corresponding finding from test of hypothesis establishes that integrity of principal significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. These findings agree with Cleary et al (2019), Qiu and Peschek (2019), Trevino, et al (2019), Simons (2020), Muafi (2021), Faniran and Akintayo (2022) who in their studies observed that integrity of a school manager to a reasonable extent determines effective school administration. In view of this, Simon (2020) reported that integrity play a fundamental role in school manager such as the principal pattern of alignment, sound moral, ethical principles and organization productivity. However, when a school principal display unethical conduct like absenteeism, unwarranted breaks, stealing of organization property, converting office equipment for personal use, gossiping and many more that does not show integrity, they are liable to affect school administration as well as productivity (Muafi, 2021; Qiu & Peschek, 2019). Arnold (2019) and Bergman (2019) asserted that the school level of productivity in terms of effective administration is directly proportional to principal level of commitment in ensuring that the right things are done in the school, thus, the commitment becomes immaterial if it does not infused with integrity. Integrating values of integrity into the day-to-day operation of the school will promote ethical behaviour amongst the teachers, prevent damaging lapses while tapping into human instincts for moral thought/action and as well enhanced sustained productivity (Bergman, 2019). Ethical leaders are courageous, bold and fearless in telling the truth at all times in all their dealings no matter the condition, disregarding the consequences. Integrity does not only end in being truthful and transparent but taking actions. This means that the principal as a leader has to be straight forward and transparent without having any questionable character, staying clear from cheating; being trustworthy, upright and fair (Okoroma, 2021).

The third finding of the study revealed that accountability of principal predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria to a low extent by 42.4%. Also, a corresponding finding from test of hypothesis establishes that accountability of principal significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. These findings however align with Kim and Lee (2020), Huskey (2021), Cooley and Shen (2022), Bua and Adzongo (2021), Moynihan and Ingraham (2022) who in their study indicated that accountability as principal ethical behaviour has proven to be a determinant to productive school administration. Consequently, Clarke et al (2021) observed that in the school setting principals who take it upon themselves to be accountable to his or her staff in the management of all the funds, generated and expend effective school administration. According to the scholars, it is the responsibility of the principal to be accountable and facilitate the execution of its statutory functions relating to the assets, liabilities, property and other fund management issues for effective administration. However, Tims as cited in Bua and Adzongo (2021) observed that some principals or school managers are found to be inefficient in the way and manner they manage and account for the finances in their schools, and this result to poor administrative system of the school. In other words, poor administration witnessed in some schools within the state can be linked to a factor such as principal inability to exhibit an ethical behaviour like accountability.

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## Conclusion

Based on findings of the study, it was concluded that selflessness as principal's ethical practice significantly predicts effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State to a high extent, integrity and accountability to a low extent predict effective administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State but significantly.

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## Recommendations

Base on the findings, the following are hereby recommended.

1. Government who is the sole employer of public employee should employee and continue to train principals to be selfless in the discharge of their duties for effective administration of secondary school system.
2. Principals should show a high level of integrity while carrying out their managerial duties in school in order to boost teachers' contribution towards teamwork for effective administrative school system.
3. The principal as part of his ethical practice should always account for any fund spent in the running of the school for effective administrative system, this will enable him win the trust of his subordinates.

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