

# ACCOUNTABILITY BY ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigated accountability by administrators and school improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were used for the study. A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population for the study consisted of the principals and teachers in the 302 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, totalling 6,557 academic staff. A sample of 900 academic staff was used for the study, which represents 14% of the total population. The stratified random sampling technique was used for the study. The coefficients index value obtained was 0.86 and therefore the reliability of the instrument was established. The statistical tool used for answering the research questions were Mean and Standard Deviation statistics, while Z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. The findings of the study indicated that to a high extent administrators' accountability in school-community and finance generation ensures that supports are gained from the host communities. The study recommended among others that the secondary administrators should be accountable in school-community relationship for them to gain the support of the community in providing facilities for the use of the school.*

**Keywords:** Accountability, Administrator, School-Community Relationship, Finance, Budgeting.

## **Introduction**

Education plays important role in the general development process of every society, Education renders services that are of both economic and non-economic nature. The services education renders to the public sector of the economy has to do with increased productivity through the adequate training of human resources and the consequent effective accounting of human and material resources. Crisis in education can be evaded by reducing the increasing lack of public confidence in the school accounting system. Education world over is seen as the corner stone of development. It forms the basis for literacy, skills acquisition, technological advancement as well as the ability to harness the natural resources of the environment for development and this all important sector is faced with myriad of problems

in Nigeria. Prominent among the problem areas that brings to light the poor show of the sector are the poor quality of school products, flawed administrative procedures and lack of accountability in the school system, politicized employment and appointment of school heads, improper supervision and defective quality assurance and control mechanism.

In the landscape of educational progress, the pivotal role of school-community relationships cannot be overstated. This symbiotic partnership between schools and communities is the bedrock upon which the holistic development of students thrives. In Rivers State, Nigeria, this bond holds immense potential for fostering excellence in secondary education, but its realization significantly hinges upon the accountability of school administrators. Fiore (2016) submitted that accountability within secondary schools is not merely a buzzword; it's a fundamental pillar that ensures effective governance, transparency, and, ultimately, progress. When administrators take on the mantle of accountability in nurturing robust school-community relationships, the results are transformative. Administrators serve as the bridge between schools and their surrounding communities. By being accountable, they foster inclusivity, encouraging open communication channels that engage parents, local leaders, and community members in the educational process. This involvement helps align the school's objectives with the community's aspirations, creating a shared vision for educational advancement. This is supported by Agi and Adiele, (2015) having asserted that the nature and type of leadership offered by the school administrator will to a large extent determine the nature and character of the school-community relationship. Accountability cultivates trust. When school administrators demonstrate transparency in their actions and decisions, they earn the confidence of both the school faculty and the community (Johnson, 2007). This trust becomes the foundation for collaboration, enabling joint efforts in addressing challenges and leveraging resources for sustainable improvements in secondary education. A keen sense of accountability empowers administrators to be responsive to the unique needs and dynamics of the community. Whether it's integrating cultural aspects into the curriculum, addressing specific educational challenges, or implementing community-relevant programs, accountable administrators proactively tailor educational initiatives to serve the community's best interests. Efficient utilization of resources is paramount in driving educational progress. Nwankwo and Nnorom, (2020) posited that accountable administrators ensure that resources; be it funding, facilities, or personnel; are allocated judiciously, aligning with the needs of both the school and the community. This strategic allocation fosters an environment conducive to learning and growth. Accountability involves continuous monitoring and evaluation of educational processes and outcomes. Administrators take the lead in assessing the effectiveness of school-community initiatives, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing responsive strategies. This iterative approach nurtures a culture of constant improvement within secondary schools. Accountable administrators foster a culture of collaboration where stakeholders from the school and the community work together to solve challenges. Whether it's addressing student performance, infrastructure development, or community engagement, a shared responsibility approach leads to innovative solutions and sustainable progress. The accountability of administrators is the linchpin for nurturing robust school-community relationships in Rivers State's secondary schools. Their commitment to transparency, responsiveness, resource management, continuous improvement, and collaboration lays the groundwork for holistic educational development (Normore, 2004). As Rivers State strides toward educational excellence, placing a premium

on administrators' accountability will undoubtedly pave the way for stronger school-community relationships, thereby fostering an environment where every student can thrive and succeed.

In the realm of secondary education, the effective utilization of resources stands as a linchpin for achieving substantial improvements. School administrators wield a significant influence in shaping the learning environment, and strategic budgeting emerges as a cornerstone in their ability to foster progress and growth within secondary schools. Nwosu&Ozioko, (2020) is of the administrators are entrusted with the responsibility of translating educational visions into actionable plans. Strategic budgeting empowers them to align financial resources with these objectives, ensuring that every allocation serves the overarching goals of enhancing teaching quality, student learning outcomes, and overall school development. Budgeting allows administrators to prioritize critical educational needs (Williamson & Snow (2014). It involves a thorough assessment of requirements, including faculty development, infrastructure upgrades, curriculum enhancements, technology integration, and extracurricular activities. By delineating priorities, administrators can allocate funds where they'll have the most significant impact on student success. Administrators should regularly assess the effectiveness of budget allocations, evaluating whether the funds are achieving the desired outcomes (Urien, 2017). This iterative process allows for adjustments and reallocations, ensuring that resources are optimally utilized.

Transparency in budgeting fosters trust and community engagement. Administrators should involve stakeholders; parents, teachers, students, and community members; in the budgeting process. Communicating the rationale behind budgetary decisions and inviting feedback not only enhances transparency but also ensures that the budget reflects the collective aspirations of the school community (Mgeni, 2015).

Durocan(2002) believes that good accounting system should be effectively utilized in the school in-order to promote public confidence, he emphasize that the task of accounting auditing and reporting are associated with the business of formal education. Consequent upon the above, it is the duty of educational managers to be accountable to the public, the educational managers should among other duties ensure protection of public fund from misuse, protection of public property from abuse, that educational goals are committedly pursued and achieve and wrong action or deeds in the educational system are check. In the school system, accountability is usually linked to the management of the scarce resources of education to ensure prudent utilization of available resources for the accomplishment of the stated goals of education. The integration of accountability in the education management processes helps to improve service delivery and control indiscipline in the organization thereby increasing efficiency in the system.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Nigeria, it has been noticed that the school administrators are not accountable to the various agents who assist in the smooth running of the school. A careful look at most public secondary schools especially at the rural areas shows lack of basic facilities needed for the delivery of quality education. The problem usually emanates from the inability of many school administrators to become accountable, plan and execute school budgets in line with the effective school-community relationship, generated finance and among others. The most common defenses of principals are always inadequate funds, dearth of basic infrastructure,

lack of support from the host community, lack of support from the PTA and among others. However, the school administrators shy away from being accountable to these agents who are responsible in contributing to the progress of the school. Nevertheless, the researcher is bothered about the little attention principals give in terms of accountability of the resources at their disposal. It is against this backup that the researcher investigated accountability by administrators and school improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State

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

The study investigated accountability by administrators and school improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the extent administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State
2. Examine the extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

To guide this study, the following null hypotheses were postulated and statistically tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on prudential theory postulated by Arthur Laffer in the early 1980's as cited in Omokorede and Bridget (2011).

#### **Prudential Theory**

American Economist Arthur B. Laffer propounded the prudential theory. Laffer (as cited in Ajileye and Ikegwuru, 2011), postulated that everybody including school managers must know how to handle and spend money wisely. The scholar went further explaining that prudence is the act of spending money wisely and judiciously utilizing it. The relevance of the theory to the study is that, the school administrator as the chief executive should be able to judiciously utilize the resources made available to them and be accountable to them to improve the state of the school system.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Accountability in Education**

Accountability is conceptualized in diverse perspectives. Ethically, Hunt (2002), views accountability as the readiness or preparedness to give an explanation or justification to relevant stakeholders for one's judgments, intentions, acts and omissions when appropriately called upon to do so. It is readiness to have one's actions judged by others and where appropriate, accept responsibility for errors, misjudgments and negligence and recognition for competence, thoroughness, excellence and wisdom. In the political scene, the term suggests that any governmental entity functions as a part and not independent of a larger political system. The ensuring interaction subjects the entity to some controls, which cause it to render a general accounting of and for its actions. Accountability is geared towards ensuring democratic responsibility to the public at large.

### **Administrators' Accountability in School-Community Relationship for Improvements in Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

The concept of school-community relations has been defined in various ways by different experts. Igwe (2006) defined the concept of school-community relations as the complex network of relationships and interdependencies intended to maintain and promote mutual co-existence between the school and the community. Dennis (2013) defined school-community relations as planned activities and a way through which the school seek to learn about the community and interpret, when need be, the purpose, programme, problems and needs of the school; and involve the community in the planning, evaluating and management of school policies and progress.

School - community relations according to Oboegbulem (2004) is the degree of understanding and goodwill existing between the school and the community. To Abraham (2002) in Agabi and Okorie (2007), school-community relations is a two-way, symbiotic arrangement through which the school and the community cooperate with each other for the realization of the goals of the community via the school.

In another dimension, community maintains its relationship with the school by providing resource mobilization.

### **Administrators' Accountability in Budgeting for Improvements in Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

A budget is a document showing allocation of funds for specific purposes within a given time and serves as a tool for planning and controlling the use of scarce resources in the accomplishment of goals (Schick 2008). School budgets are usually concerned with provision of goods and services for stakeholders and no intention of making profit. Their budgets are therefore aimed at authorizing expenditure and providing ceiling for management actions. It is normally a hierarchical process which starts at the bottom and ends at the top of the hierarchy. The bottom here is the department and the apex is the BOG. It therefore starts with the school departments who are required to prepare their departmental budget prior to the school central budget committee meets to compile the final budget draft for the various school departments to be incorporated into the final school budget.

## Methodology

The design that was adopted for this study was a descriptive research design. This was done to find out the opinions of the respondents of the study and interpret them accordingly without being biased. The population of this study comprised all the principals and teachers in the 302 public senior secondary schools spread across the 23 Local government areas of Rivers State, totaling 6,557 academic staff (**Source:** Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, 2022). A sample of 900 academic staff was used for the study, which represents 14% of the total population of the study. A stratified random sampling technique was used draw out 100 schools from where the sample size was drawn. The instrument that was used for data collection in this study was a self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled “Accountability by Administrators for School Improvements in Secondary Schools Questionnaire (ASISSQ)” in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The instrument was structured using the modified 4-point Likert rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) - 4 points, High Extent (HE) - 3points, Low Extent (LE) - 2points, Very Low Extent (VLE) - 1 point. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by giving them to the researcher’s supervisor and two other experts of Test and measurement. The reliability index value of the instrument was 0.86.900 copies of the research questionnaire instrument were administered to the respondents by the researcher. Only 842 questionnaires were retrieved which gave rise to 93% retrieval rate. Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviation (SD) used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Criterion mean of 2.5 was used for judgment in accepting or rejecting the mean.

## Results and Discussion

### Answers to Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does administrators’ accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation of principals and teachers on the extent administrators’ accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.**

| S/N                             | Principals (N = 100)                                                                                                          | Teachers (N = 742) |      |           |      | Mean Set | Remark      |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------|-----------|------|----------|-------------|
|                                 | Variables                                                                                                                     | $\bar{X}$          | S.D  | $\bar{X}$ | S.D  |          |             |
| 1                               | Through school-community, the principals raise money to purchase facilities for the school use.                               | 2.69               | 1.1  | 2.61      | 1.24 | 2.65     | High Extent |
| 2                               | The administrators also gained the support of the community during occasions.                                                 | 2.06               | 1.17 | 2.39      | 0.94 | 2.23     | Low Extent  |
| 3                               | School-community relationship skill helps the administrators to procure facilities for the development of the school.         | 2.79               | 0.95 | 2.58      | 1.08 | 2.69     | High Extent |
| 4                               | School-community relationship enables the principals to generate fund for attending the needs of the school.                  | 2.67               | 1.16 | 2.71      | 1.05 | 2.69     | High Extent |
| 5                               | It also avails the administrators the opportunity to gain the interest the interest of the people towards school development. | 2.67               | 1.04 | 2.49      | 1.01 | 2.58     | High Extent |
| 6                               | It allows the principal to relate with the community and to also support them when the need arises.                           | 2.66               | 1.15 | 2.5       | 1.26 | 2.58     | High Extent |
| Average Mean/Standard Deviation |                                                                                                                               | 2.59               | 1.09 | 2.55      | 1.09 | 2.57     | High Extent |

Data on Table 1 shows the mean ratings and standard deviation of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State. The grand mean set value of 2.57 indicates that to a high extent administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.**

| S/N                                    | Principals (N = 100)                                                                                                       | Teachers (N = 742) |             |             |             |             |                    |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
|                                        | Variables                                                                                                                  | $\bar{X}$          | S.D         | $\bar{X}$   | S.D         | Mean Set    | Remark             |
| 7                                      | Budgeting skill helps the administrators to know the cost of mobilizing the resources.                                     | 2.55               | 1.24        | 2.69        | 1.16        | 2.62        | High Extent        |
| 8                                      | It also enables the principals to know the facilities to forego in order to buy the other.                                 | 2.02               | 1.19        | 2.81        | 1.24        | 2.41        | Low Extent         |
| 9                                      | Budgeting helps the administrator to make an outline of the modalities to raise money.                                     | 2.8                | 1.06        | 2.5         | 1.08        | 2.65        | High Extent        |
| 10                                     | It helps the administrator to make decision on the measures that will be take in mobilizing plant resources.               | 2.67               | 1.19        | 2.63        | 1.06        | 2.65        | High Extent        |
| 11                                     | The administrator through budgeting notifies the other teachers and the public on the need of the school.                  | 2.46               | 1.11        | 2.58        | 0.92        | 2.52        | High Extent        |
| 12                                     | The administrator through the act of budgeting skill embarks in a market survey on the cost procuring the plant facilities | 2.31               | 1.1         | 2.5         | 1.24        | 2.40        | Low Extent         |
| <b>Average Mean/Standard Deviation</b> |                                                                                                                            | <b>2.47</b>        | <b>1.15</b> | <b>2.62</b> | <b>1.12</b> | <b>2.54</b> | <b>High Extent</b> |

Data on Table 2 shows the mean ratings and standard deviation of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State. From the grand mean value of 2.54, it implies that to a high extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State

**Table 3: Summary of z-test analysis of mean ratings of principals and teachers on the on the extent administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.**

| Groups | N | $\bar{x}$ | S.D | Df | z-cal. | z-crit. | Decision |
|--------|---|-----------|-----|----|--------|---------|----------|
|--------|---|-----------|-----|----|--------|---------|----------|

|            |     |      |      |     |      |            |                 |
|------------|-----|------|------|-----|------|------------|-----------------|
| Principals | 100 | 2.59 | 1.09 | 840 | 0.27 | $\pm 1.96$ | Accepted        |
| Teachers   | 742 | 2.55 | 1.06 |     |      |            | No Significance |
| N=         | 842 |      |      |     |      |            |                 |

**Level of significance = 0.05**

The calculated z-value, used in testing the hypothesis stood at 0.27, while the z-critical value stood at  $\pm 1.96$  using 840 degrees of freedom. At 0.05 level of significance and 165 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-test value of 0.27 is less than z-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ , hence there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 4: Summary of z-test analysis of the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.**

| Groups     | N   | $\bar{x}$ | S.D  | Df  | z-cal. | z-crit.    | Decision        |
|------------|-----|-----------|------|-----|--------|------------|-----------------|
| Principals | 100 | 2.47      | 1.15 | 840 | -0.85  | $\pm 1.96$ | Accepted        |
| Teachers   | 742 | 2.62      | 1.12 |     |        |            | No Significance |
| N=         | 842 |           |      |     |        |            |                 |

**Level of significance = 0.05**

The calculated z-value, used in testing the hypothesis stood at -0.85, while the z-critical value stood at  $\pm 1.96$  using 167 degrees of freedom. At 0.05 level of significance and 165 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-test value of 0.85 is less than z-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ , hence there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Discussion of Findings**

The discussion of findings was done as shown below:

**Extent Administrators' Accountability in School-Community Relationship Enhances Improvements in Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

The findings of the study indicated that both principals and teachers to a high extent agreed that accountability in school-community relationship enhances improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State

This finding not surprisingly is in agreement with Downey (2002), who asserted that school-community relationship will help to improve the life of the school in the provision of social amenities. Overall school-community relationships should be strongly hunted and developed

in order to significantly improve the schools as well as strengthen the community. Since the community and the school collectively influence and shape the behavior of the youths, they should realize the need for co-operation and mutual understanding.

### **Extent Administrators' Accountability in Budgeting Contributes to Improvements in Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

The findings of the study showed that both principals and teachers agreed that to a high extent administrators' accountability in budgeting contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State.

This finding is in conformity with Kuria (2012), who is of the opinion that an annual financial budget shall be an essential tool for financial control. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Principal of the institution to ensure that the annual budget is prepared in time. In principal utilization of budgeting skills ensures that each department's specifications of kind of goods and services are considered in preparation of the budget.

### **Conclusion**

This study has established the extent administrators' accountability contributes to improvements in secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings of the study indicated that administrators' accountability school-community relationship ensures they raise money to purchase facilities for the school use. It becomes imperative to state that administrators' accountability in school-community relationship helps the administrator to gain the support of the community during occasions in order to assist the school.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the summary of the findings, the following are recommended:

- 1) The secondary administrators should be accountable in school-community relationship for them to gain the support of the community in providing facilities for the use of the school.
- 2) The school administrators should be accountable in budgeting to make decision on the measures that will be taken in mobilizing resources for the school.
- 3) The school administrators should demonstrate high level of accountability in finance generation in raising money and spending judiciously in acquiring more facilities for the good of the school.

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