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## PERCEIVED COMPETENCY NEEDS OF PRINCIPALS FOR MANAGING PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated the perceived competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state. The researchers outlined three purposes, three research questions, and three null hypotheses tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 569 principals of government-approved private secondary schools in Anambra state. The sample was made up of 227 (91 males and 136 females) principals, using a proportionate stratified sampling technique. Stratification was based on gender and educational zones. Data was collected using a questionnaire of 61 items titled "Competency Needs Questionnaire for Principals" (CNQP), which was validated by experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. A reliability index of .94 for the questionnaire was obtained using the Cronbach alpha method. Data analysis was done using mean scores, t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings revealed among others the competency need which is: sourcing funds for the development of the school and conducting teacher performance appraisals. It was also discovered that there is a significant difference in the perception of male and female principals on their competency needs. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the Anambra State Ministry of Education, Post-Primary School Service Commission, as well as National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), should use the identified competency need as a basis for organizing workshops, conferences, seminars and in-service courses for their principals.

### KEYWORDS

Principals, Competency needs, Management, Private Schools.



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## Introduction

Education in every country of the world has been considered very important for personal and societal development. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) stated that quality education should be given at all levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary.

In Nigeria, secondary schools are charged with the broad goal of preparing the individual for useful living within the society and for higher education. Public secondary schools are owned and managed by government while private schools are privately owned and managed. The private secondary schools complement the public secondary schools to cater for the ever increasing number of students seeking admissions into secondary schools every year. But as private enterprises, most principals of private schools have run their schools clearly as private property often paying little or no attention to laws governing the operations of education industry (Agi, 2013).

At the head of every private secondary school, is a manager referred to as the principal who is the chief executive officer and responsible for all that happens in the school (Oyedeji&Fasasi, 2006). Arikewuyo (2007) viewed the functions of the principal as: providing leadership for curriculum development; providing leadership for instruction improvement; creating an environment conducive for the realization of human potentials; influencing the behavior of staff members; and supervising instructional activities in the school system. Obi (2004) opined that the principal has the following administrative task areas; student personnel, staff personnel, school-community relationship, instruction and curriculum development, school finance and business management, school security and school plant management.

Given the unique nature of private secondary schools as both profit making venture and providers of essential services for positive social change (education), the school principals need to possess the necessary competencies to effectively manage these schools. Egboka (2008) noted that successful administration of secondary schools require competent principals with appropriate competencies. Egboka defines competencies as essential knowledge, actions, abilities and capabilities for effective job performance. Ikedimma (2016) defined competencies as sets of skills, knowledge, crafts and abilities which are essential for effective job performance and improvement. Competencies of principals, therefore, refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the principals to do their jobs effectively.

Needs in the opinion of Hornby (2003) is circumstances that require something to be done. Chuta (2014) expressed that when something that should be done is omitted, then there is a gap. Ali and Halim (1997) refer to the need as a problem which usually occurs when a difference exists between expected performance and actual performance. Need can therefore be seen as what is required in order to meet a target standard. Competency needs, refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities which an individual lacks and these knowledge, skills and abilities are needed for improved job performance (Ikedimma, 2016). Competency need in the context of this study is the difference in knowledge, skills and abilities between current job capabilities and requirements. The first stage in any training process is the identification of the competency needs.

In Anambra state, the private secondary schools seem not to have lived up to expectations as a good number of them are known with shortage of qualified teachers, operation of what is termed 'miracle centres', dilapidated and unsafe learning environment, lack of or underequipped libraries and laboratories, shortage of instructional materials, poor maintenance culture, inability to manage human resources (Anayo 2013; Nwandu, 2012; Odogwu, 2014). According to Omenugha in Odogwu (2014), the profit-oriented nature of these schools provides a different context for school management. Overwhelming interest in profit-making negatively affects these schools in the following ways; employment of high number of unqualified teachers, lack of basic facilities, students indiscipline, lack of or underequipped libraries and laboratories, shortage of instructional materials, poor maintenance culture and operation of 'miracle centres'. These have presented challenges to Anambra state in its bid to run and deliver education needed for sustainable development of the state. This draws attention to the competency of private secondary school principals. It appears that the principals in private secondary schools charged with the task of managing the affairs of the schools to attain the secondary school objectives

need further training on some competencies in the discharge of their duties. Therefore, principals of private secondary schools need relevant competencies because prospective training for these principals needs to target the areas they need improvement. Hence, competency need assessment is required.

This work therefore investigated perceived competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.

### Statement of the Problem

Private secondary schools are expected to complement public secondary schools to provide the students with quality education. In Anambra state, the private secondary schools seem not to have lived up to expectations as a good number of them are known with the following problems: Shortage of qualified teachers, dilapidated and unsafe learning environment, lack of or underequipped libraries and laboratories, shortage of instructional materials, poor maintenance culture, inability to manage human resources (Anayo 2013; Nwandu, 2012; Odogwu, 2014). All these problems may be associated with managerial lapses in schools.

The employment of individuals without qualification in education or experience in school management as principals means that most of the private secondary school principals seem to lack the requisite competencies to effectively manage the schools.

Therefore, principals of private secondary schools need relevant competencies because prospective training for these principals needs to target the areas they need improvement. Hence, competency need assessment is required. This work therefore investigated perceived competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.

### Purpose of the study

The study aimed at identifying perceived competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study investigated the:

1. Instructional leadership competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.
2. Personnel management competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.
3. Financial management competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.

### Significance of the Study

Findings of this study will provide information on the perceived competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings will be of great value to Principals of private secondary schools in Anambra state, National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools, Anambra State chapter, All Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools, Anambra state chapter, Anambra State Ministry of Education and to researchers.

### Research Questions

The following three research questions guided the study:

1. What are instructional leadership competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state?
2. What are personnel management competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state?
3. What are financial management competency needs of principals for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state?

### Hypotheses

The following three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Male and female principals will not differ significantly on their mean ratings in instructional leadership competency needs for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.

2. The mean ratings of male and female principals will not differ significantly on personnel management competency needs for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on financial management competency needs for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.

## Methods

The research design for the study was a survey research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State using principals of private secondary schools. The population of the study was 569 (228 male and 341female) principals in all private secondary schools in Anambra State. This figure is based on record from Department of Planning, Research and Statistics, Anambra State Ministry of Education, Awka. The sample for this study was 227 respondents consisting of 227 private secondary school principals in Anambra state. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Data collection in this study was done through the use of questionnaire developed by the researchers titled “Competency Needs Questionnaire for Principals” (CNQP). The instrument was validated by three experts. Two experts from the Department of Educational Management and policy, one from Department of Education Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation), all in Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. To determine the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach alpha method was used. The reliability of the entire instrument stood at .94, indicating a high reliability. Collection of data for the study was done through direct delivery and collection method. Mean was used to answer the three research questions. Any response that attained a mean score of 2.50 or above was accepted as the competency need, while any one below it was not accepted. t-test was used to test the three null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected when the calculated t is greater than t-critical, otherwise the null hypothesis was not rejected.

## Results

**Table 1, principals’ mean responses on instructional leadership competency needs.**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Remark</b>
1. Supervise teaching and learning activities in the classroom.	227	2.43 Disagree
2. Ensure that the classroom objectives of the teachers are in consistent with the stated goal of the school.	227	1.87 Disagree
3. Prepare time table for school subjects.	227	2.04 Disagree
4. Conducts teaching appraisals in the school.	227	2.63 Agree
5. Supervise teachers’ lesson plans before delivery.	227	1.97 Disagree
6. Define school objectives in co-operation with my teachers	227	1.69 Disagree
7. Ensure that appropriate teaching aids are used in teaching.	227	2.34 Disagree
8. Provide appropriate feedback on teachers’ instructional practices.	227	2.54 Agree
9. Organize post supervision conference with teachers aimed at effective changes in their activities	227	2.19 Disagree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>2.19 Disagree</b>

As shown in table 1, the mean responses of principals of private schools for all the 9 listed instructional leadership competency need areas indicated that private school principals agree that they have two areas of need as regards instructional leadership. Namely; conducting teaching appraisals in the school (Mean = 2.63) and

providing appropriate feedback on teachers' instructional practices. (Mean = 2.54).

**Table 2, principals' mean responses on personnel management competency needs.**

	N	Mean	Remark
1. Determine schools' human resource need	227	2.26	Disagree
2. Carry out staff recruitment and selection	227	2.10	Disagree
3. Carry out staff placement	227	2.29	Disagree
4. Organize employee induction and orientation	227	2.22	Disagree
5. Organize in-service training	227	2.24	Disagree
6. Motivate my staff	227	2.33	Disagree
7. Delegate duties and authority to capable staff.	227	2.27	Disagree
8. Discipline an erring staff.	227	2.53	Agree
9. Conduct and preside over staff meetings.	227	2.20	Disagree
10. Involve staff in decision making.	227	2.96	Agree
11. Resolve conflict among staff	227	2.20	Disagree
12. Appraise staff performance (performance appraisal)	227	2.46	Disagree
13. Reward the effort of my staff	227	2.66	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>2.39</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

The analysis in table 2 shows that the mean responses of principals of private schools on the personnel management competency need areas listed indicates that out of the 13 competency areas listed, the principals agree they have three areas of need as regards personnel management, these areas include; disciplining an erring staff (Mean = 2.53), involving staff in decision making (Mean = 2.96) and rewarding the effort of their staff (Mean = 2.66).

**Table 3, principals' mean responses on financial management competency needs**

	N	Mean	Remark
1. Source fund for the development of the school.	227	2.54	Agree
2. Prepare school budget	227	2.31	Disagree
3. Work within the constraints of the school budget.	227	2.15	Disagree
4. Make judicious use of school finance	227	2.66	Agree
5. Keep financial records.	227	2.41	Disagree
6. Present book accounts.	227	2.42	Disagree
7. Keep close check on financial expenditure.	227	2.63	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

As shown in table 3, the mean responses of principals of private schools for the 7 financial management competency areas indicates that the principals agree they have three areas of need as regards financial management, namely; sourcing fund for the development of the school (Mean = 2.54), making judicious use of school finance (Mean = 2.66) and keeping close check on financial expenditure (Mean = 2.54).

## Hypotheses

**Table 4: t-test on male and female principals' responses on instructional leadership competency needs for managing private secondary schools.**

Source of variation	Mean	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	19.04	2.93	91	225	-	1.96	S
Female	20.14	3.30	136				

S = Significant

The t-test analysis presented in table 4 shows that the calculated t-value 2.57 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore the first null hypothesis is rejected. This is an indication that there is significant difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on instructional leadership competency needs for managing private secondary schools.

**Table 5: t-test on male and female principals' responses on personnel management competency needs for managing private secondary schools.**

Source of variation	Mean	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	33.73	3.30	91	225	11.23	1.96	S
Female	28.69	3.31	136				

S = Significant

The t-test analysis presented in table 5 shows that the calculated t-value 11.23 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups was rejected. This shows that there is a significant difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on personnel management competency needs for managing private secondary schools.

**Table 6: t-test on male and female principals' responses on financial management competency needs for managing private secondary schools.**

Source of variation	Mean	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	17.48	2.50	91	225	2.04	1.96	S
Female	16.88	1.99	136				

S = Significant

The analysis presented in table 6 shows that the calculated t-value 2.04 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups was rejected. This is an indication that there is significant difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on financial management competency needs for managing private secondary schools in Anambra state.

## Discussion of Findings

### Instructional Leadership Competencies

With reference to instructional leadership competencies, mean responses of principals of private schools for all the nine listed instructional leadership competency need areas indicated that private secondary school principals

agree that they have two areas of need as regards instructional leadership. Namely; conducting teaching appraisals in the school and providing appropriate feedback on teachers' instructional practices. The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of Muozoba (2005) who made similar findings on instructional leadership competencies as: guiding teachers to select what to teach, conducting teaching appraisals in the school, providing appropriate feedback on teachers' instructional practices, providing instructional materials and ensuring effective time table planning. The findings of Oredein (2006) further supports the findings of this study, Oredein conducted a survey study of indicators of effective principals' leadership in Edo State. Using a sample of 1788 principals and a 21-item questionnaire, Oredein found that one of the highest rated indicators relate to principals' provide necessary instructional materials, conducting teaching appraisals in the school, ability to monitor teachers' curriculum implementation, *vis-à-vis* lesson planning and delivery. The findings of Adegbamile (2011) further supports the findings of this study, he found in his study that principals perceived they need instructional leadership skills for effective schools' administration. This is not surprising because the true test of effective instructional leadership, as identified by Federal Ministry of Education (2007), depends on how well teachers are guided to translate curriculum materials to meaningful classroom experiences.

In terms of difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals, the study found that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on instructional leadership competency needs in the management of private secondary schools in Anambra state. The reason for the significant difference may lie in the gender difference between the two groups.

### **Personnel Management Competencies**

With reference to personnel management competencies, mean responses of principals of private schools on the personnel management competency need areas listed indicates that out of the 13 items listed, the principals agree they have three areas of need as regards personnel management, these areas include; discipline an erring staff, involving staff in decision making and rewarding the effort of their staff. The findings of this study is consistent with the finding of Enyi (2012) on personnel management competencies which are involving staff in decision making, recognizing staff effort in teaching and learning etc. Also the findings of this study agree with (Adegbamile, 2011). Adegbamile found out that involving staff in decision making is also a competency need of principals for effective school administration. Other personnel management skills needed by principals for effective schools' administration, as revealed in the results of the study are: principal modeling behaviours expected from others, principal defusing tense situation and negotiating solutions, not taking side in conflict resolution. Although, other researchers' study population and place of study differ slightly from the present one, the similarities in the results, further stress the fact that personnel management competency needs of principals are largely similar.

In terms of difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals, the study found that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on personnel management competency needs in the management of private secondary schools in Anambra state. The reason for the significant difference may lie in the gender difference between the two groups.

### **Financial Management Competencies**

With reference to financial management competencies, the mean responses of principals of private schools for the seven listed items on financial management competency need areas indicates that the principals agree they have three areas of need as regards financial management. Namely; sourcing fund for the development of the school, making judicious use of school finance and keeping close check on financial expenditure. The findings of this study agrees with (Enyi, 2012). Using a sample of 500 principals, Enyi reported that ability to source and allocate funds, keep and report on financial records, keep close check on financial records, work within budget constraints and have knowledge of accounting laws, are required by the respondents. Using a sample of 200 principals and 550 teachers, Adasu (2009), identified, ability of school principals to plan budgets based on realizable objectives as one of the major requirements of good financial management. Oredein (2006) and Oboegbulem (2007) had made similar findings about effective principals' leadership in financial management.

Although, other researchers' study population and place of study differ from the present one, the similarities in the results, further stress the fact that financial management competency needs of principals are largely similar. In terms of difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals, the study found that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on financial management competency needs of principals in the management of private secondary schools in Anambra state. This hypothesis is in-line with that of Enyi (2012) who showed that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of both male and female principals on the financial management competencies. The reason for the significant difference may be as a result of gender difference between the two groups.

### Conclusion

This study revealed principals' competency needs in various managerial areas. This section therefore draws a number of relevant conclusions based on the findings on these competencies as shown below.

1. On instructional leadership, the principals need training on the following managerial competencies: conducting teacher performance appraisals in the school and providing appropriate feedback on teachers' instructional practices.
2. As regards personnel management competencies, the principals need training on the following managerial competencies: discipline an erring staff, involve staff in decision making, and reward the effort of their staff.
3. Financial management competency needs of principals include: sourcing fund for the development of the school, making judicious use of school finance, keeping close check on financial expenditure.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions and implications of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Anambra State Ministry of Education, Post-Primary School service Commission, as well as National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) and ANCOPSS, should use the identified competency needs as basis for organizing workshops, conferences, seminars and in-service courses for their principals.
2. On instructional leadership, the principals should go for further training on the following managerial competencies: conducting teacher performance appraisals in the school and provide appropriate feedback on teachers' instructional practices.
3. As regards personnel management competencies, the principals should go for further training on the following managerial competencies: discipline an erring staff, involve staff in decision making, and reward the effort of their staff.
4. On Financial management competency, the principals should go for further training on the following managerial competencies: sourcing fund for the development of the school, making judicious use of school finance, keeping close check on financial expenditure.

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