



**INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY
PRINCIPALS FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE**

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Abstract

This study compared public and private secondary school principals' instructional leadership and mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State Nigeria. Two specific purposes and two research questions guided the study. Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 25,579 teachers (8,362 public and 17,217 private) secondary schools in Enugu State. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. A researcher-developed instrument titled "Principals' Instructional Leadership and Mentoring Strategies for Quality Teaching and Learning Questionnaire (PILMSQTLQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. Two experts from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one expert from the Department of Educational Foundation (Measurement and Evaluation) all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The internal consistency co-efficient for the two clusters of the PILMSQTLQ were 0.86 and 0.80 obtained using Cronbach's Alpha method. Data were analyzed using mean and t-test. The findings of the study revealed among others that public secondary school principals adopt instructional leadership and mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning more than their private school counterparts in Enugu State. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that private secondary school principals in Enugu State should be encouraged to improve in their adoption of instructional leadership strategies for quality teaching and learning. This would help inculcate in teachers the needed skills, capacities and competences that will help them achieve instructional effectiveness.

Keywords: instructional leadership, mentoring, quality teaching and learning, secondary schools.

Introduction

Education serves as a vital means for developing the skills and potentials individuals require for self-reliance and personal fulfillment. Over time, it has been recognized as a key instrument for nurturing intellectual capacity, shaping character, promoting moral and cultural values, and ensuring emotional stability, all of which contribute to societal progress. Nigeria, like many other nations, acknowledges that education is essential for national development and social transformation. Consequently, the country has aligned with global efforts to prioritize education through various reforms and increased investments. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), one of the primary objectives of education is to equip individuals with relevant mental, physical, and social skills and competencies that enable them to function effectively and contribute meaningfully to the society.

The primary goal of formal education, whether at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level in Nigeria is to bring about positive changes in learners' behaviour by exposing them to meaningful learning experiences and equipping them with essential life skills. Secondary education, which forms the focus of this study, serves as a vital bridge between primary and tertiary education, preparing students for advanced learning. It also offers learners the opportunity to gain additional knowledge, skills, and character development beyond what is provided at the primary school level.

Secondary schools in Nigeria are categorized as either public or private. According to Ugwu (2023), public secondary schools are post-primary institutions of learning established, controlled and financed by the government. Public secondary schools are day or boarding schools owned either by the federal or state governments, while private secondary schools are schools owned by the private sector as sole proprietors or joint partnership, such as individuals, churches and voluntary organizations. Both public and private secondary schools share similarities in using the same curriculum in teaching, although the main differences between a private and public school is how they are funded, the school size and class size. Private schools are not government funded and rely on other means of funding, such as endowments and donations. This means that tuition can be higher for a private school than a public one. Majority of the private secondary schools have limited number of students in the school and in the classrooms (Iwamoto in Odoh, 2021). Even at the expensive nature of private secondary schools, a lot of parents still prefer to send their children and wards to private schools because they feel that private school owners maintain quality education and high standards more than the public secondary schools.

At the head of every secondary school is a principal whose role essentially is to cater for the character formation and intellectual development of the students. The principal is the chief executive who performs necessary leadership functions for the achievement of school goals. As the chief executive of the school, the principal owes it a duty to modify the attitude of staff and students and motivate them to put in their best towards achieving educational goals. This he does using various management strategies to ensure that consistent progress is made towards the achievement of quality teaching and learning.

Management strategies according to Ezeugbor and Emere (2017), involve the organization and utilization of human and material resources for the achievement of educational goals. Management strategies are set of guiding principles and management styles adopted by principals to improve competitiveness and school performances through the utilization of available resources. Izuehie (2025), noted that principals' managerial strategies could be assessed using the dimensions of their activities such as communication, good interpersonal relationships, discipline, use of resources, conflict resolution, integrity, motivating, delegating, building image, welfare management, availability for consultation, supervision and innovation in an organization. This study focused on the following management strategies: instructional leadership, effective communication, decision making, discipline, staff development and mentoring strategy. The reason for choosing these six strategies is due to their importance in influencing quality teaching and learning and due to the fact that public and private schools face peculiar problems in these areas.

Instructional leadership is associated with measures that a principal takes or delegates to others to enhance students' learning. It involves the decisions, strategies and tactics which principals employ to ensure instructional effectiveness in the classroom. In this respect, the principal should provide direction, resources and support to both the educators and the learners (Akhibi, 2024). It is further applicable to best practices directed towards achieving schools' mission and objectives, managing the instructions and promoting positive school learning climate which the school leadership must take into cognizance. According to Bendikson, Robison and Hattie in Ezeugbor and Emere (2017), principals' instructional leadership practices can be direct (focused on improving teaching) or indirect (focused on creating the conditions for optimal teaching and learning). Direct instructional leadership is focused on the quality of teacher practice itself, whereas indirect instructional leadership is particularly important for secondary school principals because much of the direct leadership is carried out by deputies and heads of departments.

Another important management strategy which is of interest to this study is Mentoring. Mentoring is a management strategy where one person (a mentor) offers help, guidance, advise (counsels) and support to facilitate the learning and (professional) development of another person (mentee or protégée). According to Odimmega, Udemba and Obiekwe (2021), Mentoring is one of the most effective ways to transfer skills and offer people the opportunity to learn needed skills that allow them to function at a more senior level. It provides workplace learning in a less stressful environment. Mentoring can also be seen as the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools which is an ongoing relationship that extends throughout the first year of a new teacher's professional practice. Okechukwu, Joseph and Obiekwe (2024), opined that mentoring is a multi-dimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing, and supporting a teacher. In mentoring, the mentor always serves as a guide, counselor, confidant, adviser, and a role model to the mentee. It is usually expected that the relationship will enable the mentee to develop holistically. In a mentoring relationship, people learn by doing because under the guidance and direction of the mentor, the mentee is given a direct access to important insights and past experiences. In the school system, principals, vice principals, and heads of departments are the leaders and invariably mentors. They are expected to continue to develop their leadership skills by exposing new and inexperienced teachers to the right professional knowledge and etiquettes. Effective mentoring can enhance quality teaching and learning in the school.

Quality teaching can be seen as that which leads to improved students' achievement using outcomes that matter to their future success (Okeke 2020). Quality teaching and learning is the ability of the teacher and the students to be in conformity with the education laws and policies which will at the end make the product of a school (students) to render useful services to the society and themselves. It can also be seen as the process of ensuring that the degree of excellence specified is achieved.

Quality teaching and learning will be greatly enhanced if public and private secondary school principals employ various management strategies in the administration of secondary education in Nigeria and indeed Enugu State. However, the situation in some public and private secondary schools in Enugu State casts a shadow of doubt as to whether principals actually adopt management strategies in the administration of secondary schools in the State. This is because principals of public secondary schools appear to be grappling with management challenges such as poor learning environment, lack of teamwork, ineffective communication, poor instructional supervision as well as poor mentoring (Mbanefo, 2023). On the other hand, the National Center for Education Statistics, NCES (2017), reports that private schools are better than public schools in a number of policy areas such as discipline, effective communication, decision making and students' health and welfare services. Ugwu (2023), however argued that principals in public secondary schools seem to be more experienced and knowledgeable in terms of discipline, instructional supervision and staff development when compared with their counterparts in private schools.

More so, the prevalence of several indicators of indiscipline cutting across public and private schools in Enugu State such as lateness to school, bullying, insolence, failure to carry out assignments, insubordination, aggression, damage to school facilities is altogether worrisome. These situations therefore made it imperative to comparatively analyze public and private secondary school instructional leadership and mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

Principals of secondary schools whether private or public are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communication experts, facility managers as well as guardians of various legal, contractual and policy mandates and initiatives. However, the situation in some public and private secondary schools in Enugu State casts a shadow of doubt as to whether principals are actually living up to these expectations.

Some public secondary schools in Enugu State appear to be grappling with management challenges such as poor learning environment, persistent conflicts as well as poor instructional leadership. The surge in the number of private secondary schools in the State some of which are yet to secure approval from government and the seeming preference for private schools by parents and guardians is a testament that all may not be well with public schools in the State. Private schools appear better than public schools in a number of policy areas such as discipline, effective communication, decision making and students' health and welfare services. On the contrary, some researchers have argued that the whelming interest of private schools in profit making negatively affects the quality of teachers they employ, provision of infrastructure, students' discipline, staff development and motivation among other areas.

Principals of public secondary schools in Enugu State have been adjudged to be more experienced, knowledgeable and better than their private school counterparts in terms of discipline, instructional supervision, staff development and conflict resolution. More so, the prevalence of several indicators of indiscipline cutting across public and private schools in Enugu State such as lateness to school, bullying, insolence, insubordination, aggression, damage to school facilities is altogether very worrisome. If this trend is not mitigated urgently, the realization of quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in the State may become a mirage. This study therefore compared public and private secondary school principals' instructional leadership and mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning in Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

This study compared public and private secondary school principals' instructional leadership and mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning in Enugu State. Specifically, this study compared:

1. public and private secondary school principals' instructional leadership strategies for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. public and private secondary school principals' mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the instructional leadership strategies of principals for quality teaching and learning in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State?
2. What are the mentoring strategies of principals for quality teaching and learning in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the instructional leadership strategies of principals for quality teaching and learning in Enugu State?
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school teachers on the mentoring strategies of principals for quality teaching and learning in Enugu State?

Method

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study which was carried out in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. From a population of 25,576

teachers, a sample of 1,278 consisting 860 private and 418 public secondary school teachers was drawn using a multistage sampling procedure. A researchers' developed instrument titled Principals' Instructional Leadership and Mentoring Strategies for Quality Teaching and Learning (PILMSQTLQ) which was validated by three experts was used for data collection. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1. The internal consistency of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach's Alpha and this yielded reliability coefficients of 0.86 and 0.81. The instrument was considered reliable in line with Nworgu (2015), who stated that if the coefficient obtained for an instrument is up to 0.70 and above, the instrument should be considered good enough to be used for a study. The direct administration and retrieval method was used for data collection. A total of 1,278 copies of the questionnaire were administered while 1,060 representing 83% were retrieved and was used for data analysis. Mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test all the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For the research questions, a mean rating of 2.50 and above was interpreted as agree while mean rating of less than 2.50 was interpreted as disagree. The null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value associated with the t-cal was less than 0.05 whereas the null hypothesis was not rejected where the p-value was greater than 0.05.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Principals' Instructional Leadership Strategies for Quality Teaching and Learning in Public and Private Secondary schools in Enugu State

The principal of my school:	Public (n=403)			Private (n=657)		
	Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Monitors to see that the school's curricular objectives are achieved.	3.28	.83	Agree	3.11	.89	Agree
2. Meets with subject teachers to discuss student progress.	3.29	.74	Agree	2.97	.88	Agree
3. Observes teaching to assess the teaching process in the school.	3.19	.83	Agree	3.12	.80	Agree
4. Encourages the use of modern teaching methods to enhance student learning.	3.31	.65	Agree	3.13	.73	Agree
5. Regularly monitors lesson plans to ensure curriculum implementation.	3.18	.73	Agree	3.04	.77	Agree
6. Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	2.86	.83	Agree	2.82	.79	Agree
7. Displays awareness and knowledge of recent research about instructional leadership.	3.04	.80	Agree	2.89	.81	Agree
8. Create professional growth opportunities for teachers as a reward for special contributions to the school	2.93	.66	Agree	2.83	.71	Agree
9. Encourages the use of modern instructional technologies to enhance students' understanding of the lesson.	2.79	.82	Agree	2.75	.81	Agree
10. Contact parents and guardians to communicate improved or exemplary student performance.	2.98	.78	Agree	2.93	.74	Agree

Table 1 show the mean ratings of teachers on instructional leadership strategies of principals for quality teaching and learning in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State. The mean ratings show that teachers in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State agree to the ten listed items as instructional leadership strategies adopted by principals for quality teaching and learning in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State. The mean ratings of public-school teachers for all the nine items ranged from 2.79 to 3.31 while that of private secondary school teachers ranged from 2.75 to 3.13.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on Principals' Mentoring Strategies for Quality Teaching and Learning in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Enugu State

The principal of my school:	Public (n=403)			Private (n=657)		
	Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1. provides guidance to new and less experienced teachers to enhance their instructional practices	3.06	.66	Agree	3.11	.63	Agree
2. Pairs novice teachers with experienced staff to promote professional growth and peer learning.	2.97	.78	Agree	3.01	.78	Agree
3. Offers constructive advice to teachers facing instructional challenges.	2.99	.80	Agree	3.03	.73	Agree
4. Models effective teaching behaviors that teachers can emulate in their classrooms.	2.93	.78	Agree	3.01	.74	Agree
5. Provides constructive feedbacks to teachers in a manner that supports learning and improvement.	3.23	.81	Agree	3.10	.80	Agree
6. Assesses teacher's needs and areas of concern for appropriate support for improvement.	3.37	.72	Agree	3.34	.72	Agree
7. Delegates tasks to teachers in order to improve their professional growth.	3.42	.63	Agree	3.16	.92	Agree
8. Encourages reflective practice by helping teachers evaluate and improve their teaching methods.	3.19	.74	Agree	2.95	.94	Agree
9. Urges teachers to participate in academic events where they can learn and improve on their skills.	3.13	.78	Agree	2.98	.90	Agree
10. Gives necessary orientation to new teachers on how best to carry on their teaching assignments.	3.11	.74	Agree	3.10	.76	Agree

Table 2, shows the teachers' mean rating on mentoring strategies of principals for quality teaching and learning in public and private secondary schools Enugu State. The analysis shows that teachers in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State agree that principals adopt the ten listed items as mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning. The mean ratings of public secondary school teachers range from 2.97 to 3.42 while that of private school teachers ranged from 2.98 to 3.34.

Table 3: t-test Analyses of the Mean ratings of Public and Private Secondary School Teachers on Instructional Leadership Strategies of Principals for Quality Teaching and Learning in Enugu State

Source of variation	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Public	403	3.08	.57	1058	3.98	.00	Sig
Private	657	2.96	.46				

Table 3 show that the mean score for public secondary school teachers ($M=3.08$, $SD=.57$) is significantly greater than that of their counterparts in private schools ($M=2.96$, $SD=.46$); $t(1058)=3.98$ $p=.00$. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on the instructional leadership strategies of principals for quality teaching and learning in Enugu State was therefore rejected.

Table 4: t-test Analyses of the Mean ratings of Public and Private Secondary School Teachers on Mentoring Strategies of Principals for Quality Teaching and Learning in Enugu State

Source of variation	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Public	403	3.14	.45	1058	2.13	.03	Sig
Private	657	3.08	.43				

As shown in Table 4, the mean score for public secondary school teachers ($M=3.14$, $SD=.45$) is significantly greater than that of those in private schools ($M=3.08$, $SD=.43$; $t(1058)=2.13$, $p=.03$). The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their

principals' adoption of mentoring strategies for quality teaching and learning in public and private secondary schools in Enugu State was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study showed that both public and private secondary school principals adopted instructional leadership strategies for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Enugu State. The mean scores for public secondary school principals ranged from 2.79 to 3.31 while that of private school principals ranged from 2.74 to 3.13 indicating that public secondary school principals were rated higher than their private school counterpart in instructional leadership. This finding is not consistent with Duze (2011) who found that instructional leadership strategies adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State showed no significant differences. This difference in finding between Duze (2011) and the present study may be as a result of difference in time frame and location. The study by Duze was carried out in 2012 in Anambra State whereas the present study was carried out in 2024 in Enugu State.

The test of the hypothesis revealed that there was a significant difference between public and private secondary school principals' instructional leadership strategies for quality teaching and learning in Enugu State. This finding contradicts Onyali and Akinfolarin (2017) whose finding revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of principals and teachers on principals' application of time management strategies for secondary school effectiveness in secondary schools in Oyo State.

As revealed by the finding, public and private secondary school principals adopted mentorship strategies for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools in Enugu State. However, public secondary school principals were rated higher than their private school counterpart in terms of their adoption of mentorship strategies. The mean ratings for public secondary school principals ranged from 3.11 to 3.42 while that of private school principals ranged from 2.94 to 3.33. This finding is in line with that of Okeke (2020), that the extent to which public secondary school principals provide staff mentorship practices is high. This means that principals maintain a learning relationship with their teachers with the view of improving teachers' practice for effective teaching and learning in the school.

The findings of this study is also in line with Holland (2009) who submitted that principals provide teachers with instructions on specific details and examples of teaching techniques that constitute excellent practice and also provided demonstration lessons. The finding also aligned with Walter (2010) who posited that principals provided both formal and informal mentoring practices for teachers. However, the finding is contrary to Tulu (2019) who evidenced that mentoring activities for teachers were not practically implemented by school leaders. Tulu's work was carried out in Ethiopia which is a different location with different respondents while the present study was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria. This may account for the difference in findings.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that private schools perform better than their public-school counterparts in adoption of instructional supervision and discipline strategies. However, public secondary school principals perform better than their private school counterparts in the adoption of instructional leadership, effective communication, decision making, staff development, mentoring and conflict management strategies.

Recommendations

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

1. Private secondary school principals in Enugu State should be encouraged to improve in their adoption of instructional leadership strategies for quality teaching and learning. This would help inculcate in teachers the needed skills, capacities and competences that will help them achieve instructional effectiveness.
2. Private secondary school principals in Enugu State should be encouraged to provide mentorship to their teachers for improved teaching and learning. This will offer teachers better guidance and support that will facilitate their professional development.

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