

Influence of Education Laws in the Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of education laws in the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Four research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. A population of 256 principals was used for the study. From this population, 128 principals were sampled for the study using simple random sampling techniques. The instrument that guided the study was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit responses to answer the research questions. The instrument was content validated by the research supervisor and two other lecturers in the faculty. The reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The reliability coefficient achieved was 0.79. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses. The study found among other things that students act of indiscipline could be reduced through the influence of education laws. Principals in public senior secondary schools were not performing their administrative functions effectively. It was recommended that Rivers State Ministry of Education should employ professional staff that will help in the enforcement of education laws for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, specific amount of funds should be allotted from the budget for the enforcement of education laws for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Keywords: Education, Laws, Administration

Background to the Study

It is obvious that education today aims at among others, the production of balanced human beings, who will be useful to themselves and the society. They are expected to make positive contributions to the society that offered them the opportunity to pursue programmes in education in accordance with the acceptable norms and values of the society which reflect in the law governing individual behavior.

Education law has been viewed from different perspective by different scholars. Igwe (2014) defined education law as a range of rules and regulations guiding the operation and administration of schools. Such rules and regulations border on the students, teachers, administrators, parents and other workers within the education system. Similarly, (Manilla, 2007) believes that no organization can exist without rules and regulations if chaos is to be avoided. The school is no exception. The school is a body with legal status: it can sue and be sued. This also means that those who administer the educational system has to discharge their duties within defined legal rules and regulations as stated in the constitution as well as in various state and federal codes, ordinance, decrees and edicts. For example, no child should be compelled by the school authorities to participate in any religious prayers, activities or instructions other than those approve by his parents.

Education law itself relates to educational activities that takes place at the various tiers of education. It therefore becomes an imperative and indispensable tool for administrators, teachers, students and parents as a whole. As stakeholders, they need to know that decisions taken in education circles have far-reaching and sometimes grave impact in the administration of the schools.

According to Asuru (2008), Education law is the area relating to education and deals mainly with administration of schools, school systems, schools board and other organizations charged with providing education and allied educational services. Education or school law covers a wide range of legal issues that affect the school, school personnel, students or school-based institutions and organizations either directly or indirectly. Thus, to allow anarchy to prevail in our educational institutions is to permit lawlessness, but to permit the rule of law is to enthrone and entrench orderliness and progress in the entire school system (Igwe, 2014).

Consequently, this work essentially is intended to make the stakeholders become abreast of the necessary education laws to enable them discharge the onerous task of running education for the betterment of society. It is never aimed at making the education practitioner or reader become his own lawyer. Schools are structures set up by the society to inculcate desirable values in the educatees. For schools to effectively operate well, laws are needed to guide their operations. Hence, principals as heads of secondary schools have roles to play in their enforcement since they are responsible and accountable for everything that happens in the schools. In the same vein, principals are expected to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning to take place. They would only succeed if they are vividly aware of the legal implications of their roles.

Educational institutions are characterized by distinctive values, culture and united in the common purpose of the provision of teaching and the pursuit of knowledge and research. The laws of educational institutions outline the legal status of the school, their structures of governance, highlight the rights and privileges of its members and their responsibilities to government or administrative authorities.

The main reason for the enactment of laws in the establishment of educational institution is viewed from the point that the school is a micro society. Consequently, it requires law for self-regulation. Law makes the life of the member of the school community safe, meaningful and indeed worthwhile. The absence of law in the school community implies disorderliness and injustice. Law provides a check and balance in the institution of learning. The absence of this law would mean anarchy, a state of lawlessness because the level of indiscipline amongst these stakeholders would be high. Moreover, where there are no laws in the schools, teachers and students may not keep to their legal obligations. Therefore, for efficient management of public secondary schools in Rivers State, principals must see to the influence of education laws so as to create the needed atmosphere for the actualization of the operational goals of the schools translated from the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2008).

Schools are established to facilitate learning. It is paramount for the principals and the teachers to see that these objectives are accomplished. Thus, Asuru (2007) states that educational activity; programmes and procedures can be adequately ordered by the relevant laws. This is necessary for the elimination of unwanted acts of misconduct in the system. In like manner, sexual harassment, examination misconduct, fraudulent registration, illegal collection of money, forgery / mutilation of official documents, fight, stealing and disobedience can be checked and their impacts minimized, if not completely eradicated. In addition, Asuru (2008) suggested that education law be taught as a course in our teacher training institutions to equip trainee teachers and prospective school administrators with the fundamentals of education law.

It will enable them know their rights, duties, obligations, limitations and the legal consequences of their actions or inactions.

According to Manilla (2007), as enshrined in 1999 constitution on the right of a child; in every action concerning a child, whether undertaken by an individual, public or private body, institutions, court of law, administrative or legislative authority, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration. Therefore, students' acts of indiscipline and the legal doctrine of in loco-parentis in the administration of public senior secondary schools provides that all punishments must be reasonable, considering the sex and age of the offender and the gravity of the offence and the corporal punishment should be administered only by the principal or by a teacher authorized by him.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the influence of education laws in the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sorts to:

1. Determine the influence of education law on students discipline in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Determine the influence of education laws on teachers attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
3. Determine the influence of education laws on principals administrative functions in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
4. Determine factors constraining effective application of education laws by administrators in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the influence of education laws on students discipline in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the influence of education laws on teacher's attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. What is the influence of education laws on principal's administrative functions in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
4. What are the constraining factors to the effective application of education laws by administrators in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested for the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses between the male and female respondents on the influence of education laws on students discipline in public secondary schools in Rivers State
2. There is a significant difference in the mean responses between the male and female respondents on the influence of education laws on teachers attitude to work in public secondary schools in Rivers State

Methodology

This section explains how data for the study was gathered. It therefore highlights the research design, population, sample and sampling technique, validity, reliability, administration of instrument and method of data analysis.

Research Design

The research design for this study was descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey was the most appropriate way of determining opinions that are held and issues that exist. Descriptive survey was used to collect information such as percentage of respondents who hold certain opinion. Also, it can be used to explore relationship between different variables as we have in this study. The influence of education laws in the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Area of the Study

The area of study was Rivers State which is located in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria. Rivers State has a total of 23 Local Government Area with its capital in Port-Harcourt. Rivers State is located in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of the country. It is bounded by Imo State on the West, Ebonyi and Enugu State on the North, Cross River and Akwa Ibom States on the East and Bayelsa State on the South. The climate of the state is tropical with 2 distinct seasons namely rainy season and dry season. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people as about 70 percent of the people engage in it (Agwu, Anyanwu, & Oriuwa, O., 2014). The people produce crops like maize, yam cassava, cocoyam amongst others. They also rear animals like goat, sheep, pig, fowl amongst others.

Population of the Study

Population of the study consisted of all Principals in the 256 public senior secondary schools in the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State. A total of two hundred and fifty six (256) were recorded by Rivers State Public Senior Secondary Schools Board (2017) as the number of principals in the schools. A detail of the population is shown in table 3.1 below. Population Distribution of total number of Principals in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

S/NO	L.G.A	No. of Schools	No. of Principals	
			Male	Female
1.	Andoni	11	6	5
2.	Eleme	5	3	2
3.	Gokana	12	7	5
4.	Khana	22	16	6
5.	Opobo-Nkoro	3	1	2
6.	Oyigbo	4	1	3
7.	Tai	10	6	4
8.	Ahoda East	15	11	4
9.	Ahoda West	15	7	8
10.	Abau-Odua	11	8	3
11.	Asari-Toru	10	6	4
12.	Akuku-Toru	6	3	3
13.	Bonny	4	2	2
14.	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni	21	16	5
15.	Degema	10	7	3
16.	Emohua	21	10	11
17.	Etche	17	7	10
18.	Ikwerre	13	8	5
19.	Okrika	6	2	4
20.	Obio/Akpor	19	9	10
21.	Ogu-Bolo	3	1	2
22.	Omuma	4	2	2
23.	Port-Harcourt	14	8	6
	Total	256	147	109
	Grand Total			256

Source: Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, 2017

3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling according to Maduabun (2007) is selecting a limited number of elements from a defined population as its representative. The sample size was 128 respondents which served as 50% of the population selected from 11 Local Government Areas out of which 79 were male principals while 49 were female principals. A simple random sampling technique was adopted as indicated in table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Sample Distribution of Principals in 128 public senior secondary schools in 11 Local Government Areas in Rivers State.

S/NO	L.G.A	No. of Schools	No. of Principals	
			Male	Female
1.	Andoni	11	6	5
2.	Gokana	12	7	5
3.	khana	22	16	6
4.	Tai	10	6	4
5.	Ahoda East	15	11	4
6.	Ahoda West	15	7	8
7.	Abua-Odua	11	8	3
8.	Asari-Toru	10	6	4
9	Akuku-Toru	6	3	3
10	Degema	10	7	3
11	Okrika	6	2	4
	Total	128	79	49
	Grand Total	128	128	

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Influence of Educational Laws Questionnaire (IELQ)”. It was drafted using a 4 point scale of (Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent(VLE).The instrument which contains 20 items was structured and coded as thus:

VHE-----4 Points
HE-----3 Points
LE-----2 Points
VLE-----1 Point

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure precision in the use of instrument, the first draft of the questionnaire was given to the researcher supervisor as well as two other experts in the Department of Educational Management for proper scrutiny and correction. Their comments and corrections were incorporated in the final print.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish reliability of the instrument, the test- retest method was employed. By that, a test was administered to 20 principals of private senior secondary schools, after a period of two weeks; the same test was re-administered to the same set of persons. Thereafter, the reliability of the two results was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to check the reliability coefficient. The tests yielded a reliability index of 0.79. This means that, the instrument was reliable.

Administration of the Instrument

In administration of the instrument, the researcher employed the services to some of his course mates who assisted in the distribution and retrieval of the instrument to and fro from the respondents. Out of the 128 copies of questionnaires that was distributed only 125 copies were properly filled and returned, while 3 copies were damaged.

Table 3.2 Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaires.

Distribution	Copies Distributed	Copies Retrieved
Male	79	78
Female	49	47
Total	128	125

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2018.

The table 3.2 above shows that out of 128 copies of questionnaires that was sent out, only 125 that is (97.7%) were properly filed while 3(2.3%) was damaged.

Method of Data Analysis

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, a criterion mean of 2.50 was set as a bench mark for acceptance and rejection, (See Appendix D). While the z-test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The data were analyzed with the aid of SPSS 20.0 version and Excel Software.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This chapter focused on data presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings, recommendations, and suggestion for further studies.

Research Question 1: What is the influence of education laws on students discipline in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4.1: Mean responses of influence of education law on students discipline

S/NO	ITEMS	Male			Female		
		M	S.D	Decision	M	S.D	Decision
1.	Lateness to school	2.85	1.19	Accept	2.97	1.06	Accept
2.	Absenteeism from school	2.93	1.10	Accept	2.99	1.01	Accept
3.	Suspension	3.13	0.89	Accept	3.02	1.03	Accept
4.	Expulsion	2.95	0.95	Accept	3.06	0.94	Accept
5.	Examination malpractice	2.93	1.09	Accept	2.91	0.94	Accept
	Grand Mean	2.95	1.04	Accept	2.99	0.99	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Results in Table 4.1 revealed that lateness to school had a mean value of 2.85 & 2.97), Absenteeism from school (2.93 & 2.99), Suspension (3.13 & 3.02), Expulsion (2.95 & 3.06) while Examination malpractice (2.93 & 2.91).

Research Question 2: What is the influence of education laws on teacher's attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4.2: Mean responses of influence of education law on teachers' attitude to work.

S/NO	ITEMS	Male			Female		
		M	S.D	Decision	M	S.D	Decision
1.	Absent from work	1.76	0.85	Reject	1.69	0.82	Reject
2.	Lateness to work	3.40	0.91	Accept	2.75	0.93	Accept
3.	High-handedness	2.44	0.71	Reject	2.38	0.69	Reject
4.	Poor teacher-student relationship	1.80	0.83	Reject	1.20	0.45	Reject
5.	Non-challant attitude of teachers	2.48	0.71	Reject	2.37	0.65	Reject
Grand Mean		2.37	0.80	Reject	2.07	0.70	Reject

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Results in Table 2 above showed that absent from work had a mean value of (1.76 & 1.69), lateness to work (3.40 & 2.75), high-handedness (2.44 & 2.38), poor teacher-student relationship (1.80 & 1.20) while non-challant attitude of teachers had (2.48 & 2.37) respectively

Research Question 3: What is the influence of education laws on principal's administrative functions in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4.3 Mean responses on influence of education law on principal's administrative functions.

S.NO	ITEMS	Male			Female		
		M	S.D	Decision	M.	S.D	Decision
1.	Non-implementation of disciplinary Measures on teachers and students	2.80	1.07	Accept	2.96	1.04	Accept
2	lack of interest	3.03	0.88	Accept	2.67	0.64	Accept
3	favoritism	2.68	0.95	Accept	2.70	0.92	Accept
4	Mismanagement of the school's fund	3.00	1.06	Accept	2.83	1.06	Accept
5	Forgery of official documents	2.56	1.05	Accept	3.08	0.85	Accept
Grand Mean		2.81	1.00	Accept	2.84	0.90	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Data presented in Table 4.3 represents the mean responses of the respondents (Male and Female principals) with respect to influence of education law on principal's administrative functions. As indicated above, non-implementation of disciplinary measures on erring teachers and students had a mean value of 2.80 & 2.96), lack of interest (3.03 & 2.67), favoritism (2.68 & 2.70), mismanagement of the school's fund (3.00 & 2.83) while forgery of official documents had a mean value of (2.56 & 3.85) respectively.

Research Question 4: What are the constraining factors to the effective application of education laws by administrators in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4.4: Mean responses of factors constraining the effective application of education laws by administrators in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/NO	ITEMS	Male			Female		
		M	S.D	Decision	M	S.D	Decision
1.	Inadequate facilities in the school	2.58	1.07	Accept	3.08	0.85	Accept
2.	Government's non commitment to the application of education laws	2.65	1.03	Accept	2.57	1.11	Accept
3.	Inadequate manpower	2.63	1.05	Accept	2.67	0.64	Accept
4.	Inadequate funding	2.85	1.03	Accept	2.61	1.06	Accept
5.	Lack of supervision	2.02	1.09	Accept	1.98	1.09	Accept
Grand Mean		2.54	1.05	Accept	2.58	0.95	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Results in Table 4.4 revealed the factors constraining the effective application of education laws by administrators in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Inadequate facilities in the school had a mean value of (2.58 & 3.08), Government's non commitment to the application of education laws (2.65 & 2.57), inadequate manpower (2.63 & 2.61), inadequate funding (2.85 & 2.67) and lack of supervision (2.02 & 1.9)

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference on the influence of education laws on discipline between male and female respondents in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4.5: Analysis of Hypothesis 1. Using the z-test

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	z-cal	z.crit	Ls	Decision
Male	78	2.95	1.04				Accepted
Female	47	2.99	0.99		1.96	0.05	
				1.90			

z-cal (z-test calculated) z-crit (z-test critical)

Table 4.5 showed that male respondents had a mean and standard deviation score of 2.95 and 1.04 respectively, while female respondents had a mean and standard deviation of 2.99 and 0.99 respectively. The z-cal value was 1.90 while the z-crit was 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance for two tailed test. The result showed that z-cal was less than z-crit which means that the null hypotheses was accepted. Thus, there was no significant difference in the mean

responses of male and female respondents on influence of education laws on students discipline in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4.6: z-test analysis of the influence of education law on teachers' attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Respondents	N	M	S.D	Z-cal	Z-crit	Ls	Decision
Male	78	2.37	0.80				
				1.98	1.96	0.05	Reject
Female	47	2.07	0.70				
z-cal (z-test calculated)		z-crit (z-test critical)					

Table 4.6 revealed that male respondents had a mean and standard deviation score of 2.37 and 0.80 respectively while female respondents had a mean and standard deviation score of 2.07 and 0.70 respectively. The z-cal value was 1/98 while z-crit was 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance for two tailed test. The result showed that z-cal was greater than the z-crit which means that the null hypotheses was rejected. Thus, there was a significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on influence of education law on teachers' attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

4.2 Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are presented as follows:

1. The study revealed the extent of students' act of indiscipline which could be reduced through the influence of education laws. Also, the result showed that there was no significant difference on the influence of education laws on students discipline in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. The study revealed that the variables listed in the table above were not true about teachers attitude to work as also all the variables were rejected. Similarly, the result showed that there was a significant difference on the influence of education laws on teachers' attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. Based on the findings, it was deduced that principals in public senior secondary schools were not performing their administrative functions effectively.
4. Finally, the study also revealed that most of the variables listed in the table were constraining the school administrators from effectively applying education laws in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study were discussed under the following headings:

Influence of Education Laws on Students Discipline

The result in Table 4.1 on the influence of education laws on students discipline in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State revealed the extent of student's act of indiscipline which could be reduced through the influence of education laws. The present study is in agreement with Adudedede (2014) who found out in his study titled "Educational administration in Nigeria, Port-Harcourt Pam Publishers" that students indiscipline in school ranges from gross misconduct, fighting, stealing, sexual harassment, fraudulent registration amongst others which can either be treated in the school or as a criminal matter in the law court.

Influence of Education Laws on Teachers' Attitude to Work

The result in Table 4.2 on the influence of education laws on teachers' attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State revealed that teachers attitude to work in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State do not negatively influence students. This finding is at variance with Oloko (2014) who in his study titled "Implication of education laws in most senior secondary schools in Ogun State" as it highlighted the fact that both male and female teachers infringed on the right of the students while administering disciplinary measures in school.

Influence of Education Laws on Principal's Administrative Functions

The in Table 4.3 on the influence of education laws on principal's administrative functions in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State showed that principals in public senior secondary schools were not performing their administrative functions effectively. The present study is in tandem with Yoleye (2014) who in his study titled "Law and University Administration in Nigeria: Trends and Issues in Managing Universities in Nigeria" that education laws are of paramount importance in the operation of the education system in the country, yet, most of those in positions of authority like the school principals do not know how to perform their functions creditably.

Factors Constraining Effective Application of Education Laws by Administrators.

The result in Table 4.4 on factors constraining the effective application of education laws by administrators in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State revealed that most administrators were constrained by a lot of factors such as inadequate manpower, inadequate fund, inadequate facilities in the school amongst others which has in order words constrained them from effectively applying education laws in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study is in line with Okeke (2016) who in his study titled "Policies of education: The Nigeria Experience", said that inadequate funding is the major reason why most school administrators in Enugu State cannot enforce education laws.

Summary

The study examined the influence of education laws in the administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study area was Rivers State which is made up of 23 Local Government Areas. Four objectives, four research questions and two hypotheses were formulated, postulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Most of the variables in the study were defined for clarity purposes. The study was guided by Behavioral Theory propounded by Edward Thorndike. This theory is relevant to this research work because in a situation where a student in a classroom ask a question and the teacher rewards the student by smiling and providing help to the student, the student's behavior was reinforced and he or she will more likely ask for help again in the future. The theory also explained the concepts that were reviewed in the work such as influence of education laws on students' discipline, influence of education laws on teacher's attitude to work, influence of education laws on principal's administrative functions and factors constraining effective application of education laws by administrators. Empirical works were reviewed based on the objectives of the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and it was carried out in Rivers State. The population of the study according to Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board was 256 principals in the 256 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State out of which a total of 128 were sampled. A simple random sampling technique was adopted. The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire in a 4 point rating scale of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1). The instrument was content validated and tested

for reliability using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) method. The instruments were administered and retrieved by the researcher and some of his coursemates. The instruments were analyzed with mean and standard deviation in order to answer the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance through the help of SPSS 20.0 version and excel software.

The study found out the extent of students act of indiscipline which could be reduced through the influence of education laws. The study equally revealed that principals in public senior secondary schools were not performing their administrative functions effectively amongst others.

Conclusion

Based on the study, it was deduced that the extent of students' act of indiscipline could be reduced through the influence of education laws. The study revealed that teachers discharge their duties effectively as shown in their attitude to work

The study equally revealed that principals in public senior secondary schools were not performing their administrative functions effectively. Finally, the study revealed that a lot of factors such as inadequate funds, lack of supervision, inadequate manpower amongst others were constraining the school administrators from effectively applying education laws in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Rivers State Ministry of Education should employ professional staff that will help in the enforcement of educational law for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Specific amount of funds should be allotted from the budget for the enforcement of education laws for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. Rivers State Ministry of Education should conduct orientation programmes for all stakeholders on the need for the enforcement of education laws for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
4. Principals and teachers should ensure that students' fundamental rights are not infringed upon while administering disciplinary measures in schools.

Educational Implications

1. This research work was carried out to add to the body of knowledge in the research area.
2. It was carried out to reveal the importance of applying education laws in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

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