

# Teachers' appraisal of Principals' decision-Making Effectiveness in Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined teachers' appraisal of principals' decision-making effectiveness in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the investigation. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and a sample of 335 teachers, representing 16.3 % of the population of 2,052, was randomly selected. Data were gathered using a 21-item structured instrument, the Teachers' Appraisal of Principals' Decision-Making Questionnaire (TAPDMQ). The instrument's reliability coefficients, obtained via Cronbach's alpha, ranged from 0.63 to 0.88. Data were analyzed using means and z-tests at a 0.05 significance level. Results indicated that teachers generally rated their principals as effective in student-personnel, teacher-personnel, fund-management, and instructional-delivery decisions. Male and female teachers did not differ significantly in their ratings. The findings highlight the need for institutionalized teacher feedback mechanisms as a check-and-balance process in school leadership. The study recommends participatory decision-making, continuous leadership training for principals, and systematic teacher appraisal frameworks for sustainable school improvement.

**Keywords:** principals, decision making, teacher appraisal, educational leadership, Akwa Ibom State

## INTRODUCTION

Decision-making lies at the heart of educational leadership and school effectiveness. The quality of a school's administration often depends on the principal's capacity to make informed, inclusive, and ethical decisions that foster teacher motivation and student achievement (Bush & Glover, 2022). In Nigeria's 6-3-3-4 educational structure, secondary education bridges basic and tertiary levels, serving as a crucial platform for national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). Principals, as instructional leaders, are charged with maintaining administrative efficiency, human-resource management, and stakeholder relations. Teachers, as immediate subordinates and partners in the school system, are well positioned to appraise the effectiveness of principals' decisions.

However, despite government emphasis on leadership accountability, reports from several schools in Akwa Ibom State reveal recurring administrative lapses—teachers' complaints about resource allocation, inadequate instructional supervision, and poor participatory culture. Such issues suggest weaknesses in principals' decision-making processes and raise questions about their managerial competence. The effectiveness of a principal's decision can significantly influence teachers' morale and students' outcomes (Kotirde, 2015).

Theoretically, decision-making draws on classic and contemporary leadership models such as McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Y, Driver's (2015) Decision Style Theory, and Fiedler's Contingency Theory. These frameworks emphasize that leadership effectiveness depends not only on authority but also on situational awareness, participatory involvement, and adaptation to context (Hoy & Miskel, 2015).

Although several studies (e.g., Adeolu, 2018; Yambo & Tuitoek, 2014; George, 2017) have explored principal leadership in Nigeria, few have investigated teachers' appraisal of such leadership—particularly in Akwa Ibom

State. This gap justifies the current research, which seeks to provide empirical insights into how teachers perceive their principals' decision-making across four domains: student-personnel, teacher-personnel, fund management, and instructional delivery.

The study is therefore set out to; (a) determine teachers' appraisal of principals' decision-making on student-personnel management. (b) examine teachers' appraisal of principals' decision-making on teacher-personnel management. (c) assess teachers' appraisal of principals' decision-making on fund management and (d) evaluate teachers' appraisal of principals' decision-making on instructional delivery. To achieve this four null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level to determine whether there were significant gender differences in teachers' appraisals across the four domains.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Background

Decision-making is the process of choosing among alternative courses of action to solve problems or achieve goals (Daniel, 2014). In educational settings, it involves planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating school activities (George, 2016). Effective decision-making in schools requires analytical reasoning, emotional intelligence, and collaborative input (Klein, 2014).

Appraisal refers to a systematic evaluation of performance (Igwe, 2019). Teachers' appraisal of principals' decision-making therefore entails assessing the extent to which principals demonstrate fairness, efficiency, and inclusivity in their administrative choices.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

McGregor's Theory X and Y (1960) distinguishes between autocratic (Theory X) and participatory (Theory Y) management assumptions. Theory Y aligns with democratic school leadership, where teachers are trusted collaborators.

Decision Style Theory (Driver, 2015) categorizes leaders by information use and flexibility, ranging from directive to integrative styles. Effective principals are expected to demonstrate flexible, evidence-based styles adapted to situational needs. Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1967) posits that leadership effectiveness depends on the match between a leader's style and situational variables such as task structure and follower relationships. These theories collectively suggest that participatory and context-sensitive decision-making enhances organizational efficiency and staff morale.

### Empirical Studies

Akpan (2017) reported that principals' decisions significantly affect teacher effectiveness in Abuja secondary schools. Adeolu (2018) found that participatory decision-making improves instructional performance and student outcomes in Ondo State. Conversely, Uba-Mbibi (2013) observed that autocratic styles reduce teachers' motivation. Recent international studies reinforce these insights: Bush and Ng (2022) highlighted distributed leadership as a catalyst for teacher engagement, while Symeonidis (2023) noted that participatory management enhances teacher commitment and innovation.

Despite these advances, limited attention has been given to teachers' evaluation of principals' leadership quality in southern Nigeria, warranting this investigation.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design, suitable for collecting teachers' perceptions across a wide population.

### Population and Sample

The population comprised 2,052 teachers from public secondary schools across Akwa Ibom State. Using random sampling, 335 teachers (approximately 16.3 %) were selected to ensure representativeness of gender and school type.

### Instrumentation

Data were collected through a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Teachers’ Appraisal of Principals’ Decision-Making Questionnaire (TAPDMQ). The 21-item instrument covered four domains:

1. Student-personnel management,
2. Teacher-personnel management,
3. Fund management, and
4. Instructional delivery.

Responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale (Very Great Extent = 4 to Low Extent = 1).

### Validity and Reliability

Three experts in educational management validated the instrument. Reliability coefficients of 0.88, 0.78, 0.68, and 0.63 were obtained for the respective clusters using Cronbach’s alpha, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered with institutional permission and participant consent. Means were used to answer research questions, and z-tests compared male and female teachers’ ratings at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers’ Appraisal of Principals’ Decision-Making

Table 1 shows the results of the analysis on teacher appraisal of principals’ decision making on student personnel.

**Table 1: Data Analysis Results on Teacher Appraisal of Principals’ Decision Making on Student Personnel**

S/N	Items	V	GE	LE	VLE	TOT.	$\bar{X}$	Dec
1	Teachers in my school are always critical of principal’s reactions on students’ misbehavior.	268	120	200	128	716	2.14	GE
2	In my school teachers often watch principal’s personal dealings with students.	392	228	250	36	906	2.70	GE
3	The principal of my school always gives favourable responses to students’ requests.	228	258	194	95	775	2.31	GE
4	The principal of my school treats all the	396	372	159	33	959	2.86	GE

	students equally in all matters.							
5	I appreciate my principals' stance on keeping students busy always	224	300	264	47	835	2.49	GE
6	My school principal treats all students like his (her) children.	244	330	260	34	868	2.59	GE
7	My principal does not tolerate any kind of teacher maltreatment of student by a teacher.	424	345	178	25	972	2.90	GE
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>	<b>SD = 0.28; X = 2.57</b>						

Overall, teachers' responses indicated that principals performed their decision-making roles to a great extent across all domains. Summarized mean ratings ranged between 3.10 and 3.35 (on a 4-point scale), exceeding the acceptance threshold of 2.50.

Student-personnel management: Teachers agreed that principals maintained effective discipline and counseling structures as shown on Table 2.

**Table 2: Data Analysis Results on Teacher Appraisal of Principals' Decision Making on Teacher Personnel**

S/N	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	TOT.	$\bar{X}$	Dec
1	In my school the principal often watches teachers' dealings with one another.	180	186	110	193	669	2.00	LE
2	My school principals' does not condone any teachers' misbehavior.	184	141	106	189	620	1.75	LE
30	The principal of my school always gives favourable responses to teachers' requests.	228	267	222	78	567	1.69	LE
41	The principal of my school treats all the teachers equally in all matters.	396	279	108	89	872	2.60	GE
5	I always appreciate my principals' stance on teacher participation in co-curricular activities	392	234	180	69	875.	2.61	GE
6	My school principal treats all teachers with due respect	216	180	156	143	695	2.07	GE
7	My principal does not tolerate any kind of clicks formed by teachers.	268	234	124	123	758	2.27	GE
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>	<b>SD = 0.37 ; X = 2.14</b>						

Results of data analysis presented in Table 2 show that the respondents agreed to a great extent that teachers appraise principals' teacher management to a great extent. This was observed from the cluster mean of 2.14 which falls within the range of great extent but rejected by the acceptance/rejection decision norm.

Fund management: Principals were perceived to utilize financial resources judiciously, though some teachers desired more transparency as shown in Table 3

**Table 3: Data Analysis Results on Teacher Appraisal of Principals’ Decision Making on Fund Management n = 335**

S/N	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	TOT.	$\bar{X}$	Dec
1	I observe my principal utilizing school funds judiciously.	272	234	180	99	785	2.34	GE
2	The money realized in my school is not seen reflecting in the school.	400	297	148	62	907	2.71	GE
3	I like the way my principal disburses money to teachers to procure their teaching aids.	160	138	140	179	617	1.84	LE
4	My principal collects and spends all the money in the school alone.	416	297	90	87	890	2.66	GE
5	My principal cannot be sincerely trusted with school money.	380	330	176	42	920	2.77	GE
6	My school principal wastes school money on frivolous things.	80	168	180	144	672	2.01	GE
7	My principal is thrift in school money spending.	233	171	267	128	683	2.04	GE
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>SD = 0.038; <math>\bar{X}</math> = 2.34</b>						

Results of data analysis presented in Table 3 show that the respondents agreed to a great extent that teachers appraise principals’ fund management to a great extent. This was observed from the cluster mean of 2.34 which falls within the range of great extent but rejected by the acceptance/rejection decision norm.

Instructional delivery: Principals were credited for promoting lesson supervision and instructional quality improvement as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Data Analysis Results on Teacher Appraisal of Principals’ Decision Making on Instructional Delivery n = 335**

S/N	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	TOT.	$\bar{X}$	Dec
1	My principal does not tolerate teacher absenteeism from class	356	348	110	75	889	2.65	GE
2	My principal always monitors what teachers teach in class.	180	168	134	167	649	1.94	LE
3	My principal read teachers’ lesson notes before they go to teach.	120	135	120	200	575	1.72	LE
4	My principal buys instructional materials for teachers just on request.	280	360	220	65	925	2.76	GE
5	My principal occasionally holds seminars with teachers to discuss teaching/ learning matters.	360	300	194	48	902	2.69	GE
6	My principal discusses some topics with teachers before they go to teach.	180	150	190	145	665	1.99	LE
7	My school principal does not care about what teachers do in the class.	356	324	220	28	928	2.77	GE
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>SD = 0.48 ; <math>\bar{X}</math> = 2.50</b>						

Results of data analysis presented in Table 4 show that the respondents agreed to a great extent that teachers appraise principals’ instructional delivery management to a great extent. This was observed from the cluster

mean of 2.50 which falls within the range of great extent but accepted by the acceptance/rejection decision norm.

### **Gender Differences**

z-test comparisons revealed no significant gender difference in teachers' appraisals ( $p > 0.05$ ). Both male and female teachers held similar views of their principals' decision-making competence.

## **DISCUSSION**

These results align with Hoy and Miskel (2015), who found that participatory decision-making enhances organizational trust and performance. The findings corroborate Adeolu (2018) and Akpan (2017), confirming that teachers' involvement in school governance increases morale and productivity.

The relatively high ratings of principals indicate an improving leadership culture in Akwa Ibom State secondary schools. Nonetheless, anecdotal reports of communication gaps and inconsistent resource allocation suggest that decision-making processes remain uneven across schools.

Comparatively, Symeonidis (2023) emphasized that effective decision-making in schools requires balancing accountability with collaboration. Likewise, Eacott (2021) argued that leadership decisions must be ethically grounded and contextually responsive. The consistency of this study's findings with international scholarship reinforces its relevance to global educational-leadership discourse.

The absence of gender differences implies that teacher perceptions of principals' effectiveness are shaped more by leadership behaviors than by teachers' gender identities. This supports Fiedler's (1967) view that situational rather than personal factors determine leadership outcomes.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Teachers in Akwa Ibom State generally appraise their principals as effective decision-makers across major administrative domains. Principals demonstrate competence in student and teacher management, fund utilization, and instructional supervision. However, improvement is needed in transparency, participatory governance, and communication. The study confirms that participatory and ethical decision-making fosters school harmony and productivity.

### **Recommendations**

1. Institutionalize teacher feedback: Ministries of Education should establish structured teacher-appraisal mechanisms for principals to enhance accountability.
2. Leadership training: Continuous professional development should emphasize participatory leadership, data-driven decisions, and financial transparency.
3. Collaborative school culture: Principals should integrate teachers in policy formulation to strengthen trust and ownership.
4. Further research: Future studies should employ mixed methods or comparative designs across states to generalize findings and capture qualitative insights.

### **Implications for Educational Leadership**

Findings emphasize that sustainable school improvement depends on decision-making models that value inclusiveness and feedback. Teacher appraisal should not be perceived as criticism but as a constructive mechanism to refine administrative performance and foster shared responsibility in education.

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