MANAGING NONTEACHING STAFF FOR INSTITUTIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Educational institutions target academic excellence through teaching and learning; to attain this, institutions employ best practices in handling teaching and nonteaching staff towards achievement of educational goals been teaching and learning. This study examines the extent of influence managing nonteaching staff in public secondary schools have on institutional best practices and goal achievement in boarding schools in the era of Covid 19. Specifically, the extent of influence of managing boarding master/mistress and cleaners has on institutional best practices and goal achievement. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised 1,054 secondary school teachers drawn from 302 public secondary schools in Benue State. Out of which 350 teachers were randomly sampled. A self-structured questionnaire titled "Nonteaching staff and Best practices for Goal achievement Rating Scale (NBGRS)" was used to collect data for the study. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while, Chi-square test of goodness of fit was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that managing boarding master/mistress and cleaners significantly influences institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools. Recommendations were that; school administrators should build capacity through training and retraining of nonteaching staff in all aspects of Covid 19; for institutional best practices to be upheld for overall goal achievement in secondary schools.

KEYWORDS: Managing Nonteaching Staff, Institutional Best Practices and Goal Achievement

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions target academic excellence through teaching and learning; to attain this, institutions employ best practices in handling teaching and nonteaching staff towards achievement of educational goals been teaching and learning. Nonteaching staff such as; boarding master/mistress, cleaners, security personnel, cooks and maintenance officers among others, constitutes the human resource in various institutions to perform various tasks towards enhancing best practices and goal achievement of teaching and learning. According to Wachira (2016) nonteaching staff is a category of personnel employed by a school but not

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relating to or engaged in teaching, curriculum planning, academic counseling, and other nonteaching duties assigned to teachers whom to the research include; boarding master/mistress and cleaners. This study examines the extent of influence managing nonteaching staff in public secondary schools has on institutional best practices and goal achievement in boarding schools in the era of Post COVID 19.

Managing in schools according to Gire (2016) concerns itself with creating, maintaining, stimulating, unifying formally and informally organised human and material energies of the school so as to accomplish predetermined educational goals. It is a process of deciding what to do in school and then getting it done through effective use of available resources. The task of managing is a kind of work a manager performs to enable people to work most effectively together towards the actualisation of the overall goals of an organisation. Managing as applied in this research depicts the leadership role of school administrators in educational institutions towards judicious application of the human, material, financial and time resources targeted at capacity building through training and retraining of nonteaching staff for enhanced best practices and goal achievement in schools. Human resource considered in the research is the boarding master/mistress and cleaners.

(Stewart, 2019) likens boarding master/mistress as "dorm supervisor" who holds the responsibility of running the dorm efficiently and keeping it a safe and healthy place for the resident learners. The position of a boarding master/mistress demands a high level knowledge on how to; instruct and supervise activities of learners in the dormitory to ensure adherence to Post COVID 19 protocols; maintains boarding rules and regulations as an aspect of best practice; assign schedule to dormitory attendants where applicable, and ensure that they are on-duty through their shift; The boarding master/mistress is also responsible to re-train dormitory staff for their job in-line with Covid guidelines among others. The task of a boarding master/mistress in this era of Post COVID 19 and resumption of schools in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. To ensure safety of learners in boarding schools places the boarding masters/mistresses at an engaging task that requires the assistance of cleaners who have pertinent role in existence of a healthy school environment.

Managing cleaners is a vital aspect towards institutional best practices and goal achievement in schools. Progressive Cleaning (2020) observes that, aside quality education, health and security of the learners are of the top concerns of nearly every parent. Germs and bacteria are everywhere in a school; classrooms, cafeteria, toiletries, library, playground, walkways and other areas; thus, constantly cleaning is required to create a healthy environment for successful teaching and learning. Cleaners are thus personnel that are employed in the school to clean up the school environment more than ever in this Post COVID 19 period. There is need to provide leadership to cleaners to enable them perform the task of; handling cleaning materials properly such as; constant supply of water for hand washing, availing hand sanitisers, sanitizing equipments before and after use; carrying out regular and deep cleaning in and around the school.

This research investigates the extent of influence managing nonteaching staff have on institutional best practices which are those aspects of testing; acceleration; compacting; ability grouping; enrichment; differentiated curriculums and adding value to human life as well as supporting the main cause of an institution culminating in goal achievement, which is teaching and learning that can only be possible in a healthy learning environment. To enhance a healthy school environment, advice for school boarding premises should among others include; guidance on transmission reduction strategies for students and staff as well as guidance on facility management; School boarding premises must also follow Post COVID 19 protocols and as well undertake continuous review of a specific systematic risk assessment and mitigation process to manage the risk specific to boarders and staff handling them; create individual action plans for each student and staff member in attendance and outline steps to be taken if there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 (State Government of Victoria, Australia, 2019). These strategies pointed out can be applied in the area of study; however, it must be sequel to the leadership role in place. The role of boarding master/mistress and cleaners in this present Post COVID 19 era is thus enormous.

(Stewart, 2019) likens boarding masters/mistress as "dorm supervisors" who holds the responsibility of running the dorm efficiently and keeping it a safe and healthy place for the resident learners. The position of a boarding master/mistress demands a high level of maturity from the individual; who must be able to connect with the younger generation and possess a personality that inspires trust and respect for him

by the learners. Strong personal integrity, leadership abilities and the ability not to buckle even under extreme stress are crucial.

The boarding master/mistress is relevant in school administration when it is a boarding school. (Stewart, 2019:11) outlined duties of a boarding master/mistress to include:

i. Overseeing learners in the boarding: The boarding master/mistress is responsible for learners in his care to: supervise their activities in the dormitory; address learners' problems and grievances and actively participate in devising learners' development programs such as counseling and extracurricular activities. As the personnel in-charge of the dormitory, the boarding master/mistress should be up-to-date about the whereabouts of learners within the dormitory and other areas where learners are likely to be, such as libraries, gyms or play courts. The boarding master/mistress should not leave the dormitory and its premises unsupervised at any time. In case of unavailability, he/she should assign his/her responsibilities to another supervisor or notify his reporting authority of his absence to enable prompt action. To ensure that learners in boarding secondary schools adhere to Post COVID 19 protocols, the boarding master/mistress has to keep close watch on the learners.

ii. Ensure Maintenance of boarding Rules and Regulations: The boarding master/mistress enforces dormitory rules and policies as stipulated by the school authority. The boarding master/mistress reports to school authorities of any suspicions and unlawful activities in the dormitory including; student harassment, weapon possession and alcohol or drug use. This indicates that the boarding master/mistress can as well report any noticeable symptom of Post COVID 19 among learners to relevant authorities.

iii. Staff Supervision: A boarding master/mistress oversees the job activities of the dormitory staff to ensure that the facility is maintained safe for learners and in accordance with school policies. The boarding master/mistress is also responsible to train dormitory staff for their job, which involves now ensuring adherence of learners to Post COVID 19 protocol.

iv. Clearance to parents on visiting days: The boarding master/mistress uses available records of learners to ascertain the right parent or caregiver that visits learners in the dormitory. He/she undertakes clearance to parents or caregivers who come to visit with items deemed acceptable by the school authority and avoid access to contra banned items. This clearance is done for the security and safety of learners and the school. Parents/caregivers coming around the boarding house must adhere to Post COVID 19 protocols before they are cleared for visits. This can be strengthened with relevant knowledge of boarding master/mistress on terms of clearance as well as backup of leadership.

v. Availability of information of the dormitory and learners: The boarding master/mistress maintains information related to the dormitory and the learners therein accurately and offers information as required to school staff. Information pertaining to: Learners' presence/absence; health, education levels, parents/caregivers as well as information regarding the space in dormitory, beds, cleaning roster, devotion roster and others are kept by the boarding master/mistress. This information will aid in applying social distance during the Post COVID 19 era.

vii. Budget preparation: The boarding master/mistress prepares the budget for the dormitory maintenance and activities which is presented to the relevant authority. Without adequate knowledge and guidance on Post COVID 19 protocols, the boarding master/mistress will be handicap in budgeting for items that are needed to ensure compliance to Post COVID 19 protocols.

A school is a special environment that exists to improve the learning process of children. On this note, aside from quality education, health and security of the learners is one of the top concerns of nearly every parent. Germs and bacteria are everywhere in a school; classrooms, cafeteria, toiletries, library, playground, walkways and other areas; thus, constantly cleaning is required to create a healthy environment for successful teaching and learning. Cleaners are thus personnel that are employed in the school to clean up the school environment to ensure adequate sanitation of boarding houses to prevent Post COVID 19 transmissions among learners and/or staff.

A clean and healthy environment is important in boarding schools now that schools have reopened in the midst of the Post COVID 19 pandemic. A clean environment gives parents an assurance that their children stand fewer chances of getting sick, learners and other staff in the school, can improve their school performance as sickness is one of the main factors of absenteeism of learners and teachers in the school which counters institutional best practices. Understanding the importance of the

school clean and healthy environment is essential to having a secured learning atmosphere free of health issues, no matter the type of school or level of education, cleaners are needed to facilitate clean and healthy environment. A school administrator should work closely to motivate and supervise cleaners to obtain better school environment that facilitate school goal achievement. In as much as boarding master/mistress and cleaners are initially hired to provide services they are conversant with; Post COVID 19 situation beholds on then to expand their routine task to ensure compliance to Post COVID 19 protocols. Leadership in the Post COVID 19 Era should bring the ideas of contingency theory to bear in managing boarding masters/mistress and cleaners in the schools for institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools in the area of study.

A contingency theory is an organisational theory that claims, there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. It specifically holds that:

1.   The appropriate leadership style depends on situational contingencies

2.   Appropriate leadership style depends upon the nature of the task to be done

A contingency approach to management holds that; the way an institution is managed should change depending on the circumstances. The researcher in line with the views of the contingency theory posits that; leadership of boarding secondary schools "over steps its boundaries" of hinging more attention to the academic staff as the means of attaining institutional best practices and goal achievement in schools; to the task of managing non academic staff who have direct link with the learners who are the reason for the existence schools. As the contingency opines; leaders in schools "even though they are not health workers" should acquire and share relevant knowledge of Post COVID 19 to boarding masters/mistress and cleaners.

The (United Nations, 2020) rightly points that the Post COVID 19 pandemic has caused the largest disruption of education in history, having already had a near universal impact on learners and teachers around the world, from pre-primary to secondary schools, technical and vocational education and training institutions, universities, adult learning, and skills development establishments. However, the research is more interested in boarding secondary schools, which constitute youths who are more on their own in the hostels and are not easy to be controlled by school administrators and academic staff. The non-academic staff as observed in this research is a group of personnel who are least considered by the learners in secondary schools, especially when there is no noticeable capacity and guidelines to build their confidence in performance of their duties.

Akinloye, Adu and Odu (2017) points out that effective leadership causes individuals to meet challenges, take responsibility and become involved in what they are doing. It involves doing careful planning, organising, controlling and staffing the organisational structure with people who are as competent as possible. It also borders on the ability to in-spire others to bring out the best in them with the main aim of achieving a set goal. This view indicates that when there is collective ability of leadership to detect and cope with changes in the external environment posed by Post COVID 19; by way of building capacity of the nonacademic staff and provision of supportive supervision for them to contribute their quarter in management of educational institutions such as boarding secondary schools in line with Post COVID 19 guidelines; it may influence maintenance of institutional best practices as well as goal achievement among boarding students in public secondary schools in the area of study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent of influence managing nonacademic staff has on institutional best practices and goal achievement among public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria

Specifically, the study sought to:

1.   Ascertain the extent to which managing boarding masters/mistress would enhance institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study.

2.   Ascertain the extent to which managing cleaners would enhance institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the research questions below:

1.   To what extent does managing boarding master/mistress influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

2.   To what extent does managing cleaners influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1.   Managing boarding masters/mistress has no significant influence on institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

2.   Managing boarding cleaners has no significant influence on institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Research Methods

The research design for the study was survey design. The design was chosen because it seeks to find out factors that are associated with certain occurrences, outcome, conditions or already existing conditions (Emaikwu, 2015). The population of the study comprised 1,054 secondary school teachers from 302 public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria (TSB, Makurdi, 2019). Out of this population, three hundred and fifty or 7% of the public secondary school teachers from thirty-five or 5% of the public secondary schools in Benue State were sampled. A self-structured questionnaire titled "Nonteaching Staff and Best practices for Goal Achievement Rating Scale (NBGRS)" was used to collect data for the study. Data was obtained through direct contact with the respondents in the public secondary schools (boarding) in the area of study with the aid of two research assistants. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while, Chi-square test of goodness of fit was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results and Findings

RESULTS

The results of the statistical analysis of the data are presented as follows;

Research Question 1: To what extent does managing boarding masters/mistress influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on the extent of influence managing boarding masters/mistress has on institutional best practices and goal achievement

Item No.	Item Description	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\overline{\overline{X}}$	Std. Dev.
1	Checking learners in hostels during Post COVID 19 by trained boarding master/mistress will ensure compliance of learners.	142	130	42	39	3.06	0.98
2	Boarding master/mistress who is properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will manage learners' information	138	137	43	35	3.07	0.95
3	Boarding master/mistress are properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will be effective in space administration in hostels	118	111	79	45	2.86	1.03
4	Boarding masters/mistress who are properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will observe and report symptoms of learners to leadership	106	122	83	42	2.83	1.00
5	Boarding masters/mistress who are properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will monitor availability and proper use of Post COVID 19 in hostels	151	127	39	36	3.11	0.97
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation					**2.99**	**0.99**

Source: (Field work, 2022).

Table 1 showed that the mean ratings of respondents for items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were 3.06, 3.07, 2.86, 2.83 and 3.11 with their corresponding standard deviation of 0.98, 0.95, 1.03, 1.00 and 0.97 respectively. With the cluster mean of 2.99, standard deviation 0.99 which is above the cut-off point of 2.50 which means acceptance, the respondents have agreed with the views that: Checking learners in hostels during Post COVID 19 by trained boarding masters/mistress will ensure compliance of learners; Boarding masters/mistress who are properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will manage learners information; Boarding masters/mistress who are properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will be effective in space administration in hostels; Boarding masters/mistress who are properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will observe and report symptoms of learners to leadership; Boarding masters/mistress who are properly given leadership on Post COVID 19 protocols will monitor availability and proper use of Post COVID 19 in hostels. The cluster mean of 2.99 with the corresponding standard deviation of 0.99 was above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implied that managing boarding masters/mistress influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Research Question 2: To what extent does managing cleaners influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on extent of influence of managing cleaners on institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Item No.	Item Description	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	Std. Dev.
6	Cleaners who are knowledgeable on Post COVID 19 protocols will identify the right items to use for clean-up in schools	126	121	63	43	2.93	1.01
7	Cleaners who are knowledgeable on Post COVID 19 protocols will sanitise cleaning equipment before and after use	186	137	22	8	3.42	0.71
8	Cleaners who are supervised by school administrators supply Post COVID 19 items at the right places in the school	132	155	33	33	3.09	0.91
9	Cleaners who are knowledgeable on Post COVID 19 protocols will place timely order for cleaning materials	174	154	17	8	3.40	0.69
10	When leadership ensures adequate clean-up of school environment, institutional best practices are attained	88	96	112	57	2.61	1.03
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation			3.09		0.87		

Source: (Field work, 2022).

Table 2 showed that the mean ratings of respondents for items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were 2.93, 3.42 3.09, 3.40 and 2.61 with their corresponding standard deviation of 1.01, 0.71, 0.91, 0.69 and 1.03 respectively. Based on the cut-off point of 2.50 which means acceptance, the respondents have agreed with the views that: Cleaners who are knowledgeable on Post COVID 19 protocols will identify the right items to use for clean-up in schools; Cleaners who are knowledgeable on Post COVID 19 protocols will sanitise cleaning equipment before and after use; Cleaners who are supervised by school administrators will supply Post COVID 19 items at the right places in the school; Cleaners who are knowledgeable on Post COVID 19 protocols will place timely order for cleaning materials; When leadership ensures adequate clean-up of school environment, institutional best practices will be attained. The cluster mean of 3.09 with the corresponding standard deviation of 0.87 was above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implied that managing cleaners will influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses for this study were tested using chi-square test of goodness of fit at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented on Tables 3 and 4.

Hypothesis 1:

Managing boarding masters/mistress has no significant influence on institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Table 3: Chi-Square value of the influence of managing boarding masters/mistress on institutional best practices and goal achievement

Response	F_o	F_e	df	Level of sig	X^2_{cal}	X^2_{crit}	Decision
Very High Extent	118(33.4)	83.3	3	0.05	38.06	7.82	Rejected
High Extent	111(31.4)	83.3					
Low Extent	79(22.4)	83.3					
Very Low Extent	45 (12.7)	83.3					
Total	353(100)	353					

Source: (Field work, 2022), (Values in parentheses are percentages)

Table 3 showed that 229(65%) respondents, positively affirmed that; managing boarding master/mistress, significantly influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study; while 124 (35%) respondents negatively affirmed of the significant influence of managing boarding masters/mistress on institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary. Table 3 further showed that chi square cal value of 38.06 was greater than crit. value 7.82 checked at alpha-value of 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that managing boarding masters/mistress has no significant influence on institutional best practices and goal achievement was rejected. This means managing boarding masters/mistress significantly influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: Managing cleaners has no significant influence on institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Table 4: Chi-Square value of the influence of Managing cleaners on institutional best practices and goal achievement in the area of study?

Response	F_o	F_e	Df	Level of sig	X^2_{cal}	X^2_{crit}	Decision
Very High Extent	88 (24.9)	83.3	3	0.05	18.14	7.82	Rejected
High Extent	96 (27.2)	83.3					
Low Extent	112(31.7)	83.3					
Very Low Extent	57 (16.1)	83.3					
Total	353 (100)	353					

Source: (Field work, 2022), (Values in parentheses are percentages)

Table 4 indicated that 184 (52%) respondents positively indicated that managing cleaners significantly influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools; while 169 (48%) respondents indicated that there is no significant influence of managing cleaners on institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools. Available evidence in Table 4 shows that chi square cal=18.14 was greater than crit. =7.82 checked at alpha-value of 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states managing cleaners has no significant influence on institutional best practices and goal achievement was rejected. This implied that managing cleaners significantly influence institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings of the study revealed that managing nonteaching staff significantly influences institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools. This finding is in agreement with that of World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) which attests that, the burden of bridging the gaps in understanding Post COVID 19 with its protocols, falls on the shoulders of decision makers, health care workers, first responders, epidemiologists, community workers and all players involved in delivering health care and essential services to ensure they can learn, adapt, connect and succeed in delivering the response needed to save lives. It's a race against time. At the school level, the burden lies on administrators to provide meaningful leadership to nonteaching staff on issues surrounding Post COVID 19, to enhance institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools.

Findings also agrees with Stewart (2019) who posits that; boarding masters/mistress who act as "dorm supervisors" hold the responsibility of running the dorm efficiently and keeping it a safe and healthy place for the resident learners. The position of a boarding master/mistress therefore, demands a high-level knowledge on how to; instruct and supervise activities of learners in the dormitory to ensure adherence to Post COVID 19 protocols; maintains boarding rules and regulations as an aspect of best practice among others.

The study further agrees with that of Progressive Cleaning (2020) which observes that, aside from quality education, health and security of the learners are one of the top concerns of nearly every parent as such; constant cleaning of schools is required to create a healthy environment for successful teaching and learning. To this end; there is need to provide leadership to cleaners to enable them perform the task of; handling cleaning materials properly such as; constant supply of water for hand washing, availing hand sanitisers, sanitizing equipments before and after use; carrying out regular and deep cleaning in and around the school.

Hall and Hord (2011) in the same vein describes the implementation of change as a process through which people and organizations move as they gradually come to understand, and become skilled and competent in the use of new ways, indicating that leadership of secondary schools in cognizance of the current COVID-19 pandemic has the task of implementing changes in schools in line with Post COVID 19 protocols at the same time ensure institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, conclusions were that managing nonteaching staff significantly influences institutional best practices and goal achievement in secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:
1. School administrators should build capacity of nonteaching staff in all aspects of Post COVID 19 and institutional best practices to be upheld for overall goal achievement in secondary schools.
2. Government should with all sense of commitment look into regular training and retraining of nonteaching staff in secondary schools for optimum job performance, especially during the Post COVID 19 epidemic.

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