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# PRINCIPALS'AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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## Abstract

This study investigated principals' authentic leadership practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two specific purposes, two research questions, and two hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 274 principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State; hence census sampling technique was employed for the study. Researcher-structured rating scale titled "Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices for Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (PALPAEQ)". The instrument was developed by the researcher from literature and in consultation with experts and was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts; two experts in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one in Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained through Cronbach Alpha statistics; and an overall internal consistency co-efficient of 0.83 was obtained. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. The findings revealed among others that principals in public secondary schools in Anambra state moderately engage in self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness and the experience is a significant moderator of principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that principals in secondary schools in Anambra state should be encouraged and incentivized through conferences, seminars and monetary rewards to keep up with their authentic leadership engagements.

**Keywords:** Authentic leadership, Leadership, Administration, Administrative Effectiveness

## Introduction

Secondary education in Nigeria targets students aged 12 to 18 years, catering for their diverse academic, vocational, and personal interests. This six-year programme divides equally into

junior secondary (three years) and senior secondary (three years), serves as a link education and higher learning or workforce preparation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). At the helm of each public secondary school stands the principal, whose leadership drives curriculum implementation, staff motivation, and overall administrative effectiveness (Okafor and Ugwuoke, 2021). Secondary schools cannot achieve these laudable objectives if the principals are not fully equipped and poised for the assignment of effective administration of the school.

Administrative effectiveness in schools is the extent to which school leaders efficiently and successfully organize, coordinate, and manage the resources, personnel, and activities of the school to achieve its educational goals. Ogbo, Obiekwe and Emere (2020) perceived administrative effectiveness as the achievement of operative goals, capabilities, experiences, energy goals and value. It involves functions such as planning, decision-making, supervision, communication, and evaluation, all aimed at ensuring that instructional programmes are delivered effectively and institutional objectives are met. Ugwu and Okoye (2024) argued that principals' decision-making skills and communication patterns in Anambra state appear ineffective and this has negatively impacted their administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools; thus, influencing key areas such as planning, coordinating, and supervising school activities among others. Similarly, (Okaforcha and Uche (2024) reported a significant positive relationship between principals' supervisory skills such as classroom visitation, interpersonal interaction, and communication and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. Okaforcha and Uche (2024) further insisted that effective school administration requires authentic leadership practices on the part of the principals.

Authentic leadership is not just about leading with authority; it is about leading with heart and integrity, creating a ripple effect of positive change throughout the organization. Authentic leadership, a concept revered in modern management, is characterized by distinct traits that set authentic leaders apart. Tetra, Zainal and Agus (2022); Levesque-Cote, Fernet Morin and Austin (2020); and Bahzar (2019) are in agreement that authentic leadership practices involve principals being self-aware and being relationally transparent.

Self-awareness practices involve a deep understanding of one's thoughts, emotions, personality traits, and their influence on actions and decisions. Ayca (2023) emphasized that self-awareness enables individuals to comprehensively understand themselves including their strengths and weaknesses, knowledge and abilities, instincts, life principles, and core values; thus facilitating effective self-regulation. Principals who demonstrate strong self-awareness practices consistently recognize their greatest strengths and limitations; hence, enabling them to leverage personal capabilities while seeking support for areas needing development, ultimately enhancing their leadership effectiveness in school administration.

Another important dimension of authentic leadership practice is relational transparency. Relational transparency focuses on openness and honesty in leader–follower interactions**.** Relational transparency practices are the extent to which leaders demonstrate openness, honesty,

and clarity in their interactions and decision-making processes. Oshia, Chukwudi and Obionu (2022) explained that relational transparency is reflected in ethical communication, truthful information sharing, and sincere relationships between leaders and followers. In the school context, principals who practice relational transparency communicate policies and expectations clearly, involve teachers in relevant decisions, and relate with staff in an open and trustworthy manner. Koon, Ciftci, and Jufri (2023) further asserted that transparent leadership practices strengthen trust, enhance staff morale, and promote positive interpersonal relationships within organizations. Similarly, Tahir and Arul (2023) noted that relational transparency among school leaders encourages collaboration and accountability; which are essential for effective school administration. Therefore, principal who exhibits relational transparency creates a supportive school environment characterized by trust, openness, and shared commitment to achieving administrative effectiveness.

Meanwhile, some scholars are of the view that experience of the principals in the job, plays a significant role in determining the principals' ability to leverage on adaptive leadership principles to achieve administrative effectiveness. Ahmed (2025) argued that principals' working experience is a significant predictor of their leadership success. In the same vein, Sambo (2024) contended that majority of principals who lack experience were unable to lead their schools effectively. But, another set of researchers subscribe to the opposite Muhammad, Saeed and Muhammad (2013) are of the view that principals' leadership competencies have no significant correlation with experience, age or qualification but contingent on a number of innate characteristics. It is against the foregoing background that this study was conceived to investigate principals' authentic leadership practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The debate as to whether or not the experience of the principals can determine their level of authentic leadership competencies will equally be resolved in the course of this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

Principals in secondary schools are saddled with the responsibility of transmitting policy into action by providing the right type of leadership and guidance to the teachers and students alike. Principals are not only responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school but also play a central role in shaping its overall ethos and direction, set the schools' educational visions and goals, charting a course for academic excellence, involve in developing curriculum standards and ensuring that instructional methods align with educational best practices. Principals who are attuned to the tenets of authentic leadership demonstrate strong self-awareness which enables them to leverage personal capabilities while seeking support for areas needing development, focus on openness and honesty in leader–follower interactions, and continuously seeking ways to improve teaching and learning, consult teachers, consider their professional inputs, and incorporate same into administrative decisions among others.

Although there are copious documented evidences of principals' remarkable strides in area of students' personnel management practices, there is preponderance of evidence to suggest that

principals' administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State is at an all time low as attested to by poor authentic leadership practices among the principals. There are reported cases of bias, exclusion of teachers from decision-making, favouritism, and poor communication, unethical conduct among some school administrators, including abuse of authority, harshness, and rigidity in managing staff and school affairs. Also reports from stakeholders indicate persistent concern regarding supervision, staff motivation, conflict management and instructional monitoring among others in some public secondary schools. The extent to which these administrative issues are influence by principals' authentic leadership practices remains unclear, thus creating a gap for this study.

## Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to determine principals' authentic leadership practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra state. Specifically, this study determined the principals**;**

1. self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State;

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of more experienced and less experienced principals on self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of more experienced and less experienced principals on relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

## Method

The study adopted descriptive research design. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. The population comprised 274 principals in all the 274 public

secondary schools in Anambra State. Census sampling technique was used because of the manageable size of the population. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire titled: Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices for Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (PALPAEQ). Face and construct validity of the instrument was ascertained. The Cronbach's Alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.85. Out of the 274 copies of the questionnaire administered 268 copies were returned duly completed, and were used for data analysis. This gave a return rate of 97.81%. Data was analyzed using mean statistic to answer the research question; the decisions were based on the following ranges: Strongly Agree (SA) 3.50 – 4.00 Agree (A) 2.50 – 3.49 Disagree (D) 1.50 – 2.49 Strongly Disagree (SD) 0.00 – 1.49. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using inferential statistics of t-test of independence. The P-value was used to determine the significance of difference of principals' responses where the p-value equals to or greater than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypotheses was not accepted. On the other hand, when the p-value was less than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p<0.05$), the null hypothesis was accepted

**Results**

**Research Question One:** what are the principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.**

| S/N | Items | $\bar{X}$ | SD | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I can list my three greatest weaknesses | 2.61 | .58 | Agree |
| 2. | I can list my three greatest strengths | 2.59 | .60 | Agree |
| 3. | I seek feedback as a way of understanding who I really am as a person. | 2.66 | .61 | Agree |
| 4. | I accept the feelings I have about myself. | 2.60 | .69 | Agree |
| 5. | I admit mistakes when they are made | 2.47 | .58 | Disagree |
| 6. | I say exactly what I mean. | 2.59 | .62 | Agree |
| 7. | I know when it is time to re-evaluate my positions on important issues. | 2.70 | .59 | Agree |
| 8. | I demonstrate beliefs that are consistent with actions | 2.50 | .79 | Agree |

The results presented in Table one shows the mean ratings of respondents on principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The mean ratings indicate that the respondents agreed that seven of the eight items represent principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness. Specifically, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 recorded mean ratings ranging from 2.50 to 2.67, indicating agreement.

However, respondents disagreed that item 5 with mean 2.47, represents a self-awareness practice of principals for administrative effectiveness, as its mean rating fell below the criterion mean.

**Research Question Two:** what are the principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State**

| S/N | Items | $\overline{X}$ | SD | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I ensure my actions reflect my core values. | 2.58 | .56 | Agree |
| 2. | I do not allow group pressure to control me. | 2.75 | .65 | Agree |
| 3. | I ensure other people know where I stand on controversial issues. | 3.29 | .58 | Agree |
| 4. | I make sure morals guide what I do as a leader. | 2.87 | .66 | Agree |
| 5. | I analyze relevant data before coming to a decision. | 3.15 | .59 | Agree |
| 6. | 1 encourage staff to make decisions that are consistent with my fundamental values | 3.00 | .70 | Agree |
| 7. | I understand how specific actions impact others. | 2.78 | .60 | Agree |
| 8. | I carefully listen to alternative perspectives before reaching a conclusion | 2.77 | .65 | Agree |

Table two shows the mean ratings of respondents on principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The mean ratings for all the eight items ranged from 2.58 to 3.00. This is an indication that all eight items represent principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals on self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Table five: t-test comparison of more experienced and less experienced principals' mean ratings of self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.**

| Source of variation | N | $\bar{X}$ | SD | df | t-cal | *P*-value | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experienced | 170 | 2.63 | .37 | | | | |
| | | | | 268 | 2.56 | .01 | Sig |
| Less Experienced | 100 | 2.51 | .34 | | | | |

The results in Table five shows that the mean score for experienced principals (*M*=2.63, *SD*=.37) was significantly greater than that of their less experienced counterpart (*M=2.51, SD=.34*); *t (*268*)* =2.56, *p*=.01. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State was therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced principals on relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Table six: t-test comparison of more experienced and less experienced principals' mean ratings of relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.**

| Source of variation | N | $\bar{X}$ | SD | df | t-cal | *P*-value | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experienced | 170 | 2.88 | .27 | | | | |
| | | | | 268 | 1.34 | .17 | Not-Sig |
| Less Experienced | 100 | 2.92 | .24 | | | | |

Table six shows that the mean score for experienced principals (*M*=2.88, *SD*=.27) was not significantly less than that of their less experienced counterpart (*M=2.92, SD=.24*); *t (*268*)* =1.34, *p*=.17. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State was therefore not rejected.

**The principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State**

The findings of the study as presented in table one showed that the mean ratings of the respondents to the items in cluster A indicates an agreement to seven out of the eight items that represent principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness. Except for item 5 which is on principals admitting mistaking when they make mistake, every other items under principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness recorded mean ratings ranging from 2.50 to 2.67, indicating agreement; this implies that principals in public secondary schools in Anambra state are in agreement that they are self-aware and that they engage in those identified self-awareness practices believing same to bring about effectiveness in their administration. Meanwhile, the principals disagreed that item 5 with mean score of 2.47, does not represent a self-awareness practice of principals for administrative effectiveness. It is equally instructive to observe

that item 7 which is on the principals knowing when it is time to reevaluate their positions on important issues has the highest mean score of 2.70. This means that more than any other thing else, they (principals) are in agreement that knowing when to re-examine oneself especially on important issues stands out as the highest indicator of a self-aware principal. More so, item 3 which bother on principal seeking feedback as a way of understanding who he really is as a person has the second highest mean score of 2.66 suggesting that self-appraisal and allowing others to appraise you as a principal form the major indices for measuring principals' self-awareness for administrative effectiveness.

Also, the findings of this study as presented in table five showed that the mean score for more experienced principals is 2.63 and the standard deviation is *0*.37 which was significantly greater than that of their less experienced counterpart with mean score of 2.51 and standard deviation of 0.34., t-test (268) =2.56 at $p$=.01. Since a significant difference exist between the means and standard deviations of the two groups, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State was not accepted. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted, hence there is significant difference in the mean ratings of experienced and less-experienced principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Pretorius and Plaatjies (2023) on self-awareness as a key emotional intelligent skill for secondary school principals' leadership toolkit. The study revealed that self-awareness practices of school administrators significantly enhance their capacity to manage educational challenges and improve overall school leadership. Despite some degree of variations in the two studies in terms of location, research method and government policies, the results have remained consistent. The expectation would have been that since the study by Pretorius and Plaatjies (2023) was conducted in South Africa with substantially significant difference in education system and government policies from Nigeria where the present study was conducted, a different result would not have been much of a surprise. However, the agreement between the findings of the two studies only gives credit to the fact that the principals' self-awareness practices have a lot to do with their administrative effectiveness.

Similarly, the finding of this study is in agreement with the findings of Uwaleke, Yakubu and Nuhu (2024) whose study revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between principals' self-awareness and conflict management in secondary schools in Benue South Senatorial District; Principals' conflict management ability being an indicator of administrative effectiveness suggests that the result of the study by Uwaleke, Yakubu and Nuhu (2024) is in total agreement with the finding of the present study. Time proximity, same research design and similar education system and government policies among others, may account for the congruence of the two studies. The time lag between the two studies is just two years; so small a time for significant change to occur within the education system, descriptive survey research design was adopted for

both studies and Nigeria's national policy on education centrally controls the operations and activities of secondary education in Nigeria, Benue and Anambra state alike.

However, it is curious to observe that whereas the present study showed that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of more experienced and less-experienced principals' self-awareness practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra state, the study by Gidado, Apeh and Ogundeyi (2025) on the relationship between emotional intelligence and senior secondary school principals' management performance in south-west geo-political zone, Nigeria reported a no significant difference based on experience. The discrepancy in the findings of the two studies calls into question the notion that "experience is the best teacher". If experience is indeed the best teacher, the finding of Gidado, Apeh and Ogundeyi would have been consistent with the findings of the present study. But a careful consideration of the study by Gidado, Apeh and Ogundeyi seems to suggest that the choice of research design and instrument for data analysis could explain possible errors or mismatch in the results.

**The principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State**

The findings of the study as presented in table two showed the mean ratings for all the eight items ranged from 2.58 to 3.00. This is an indication that all the eight items represent principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness. Meanwhile, it should be noted that items 11, 13 and 14 that focused on principals ensuring that other people know where they stand on controversial issues, analyzing relevant data before coming to a decision and encouraging staff to make decisions that are consistent with their fundamental values respectively have mean scores of 3.0 and above. This implies that the principals are in agreement that engaging in each of those three practices can contribute to at least 60% in principals being adjudged as relationally transparent. Item 9 which is on principals ensuring that their actions reflect their core values has a near-borderline mean score of 2.58 suggesting that although they agree that it is a relational transparency practice, it ranks very low compare to items 11, 13 and 14.

Similarly, the finding of the study as presented in table 6 indicates that the mean score for more experienced principals is 2.88 and the standard deviation is *0*.27 which was significantly greater than that of their less experienced counterpart with mean score of 2.92 and standard deviation of 0.24., t-test (268) =1.34 at $p=0.17$. Since a significant difference exist between the means and standard deviations of the two groups, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on their relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State will be rejected. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted, hence there is significant difference in the mean ratings of more experienced and less-experienced principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

The findings of this study corroborate the findings of Alao and Ogunleye (2023) whose study revealed that principals that engage in transparency practices in communication and decision making were perceived to more effective in school administration. The agreement in the findings of the two studies could be explained by the similarity in methods; both adopted descriptive survey design, population/respondents; both studies engaged the principals as the respondents and statistical tools; both used descriptive statistics for data analysis.

The result of the present study also confirms the findings of the study conducted by Hernandez and Lopez (2022) on principals' relational transparency and teacher trust in K-12 secondary schools in Texas, USA. The findings revealed that principals' relational transparency practices significantly predicted teacher trust, collaboration, and their perceptions of administrative effectiveness. The congruence of the findings of both studies notwithstanding the disparity in time, location and governments' policies and technology divide in areas where the studies were conducted, suggests that the impact of relational transparency practices of administrators in bringing about effective administration enjoys global relevance and application.

Also, the finding of this study which states that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of more experienced and less-experienced principals' relational transparency practices for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra state is in tandem with the findings of Okaforcha, Ohamobi and Elodi (2024) whose study revealed that principals' job experience has a significant contribution to the principals' leadership and managerial competence**.** Similarities is location as both studies were conducted in Anambra state and level of education where the studies were conducted (secondary schools) and same research participants could provide possible explanations for the consistency of the results.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it can be concluded that principals in public secondary schools in Anambra state engage in authentic leadership practices for administrative effectiveness

## Recommendations

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

1. Principals in secondary schools in Anambra state should be encouraged and incentivized through conferences, seminars and monetary rewards to keep up with their authentic leadership engagements.
2. Since this study revealed that authentic leadership practices could not have been the undercurrents for administrative ineffectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra state, efforts should be made by researchers and policy makers through studies to identify other factors within the school system responsible for administrative ineffectiveness.

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