



## ASSESSING THE USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS ON STREAMLINING ADMINISTRATIVE TASK BY PRINCIPALS OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the use of digital tools on streamlining administrative tasks by principals of public secondary schools in Anambra state. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all the 268 principals in public secondary schools in the six education zones of Anambra State. The sample of this study consisted of 120 principals. Three education zones (Aguata, Ogidi and Otuocha) were selected using simple random sampling technique and used for the study. All the 120 principals in the three selected zones were used as sample size. A self-developed instrument titled 'Principals' use of Digital Tools in Streamlining Administrative Tasks Questionnaire (PDTSATQ). Section A had the personal data of the respondent while Section B had two clusters that addressed the research questions. The response format of the instrument was Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Strongly Disagree (SD) – 2 points and Disagree (D) –1 point. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two from Educational Management and one from Measurement and Evaluation in Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. The overall internal consistency reliability co-efficient index obtained through Cronbach Alpha method was 0.71, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. Data generated were answered using mean rating research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that principals make use of digital tools to a low extent in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools among others. The researchers recommended that host communities should join in the provision of some of these digital tools and that principals should embark on self-sponsored development through attending seminars, training and workshops to enable them as administrators to streamline their administrative tasks.*

**Keywords:** Digital tools, Streamline, Principals, Administrative tasks, Public Secondary Schools

### **Introduction**

Administrative tasks are the backbone of secondary schools, it encompasses a wide range of responsibilities such as student enrollment, record-keeping, scheduling, and communication. But for Ogunode (2020) administrative tasks in the school system means to implement the programme of the school as defined; to allocate resources for the implementation of the school programme; to ensure implementation of teaching programme, to ensure delivery of quality community services programme, to ensure effective staff development, to ensure effective student administration, to ensure smooth implementation of academic calendar as well as to ensure quality education. These tasks are vital for ensuring the smooth functioning of public secondary schools. Previously, principals used to rely heavily on traditional or manual processes to manage these administrative workflows which is incredibly time-consuming. This approach can lead to



inefficiencies, such as delays in processing time, the potential for human errors, difficulty in accessing and retrieving information, and challenges in maintaining data accuracy and consistency across various systems.

Additionally, manual processes can consume valuable staff time and resources, diverting their attention from more important tasks related to student support and academic development. The continuously changing educational and technological environment demands that the administrative tasks be streamlined so as to meet up with the digital trend.

Digitalization can simply be explained as the transformation of the skills needed by the world's working population and the young in order to successfully engage in a globalized modern economy (Webb et al. 2021). Digital tools in secondary school administration include; Computer, internet, smartphone, scanner, digital camera, projector and printer. These digital tools can be used for students' information during online admission process such as registration, uploading personal data the online exam, the sharing of online information like students' admission status. It can also be used for payment of school fees, purchasing equipment, tracking unremitted fund, drawing staff and students' timetable, sending messages to parents about school activities, staff meeting, hostel allocation, tracking defaulters of any fee payment, monitoring the inflow and outflow of funds in the school at any given period. For Stolterman and Fors (2014) digitalization is the changes that digital technology causes or influences in all aspects of human life. It includes the creation of new infrastructures as well as the increased use of digital media and technologies for teaching and learning, research, support services, administration, and communication, as well as the need for students and faculty to acquire new (digital) skills for their current and future workplaces (Rampelt et al., 2018). PWC (2018) reiterated that digital has come to stay. This is manifest in new innovations and automations that is on the increase as Selwyn (2016) pointed out, that digitalization concerns the use of technology to renew, simplify and improve processes and administrative tasks.

Administrative tasks of principals remain where the making and marring of schools lie. This is because it is through these tasks that all the educational goals of the secondary school system are carried out to fulfilment, not just the instructional delivery but students and even community relations. For, Ekpo and Eze (2015) administrative tasks of the principal include; communication network, decision making, supervision, leadership, motivation, coaching, coordinating, staffing, planning, organizing, directing, evaluating and mediator between the school and community to ensure active job performance among teachers in secondary schools. Therefore, there is need for principals to communicate effectively with both students, staff and community in the school system which requires the use of digital tools like phone and computer for quicker response and output. Hence, Oguejiofor (2018) pointed out that as an administrative strategy, communication network is frequently expected to share information with staff, student as well as community to coordinate activities, reduce unnecessary administrative stress while improving the performance of teachers and students in schools. Igoni (2020) posited that administrative task of the principal also include checking teachers' day-to-day activities towards enhancing their instructional performance in school). However, Nwafor (2018) stated that the use of digital tools is said to improve notably in students' personnel, financial and general administration as well as instructional supervision. He further added that it has brought about improved communication, improved record preparation and keeping, easier sourcing of information, effective registration of students for external exams and faster analysis of examination of result.

Administrative tasks can be streamlined by having all the school record in a database so as to eliminate redundant paper work. This allows not just the principals access to information but other stakeholders thereby eliminating the stress of parents coming to school physically in some cases. The mere check on the school website can provide all the necessary information that stakeholders need to know at certain point in time, thereby streamlining administrative tasks of principals. In agreement, Christensen et al. (2020) asserted that integration of digital technology in school administration, transformation has emerged as a global phenomenon, driven by its ability to revolutionize administrative process and stimulate innovation. Okon et al. (2015) observed that secondary school administration in Nigeria has become more complex with concomitant management demands being exerted on the principals especially in today's digital era. Although, Onuorah and Chukwu (2022) lamented that some secondary school principals have failed to effectively utilize digital tools in carrying out their administrative tasks that will increase school efficiency and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy as well as make school administration less cumbersome. In agreement Ibadin in Wichedu and Odionyeme (2021) argued that they are challenges associated with the use of ICT in the effective administration of schools which can cause a loss of purpose, loss of productivity, loss of quality and absence of the attainment of common goals. Thompson and Anachuna (2019) pointed out that through the use of



digital tools like computer and internet, students can pay for educational services like hostel fee, tuition fee, and transportation fee among others without necessarily going to the school to make transaction. ThankGod and Vulasi (2020) observed that the use of computer could store up thousands of files such that it can streamline administrative tasks but sadly many school administrators still go through the analogue exercise of registering students manually, maintaining records of students' performance, keeping inventory list of supplies and even paying bills.

They further added that computer which is a digital tool provides instantaneous responses and has the capacity to retrieve and manipulate information which cannot be matched because of its ability to serve any school administrator in streamlining administrative tasks. Oboegbulem and Ugwu in Atunde et al. (2022) pointed out that digital tools in secondary school administration is a necessity and worthwhile venture most importantly in this era of digitalization. They further decried the poor application of digital tools blaming it on incompetence among principals. Hamma et al. (2021) asserted that digital tools could help in streamlining administrative process of the human resource especially in the area of communication like through the use of whatsapp message, zoom meeting, google meet among others. This is because it helped communicate whatever information was available to all the stakeholders in secondary school administration. However, Okafor (2020) decried the non-availability of computers, satellite dish, Ipods, TVs, radio, compact disks, printers, UPS and scanners in some secondary schools in Anambra state. Thus, this paper tries to assess the use of digital tools on streamlining administrative tasks by principals of public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Principals as administrators in public secondary schools in Anambra state are saddled with lots of administrative tasks ranging from students' enrolment, staff biodata, school plant among others. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, where technology has taken over so as to improve efficiency and time management, observation has it that there are many cases of manual records keeping by principals, the mistakes and untidy output arising from the use of it, scheduling of staff meeting through displaying on the school notice board, writing on sheets of paper to inform members of PTA about schedule for meeting, handwritten list of school students biodata among others. All these affect the efficiency of performing administrative tasks by principals, it is against this background that the researchers are investigating the use of digital tools to streamline administrative tasks by principals of public secondary schools in Anambra state.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study's primary goal is to examine principals use of digital tools to streamline administrative tasks. In particular, the study looked into:

1. Assessing principals' use of digital tools to streamline administrative tasks in public secondary in Anambra state.
2. Examine the factors that discourage principals from the use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised:

1. Which administrative tasks do principals in public secondary schools use digital tools to streamline?
2. What are the factors that hinder principals' use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks?

### **Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis was formulated to be tested at 0.05 level of significance

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no difference in principals' use of digital tools to streamline administrative tasks.

**Methods:** The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all the 268 principals in public secondary schools in the six education zones of Anambra State, (Post Primary School Service Commission, PPSSC 2024). The sample of this study consisted of 120 principals. Three education zones (Aguata, Ogidi and Otuocha) were selected using simple random sampling technique and used for the study. All the 120 principals in the three selected zones were used as sample size. A self-developed instrument titled 'Principals' use of Digital Tools in Streamlining Administrative Tasks Questionnaire (PDTSATQ). Section A had the personal data of the respondent while Section B had two clusters that addressed the research questions. The response format of the instrument was Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) – 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two from Educational Management and one from Measurement and Evaluation in Faculty of



Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam. The reliability of the instrument was tested using 20 principals in Enugu State. The overall internal consistency reliability co-efficient index obtained through Cronbach Alpha method was 0.71, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. Data were collected through direct delivery method by the researchers with the help of three research assistants that were briefed on how to administer the instrument. This ensured a 100% return rate of the questionnaire administered. Mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance.

### Analysis of Research Questions

**Research question 1:** Which administrative tasks do principals in public secondary schools use digital tools to streamline?

**Table One: Mean Rating of Principals' Use of Digital Tools in Streamlining Administrative Tasks in Public Secondary Schools**

S/n	Item description	Principals	
		X	Decision
	<b>Principals in public secondary schools use digital tools in streamlining administrative task in area such as;</b>		
1.	Capturing the biodata of student during admission into public secondary school through the use computer	1.11	SD
2.	Preparing students' result online for parents to assess through the use of computer	1.16	SD
3.	Scheduling staff meeting online through zoom link	1.50	D
4.	Students making fees payment online through the use of remittal	3.93	SA
5.	Preparing students' biodata on the computer for students' nominal roll	2.51	A
6.	Scheduling staff meeting online through the use of whatsapp app	1.91	D
7.	Checking teachers' lesson plan online through email	1.96	D
8.	Scheduling PTA online through sending whatsapp message.	1.18	SD
9.	Drafting school timetable through the computer	2.78	A
10	Capturing of staff biodata for staff nominal roll	2.58	A
	<b>Total Mean Rating (X)</b>	<b>20.62</b>	
	<b>Mean of Mean Rating (X)</b>	<b>2.06</b>	<b>D</b>

**Source:** Field Survey (2024)

**Decision Key:** SA – Strongly Agree, A - Agree, SD – Strongly Disagree, D– Disagree

Findings on table 1 above showed that principals strongly disagree that principals make use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in areas of students' enrollment, preparing results for parents to assess, and scheduling PTA meetings through whatsapp. Furthermore, principals disagree that they use digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks is in the area of scheduling staff meeting through zoom, scheduling staff meeting through whatsapp, and checking teachers lesson notes through emails. However, there is a sharp contrast in principals making use of digital tools for administrative purposes in the area of students' payment online, as they strongly agree that they make use of digital tools, and also we see something similar in the area of preparing students and staff biodata in the computer and drafting school timetable in the computer, as they agree they use digital tools in those areas. Generally, principals disagree they make use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools with a total mean rate of 20.62 and a mean rate of 2.06.

**Research Question 2:** What are the factors that hinder principals' use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks?





**Table Two: Mean Rating of Factors that Hinders Principals' Use of Digital Tools in Streamlining Administrative Tasks in Public Secondary Schools**

S/n	Item description	Principals X	Decision
<b>Principals' use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks are hindered by the following factors</b>			
1	Lack of power supply	3.85	SA
2.	Lack of knowledge on the use digital tools like computer	3.12	A
3.	Non-availability of digital tools like computer	3.42	A
4.	Lack of interest in the use of computer	3.23	A
5.	Lack of confidence in computer	3.15	A
6.	Incessant technical problems	3.73	SA
7.	Poor funding by the stakeholders	2.73	A
8.	Lack of quality software	3.65	SA
9.	Poor training of principals	3.12	A
10	Resistance to change by principals	1.15	SD
<b>Total Mean Rating (X)</b>		<b>31.15</b>	
<b>Mean of Mean Rating (X)</b>		<b>3.12</b>	<b>A</b>

**Source:** Field Survey (2024)

**Decision Key:** SA – Strongly Agree, A - Agree, SD – Strongly Disagree, D– Disagree

The data in table 2 shows that some factors that hinder principals' use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks to a very are extent are lack of power supply, lack of quality software and incessant technical problem. To a high extent, lack of knowledge on the use of digital tools, non-availability the digital tools, lack of interest, lack of confidence, poor funding and poor training of principals are contributing factors that hinder principals' use of digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks. We however saw that resistance to change by principals to a very low extent hinder principals from using digital tools in administration. In general, the unlisted factors in the table hinder principals to a high extent in using digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools with a total mean rate of 31.15 and a mean rate of 23.12.

### **Hypothesis Testing:**

HO 1: There is no significant difference in principals' use of digital tools to streamline administrative tasks.

**Table 3: T-test analysis of the difference of the mean rating between principals' use of digital tools to streamline administrative tasks.**

Digital tool usage of Respondents	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Use digital tools	20	2.79	11.14	118	1.93	0.006	Significant
Do not use digital tools	100	2.68	10.23				

**Key:** SD = Standard Deviation, Df = Degree of freedom, Significant =  $p < 0.05$



The data in table 3 show the aggregate mean responses of principals who use digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools and those who do not use as 2.79 and 2.68 respectively. The corresponding standard deviations are 11.14 and 10.23. The table reveals that at 118 degree of freedom (df), the t-value is 1.93 with a p-value of 0.006. Testing at alpha value (0.05), the null hypothesis is therefore rejected since the p-value of 0.006 is less than the alpha value. Thus, there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of principals who use digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study on table 1 revealed that principals make use of digital tools to a low extent in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools which is not in line with this era of digitalization. The finding agrees with Onuorah and Chukwu (2022) that lamented how some secondary school principals have failed to effectively utilize digital tools in carrying out their administrative tasks that will increase school efficiency and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy as well as make school administration less cumbersome. Therefore, it does not conform with the opinion of Selwyn (2016) that pointed out that digitalization concerns the use of technology to renew, simplify and improve processes and administrative tasks. Testing at alpha value (0.05), the null hypothesis is therefore rejected since the p-value of 0.006 is less than the alpha value. Thus, there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of principals who use digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools.

Table 2 revealed that there are some factors that hinder principals to a high extent in using digital tools in streamlining administrative tasks in public secondary schools. This is in agreement with Okafor (2020) that posited the non-availability of computers, satellite dish, Ipods, TVs, radio, compact disks, printers, UPS and scanners in some secondary schools in Anambra state which could lead to none usage of digital tools to streamline administrative tasks. It further agrees with Ibadin in Wichedu and Odionyeme (2021) that argued that many factors hinder the use of digital tools in the effective administration of schools which can cause a loss of purpose, loss of productivity, loss of quality and absence of the attainment of their common goals.

### Recommendations

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

1. Host communities of public secondary should contribute towards the provision of some of these digital tools to streamline administrative tasks in public secondary schools.
2. Principals should embrace the trend of digitalization as something that has come to stay and try to acquire the necessary skills to streamline administrative tasks.
3. Principals should strive to develop themselves on the use of digital tools by attending self-sponsored training, seminars and workshops so as to streamline administrative tasks because it is their core duty as school administrators.
4. Government should train and retrain principals on the use of digital tools to enable them acquaint themselves with the use of these tools through workshops and seminars.

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