



EDUCATION LAW AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA.



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Abstract

The study examined education law and its implications in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Three objectives, three research questions and two hypothesis guided the study using a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 515 secondary school principals in Bayelsa State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 290 respondents, which comprised of male 190 and female 100 respectively for the study. Data were collected with instrument titled "Education Law and Administration of Secondary Schools Questionnaire (ELASSQ)" which was structured on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Two experts in measurement and evaluation and Educational Management validated the instrument. Test-retest was used to ascertain the reliability coefficient at 0.85. Data collected were statistically analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed a high level of awareness of education law among male and female principals in the administration of secondary schools. The study also revealed challenges faced by principals in the implementation of education law in the administration of secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The study revealed a significant difference on the mean rating of male and female principals on the level of awareness of education laws and a significant difference on the mean rating on challenges principals faced implementing education laws in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was therefore, recommended that government should intensify regular workshops, seminars, and encourage continuous professional development programs among principals on the importance of education laws for effective school administration. In addition, the Bayelsa State Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the educational agencies should ensure that education law is taught as a compulsory course in all teacher education programs, amongst others for the smooth administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Key Words: Education, Law, Education Law, Administration of secondary schools

Introduction

The existence of national development, social transformation, and human capital development of any nation lies on its education. Education empowers individuals with robust knowledge, skills, and values required to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of society. In Nigeria, the role of education is not only a social imperative but also a constitutional mandate, as enshrined in Section 18 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which emphasizes that the government shall eradicate illiteracy and ensure equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels. However, for education to function effectively and equitably in any society, especially a complex one like Nigeria, a clear, enforceable, and responsive legal frameworks (law) must govern it.

Law is regarded as a codified guidelines or standards that control how people behave and interact with one another in the society. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines "law" as both a system of rules and a specific rule within that system. Durosaro (1998) define law as both written and unwritten regulations that are drawn from enactments and conventions, accepted by the public as obligatory that may be enforced through the proper penalty system. Robertson (2006) define law as system of rules that are enforced through social institutions to govern individual behavior.

In the educational system, laws provide the legal framework and authority for the organization, regulation and the administration of educational activities. Considering the fact that the education system is increasingly complex and knotted with other societal structures. Education law has become essential in guiding policies, practices, and the resolution of disputes in the sector (Ibara, 2018).

Therefore, education law can be view as the body of statutes, policies, regulations, judicial decisions, and ethical codes that guide the organization, administration, rights, duties, and responsibilities within the educational system. Education law acts as both a safeguard and a regulatory mechanism, ensuring that the operations of schools are in conformity with national goals, democratic values, and international best practices (Ololube, 2016). Education law integrates a robust legal subjects such as constitutional laws, court rulings, state or local government regulations and legislation serve as guidelines for how the educational system should be manage in the contemporary Nigeria (Ibara, 2018). Furthermore, in Nigeria, according to Ogunyemi (2015), the legal framework governing education is built upon several key instruments such as National Policy on Education (NPE), the Universal Basic Education Act (2004), the Child Rights Act (2003), the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act, and sector-specific laws like the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act. These laws provide comprehensive guidelines on issues ranging from school governance, teacher qualifications, curriculum standards, students' rights, infrastructural requirements, funding mechanisms, and private sector participation in education.

The administration of schools in contemporary Nigeria, both public and private, urban or rural operates within this evolving legal environment. School administrators are expected to navigate through complex legal issues involving student discipline, staff employment, safety protocols, examination standards, and inclusive education (Ibara, 2018). The implications of not complying with education law can be severe, leading to litigation, withdrawal of accreditation, disruption of school activities, or denial of students' rights (Oluremi&Oyelade, 2013). Educational laws are designed to safeguard students and employees' rights in educational institutions. Osaat and Nwabueze (2021) suggested that educational laws are safeguarding, offering the structure and process required for managing educational institutions. It is almost impossible to overemphasize how significant it is for educational administrators to be aware of it.

Breach of the Law in Educational Institutions

In order to prevent needless lawsuits that could impair the efficient operation of the educational system, educational administrators must effectively manage the following areas of legal violations frequently linked to educational institutions:

1. Unlawful dismissal of teachers, discrimination in hiring, breach of contractual terms.

Legal Implication: Contravenes Labour Act of Nigeria (2004) and Public Service Rules.

2. Embezzlement of school funds, unauthorized levies.

Legal Implication: Violates anti-corruption laws and may lead to criminal prosecution.

3. Corporal punishment or abuse of students like physical assault and battery, sexual harassment, emotional abuse.

Legal Implication: Breach of child rights and protection laws.

4. Examination malpractice which include teachers aiding cheating, falsification of results, etc.



Legal Implication: Contravenes Examination Malpractice Act, 1999.

Concept of Education Law

Education law encompasses all legal provisions, acts, policies, and judicial decisions that regulate the provision of education at all levels. These include the *National Policy on Education*, the *Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act (2004)*, the *Child Rights Act (2003)*, and constitutional provisions, notably Section 18 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), which affirms the government's commitment to educational development.

As noted by Obi and Ibiam (2011), education law provides the legal context for decisions related to school governance, staff employment, student rights, school discipline, curriculum implementation, and infrastructural development. It ensures accountability, quality assurance, and ethical standards across educational institutions. "Education law is a generic term that covers a wide range of legal subject matter," according to Sydor (2006). Legitimate rights, administrative, property, constitution law, agreements, torts, and a variety of other topics are all relevant to administrative and educational procedures. The rules for the efficient operation of educational activities are outlined in Nigerian education legislation (Fabunmi, 2003, Fafunwa, 2004 & Fabunmi, 2005). The governmental bureaucracy that is represented is the source of the education laws and decree. The actions of parents, students, instructors, and many others in the educational sector are governed by education legislation (Olakanmi, 2007). He said that it includes school safety, curriculum, disciplinary actions, code of conduct, instructors' rights, and kids' rights.

Students' Legal Rights

- The freedom to practice or not practice a religion;
 - The freedom from arbitrary harassment, interrogation, search, or seizure;
 - The right to file a grievance and appeal in order to seek remedies;
 - The freedom to assemble, speak, express, and publish within the bounds of the law;
 - The right to education and access to educational facilities;
- The right to view school recordings when there is a valid reason to do so (Amirize, in David-West, 2020).

Legal Right and Obligations of Teachers/Administrators

The following are some among other rights of teachers/administrators, according to Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008):

- Teachers right to their salary
- Right to allowance
- Right to discipline students within the limits of the provision of the legal right of the student and the principle.

Legal Frameworks Guiding School Administration in Nigeria

Various legal frameworks, including, influence the administration of secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria:

- The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) – provides a legal basis for education as a fundamental right and outlines government responsibilities.
- Universal Basic Education Act (2004) makes education free and compulsory for children between the ages of 6–15.
- National Policy on Education (NPE) sets the goals, structure, and guidelines for the Nigerian educational system.
- Child Rights Act (2003) protects the rights of the child, including the right to education, safety, and dignity in schools.
- Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act regulates the teaching profession to ensure professionalism and ethical conduct.

There is doubt, that the Nigeria's educational sector faces a series of contemporary challenges such as insecurity, gender inequality, examination malpractice, cultism, inadequate infrastructure, and the politicization of education policy, which have stressed the urgent need for robust legal interventions (Adewale, 2019). Education law thus becomes essential not only for maintaining of order and structure but also for ensuring justice, accountability, and equity in school administration. According to Adewale (2019), education law plays a crucial role in the effective administration of schools by providing a framework of rules and regulations that govern educational activities and ensure a conducive learning environment. It establishes the rights and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and the government, promoting order, accountability, and the overall development of the education system.

******There are challenges that encircles the practice of educational law. On these challenges, Okeke (2016) said that inadequate funding is the major reason why most public senior secondary schools cannot enforced education laws. This is in line with the findings of Ayodele (2015) who reported that there was no significant difference between the opinion of male and female principals on the availability of fund for the enforcement of education laws in the administration of universal basic education in Lagos State. Udeozor (2015) also reported that most public secondary schools principals in Enugu State are handicap of the enforcement of education laws because of inadequate funding for the implementation.

Despite the comprehensive legal framework, challenges persist according to Okebukola (2008):

- Lack of awareness among school administrators about legal provisions.
- Weak enforcement mechanisms, especially in rural and public schools.
- Overlapping jurisdictions between federal, state, and local authorities, leading to policy conflicts.
- Corruption and mismanagement that undermine legal compliance.
- Inadequate legal training for school heads and teachers.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the existence of robust education laws, policies, and regulations in Nigeria, the administration of secondary schools continues to face hazardous legal issues involving policy inconsistency, administrative malpractice, weak enforcement of rules, political interference, poor implementation of legal provisions, and frequent legal disputes involving staff, students, and stakeholders. Many school administrators, Bayelsa State inclusive either lack adequate knowledge of these laws or do not apply them effectively in decision-making processes for the effective administration. This raises critical questions about the role and effectiveness of education law in enhancing quality and vibrant secondary school administration in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Therefore, it is against this background, this research is carried out to investigate education law and its implications in the administration of secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives the Study

The study aim is to examine education law and its implications in the administration of secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the level of awareness of education law among principals in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
2. State the benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
3. Identify the challenges in implementing education law school in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the level of awareness of education law among principals in the administration of public secondary schools in BayelsaState?
2. What are the benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in BayelsaState?
3. What are thechallenges in implementing education lawsamong principals in public secondary schools in BayelsaState?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant differencebetweenthe mean ratings of male and female principals on the awareness of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

H₀₂ There is no significant diffserence between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the challenges of implementing education lawsin the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey design, which comprises515 principals of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 290 principals (male and female). Instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Education Law and Secondary School Administration Questionnaire (ELSSAQ)” The Questionnaire was structured along a 4-point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) Weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.Two experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Management validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using test-retest method to get the coefficient of 0.85. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistics to answer the research questions, while t-testwas used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Presentation

Data collected were analyzed under the following tables:

Research Question One:What are the level of awareness of education law among principals in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table One: Mean Scores, Standard Deviation of Male, and Female Principals on the level of awareness of education law among in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	Male 190		Female 100		Weighted Mean	Decision
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
1	School administrators are aware of important legal documents such as the National Policy on Education (NPE).	3.70	0.47	3.76	0.45	3.73	Agree
2	There is enforcement of education lawscarry out byprincipals for the smooth running of the school	3.68	0.46	3.76	0.44	3.72	Agree
3	Many school	3.75	0.42	3.81	0.44	3.78	

	administrators have not received formal training/ professional development on education laws.						Agree
4	Principals practice education law to safeguarding teachers from harassment by parents	3.78	0.45	3.84	0.43	3.81	Agree
5	Handling of disciplinary issues among principals demonstrate their level of awareness of education law.	3.73	0.57	3.77	0.55	3.75	Agree
6	Due to principals, awareness of education law issues are often resolves to prevent legal breaches.	3.75	0.60	3.79	0.56	3.77	Agree
Grand Mean		3.73	0.50	3.79	0.48	3.76	Agree

Table 1 shows alevel of awareness of education laws among secondary school principals in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In the table 1, all the items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) have mean values higher than the criterion mean of 2.5. Moreover, the table shows that the grand mean is 3.76, which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. This shows that there is goodlevel of awareness of education lawamong principals in the administration of secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What are the benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table Two: Mean Scores, Standard Deviation of Male, and Female Principals on the Benefits of Education Laws in the Administration of secondary Schools.

S/N	Items	Male 190		Female 100 Mean	Female Std. Deviation	Weighted Mean	Decision
		Mean	Std. Deviation				
1.	Provide a framework of rules and regulations that govern educational activities.	2.70	1.20	2.58	1.26	2.64	Agree
2.	Students are protectedfrom unjust mistreatment from teachers.	2.15	1.03	2.03	0.97	2.09	Agree
3.	It safeguard teacher's right from unnecessary harassment by parents.	3.20	0.85	3.08	0.93	3.14	Disagree



4.	It ensures a conducive learning environment where rights and obligations are treated fairly.	3.75	0.60	3.65	0.70	3.70	Agree
5.	It makes it easy for principals to encourage excesses of teachers and students alike.	2.25	0.90	2.11	1.02	2.18	Disagree
6.	It slightly establishes the rights and responsibilities of various stakeholders	1.95	0.80	1.85	0.76	1.90	Disagree
Grand Mean		2.67	0.90	2.55	0.94	2.61	Agree

Table 2, shows that items 1,3,4 have means scores above the criterion mean of 2.5. Which states the benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State to include that, it provides a framework of rules and regulations that govern educational activities, it safeguard teacher's right from unnecessary harassment by parents and it ensures a conducive learning environment where rights and obligations are treated fairly. While items 2, 5 and 6 had mean scores below the criterion mean of 2.5 meaning that students are not totally protected from unjust mistreatment from teachers, it is not easy for principals to encourage excesses of teachers and students alike and it does not slightly establishes the rights and responsibilities of various stakeholders. Moreover, the table shows that there are benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges school administrators face in implementing education laws in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table Three: Mean Scores, Standard Deviation of Male, and Female Principals on the Challenges School Principals' faced in Implementing Education Laws.

S/N	Items	Male 190		Female 100		Weighted Mean	Decision
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
1	Lack of comprehensive knowledge of education law.	3.38	0.93	3.50	0.88	3.44	Agree
2	Poor enforcement due to limited oversight from regulatory agencies.	3.18	0.92	3.30	0.85	3.24	Agree
3	Lack of access to legal documents and training materials.	1.54	0.88	1.40	0.80	1.47	Disagree
4	Corruption and mismanagement that undermine legal compliance.	2.43	0.98	2.55	0.94	2.49	Disagree
5	Cultural and social resistance	2.60	0.98	2.70	1.00	2.65	Agree
6	Lack of monitoring and evaluation	2.85	0.93	2.95	0.91	2.90	Agree
Grand Mean		2.66	0.91	2.73	0.89	2.70	Agree

Table 3 shows the various challenges school administrators' face in implementing education laws in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. In table 3, items 3 and 4 have mean values lower than the criterion mean of 2.5, while items 1, 2, 5, and 6 have mean values greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. Moreover, the table 3 shows that the grand mean of 2.70, which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. This shows that principals agreed to the various challenges faced in implementing education laws in secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Hypotheses Test

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the awareness of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table Four:Independent Sampled t-test of the Difference in the mean rating of Male and Female Principals on the Level of Awareness of education laws among Administrators in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t-value	p-value
Male Principals	190	15.45	4.55	288	19.400	0.000
Female Principals	100	6.54	0.81			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 4 shows that the mean rating of public schools respondents (Mean = 15.45, standard deviation = 4.55) is greater than the mean rating of private schools respondents (Mean = 6.54, standard deviation = 0.81). Table 3 also shows the t-value of 19.400, with p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha value, this means that there is a significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Conclusively, there is a significant difference on the mean rating of male and female principals on the level of awareness of education laws among administrators in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 5: Independent Sampled t-test of the Difference in the mean rating of Male and Female Principals on the Benefits of education laws in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t-value	p-value
Male Principals	190	19.14	2.84	288	23.389	0.000
Female Principals	100	10.73	3.04			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 5 shows that the mean rating of male respondents (Mean = 19.14, standard deviation = 2.84) is greater than the mean rating of female respondents (Mean = 10.73, standard deviation = 3.04). Table 4 also shows the t-value of 23.389, with p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha value, this means that there is a significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Conclusively, there is a significant difference on the mean rating of male and

female principals on the challenges school administrators faced in implementing education laws in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the challenges of implementing education laws in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 6: Challenges Male and Female Principals faced in implementing education laws in the Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t-value	p-value
Male Principals	190	18.83	2.72	288	29.074	0.000
Female Principals	100	9.73	2.14			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 6 shows that the mean rating of male respondents (Mean = 18.83, standard deviation = 2.72) is greater than the mean rating of female respondents (Mean = 9.73, standard deviation = 2.14). Table 6 also shows the t-value of 29.074, with p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha value, this means that there is a significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Conclusively, there is a significant difference on the mean ratings of male and female principals on the challenges school administrators faced in implementing of education laws in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of the Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and existing literature, highlighting the implications of education law awareness, benefits and challenges among school administrators in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

The first findings shows that there is good level of awareness of education law among principals in the administration of secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. These findings align with Osaat and Nwabuwe (2021), who observed that institutional type often influences exposure to legal frameworks in school management. This is in consonance with the findings of Aghenta (2001); Eferakeya and Igbinedion (2015), whose work revealed that, the disparity in policy implementation between urban and rural educational settings in Nigeria. It is important for students, academic, and non-academic staff in educational institutions to have a sound understanding of education laws. Therefore, the teaching of education law should be a continuous and integral part of learning across secondary schools in Nigeria.

The second table revealed that, there are benefits of education law in the administration of public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. This is in line with Adewale (2019) whose work revealed that education law plays a crucial role in the effective administration of schools by providing a framework of rules and regulations that govern educational activities and ensure a conducive learning environment. It establishes the rights and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and the government, promoting order, accountability, and the overall development of the education system.

Table three shows that principals agreed to the various challenges faced in implementing education laws in secondary schools in Bayelsa State. This is in consonance with Okeke (2016) whose work revealed inadequate funding as the major reason why most public senior secondary schools cannot enforced education laws. The study of Ayodele (2015) is in consonance with the this work in the sense that, his work reported that there was no significant difference between the opinion of male and female

principals on the availability of fund for the enforcement of education laws in the administration of universal basic education in Lagos State. Udeozor (2015) also reported that most public secondary schools principals are handicap of the enforcement of education laws because of inadequate funding for the implementation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should organize regular workshops, seminars, and continuous professional development programs on education laws for principals in public secondary schools of Bayelsa State.
2. The Bayelsa State Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the educational agencies should ensure that education law is taught as a compulsory course in all teacher education programs.
3. Schools should promote a culture of legal consciousness by engaging all stakeholders.
4. Government should make efforts to simplify and distribute education law materials (in both print and digital formats) to school heads.

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