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ECONOMIC RECESSION AS CORRELATE OF PRINCIPALS TASK PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study determined the correlation between economic recession and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. The correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of study comprised 263 public secondary school principals. Two questionnaires were developed and used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained through a pilot test. The instrument's reliability was established through a pilot test. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha and coefficient values of 0.75 and 0.77 for clusters 1 and 2 respectively for the economic recession questionnaire while coefficient value of 0.87 was achieved for principals' task performance questionnaire. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer research questions. Findings revealed that there is a very high negative relationship between government low revenue and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Finding also revealed that there is a very high negative relationship between government low revenue and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that in order to enhance school funding during and after the recession, principals of public secondary schools should engage in public private partnership agreements with the private sector (individual, commercial organizations and Non-governmental organizations).

Keywords: Economic Recession, Principals, Task Performance, Public, Secondary School

Introduction

Education is an important instrument of national development. This is because education is a tool that improves the human capacity of the citizens in a nation. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) saw education as the bedrock of growth and development of any nation and an indispensible resource needed to sustain and harness other resources giving to humanity. Thus, education is a tool through which an individual masters his environment and acquires the necessary tools for living worthwhile life. The FRN (2013) averred

that education is instrument per excellence for individual and national development. According to Olorunsola and Belo (2018), a well administered education would equip individuals with the capacity to understand and adapt to new challenging problematic situations, awaken intellectual curiosity, encourage spirit of inquiry, become inventive, self-reliant and resourceful. Educational institutions are mandated to use education as a tool for social transformation.

Secondary school education is the phase of education students receive after primary school and before the tertiary level. Its importance lies in its position both as the bridge between primary and tertiary education and the agent for preparing individuals for useful living in the society (Udalla, 2012). Olorunsola and Belo (2018) opined that educational organization such as the secondary school system exist in a symbiotic relationship with its environment, while utilizing both human and material resources for the production of educated socialized graduates. According to Olorunsola and Belo, a well administered education would equip individuals with the capacity to understand and adapt to new challenging problematic situations, awaken intellectual curiosity, encourage spirit of inquiry, become inventive, self-reliant and resourceful. Educational institutions are mandated to use education as a tool for social transformation. All secondary schools, irrespective of ownership, have common objectives. Hence, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) enumerated the broad aims of secondary school education as preparing people for useful living in the society and for higher education. It is in fulfilment of these goals that it is imperative that secondary schools should, among others, supply trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional levels; inspire students with the desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence; raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views of others and uphold the sanctity of dignity of labour (Udalla, 2012). The realization of the goals of secondary education is dependent on the ability of school principals to carry out their tasks.

Principals are the chief executive of the school and the key person in ensuring that the students receive quality school experience. Olorunsola and Belo (2018) defined a principal as a leader is also the liaison officer that mediates between the school and the society. A school principal is a leader that provides direction and expert advice on development of teaching and learning in school. The principal has a duty to lead, guide, conduct, direct and motivate both the teaching and non-teaching staff toward achievement of the school goals and objectives. However, fluctuation in the economy which results in economic down turn threatens the realization of the goals of secondary education in Nigeria.

An economic downturn in general is known as a recession. According to Paul (2017), an economic recession is a time of overall economic deterioration that is frequently

followed by a decline in the stock market, high unemployment, and a decline in the housing market, as well as a slowing of the gross domestic product. The economy of a country that generously gives is currently experiencing a downturn. It typically happens when export demand is weak and the flow of remittances, private money, and development aid is diminishing. Because they result in job losses, decreased per capital income, unemployment and underemployment, as well as the inability to pay bills, these economic heads are reactive in nature. Economic recession, as defined by Farayibi (2016), is a decline in the economy. Any economy that displays signs of recession, such as escalating prices for goods and services, a government that is unable to pay its debts, fluctuations in the value of the currency, and subpar performance by other macroeconomic variables that define the state of the economy at any given time, is doing so. According to Kamar (2012), the financial crisis and/or the strength of the demand and supply side of the stock market could both cause a recession. Inflation is one of the socioeconomic elements that contribute to economic recession. Economic recession results in government revenue and inflation. According to Chinguwo and Blewit (2012), the economic recession all contributed to making life even harder for many working people and their families. According to a poll by Education International (2014) on how the economic downturn has affected education globally, most nations have cut back on spending or fiscal support for education. Of the 21 countries that they surveyed, 10 had budget expenditures that were decreased on average by 5 to 10%, according to the report on the survey. On the other hand, economic recession leads to inflation which increases the overall increase in prices of goods and services that has the consequence of lowering the purchasing power of the individual worker is known as inflation (Akpomi, Azubuike & Isaac, 2018). Inflation is a severe socioeconomic impact of the economic downturn that principals of public secondary schools must deal with. Purchase power has decreased as a result of inflation. Akpomi et al averred that inflation resulting from inflation could affect principals' task performance in secondary schools in Nigeria. According to Arop, Owan and Chijioke (2019), principals' task performance refers to the mandated curriculum role that principals must carry out in order for instructors and students to meet the school's objectives within a specified period. Principals task performance, according to Owan and Agunwa (2019), is the degree to which principals fulfill their primary role and conduct themselves in a professional manner. However it has been suggested that economic recession could impact on principals' task performance among secondary school principals (Anele, 2020). This however has not been empirically proven to be the case among principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State. It is against this background that the researcher investigated relationship between economic recession and principals' task

performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Principals are solely responsible for the administrative management of public secondary schools, but in this time of economic recession, there is growing concern that both principals and public secondary schools are in crisis because of the gross disregard for the factors that will affect their performance. Most principals are inefficient and ineffective at their jobs, as evidenced by the following: failure to provide clear and practical guidelines for school activities, a lack of work ethic, the imposition of illegal fees, irregular attendance, lack of teacher coordination, improper handling of school funds, and other unethical actions that undermine the management of public schools and prevent them from meeting their objectives in terms of education.

Depreciation in household income has increased the entrance of students to public secondary schools and increased pressure on school trees while reduction in total cash input into the economy led to salary arrears payable, none release of impress, and none rehabilitation of buildings and furnishings. These current circumstances would undoubtedly have a bad effect on principals, which would result in a poor achievement of educational objectives. Given that educational financing and principals are the two main contributors to the success of school administration, it is essential for principals to have a thorough awareness of the effects of the economic recession on public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The researcher therefore wonders if economic recession correlates principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between government low revenue and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between inflation and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Method

The correlation research design was adopted for the study. It was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 263 principals from 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. The first instrument was titled "Economic Recession Questionnaire (ERQ)" spread in two clusters. Cluster 1 consisted of 10 items on government low revenue. Cluster 2 contained 10 items on inflation. The second instrument was titled "Principals' Task Performance Questionnaire (PTPQ)'. The instrument contains 10 items on principals' task performance. Both instruments are structured on 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instruments were

validated by three experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument's reliability was established through a pilot test. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha and coefficient values of 0.75 and 0.77 for clusters 1 and 2 respectively for economic recession questionnaire while coefficient value of 0.87 was achieved for principals' task performance questionnaire. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer research questions. The research questions were interpreted as follows:

Correlation Coefficient	**Interpretations**
0.8 to 1.0 (negative or positive)	Very High
0.6 to 0.8 (negative or positive)	High
0.4 to 0.6 (negative or positive)	Average
0.2 to 0.4 (negative or positive)	Low
0.0 to 0.2 (negative or positive)	Very Low (no relationship)

In testing the null hypotheses, multiple regression correlation analysis was employed to determine the significant correlation between the variable of interest. In interpreting the values of the null hypotheses, when p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$), the null hypothesis was not accepted. On the other hand, when the p-value is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was accepted.

Result

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between government low revenue and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation between Government Low Revenue and Principals' Task Performance in Public Secondary Schools

Variables	**N**	**Government Low Revenue**	**Principals' Task Performance**	**Decision**
Government Low Revenue	256	1	-.830**	Very High Negative Relationship
Principals' Task Performance	256	-.830**	1	

Data in Table 1 reveal that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is r= -0.83.This shows that a very high negative relationship between government low revenue and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This indicates that government low revenue has a very high negative influence on principals' task performance. Summarily, there exists a

very high negative relationship between government low revenue and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between inflation and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation between Inflation and Principals' Task Performance in Public Secondary Schools

Variables	N	Inflation	Principals' Task Performance	Decision
Inflation	256	1	-.809**	Very High Negative Relationship
Principals' Task Performance	256	-.809**	1	

Data in Table 2 reveal that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is r= -0.81.This shows that a very high negative relationship between inflation and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This indicates that inflation has a very high negative influence on principals' task performance. Summarily, there exists a very high negative relationship between inflation and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that a very high negative relationship between government low revenue and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The finding of the study may have resulted because low government revenue indicates that there would be a shortage in financial resources available to the government for carrying out the task of governance. This means that government will be forced to reduce spending in education. This finding is in agreement with Anele (2020) who reported that recession which results in low government revenue affects government investment in education. Anele further stated that low government revenue lead to government inability to sponsor extra-curriculum activities like inter-house sports, music competition, inter debt competitions and quiz due to lack of fund; delay in the payment of salaries and allowances of principals and teachers, which in concomitant demoralizes them and reduce their performance; schools adopted cut in budget as a measure to cushion the effect of recession in the following areas; minimal school fee payment, cut in school excursion and laying off of teachers. In the same vein, Ochai and Ogwa, (2018) who reported that economic recession influenced personnel administration of secondary schools. Ochai and Ogwa, (2018) asserted that economic

recession leads to increase in cost of education, accumulation of debt services, decline in internally generated revenue and underfunding of administration of secondary schools. These identified problems led to laying off of workers that resulted in shortfall of personnel salaries and allowances, reduction of administrative cost and elimination of staff professional development.

The finding of the study revealed that there exist a very high negative relationship between inflation and principals' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding is an indication that inflation which is caused by economic recession influences the ability of secondary school principals to carry out their duties. Inflation which results in increases in the prices of goods and service could influence the ability of secondary school principals to buy school supplies and inventories which will ultimately impact on their task performance. This finding is in agreement with Azi and Lagan (2014) who found that inflation resulted in huge economic loss in a country and it impacted on school administration. Azi and Lagan stated that the class sizes of schools increased during the period of economic recession with few teachers to instruct them as a result of retrenchment and it affected the choice of subject to offer. The authors also noted that most teachers were retrenched as a result of cut in budget meant for school administration which leads to fall in the standard of education. In the same vein, Evans, *et al*. (2014) emphasized the fact that most schools depended on the government for its funding and with the decline in economic activities which affected the budgetary allocation to schools majority of the schools had no option than to retrench some of their teachers. Evans, *et al*. opined that there is total reduction in recruitment and posting of teachers and personnel's needed in the public schools to deliver effectively. The management also observed that inadequate funding of public secondary schools affects them in retaining teachers that specializes in core subjects. It was also observed that due to high and continuous increase in foreign exchange, a major problem during economic recession, the ability to purchase instruction materials with the limited fund made instruction material practically unavailable for the teachers to use. Maintenance work on buildings in the public secondary is in its lowest ebb leading to lots of dilapidated building. Anele (2020) posited that as a result of inflation, teachers complain of lack of instruction materials to enable them do their work effectively. There is also complaining of lack of motivation of school staff as a result of recession. There are problems observed on lack of prompt payment of salaries and wages and their inability to meet up with their daily need due to high cost of living as a result of the recession.

Conclusion

The researcher draws the conclusion that the economic recession affects how well Anambra State's public secondary schools' principals accomplish their job duties. Due to its impact on principals' capacity to carry out their responsibilities, economic recession appears to have a detrimental impact on how well they accomplish their tasks. Since principals play a crucial role in helping schools achieve their objectives, everyone involved in education must work to develop plans for mitigating the impact of economic recession on secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. In order to enhance school funding during and after the recession, principals of public secondary schools should engage in public private partnership agreements with the private sector (individual, commercial organizations and Non-governmental organizations).
2. Government at all levels should increase the funding allocation reserved for education. This will improve the level of funds available for the administration of public secondary schools.

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