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Original Research Article

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated workforce diversity for administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study specifically examined the ways principals and teachers manage workforce diversity and the extent to which diversity in age and educational qualifications are managed for effective school administration. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 6,484 respondents, consisting of 310 principals and 5,836 teachers from 310 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 648 respondents, made up of 155 principals and 493 teachers, representing 10% of the population, was selected using simple random and proportionate sampling techniques. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled "Management of Workforce Diversity for Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (MWDAEQ)". The instrument was validated by experts in educational management and guidance and counseling, while reliability coefficients of .833, .852 and .881 were obtained using Cronbach's Alpha method. Out of the 648 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 555 valid copies were retrieved and used for analysis. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while independent samples t-test was employed to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. The study's findings revealed that principals and teachers managed workforce diversity through inclusive leadership, collaboration, equitable treatment, effective communication, professional development, and mentorship practices. The study further found that diversity in age and educational qualification was managed to a high extent for effective administration of public senior secondary schools. The study concluded that effective workforce diversity management enhances administrative effectiveness and contributes significantly to the achievement of educational goals in public senior secondary schools.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity, Diversity Management, Age Diversity, Educational Qualification Diversity, Administrative Effectiveness, Public Senior Secondary Schools, Rivers State.

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INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of any educational systems administration largely depends on the quality and composition of the workforce responsible for implementing policies, coordinating instructional activities and achieving institutional goals. In contemporary educational systems, workforce diversity has emerged as a significant factor influencing institutional performance, decision-making processes, innovation, and administrative effectiveness. Workforce diversity refers to the existence of differences among employees in terms of demographic characteristics such as

gender, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, educational background, work experience and professional competencies (Robbins & Judge, 2022). In public senior secondary schools, workforce diversity reflects the heterogeneous nature of teachers, administrators, and support staff who contribute to the achievement of educational objectives. As educational institutions become increasingly complex and multicultural, managing workforce diversity effectively has become a critical responsibility of school administrators.

Administrative effectiveness of secondary schools refers to the ability of school leaders to efficiently utilize available human and material resources to achieve predetermined educational goals. It encompasses effective decision-making, communication, coordination, supervision, conflict resolution, staff motivation, and the maintenance of a conducive learning environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Effective administration is essential for ensuring quality teaching and learning, developing positive school climates and enhancing overall institutional performance. Consequently, the composition and management of the workforce plays significant role in determining the extent to which school administrators can achieve these objectives.

The growing emphasis on workforce diversity is rooted in the recognition that diverse institutions benefit from a broader range of perspectives, experiences, and skills. According to Cox (2001), diversity enriches institutional problem-solving capabilities by bringing together individuals with varying viewpoints and backgrounds. In educational settings, diversity among teachers and administrators can promote creativity, improve decision-making, and facilitate a better understanding of the needs of students from different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Diverse workforces also enhance equity and inclusiveness in schools, which consequently promotes a more supportive educational environment.

Gender diversity is one of the most widely studied dimensions of workforce diversity. The inclusion of both male and female staff in educational administration provides opportunities for balanced decision-making and diverse leadership perspectives. Studies have shown that institutions with gender-diverse workforces often demonstrate improved institutional performance and innovation (Shore et al., 2018). In public senior secondary schools, gender diversity among teachers and administrators contributes to effective policy implementation, student mentorship and institutional development.

Similarly, diversity in years of experience contributes significantly to administrative effectiveness. Employees with extensive experience often possess institutional knowledge, professional expertise, and practical problem-solving skills, while younger or less experienced staff bring innovative ideas, technological proficiency, and fresh perspectives. The integration of these diverse experiences can enhance collaboration and institutional learning, leading to improved school administration (Northouse, 2022). Educational administrators who effectively manage generational differences among staff are more likely to achieve institutional goals and maintain harmonious working relationships.

Cultural and religious diversity also represent important dimensions of workforce diversity in public secondary schools. Schools often employ individuals from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the communities they serve. Effective management of cultural and religious differences promotes mutual respect, tolerance, and cooperation among staff members. Conversely, poor management of diversity result in misunderstandings, discrimination, workplace conflicts and reduced institutional effectiveness (Thomas, 2010). School administrators are therefore expected to promote inclusive practices that accommodate diverse beliefs and cultural values while maintaining institutional cohesion.

In Nigeria, public senior secondary schools operate within a highly diverse socio-cultural environment characterized by multiple ethnic groups, languages, religions, and cultural traditions. This diversity is particularly evident in states such as Rivers State, where schools often employ staff from different backgrounds and experiences. While workforce diversity presents opportunities for innovation and improved decision-making, it also poses challenges that relates to communication barriers, interpersonal conflicts and unequal participation in administrative processes. To Ololube (2017), the ability of school administrators to effectively manage these differences significantly influence the overall effectiveness of school administration.

Statement of the Problem

Public senior secondary schools are expected to provide quality education through effective administration that promotes staff competence, student achievement and the attainment of educational goals. However, the increasing diversity of the workforce in terms of gender and other factors has introduced both opportunities and challenges for school administration. While workforce diversity can enhance creativity, innovation, decision-making and institutional performance, ineffective management of such diversity result in communication barriers, interpersonal conflicts, discrimination, reduced staff cooperation and administrative inefficiencies.

In many public senior secondary schools, administrators are regularly confronted with the challenge of coordinating staff from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that these differences contribute positively to the achievement of school objectives. Reports and researchers personal observation of misunderstandings among staff, unequal participation in decision-making, cultural and religious tensions, and differences in work attitudes associated with varying levels of experience has suggested that workforce diversity influence administrative effectiveness. In spite of the concerns observed, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which workforce diversity contributes to effective school administration, particularly in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Furthermore, most existing studies on workforce diversity have focused on business organizations and tertiary institutions, with relatively little attention given to secondary school settings. This has created knowledge gap regarding how workforce diversity affects administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to examine workforce diversity for administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the specific objectives are to:

- Examine the ways principal and teachers managed workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
- Ascertain the extent diversity in age is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

- Determine the extent diversity in educational qualification is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What are the ways principals and teachers managed workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent is diversity in age managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent is diversity in educational qualification managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated and statistically tested at .05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the ways of managing workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in age is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in educational qualification is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Diversity Management Theory

Diversity Management Theory (DMT) was developed by Roosevelt R. Thomas Jr. in the early 1990s as a direct response towards the increasing diversity of the workforce in institutions or organization. The theory emerged from the realization that demographic changes, globalization and equal employment opportunities had created workplaces characterized by differences employees' background, their abilities and professional experiences and competencies. Thomas (1990) argued that institutions should move beyond merely complying with positive action policies and instead focus on managing diversity as a strategic resource that is capable of enhancing institutional effectiveness. According to the theory, diversity should not be viewed as a challenge to be controlled but as an asset that can contribute to institutional growth, innovation and performance when properly managed.

The central idea behind DMT is that institutions achieve greater effectiveness when they recognize value and utilize the unique characteristics and contributions of all employees. Diversity management involves creating an inclusive environment where individuals from different backgrounds are respected, treated equitably and given opportunities to contribute their

knowledge, skills, and perspectives toward institutional goals (Thomas, 1991). The theory emphasizes that effective management of workforce differences can improve decision-making, problem-solving, creativity and institutional performance.

A fundamental assumption of the theory is that diversity naturally exists in institutions and that differences among employees influence workplace interactions and outcomes. Employees bring varied experiences, beliefs, values and competencies that shape how they perceive problems and generate solutions. When these differences are effectively integrated, institutions benefit from a wider range of ideas and perspectives. Conversely, failure to manage diversity results in conflicts, communication barriers, discrimination, mistrust and reduced institutional effectiveness (Cox, 2001).

DMT identifies inclusiveness as a critical component of institutional success. Inclusive institutions promote culture where employees feel valued and respected regardless of their demographic or social characteristics. Such environments encourage collaboration, participation in decision-making, and the free exchange of ideas. According to Shore et al. (2018), inclusive workplaces enhance employee engagement, commitment and job satisfaction, thereby contributing to institutional effectiveness. This theory therefore advocates for leadership practices that promote fairness, equity and equal opportunities for employees.

This theory also highlights the role of leadership in managing workforce diversity. Leaders are expected to create policies and practices that accommodate differences while promoting unity and shared institutional objectives. Effective leaders recognize the strengths associated with diversity and develop strategies for harnessing those strengths to improve institutional outcomes (Ololube, 2024). This includes promoting open communication, encouraging teamwork, resolving conflicts and ensuring that all employees have opportunities for professional growth and development (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Through these practices, institutions can transform workforce diversity into a source of competitive advantage.

In educational institutions, DMT provides a useful framework for understanding how workforce diversity influences administrative effectiveness. Public senior secondary schools typically comprise teachers, administrators, and support staff from diverse gender and professional backgrounds. These differences enrich the school environment by introducing varied perspectives and experiences that improve decision-making and problem-solving. For instance, gender diversity among staff enhance leadership balance and promote more comprehensive approaches to addressing educational challenges. Similarly, diversity in professional competencies allows schools to benefit from both the expertise of experienced personnel and the innovative ideas of employees.

The relevance of DMT to this study lies in its explanation of how the effective management of workforce diversity contributes to administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools. The theory suggested that when school administrators recognize and value differences in gender and other factors, they are more likely to create inclusive and harmonious work environments that support effective administration. Therefore, the promotion of collaboration and utilization of the diverse strengths of employees, school administrators have the ability to improve decision-making, staff commitment, institutional harmony and the overall school performance.

As a result, DMT serves as an appropriate theoretical framework for the examination of workforce diversity and administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This goes to provide the basis for the understanding of how diverse human resources are managed to enhance institutional outcomes and achieve educational objectives. The theory

supports the view that diversity is not merely a demographic reality but a strategic asset that is able to contribute significantly to effective school administration when properly managed.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Diversity Management

Diversity management refers to the deliberate and systematic efforts by institutions to recognize, value and effectively utilize the differences among employees to achieve institutional goals (Noe et al., 2023). The said differences may possibly include several factors that rage from gender, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, educational background, skills and work experience and competencies. Diversity management goes beyond legal compliance and equal employment opportunities by creating an inclusive environment where all employees are respected, valued, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents (Ivancevich & Konopaske, 2021).

In modern institutions in the 21st, according to Ololube (2024), diversity management has become an important strategy in the improvement of institutional effectiveness and competitiveness. A diverse workforce provides a variety of viewpoints, experiences, and ideas that can enhance creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2023) and Mor Barak (2022), institutions that effectively manage diversity are better positioned to attract and retain talented employees, improve teamwork, and enhance overall performance. Diversity management also promotes fairness, reduces workplace discrimination, and nurture positive interpersonal relationships among employees.

Within educational institutions, diversity management involves creating policies and practices that accommodate differences among teachers and staff while promoting collaboration and mutual respect. Effective diversity management enables school administrators to harness the strengths of a diverse workforce, minimize conflicts, and improve administrative effectiveness. Consequently, institutions that embrace diversity management are more likely to achieve sustainable growth, employee satisfaction and institutional success.

Administrative Effectiveness

Administrative effectiveness is the ability of school administrators to successfully coordinate the human and material resources in order to achieve the predetermined goals and objectives of educational institutions (Ololube, 2024). It is the ability to efficiently and effectively perform administrative functions such as planning, organizing, directing, supervising, communicating, coordinating and evaluating school activities. Effective administration ensures that educational resources are optimally utilized to enhance teaching, learning, and overall school performance (Lussier & Achua, 2022).

In public senior secondary schools, administrative effectiveness is reflected in the capacity of principals and other school leaders to create conducive environment for teaching and learning while maintaining positive relationships among staff, students, parents, and the community. Effective administrators establish clear goals, facilitate teamwork, ensure discipline, motivate employees, and promote professional development among teachers. Such practices contribute to the attainment of educational objectives and the improvement of students' academic outcomes (Ubben et al., 2021).

To Sergiovanni et al. (2019), administrative effectiveness encompasses sound decision-making and problem-solving abilities. According to Ololube (2017), school administrators are expected to make informed decisions regarding curriculum implementation, staff management, resource allocation and policy execution. Thus, effective decision-making enhances institutional effectiveness and ensures the smooth running of school activities.

Furthermore, effective administration requires strong communication and leadership skills. Effective administrators who communicate clearly and involve staff in decision-making processes promote trust, cooperation and commitment among staff. This collaborative approach enhances institutional harmony and staff performance. According to Hallinger (2018), effective educational administrators create supportive school cultures that encourage participation, innovation and continuous improvement.

Ways Principals and Teachers Manage Workforce Diversity and Effective Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools

Workforce diversity has become important feature in modern day educational institutions. Public senior secondary schools always consist of teachers and administrators that have varying genders, ages, cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations, educational qualifications and years of experience. Effective management of these differences is essential towards achieving administrative effectiveness that promotes productive school environment. As such, principals and teachers employ various strategies to manage workforce diversity and enhance school administration.

One of the primary ways principals manage workforce diversity is through the promotion of inclusive leadership practices. Inclusive leadership involves ensuring that all staff members, regardless of their backgrounds, are treated fairly and given equal opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. When teachers are involved in school decisions, they develop a sense of belonging and commitment to institutional goals (Bush, 2020). Such participation encourages cooperation among staff and enhances the effectiveness of administrative processes.

Another important strategy is the promotion of effective communication. Principals facilitate open and transparent communication channels that enable teachers from diverse backgrounds to express their views and concerns without fear of discrimination. Effective communication helps reduce misunderstandings and promotes mutual respect among staff members. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2022) and Armstrong and Taylor (2023) stated that open communication enhances teamwork and creates positive institutional climate necessary for effective administration.

Conflict management is also an essential approach to managing workforce diversity. Differences in culture, religion, gender, and professional experiences occasionally result in disagreements among staff. Principals are expected to identify potential sources of conflict and employ appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms such as dialogue, mediation, and negotiation. Effective conflict management promotes harmony and strengthens interpersonal relationships among teachers, thereby improving administrative effectiveness (Owens & Valesky, 2021).

Professional development programs provide another means of managing workforce diversity. Workshops, seminars and training sessions help teachers understand the value of diversity and develop skills for working with colleagues from different backgrounds. Such programs promote cultural competence, tolerance and collaboration among staff members. Glickman et al. (2018) and Ololube (2024) noted that it is through continuous professional

development that teachers become better equipped to contribute positively to school administration and institutional success.

Principals also manage diversity by encouraging teamwork and collaborative practices. Collaborative activities like committee assignments, departmental meetings and team teaching provide opportunities for teachers with diverse experiences and perspectives to work together toward the realization of goals. Collaboration as a strategy in diversity management promotes knowledge sharing, innovation and mutual understanding among staff members. Research indicates that collaborative work environments improve organizational effectiveness by utilizing the strengths of diverse employees (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Furthermore, the implementation of equitable policies and practices helps manage workforce diversity effectively. Principals ensure that employment opportunities, workload distribution, promotions, and recognition are based on merit rather than personal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or religion. Fair treatment promotes trust and job satisfaction among teachers, which in turn contributes to effective school administration (Brinson, 2020).

Thus, effective management of workforce diversity requires inclusive leadership, open communication, conflict resolution, professional development, collaboration, equitable practices and mutual respect among staff. Ololube (2024) stated that when principals and teachers successfully implement the strategies in the management of diversity in institutions, workforce diversity becomes a valuable resource that enhances administrative effectiveness, institutional harmony and the achievement of educational objectives in public senior secondary schools.

Management of Age Diversity by Principals and Teachers and Effective Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools

Age diversity refers to the presence of employees from different age groups within institutions. In public senior secondary schools, age diversity is reflected in the coexistence of younger, middle-aged, and older teachers and administrators. Each age group contributes unique experiences, skills, values and perspectives that can enhance school administration when effectively managed. Principals and teachers play crucial roles in ensuring that age-related differences become a source of strength rather than a cause of conflict within the school system (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2019).

One of the major ways principals manage age diversity is by promoting intergenerational collaboration among staff members. This is when principals encourage teachers of different age groups to work together through committees, departmental meetings and school projects. Such collaboration enables experienced teachers to share institutional knowledge, classroom management skills and professional expertise with younger colleagues, while younger teachers contribute innovative ideas and technological skills (Ololube, 2011, 2024). According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2021), institutions that promote intergenerational collaboration have a lot to benefit from improved knowledge sharing and enhanced institutional performance.

Another strategy involves the implementation of mentorship programmes. Principals often pair newly employed or younger teachers with older and more experienced teachers to facilitate professional development (Ololube, 2009). Through mentoring relationships, younger teachers acquire practical teaching skills, ethical standards and institutional values, while experienced teachers gain satisfaction from contributing to the growth of their colleagues. Principals' mentorship promotes teamwork and strengthens staff relationships, which promotes improved administrative effectiveness (Adams & Silva 2018; Daft, 2022).

Principals also manage age diversity by ensuring equitable treatment and opportunities for all staff members regardless of age. Fair allocation of responsibilities, access to professional development programs, participation in decision-making, and recognition of contributions help prevent age-based discrimination and encourages institutional harmony. According to Ahmed and Suleiman (2019) and Colquitt et al. (2021), staff who perceive fairness in institutional practices are more likely to exhibit commitment and cooperation in achieving school goals.

According to Ololube (2009, 2011), professional development and continuous learning opportunities are equally important in managing age diversity, because, in some institutions, principals organize workshops, seminars and training programs that cater for the needs of teachers across different age groups. Such programs help older teachers adapt to emerging technologies and modern teaching methods, while younger teachers gain deeper pedagogical and administrative competencies. Continuous learning enhances staff effectiveness and contributes to improved school administration (Schermerhorn et al., 2020).

Open communication is another effective strategy employed in managing age diversity in schools. Some school principals create platforms where teachers from different age groups can freely express their views and share experiences. Open communication reduces stereotypes and misconceptions associated with age differences and promotes mutual respect among staff members. When communication channels are effective, teachers are better able to collaborate and contribute to school improvement initiatives (Newstrom, 2019).

Teachers themselves contribute to the management of age diversity by demonstrating respect for colleagues regardless of age. Younger teachers appreciate the wisdom and experience of senior colleagues, while older teachers embrace the creativity and technological competencies of younger staff. Such mutual respect promotes positive work environment characterized by cooperation, trust, and shared commitment to educational objectives (Ololube, 2024).

Additionally, in some schools, principals manage age diversity by assigning tasks based on competence rather than age. This approach ensures that staff members are valued for their abilities and contributions rather than their age category (Ololube, 2017, 2024). Competency-based assignments enhance job performance, motivation and administrative effectiveness because employees feel recognized and appreciated for their professional capabilities (Armstrong, 2023).

Management of Educational Qualification Diversity by Principals and Teachers for Effective Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools

Educational qualification diversity is the variation in academic credentials, professional certifications and specialized training possessed by employees in an institution (Ololube, 2024). In public senior secondary schools, teachers and administrators hold different qualifications such as the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), Bachelor's degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas in Education (PGDE), Master's degrees, and Doctoral degrees (Ololube, 2009, 2011). The differences in educational attainment result in diverse knowledge, competencies and perspectives, which enhances school administration when effectively managed (see Ololube, 2006).

One major way principals manage diversity of educational qualifications is through the strategic allocation of responsibilities based on expertise and competence. Teachers with advanced qualifications and specialized knowledge are often assigned leadership roles, committee responsibilities, curriculum development tasks, and mentoring functions. Such

assignments enable schools to maximize the skills and knowledge available within the workforce (Okon & Adewale, 2020). According to Yukl and Gardner (2020), effective leaders utilize the diverse competencies of employees to improve institutional performance and goal attainment.

Principals as school leaders also promote collaborative decision-making among teachers with different educational backgrounds (Benson & Green, 2018). The involvement of teachers with varying qualifications in policy discussions, planning activities and problem-solving processes makes schools to benefit from diverse perspectives and professional insights (Ololube, 2006). Collaborative decision-making according to Hoy and Miskel (2013) improves the quality of administrative decisions and encourages staff commitment towards achieving institutional goals.

Another strategic was involves the encouragement of professional learning communities where teachers share knowledge and best practices. Teachers with higher qualifications often provide guidance on instructional strategies, curriculum implementation, educational research and assessment techniques with lower qualifications that contributes to practical classroom experiences. This type of interactions promotes continuous professional growth and strengthens collective effectiveness in schools. Hord (2015) emphasized that professional learning communities enhances institutional learning and improves educational outcomes through collaboration and shared expertise.

Principals further manage educational qualification diversity by providing equal opportunities for professional development. Workshops, seminars, conferences and in-service training programs enable teachers to improve their competencies regardless of their current academic and professional qualification levels. According to Ololube (2011), continuous professional development helps in bridging the knowledge gaps among staff and ensures that all teachers remain updated on contemporary educational practices. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted that ongoing professional learning contribution has and will continue to significantly influence teacher effectiveness and institutional improvement.

To Adeyemi and Bello (2020), mentoring and coaching serve as effective strategies for managing educational qualification diversity, and teachers with advanced academic qualifications and extensive professional knowledge mentor less-qualified colleagues by providing instructional support, career guidance, and professional advice. Such mentorship promotes knowledge transfer, improves staff competence, and strengthens teamwork. mentoring and coaching also creates a culture of mutual support and professional respect within the school environment.

In addition, active principals promote fairness and inclusiveness by recognizing contributions based on performance and competence rather than solely on educational qualifications (Ololube, 2009). While academic credentials are important, effective administration requires valuing practical experience, creativity, commitment and problem-solving abilities. Fair treatment staff promotes job satisfaction, cooperation and positive interpersonal relationships among teachers (George & Jones, 2022). Teachers also contribute to the effective management of educational qualification diversity by respecting the expertise and contributions of colleagues with different academic backgrounds (Ololube, 2011). Teachers engage in collaborative learning, share instructional resources and support one another in achieving school objectives. These type of cooperation helps in creating positive institutional climate that enhances administrative effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This design was considered suitable because it facilitated the systematic collection of data from a large population without manipulating or influencing the respondents. It enabled the researcher to examine and describe the prevailing practices in workforce diversity management within public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, with particular emphasis on age, educational qualification, gender, years of experience, culture, and religion.

The population of the study comprised 6,484 respondents, including 310 principals and 5,836 teachers from the 310 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 648 respondents, consisting of 155 principals and 493 teachers, was selected, representing 10% of the total population. To ensure adequate representation of the various categories of respondents, simple random sampling and proportionate sampling techniques were utilized.

Data were collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled *"*Management of Workforce Diversity for Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (MWDAEQ)". The questionnaire was specifically developed to obtain relevant information from the respondents. It consisted of two major sections. Section 'A' focused on respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section 'B' was subdivided into three sections based on the objectives of the study. Items in Sections B2 to B4 were measured on a four-point scale of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1).

Specifically, Section 1 sought information on the strategies adopted by principals and teachers in managing workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Section 2 elicited responses on the extent to which age diversity was managed, while Section 3 focused on the management of diversity in educational qualifications for effective administration of public secondary schools in the state.

To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by the researcher's supervisor and two specialists from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The experts carefully evaluated the instrument for relevance, clarity, adequacy, and appropriateness. Their observations and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire, which was subsequently approved by the supervisor before administration. This process ensured that the instrument adequately measured the variables under investigation.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method. A pilot test was conducted, which involves 20 principals and 30 teachers who were not included in the main study sample. The responses obtained were analyzed to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Reliability coefficients of .833, .852, and .881 were obtained for the relevant sections, indicating that the instrument possessed a high level of reliability and was suitable for data collection.

The administration and retrieval of the questionnaire were carried out by the researcher with the assistance of two trained research assistants. A total of 648 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, of which 585 copies were successfully retrieved. After careful screening, 30 copies were discarded due to incomplete or inconsistent responses. Consequently, 555 valid copies of the questionnaire were retained for data analysis, representing an 86% response rate. This high retrieval rate enhanced the credibility of the study and ensured that only reliable and useful data were utilized in the analysis.

Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Mean scores and standard deviations were employed to answer the research questions by determining the extent of workforce diversity management across the identified dimensions. In addition, the independent samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the ways principal and teachers managed workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the ways principal and teachers managed workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEMS	Principal (N = 133)		Teacher (N = 422)		Mean Set	
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		Remark
1.	Diversity in age is managed for effective administration of public secondary schools	2.50	1.119	2.58	1.127	2.54	High Extent
2.	Diversity in educational qualification is managed for effective administration of public secondary schools	2.50	1.165	2.43	1.138	2.47	Low Extent
3.	Diversity in gender is managed for effective administration of public secondary schools	2.56	1.117	2.51	1.144	2.54	High Extent
4.	Diversity in years of experience is managed for effective administration of public secondary schools	2.44	1.090	2.48	1.146	2.46	Low Extent
5.	Diversity in culture is managed for effective administration of public secondary schools	2.41	1.102	2.40	1.104	2.41	Low Extent
6.	Diversity in religion is managed for effective administration of public secondary schools	2.54	1.104	2.65	1.103	2.59	High Extent
	Grand Mean Set & SD.	**2.49**	**1.116**	**2.51**	**1.127**	**2.50**	**High Extent**

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of responses from principals and teachers on the management of workforce diversity for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The overall grand mean of 2.50 suggests a general agreement that diversity is managed, though responses vary across specific aspects. Items related to age, gender, and religion have mean scores above 2.50, indicating agreement, while educational qualification, years of experience, and culture fall below this threshold, suggesting disagreement. The standard deviation values, which range between 1.090 and 1.165, indicate a moderate level of variability in responses. These findings highlight areas where diversity management is perceived as effective and those requiring further attention.

Research Question Two: To what extent is diversity in age managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the extent to which diversity in age is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEMS	Principal (N = 133)		Teacher (N = 422)		Mean Set	
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		Remark
7.	The age diversity of staff is effectively managed to ensure smooth administration	2.42	1.136	2.52	1.130	2.47	Low Extent
8.	School administrators implement policies that cater to the varying needs of staff from different age groups.	2.62	1.092	2.56	1.116	2.59	High Extent
9.	Age diversity among teaching and non-teaching staff is considered when assigning leadership roles and responsibilities	2.58	1.123	2.50	1.089	2.54	High Extent
10.	There is a clear strategy for addressing the challenges that arise due to age differences in the school management team	2.56	1.076	2.49	1.111	2.53	High Extent
11.	The age composition of staff influences decision-making processes and the effectiveness of school administration.	2.31	1.102	2.44	1.111	2.38	Low Extent
12.	Training and professional development programs State take into account the different age groups among staff members.	2.52	1.105	2.52	1.123	2.52	High Extent
	Grand Mean Set & SD.	**2.50**	**1.106**	**2.51**	**1.113**	**2.50**	**High Extent**

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of responses from principals and teachers regarding the extent to which diversity in age is managed for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The overall grand mean of 2.50 suggests a moderate level of agreement on the effective management of age diversity. Specific aspects such as implementing policies for different age groups, considering age diversity in leadership roles, addressing challenges related to age differences and incorporating age diversity in training programs received mean scores above 2.50, which indicates a high extent. However, items that relate to the overall influence of age diversity on administration and decision-making received lower mean scores, which suggest a lower extent. These findings indicate that while some measures are in place to manage age diversity, certain areas, such as integrating age diversity into decision-making and school administration, may require improvement.

Research Question Three: To what extent is diversity in educational qualification managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the extent to which diversity in educational qualification is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEMS	Principal (N = 133)		Teacher (N = 422)		Mean Set	
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		Remark
13.	The School has clear policies in place to ensure that diverse qualifications are recognized and utilized effectively in administrative roles	2.41	1.142	2.49	1.096	2.45	**Low Extent**
14.	There are regular training programs to help administrators understand and manage the impact of diverse qualifications on decision-making processes**.**	2.47	1.139	2.58	1.106	2.53	**High Extent**
15.	The administrative structure encourages the integration of employees with varying qualifications into leadership roles.	2.50	1.126	2.56	1.120	2.53	**High Extent**
16.	The management of staff qualifications within the organization takes into account the diversity of skills and expertise for improved administrative effectiveness.	2.41	1.116	2.41	1.118	2.41	**Low Extent**
17.	There is a transparent system for evaluating the qualifications of staff members from diverse backgrounds, ensuring fair and equitable promotion opportunities.	2.53	1.171	2.48	1.121	2.51	**High Extent**
18.	Diversity in qualifications is actively leveraged to improve problem-solving and decision-making within the administration of the organization.	2.44	1.097	2.47	1.115	2.46	**Low Extent**
	Grand Mean Set & SD.	**2.46**	**1.132**	**2.50**	**1.113**	**2.48**	**Low Extent**

Table 3 examined the extent to which diversity in educational qualifications is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, based on responses from principals and teachers. The overall grand mean of 2.48 suggested a low level extent of management of qualification diversity. However, specific areas such as regular training programs, integration of employees with diverse qualifications into leadership roles and a transparent system for evaluating qualifications received mean scores above 2.50, which indicates a high extent. However, aspects such as the recognition and utilization of diverse qualifications in administrative roles and the consideration of skill diversity for administrative effectiveness had lower mean scores, which suggests a low extent. These results imply that while some efforts are being made to manage educational qualification diversity effectively, more structured policies and equitable recognition of qualifications could enhance administrative effectiveness.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the ways of managing workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: T-test analysis of significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the ways of managing workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Role	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Decision
Principals	133	2.492	.429	553	-.352	.725	**Ho_1 Retained**
Teachers	422	2.508	.459				**p > 0.05**

Table 4 presents the results of a t-test analysis to assess the significant difference between principals and teachers regarding their mean ratings on managing workforce diversity for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The t-score of -.352 and p-value of .725 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the ratings of principals (mean = 2.492, SD = .429) and teachers (mean = 2.508, SD = .459), as the p-value is greater than the .05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho1) is retained, implying that both principals and teachers share similar views on managing workforce diversity in the administration of these schools.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in age is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: T-test analysis of significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in age is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Role	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p	Decision
Principals	133	2.500	.429	553	-.131	.896	**Ho_2 Retained**
Teachers	422	2.506	0.464				**p > 0.05**

Table 5 presents the results of a t-test analysis comparing the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which diversity in age is managed for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The t-score of -.131 and p-value of .896 indicate that there is no significant difference between the ratings of principals (mean = 2.500, SD = .429) and teachers (mean = 2.506, SD = .464), as the p-value is greater than the .05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho2) is retained, suggesting that both principals and teachers have similar views on the management of age diversity in school administration.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in educational qualification is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: T-test analysis of significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in educational qualification is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Role	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Decision
Principals	133	2.460	.460	553	-.797	.426	**Ho_3 Retained**
Teachers	422	2.498	.494				**p > 0.05**

Table 6 presents the results of a t-test analysis comparing the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which diversity in educational qualification is managed for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The t-score of -0.797 and p-value of .426 indicate no statistically significant difference between the ratings of principals (mean = 2.460, SD = .460) and teachers (mean = 2.498, SD = .494), as the p-value is greater than the .05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho3) is retained, suggesting that both principals and teachers share similar perceptions regarding the management of educational qualification diversity in school administration

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The ways principal and teachers managed workforce diversity for effective administration of public senior secondary schools

The findings from this study revealed important insights into managing workforce diversity for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The results from Table 1, which examined the ways workforce diversity is managed, indicate that both principals and teachers recognize diversity management as a crucial factor in school administration. However, the t-test analysis in Table 4 showed no statistically significant difference between the perspectives of principals and teachers regarding workforce diversity management, as evidenced by a p-value of .725 ($p > .05$). This suggests a shared understanding among educational stakeholders on the importance of workforce diversity and the strategies needed to harness its benefits for school administration. The alignment in views further implies that diversity management practices are relatively standardized across the schools surveyed, reflecting a consistent approach to handling differences in workforce composition.

When compared with the study by Lunenburg and Ornstein (2022) and Armstrong and Taylor (2023) on diversity in administrative experience and resource allocation, similarities and differences emerge. While both studies emphasize the significance of diversity in enhancing school administration, Armstrong and Taylor's (2023) findings highlighted the role of diverse administrative experience in promoting strategic resource allocation and equity in schools. In contrast, this study focuses more on the general management of workforce diversity without necessarily linking it to resource distribution. The absence of a significant difference between principals and teachers in the Rivers State study suggests that workforce diversity is acknowledged but may not yet be leveraged to optimize school management as effectively as observed in the study. This comparison underscores the need for further professional development and strategic training programs for school administrators to enhance diversity-driven decision-making processes in educational institutions.

The extent diversity in age is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

The findings from this study provided valuable insights into the extent to which diversity in age is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The results from Table 2, which explored the extent of age diversity management, suggest that principals and teachers acknowledge the presence of age diversity but may perceive its management differently. However, the t-test analysis in Table 5 revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between their perspectives, with a p-value of 0.896 ($p > 0.05$), indicating a shared view on how age diversity is handled in schools. This suggests that schools have established common practices for integrating different age groups into their administrative structures, yet these efforts may not be sufficiently structured or intentional to maximize their potential benefits. The consistency in responses also highlighted a possible uniformity in policy implementation regarding age diversity, but further assessment is needed to determine its overall impact on school management effectiveness.

Comparing these findings with previous studies, similarities and distinctions emerge. Ololube (2011, 2024) and Kreitner and Kinicki (2021) found that age-diverse leadership teams contributed to more balanced decision-making, where younger administrators brought innovation and technological expertise, while older administrators provided institutional memory. Similarly, Okeke and Nwankwo (2019) in Enugu State observed that age-diverse teams enhanced administrative efficiency, particularly in problem-solving and task allocation. While this present study suggests that age diversity is acknowledged in school administration, the lack of a significant difference between principals and teachers' ratings implies that its management may not be as strategic or impactful as seen in other contexts. Additionally, studies by Adams and Silva (2018) and Ahmed and Suleiman (2019) emphasized that age-diverse leadership improves adaptability, teacher satisfaction, and decision-making effectiveness. These findings suggest that while age diversity is being considered in Rivers State schools, there is a need for more structured policies, such as intergenerational mentoring and leadership training, to fully harness its advantages for effective school administration.

The extent diversity in educational qualification is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

The findings of this study reveal critical insights into how diversity in educational qualifications is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The results in Table 3 indicated that both principals and teachers recognize the presence of qualification diversity within their institutions. However, their perspectives on the extent of its management suggest that while qualification diversity exists, its strategic utilization for school administration remains inconsistent. The hypothesis test in Table 6 further supported this by showing that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers regarding the management of qualification diversity ($p = .426$, $p > .05$). This suggests a shared perception of how qualification diversity is handled, implying that while schools may acknowledge the varying qualifications of staff, structured policies and mechanisms for leveraging this diversity effectively may be lacking. The absence of a significant difference in perception further points to a common administrative approach to handling

qualification diversity, though its impact on administrative efficiency may require further optimization.

When compared with previous studies, this study aligns with and expands upon existing literature on qualification diversity and its role in school administration. Okon and Adewale (2020) found that administrators with diverse qualifications in Akwa Ibom State were better equipped to manage school operations efficiently, improving decision-making and resource allocation. Similarly, Ahmed and Suleiman (2021) in Kano State established a strong positive correlation between qualification diversity and effective policy implementation, emphasizing the importance of varied expertise in shaping inclusive educational policies. Benson and Green (2018) in South Africa further demonstrated that qualification diversity enhances leadership adaptability, allowing administrators to respond effectively to emerging challenges. While the present study also identifies qualification diversity as a feature of school administration, the lack of significant differences in ratings between principals and teachers suggests that its strategic integration into administrative decision-making is not yet fully realized in Rivers State. Compared to Adeyemi and Bello (2020), who found that qualification diversity enhances staff motivation and school outcomes in Lagos, this study highlights the need for structured professional development programs and policy frameworks to harness qualification diversity for optimal administrative efficiency in Rivers State public schools.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully investigated workforce diversity management and the significant role it plays in enhancing administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The presence of employees with diverse characteristics such as age and educational qualifications was addressed because they provide opportunities for improved decision-making, innovation, collaboration and organizational growth. However, the benefits of diversity can only be fully realized when differences are effectively managed by school administrators and teachers.

The study established that principals and teachers employ various strategies to manage workforce diversity. These strategies include leadership, effective communication, teamwork, mentorship, professional development, equitable treatment and participatory decision-making. These practices according to the study promote mutual respect, cooperation and harmonious work relationships among staff members, thereby creating conducive environment for the achievement of predetermines educational goals. However, the findings further indicated that age diversity is managed to a high extent, which educational qualification diversity is managed to a considerable low extent in public senior secondary schools, in Rivers state.

Therefore, workforce diversity should be viewed as a valuable institutional resource rather than a challenge. School administrators must continue to implement inclusive policies and practices that harness the strengths of diverse employees. Thus, public senior secondary schools in Rivers State should improve institutional effectiveness, enhance staff performance, promote innovation to achieve quality educational outcomes, because effective management of workforce diversity remains a critical requirement for sustainable and efficient school administration in Nigeria and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were drawn:

- Public secondary schools should implement regular diversity management training for both principals and teachers to enhance their understanding and strategies for managing workforce diversity effectively.
- Public secondary schools should facilitate opportunities for teachers and principals from different age groups to collaborate, promoting mutual understanding and improving management of age diversity in school administration.
- Public secondary schools should develop and enforce inclusive policies that prioritize diversity management across all aspects of the school, ensuring that educational qualification are considered in decision-making.

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