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Conceptualizing the Influence of Principals' Competence on Skill Acquisition in Agricultural Science Subject in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This paper proposes a conceptual model about the influence of school principals' competence on skill acquisition in agricultural science subject in secondary school. In this study, scoping method was employed to make an extensive review of past researches selected based on key variable of principals' competence dimensions like 'instructional leadership, personnel management, communication and financial management' from researches conducted and published between the period of 2010 to 2018. The framework of this study also offers the four dimensions, which explain the proposed model for skill acquisition as predicted by principals' competence. The author therefore suggested further research to test and validate the framework to provide empirical evidence. Upon model validation, the paper could offer practical interventions for teachers to assist principals towards managing and developing competencies to ensure skill acquisition among students in agricultural science subject. The author used skill development theory to explain the influence of the four dimensions. The study contributed to literature on the significance of school principals' competence factors in promoting skill acquisition for secondary school students in agricultural science subject.

Keywords: *Principals' Competence, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Skill Acquisition, Agricultural Science*

Introduction

This study focusses on the influence of principals' competency factors on skill acquisition among students in agricultural science subject in secondary schools. The thematic issue in this study is how principals' competence factors, which is considered from perspective of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), influences the process of skill acquisition among secondary school students in agricultural science subject. Skill acquisition is conceptualized as the ability to choose a trade, occupation or profession which best suit his/her economic gains and to work hard to succeed

in the vocation (Onyia & Esomonu, 2017). This implies that the receivers or students of agricultural education must have skills in the different areas of agricultural production such as planting skills, harvesting skills, distributing skills, packaging/branding skills, in crop production. In similar manner, animal production requires such skills in addition to creative skills by imitating creative ideas, thinking in their service delivery in selling agricultural products to their consumers.

Studies show that agricultural education skills such as budding, grafting, and layering can sustain an individual (Manga & Jholgiker 2017). For example, budded citrus are required in different compound, home, Mosques, playground, schools, and hospitals among others for planting. This can generate a lot of money to the investor since the demand is high in the society. The skills in grafting, budding and layering in different crops required special skills which is required by the receiver or students or the youth in the training Centre (Mutua, Muriuki, Gachie, Bourne & Capis, 2014). Therefore, the skills in raising ornamental flowers is not a small business in terms of self-sustenance since ornamental flowers are demanded by different people in different location on daily bases to beautify their environment. It has high estate values and gives a lot of money to the investors. The skills in raising them can be perfectly inculcated by the secondary school students of agricultural science subject.

In developing countries like Nigeria for example, transition programs and services like the Universal Basic Education (UBE) and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) now mandated by law, are intended to foster skills acquisition and attitudes that student's need for positive outcomes in employment, independent and community living, and further education (EWA, 2016). However, many transition goals and services are designed for secondary school students who require extensive support to succeed in postsecondary settings. Transition plans for these individuals should focus on skills acquisition and employment for all students irrespective of their background in the country as a whole. Emphasis by the public nowadays according to Wayne and Miskel (2014) is on efficiency, academic achievement and acquisition of employable skills which require a competent school administrators for effective leadership in implementing the programme.

The principal is the head of administration in secondary schools who ensures the effective implementation of policies and programmes for the achievement of the school goals. For the attainment of the objectives of secondary schools, the curriculum has been developed to suit such desires which are to be implemented by the Principal with the cooperation of teachers and other members of staff (Walker, Lee, & Bryant, 2014).

Previous studies show that there is an extensive interest by many researchers, educationists, parents and even stakeholders and policy makers on the principals' competence in handling the educational programmes of the schools.

Other researchers have focused on managerial skills and enhancement strategies of secondary school principals (Egboka, Ezeugbor & Enueme, 2013). Researchers however, have not addressed the issue of school principals' competence on skill acquisition among students in technical vocational education and training (TVET) areas, specifically agricultural science subject at secondary school level. Students at secondary school level are mostly adolescents who are within career exploration stage of life, therefore, an insight into their vocational identity in regards to skill acquisition is very crucial to their overall career development.

Few studies have attempted to address it, however, they are in isolation and not related to principals' competence on skill acquisition in TVET area specifically at secondary school level. For example, there

was a study on the competency levels of school principals in implementing knowledge management strategies by Ozmen and Muratoglu (2010) but it was not in the context of skill acquisition among students in agricultural science subject in secondary schools. Similarly, Arman, Syamsul Bachri Thalib, and Darman Manda (2016) studied on the effect of school supervisors' competence and school principals' competence on work motivation and performance of Junior High School teachers in Maros Regency, Indonesia but they did not address principals' competence on skill acquisition of students in agricultural science subject. There is also a study on Principals' Competency Needs for Effective Schools' Administration in Nigeria (Adegbemile, 2011).

Taken together, previous researchers seemed to focus on school principals' leadership competence. Specifically, not much is known on the influence of school principals' competence on skill acquisition among students in agricultural science subject at secondary school level. Principals' competence is very crucial in the implementation of education programme of such nature. This is because the education programme deals with early adolescence learners. This gap in knowledge if not attended to may lead to a serious setback for the successful education programme in the area of TVET and specifically in agricultural science subject. Therefore, the objective of this article is to find out how principals' competence factors such as instructional leadership, personnel management and financial management could influence skill acquisition among students of secondary school in agricultural science subject. Result of this conceptual analysis could serve as a guide for other researchers to know on what aspect of competence contribute to successful agricultural skill acquisition among students of secondary schools in the developing countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria.

Literature Review

The concept of skill acquisition and competence are pervasive in literature. Skill acquisition is an activity which involves the discovery, examination and exploitation of opportunities to bring into existence new good and services, different ways of organizing, markets, process, and raw material organizing efforts that previously had not existed (Usman and Tasmin 2015). On the other hand, competence refers to knowledge, skills, and abilities that qualifies an individual to perform in a particular task (Chell, 2013). Thus principals' competence is the state of been functionally adequate in the performance for effective administration of secondary school (Stronge, Richard & Catano, 2016). Principals require broad-spectrum instructional leadership ability to become skilled technology leaders. Principals who are effective instructional leaders are well versed in learning theory, instructional planning, aligning curriculum standards, assessment, and are good resources for teachers needing assistance (Ghavifekr, Ibrahim, Chellapan, Sukumaran, & Subramaniam, 2017).

Principals are the ones who make things happen in the school by doing the planning, organizing, leading, monitoring and communication that are required for the school to function (Lunenburg, 2010). These enable effective teaching and learning which impacts on students' academic performance. Communication competency skills are equally important at all levels of school management. They help the principals to recognize the feelings of the students and workers under them, judge their possible reactions and outcomes of various courses of actions they want to take. The principals as managers need high level of communication and financial management competencies to support and plan staff development programmes that will improve efficiency in skill acquisition.

According to Ibara, (2014) financial management in school are the ways and means usually employed to provide the financial resources involved in running educational institutions. It is the function of the school heads to manage the financial resources of the schools. Chaba, (2017) described the school's financial management as actions connected with the financial aspects of a school for the achievement of effective educational activities. The common factor in these definitions of financial management is that a connection is made between the management tasks and the financial aspects of a school.

Successful school principals must ensure that their competencies are put in place to involve and transform teachers to work through the change process. Levin (2001) spotlighted the importance of school principals need to possess competencies to demonstrate change in his students. Kursunoglu and Tanriogen (2007) also made the same point in their study that principals must have necessary skills to implement successful school change. This study, however, specifically focuses on school principals' competence on skill acquisition among students in agricultural science subject.

From the literature, four dimensions exist to reflect school principals' competence measurement. These are instructional leadership, personnel management, communication, and financial management (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). In the context of this review, it is imperative for TVET to evaluate school principals' competence at individual level in order to establish qualification and ability for school principals to perform their duties diligently. This analysis on principals' competence is crucial to the implementation of educational programme for development. Furthermore, according to Okwelle and Okeke (2015), technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is for productive purpose. Dike (2009) posited that technical and vocational education and training has been an integral part of National development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productive and economic development. It is the basic key to the growth and automation of nations. Therefore, the ability of school principals to integrate their competencies in skill acquisition for their students in secondary schools is very necessary.

Principals' Competence

Education is a transformational tool in every society and should be held in high esteem. It is the acquisition of knowledge and skills required to sustain individual, groups, and organizational advancement at all levels and spheres of life. Egwu (2016) opined that the principal is a leader who must plan, coordinate and supervise the affairs of the school, so that they run smoothly. The principal is the chief administrator of secondary school who is expected to effectively use various resources through the adoption of management principles and practices for the realization of school goals. If education system must achieve it national policies and goals, the school managers at all levels must ensure optimum management of human, material, financial and time resources.

Nkwoh (2011) observed that school principals must possess a wide array of competencies in order to lead schools effectively towards the accomplishment of educational goals, which has led to changing expectations of what leaders need to know and must be able to do. Competency as opined by Carol and Edward (2004) is the successful performance of a task through the use of knowledge, skills, attitude and judgment. It is the ability and required skills to accomplish given task. Managerial competency is the possession of necessary skills to effectively manage resources for productivity. Heller (2012) outlines functions of school administrators as including management of instructional programmes, staff personnel administration, students' personnel administration, finance and

physical resource management and community relationship management. Effective management of human, material, time and financial resources is highly crucial for institutional sustainability and the development of school action plan.

Research conducted by Uyanga (2008) indicated that school principals have great impacts on school, teachers and students' performance through schools' vision, mission and objectives. Leithwood *et al.* (2004) suggested that school principals as school leaders provide indirect impact to the learning outcome yet very significant towards education. The school principals must also be competent in executing their tasks as the leaders whether it is focusing on school, the instructional method or even the operational aspects to support the students' success (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Leithwood *et al.*, 2004; & Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 2008). School principals' competency in terms of school leadership set off from the knowledge about leading their organization and the stakeholders, being able to respond and influence other people whether in social or political area (Bolman and Deal, 2003; Florida Department of Education, 2008). The competency of the principals in schools played an important role in promoting and preserving changes in schools. This means that, without their efforts, schools will never experience transformation or improvement of the students' accomplishment whether academically or vice – versa, and also their preparation towards living with the society later.

In countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria, the competency of school principals is currently becoming a national interest. The governments of these countries demand school principals to acquire competencies related to leadership and management (Institute Aminuddin Baki, 2008; Chidozie & Eze, 2016; Oluwadare, 2011).

In Indonesia however, the competency development among the principals has not yet commenced by the district rules, despite Indonesia has aimed for achieving the National Education Standard in 2013 (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia, 2007). Several studies have showed that the National Education Standard efforts and achievement are far beyond realization of the set objectives because the principals do not acquire the competency towards accomplishment (Dharma, 2008; & Rakhmat, 2010). According to Mazzeo (2003), many developing countries utilize the strategy of competency development with the gradual licensed certificate system. In developing countries like Malaysia for example, they use high impact competency development of school principals programme (Institut Aminuddin Baki, 2010). They suggest an effort in enhancing the competency of school principals with special training together with the course for national professional principalship qualification. Principal Leadership Standards and Competencies approach is widely being used in the developed countries like the United States of America (Florida Department of Education, 2008).

We have to believe that these efforts by various governments of these countries are worthwhile. However, one big concern raised is regarding the kind of competencies that the principals should have since a vast volume of literatures pointing to different angles and perspectives towards competencies. Secondly if an instrument which takes into account all different perspectives can be built to make it more comprehensive so that the measurement of competencies can be used to reflect the training and practices in the school setting. In some countries like Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and

South Africa, any educator can be appointed to the office of principal-ship irrespective of the fact that he/she had a school management or leadership qualification or competencies. Such openness to appointment to the highest office in a secondary school does not only defeat Frederick Taylor's view of getting the right person for the office, but also places school administration, management, leadership and governance in the hands of incompetent personnel (Van Vuuren, Van der Westhuizen, & Van Der Walt, 2012). Consistent with the above, it can be observed that school principals' competence is linked to domain, where specialization and qualification matter, which then leads to success in all aspects of education including skill acquisition programme.

Skill Acquisition

The acquisition of practical skills involves the development of new skills, practice and way of doing things or performing a task, usually gained through training or experience (Idoko 2014). From the foregoing, skills acquisition could be referred to as an organized process of training which eventually leads to effectiveness in a given trade. It is an ability to do a given job better and faster with enhanced output. In view of this, Olabiyi (2004) points out that before any skill are acquired, it is important to ascertain the skills required or needed. He stressed further that it is not enough to assume that because somebody fails to achieve the desired results, that there is need to train people to acquire skill as a result of failure, which might be due to variety of other causes. A lot of money, time and other resources could have been wasted on skill acquired just because the skills and students have not been identified. He added that, there is need for skill development when efficiency and effectiveness are being sacrifice and also, when there is a change in technology, methods or required behaviour specially when rendering the current skill obsolete.

Skill acquisition, according to Okorie (2001) is essential for the development of intrinsic potentials in an individual. To enable students develop their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual, biological, political and economic capacities, there is need to provide vocational rehabilitation service for them to learn and develop appropriate skills. With this, students can become aware of the challenges that are associated with a worthwhile life that will boost their career, stability and fulfillment in a world of competitive of economy. Such skills are not easily developed over night or in a lesson period. A lot of effort needs to be invested by the trainer/teacher to assist the students to develop the desired skills. Such desirable skills according to Mkpa (2001) are often cultivated through relatively long period of time through the instrumentality of vocational rehabilitation service.

However, Imandojemu (2008) suggested that the first step in planning for skill acquisition is to identify the skill needed and develop the skill objectives from skill needed. He further explained that it is import to establish whether the person or persons to be trained can already perform the activities identified in the objectives and to what level. Also, the trainer needs to be informed about what prior knowledge or experiences the trainee has or better still, arrange for the trainer to meet with the trainee.

In respect of that, careful attention should be given to physical arrangement of skill acquisition subjects like agricultural science, carpentry, home sciences, wood work etc, and a thorough investigation of those specific skills that are realistically unique to a particular needs of the students and a survey of the employment opportunities will also determine the skill to be developed.

Theorizing Skill Acquisition in TVET

The theories used to conceptualize the link between school principals' competence and skill acquisition is the skills development theory propounded by Cratty (1973). The articles reviewed were those published between the periods of 2010 to 2018. The purpose is to support the relationships of the predictor variables of instructional leadership, personnel management, communication structure and financial management competencies of school principals with skill acquisition among students in agricultural science. In the work of Cratty (1973) the theory of skill or skill development stated that skills were essential in all technical and vocational occupations or professions, sports or athletics. The level of performance depends on information, application of knowledge, training, practice, experience and habit. While application of skills depend on the ability to understand and interpret the various components involved in the occupation or profession. This coupled with the accuracy and the force of work involved.

The basic unit of analysis for representing individual acting, thinking and feeling is the concept of skill. A skill according Fischer and Bidell (1998) is an individual's capacity to control elements of behavior, thinking, and feeling within specified contexts and within particular task domains. As such, a skill is a type of control structure. It refers to the organization of action that an individual can bring under his/her own control within a given context. A skill is not simply an attribute of an individual. Instead, a skill is a property of an individual-in-a-social-context. It must develop before use. The production of any instance of skilled action is a joint product of person and context (physical and social). As such, a change in the context in which a given act is performed can result in changes in the form and developmental level of the skill in question. In this way, context plays a direct role in the construction of skilled activity. Skill acquisition are learning activities that involve not only psychomotor domain but also the cognitive, affective and the perceptual domain. It will appear naïve and inconsequential if a model fails to address these factors of skill acquisition in vocational and technical education.

The basic claim of Skill Acquisition Theory, according to Dekeyser (2007), is that, learning of a wide variety of skills shows a remarkable similarity in development from initial representation of knowledge through initial changes in behavior to eventual fluent, spontaneous, largely effortless, and highly skilled behavior. This set of phenomena can be accounted for by a set of basic principles common to acquisition of all skills. As mentioned by Oviawe, Uwameiye, and Uddin, (2017) skill acquisition can be considered as a specific form of learning, where learning has been defined as the representation of information in memory concerning some environmental or cognitive event. Therefore, according to these researchers, skill acquisition is a form of learning where skilled behaviors can become routinized and even automatic under some conditions. Skill Acquisition Theory is not just a theory of skill development, rather it is a general theory of learning ranging from cognitive to psychomotor skills (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2012).

In fact, in spite of the shortcomings leveled against Skill Acquisition Theory, as mentioned by Dekeyser (2007), this theory fits very well with other aspects of cognitive science. Also, the approach to skill learning has proven to be robust over time, in spite of changes in emphasis, methodology, and terminology. Moreover, the procedure of research in this theory, whether conducted with behavioral data or through neuro-imaging or computer modeling is very explicit, e.g., power curves, computer programs and brain-scanners provides precise answers. Furthermore, research in this field is

developmental and rather than providing snapshots of learners it can document learning day after day.

Applying this theory to secondary school context, especially in the Nigerian context would mean applying stimulated skill acquisition. It also involves taking the students outside the classroom situation into places where they can apply the knowledge and skills in various areas of work known as student industrial work experience scheme (SIWES). The application of these theories outside the classroom environment may include engaging in agricultural activities such as crop production (budding, grafting, and layering) and animal production (artificial insemination, castration, debecking/dehorning). Others may also include building and construction, land management, tourism and hospitality, auto-mechanics, entrepreneur management, to name a few. It is a hand-on training approach, a very constructive way for knowledge and skill acquisition to take place.

Method

Using Scoping review methods, the author searched Journal of Education and Practice, International Journal of Environmental Dan Science Education, International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education, International Journal of Educational Development, The principal and education reforms in Nigeria. A publication of the Mandatory Continuing Professional Training (MCPT) programme of the All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS), Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, International Journal of Vocational Education and Training Research and Journal of Science and Computer Education from 2010 to 2018 full text articles that focused on principals' competence dimensions like (instructional leadership, personnel management, communication and financial management). A standardized extraction form was used to collect articles demographic data and features reflecting the methodological rigor of the articles reviewed, 75 met the inclusion criteria. The 'instructional leadership competence (22/75, 29.3%), personnel management competence (17/75, 26.6%), communication competence (15/72, 20%) and financial management competence (21/75, 28%) were most often used.

Predictors of Principals' Competence

From the literature reviewed, four antecedents of skills acquisition are selected. Therefore, there is a need to extend the discussion on each factor to principals' competence based on past empirical evidences.

Instructional Leadership

The term instructional leadership is defined as actions leaders take to improve teaching and learning (King, 2002,). Moreover, instructional leadership refers to the actions principals take to develop a productive and satisfying work environment for teachers and desirable learning conditions and outcomes for children (Greenfield, 1987). It also refers to lists of characteristics usually associated with school principals whose works have been identified as effective (Purkey & Smith, 1982). However, while many of common statements exist on the importance of principals' instructional leadership at schools, there is less agreement on what instructional leadership actually is. Some

interpret instructional leadership as similar with classroom observations and direct teaching between teachers and students in the classroom. (Hornig & Loeb, 2010).

However, adding instructional leadership to the duties of the principal is not simple. Instructional leadership requires a different sort of responsibility. It might be that the role of the principal, as ordinarily defined in the job description, excludes the responsibility for instruction altogether because instructional leadership is neither understood nor valued by school supervisors or post primary schools boards. Although the essential of instructional leadership of the principals have been acknowledged, in reality, good instructional leadership skills are rarely practiced. Nowadays, more principals fail to exhibit day-to-day instructional leadership behavior as there are many complex problems and distractions to implement the instructional leadership at schools. (Doyle, 2002).

Principals require broad-spectrum instructional leadership ability to become skilled technology leaders. The following information was included to provide a background for what studies define as skilled instructional leadership. Principals who are effective instructional leaders are well versed in learning theory, instructional planning, aligning curriculum standards, assessment, and are good resources for teachers needing assistance (Shellard, 2003). This means that principals must continue to learn new instructional information that affects the teaching and learning standards of schools.

Peterson (1999) investigated instructional leadership qualities in a study, which focused on five highly effective California schools superintendents. Superintendents at the core of this study were sure that their districts could make a bigger difference in their students' learning than other districts within the state (Peterson, 1999). While superintendents in this study credited personal vision as the explanation for success, it was only one of the critical themes identified. These critical themes of instructional leadership success were: creating a vision, being highly visible, modeling of academic expectations, developing rapport with the school board, and managing instructionally oriented programs (Peterson, 1999).

Conversely, Creighton (1999) explained how leadership was more than a set of skills, and depended on a relationship to a leader's character, beliefs, morals and values, emotions and spirit. Creighton (1999) believed, to lead our schools and their communities into the millennium, principals must strengthen the correlation between organizational success and their spiritual development. Leadership behaviors affect students and the success of schools, therefore the realization that leaders' personal beliefs guide leadership behavior was especially important to Creighton. Instructional leadership brings about successful educational reform. Youngs and King (2002) conducted a study on urban districts throughout the United States investigating principal leadership capacity. Youngs and King found that effective principals sustained high levels of capacity by establishing trust, creating structures that promote teacher learning, connecting their faculties to external expertise, and helping teachers generate internal reforms. One important implication of the research was principals must be cognizant of shared norms and values before trying to initiate new practices in curriculum, instruction, or school organization (Youngs & King, 2002).

Instructional leadership strategies become a necessity for the successful attainment of educational programmes like the skill acquisition for employability. Bateman and Snell (2003) contended that

management requires structuring the organization, staffing it with capable people and monitoring their activities. They are of the opinion that it has to do with collaborative endeavor such as creating vision or setting the direction, inspiring people to attain the vision, moving the organization towards its ideal future and motivating them to overcome the problems in the schools. When related to skill acquisition which is the focus of this study it is a way of getting things done with particular reference to the process of coordinating educational activities to achieve the goals of the programme. Principals should therefore administer the schools through the efforts of other staff members of their schools so as to achieve the goals and objectives of these schools. The aspects considered in this include the extent of the Principals' competencies in supervision of instruction, teaching and learning activities, and school plant maintenance in relation to skill acquisition. Therefore we propose that, there is a positive relationship between instructional leadership and principals' competence.

Personnel Management

Personnel management, otherwise referred to as human resource management is concerned with the people dimension in management. Human Resource Management (HRM) is the function within an organization that focuses on recruitment of, management of, and providing direction for the people who work in the organization (Heathfield, 2011). According to Ekanem (2014), meaningful educational value change can take place in individual human beings' who are involved in the management of the educational system for sustainable growth. Human resource is a vital asset to the school which must be recognized. For school heads to derive the best out of teachers', students', and school auxiliary workers, he must be competent in motivating, supervising, training and providing sustainable welfare policies to personnel. Welfare policy does not only include money, but other packages such as employer and employee interpersonal relationship, as it is often times geared purposely towards the enrichment of personnel performance (Akinfolarin, 2017). School Principals' should often involve other school personnel in decision making process with constant communication to increase their commitment and dedication to school goals and objectives.

According to Akinfolarin and Rufai (2017), there must be a good communication mechanism among teachers', students' and school administrators' within and outside the school for goals achievement at all levels of education. The presence of good information and communication system in school management will help to carry teachers' and students' along with school aims and objectives which would motivate them for improved teaching and learning process. Teachers' and students' can be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated through the provision of incentives which could be tangible or intangible. School leaders should strive to identify the categories of incentives that would yield the best result based on individual differences. It is pertinent to note that there are two areas of human resource management in the school system; the staff human resource management and the students' human resource management.

For effective staff human resource management, school principals must develop good competencies in staffing, orientation, communication, training, supervision, conflict management, motivation, discipline and ensuring professional growth of academic and non-academic staff, while for effective students' human resource management, school administrators should acquire competencies in

increasing students' enrolment, orientation, students' discipline, welfare services, counselling services and provision of incentives to students'. Also, there must be a favourable teaching and learning environment with adequate instructional and learning materials which should be properly managed for positive academic outcome.

Ibara (2014) reported that federal government secondary schools in Nigeria can be productive if there would be efficient management of human and material resources by highly managerially competent principals. Through school management the principals and the staff should see themselves as a team, working for the growth and development of the students. Educational leaders according to Sharrat and Sharrat (2006), need to be explicit about target setting for teaching and learning to take place. They pointed out that activities in any organizations are initiated and determined by people that make up the institution. School facilities such as buildings, offices, workshops, automated equipment are not useful unless when operated or manipulated by the staff of the organization (Kowalski, 2002). It is therefore very pertinent that the personnel of any school organization have to be properly managed to make maximum contribution to the success of skill acquisition of the students and this can only be possible when the principals are highly managerially competent to effectively communicate across the system. In view of the above, therefore we propose that, there is a positive relationship between personnel management and principals' competence.

Communication Structure

Communication is an important factor in enhancing teachers' motivation and ensuring their efficiency in schools where informal relationships play an important role. Schools with an effective communication network will have more interaction between the principals and the teachers. In this way, good cooperation will be established between the management, one of the most effective units of the school, and workers. The motivation of workers in schools where the communication network is strong is more than those in schools where the communication network is weak. Through effective communication, both the management and workers can better understand what the other side wants and thus the motivation of workers, particularly that of teachers increases.

According to a definition, communication is the act of influencing or activating a behavior, the motivation purpose, the exchange of information with two or more persons, and the understanding of this information (Bridge, 2003). An increasingly motivated teacher is more willing to work towards the goals of the school, feels highly committed to the school and does not hesitate to do his/her best for the success of the school. If teachers communicate effectively with principals and other teachers in the school, it becomes easier to reach the goals of the organization (Gunes, 2007). According to Vieira and Auriemma (2015), the first step for education and training is to find a common language. In many schools, this language is used to provide coordination between teachers and to increase motivation. In addition, in order to maximize the effectiveness of this communication, the common language must be populated at all levels of the school, from classroom instruction to vocational learning. The greatest task in this regard falls to the school principal. Moreover, the quality of principal-teacher communication in the school is a factor that directly affects the degree to which the school achieves its goals and teacher-student relations. Communication and the quality of

communication are of great importance in terms of establishing a democratic organization and accomplishing organizational goals (Simsek, 2003).

Communication is lifeblood of a braid. If we think of school as a person, the communication becomes blood circulating throughout the whole body to feed educators, students, parents and society. If communication is interrupted or ineffectual, there is a blockage in the circulation (Danielson, 2015). Communication, one of the management processes, activates the other processes of management and plays a key role in maintaining these processes. If this key role is properly played, management will be well informed about the good and bad sides of the system by the workers. Thus, workers' motivation levels are also affected from the existing communication process (Torbacioglu, 2007). The communication process is not just about sending one or more simple messages.

Communication is about complex networks that connect people together. For example, in an organizational context, an administrator (source) who wants a volunteer (message) to work on the weekend may send this message to all employees (receivers) via an e-mail (channel). This model, conceptualized as a very simple "SMCR" model, can be summarized as a source transmitting a message to a receiver via a channel (Miller, 2012). It is the school principal who will lead the school towards its objectives and will create a quality atmosphere in the school. As a social system, the school should be able to establish a balance between the individual and the organization and in this regard, the main responsibility should be taken by the school director. For school principals to serve the goals of the school effectively, they need to be well-informed about the concepts and theories of management and human relationships (Toremén & Kolay, 2003). In addition, not directly involved in managerial processes but involved in leadership and cooperative processes, motivation emerges as a result of individual needs. For these processes to be carried out effectively, motivation is a prerequisite (Torbacioglu, 2007). Communication is at the heart of education. Communication at school; on the other hand, is an indispensable part of success in education. Healthy mutual communication can exert an important influence on all elements of education. For the formation of a communication process, it is of great importance to establish interpersonal communication. Communication is such links that people are connected to each other through it and thus can work efficiently and in harmony as a group.

This link sometimes brings people closer to one another and sometimes away from one another. If an effective working environment and success are targeted at school, then great care should be taken for the formation of effective communication between individuals. Schools are living social organizations. As in any organization, for schools to survive and to keep pace with the age, they must function effectively. Principals and teachers working in schools not having an effective communication network seem to be indifferent to the objectives of their schools and school environment.

On the other hand, motivation of principals and teachers working in schools having an effective communication network is high and they work industriously to accomplish the objectives of the school. Thus, it seems to be clear that by having a good communication network, it is more likely to

educate thinking, questioning and successful generations. Therefore, the principals as managers need high level of communication competencies to support and plan staff development programmes that will improve productivity (Ibara, 2014). This will assist the principals throughout their career to function positively in relation to the goals of skill acquisition programmes in secondary schools. In secondary schools in Nigeria for example, communication is a very crucial aspect of school management. It is worth noting that the degree of success of the Principal in effective communication is a function of the competencies possessed or acquired through several years of working experience in managing schools (Arikewuyo, 2009). This is because no matter how well a principal's intentions may be, he cannot achieve any success in school management without the flow of information in the system in order to get full support and corporation of well qualified, dedicated and capable personnel. Principals must regard communication as important process in the pursuit of common goals. High communication competency practices in school management have some motivating factor that can solve problems, if adequately adopted by the school principals (Adegbemile, 2011). Therefore we propose that, there is a positive relationship between communication and principals' competence.

Financial Management

The main purpose of financial management is the raising of fund and ensuring that the funds mobilized are utilized in the most effective and efficient manner. Financial management is the planning, organizing and controlling of inflow and outflow of money aimed at achieving organizational success and development. Financial management practices involve budgeting, auditing, application accounting strategies, cost-saving approaches, profit maximization, sourcing of funds among others. In secondary schools, school principals and administrators are responsible for preparation of the school budget and ensure effective financial management in order to achieve the objectives of the school (Alia & Iwuoha, 2014). In any organization, the head is the chief accounting officer who play key role in the efficient management school finance. Poor budgeting is one of the major reasons that derail effective management of schools due to overspending or underspending which can lead to misappropriation and mismanagement of school funds (Mito & Simatwa, 2012). Some school principals in Nigeria seem not to involve stakeholders in budgeting processes and sourcing of funds for school improvement which amount to setback in the actualization of school action plan. The principal is the chief accounting officer in the school entrusted with the fiscal task of ensuring accountability and efficiency in the management of financial resource for the attainment of school goals and objectives. Magak (2013) summarized the challenges that school administrators faced in managing school funds. This included incompetency in procurement, inadequate and irregular auditing, lack of accounting supportive documents and records and inability to prepare end year financial statements among others. Lipham (2016) say that financial management skills are needed by the school principals to make them effective in planning, sourcing and in utilization of school funds. For any organization to achieve its goals and objectives and for continuous existence, managers must acquire appropriate competencies in effective management of its vital resources. According to Ikediugwu (2016), good school heads must carefully and effectively handle educational resources particularly money, material and machines including computers, teaching technology and internal facilities put under their custody for proper management of fund. Ikediugwu further posited

that managing people is very central to educational management owing to the nature of the educational system, as a labor intensive and child centred industry. Education is a vital tool for societal transformation having the school as an institution for the realization of its goals and objectives. Schools in Nigeria are witnessing numerous challenges ranging from poor and inadequate infrastructural and instructional facilities, shortage and poorly motivated personnel, and mismanagement of funds which may be due to managerial incompetency of school managers'. Institutions of learning need human, material and financial resources to implement skill acquisition programmes for employability. School resources must be well managed by competent school administrators in order to achieve the objectives of programmes like the skill acquisition.

The success of school program to a large extent depends very much on the way the funds are managed, since this is bound to affect the overall performance of the school (Sadiq, 2014). This brings to limelight why it is very important that the Principals of schools should have high competencies in financial management. Financial issues are very sensitive matters so ineffective or inadequate managerial competencies usually spell doom to any organization (Sadiq, 2014). Thus the justification of the saying, that, money is the root of all evils. Sadiq, affirmed by adding that financial control comprises of all the methods and measures established by the management within the business to safeguard its assets. It also includes securing the accuracy and reliability of its records, promoting operational efficiency and encouraging adherence to policies laid down by the management. He further noted that the financial control of school funds is necessary because it discourages misappropriation of funds and assists school principals in ascertaining through accepted accounting procedures that the funds are indeed used for the purpose for which they are meant for. The success of skill acquisition programme depends very much on the way the financial inputs are managed and if not well managed will affect the overall performance of the learners (Adegbemile, 2011). The principal as the financial controller of the school has the responsibility of managing and controlling school finance. He will be held accountable for all expenditures so he should see to the prudent management of funds in the school he advised. Therefore we propose that, there is a positive relationship between financial management and principals' competence.

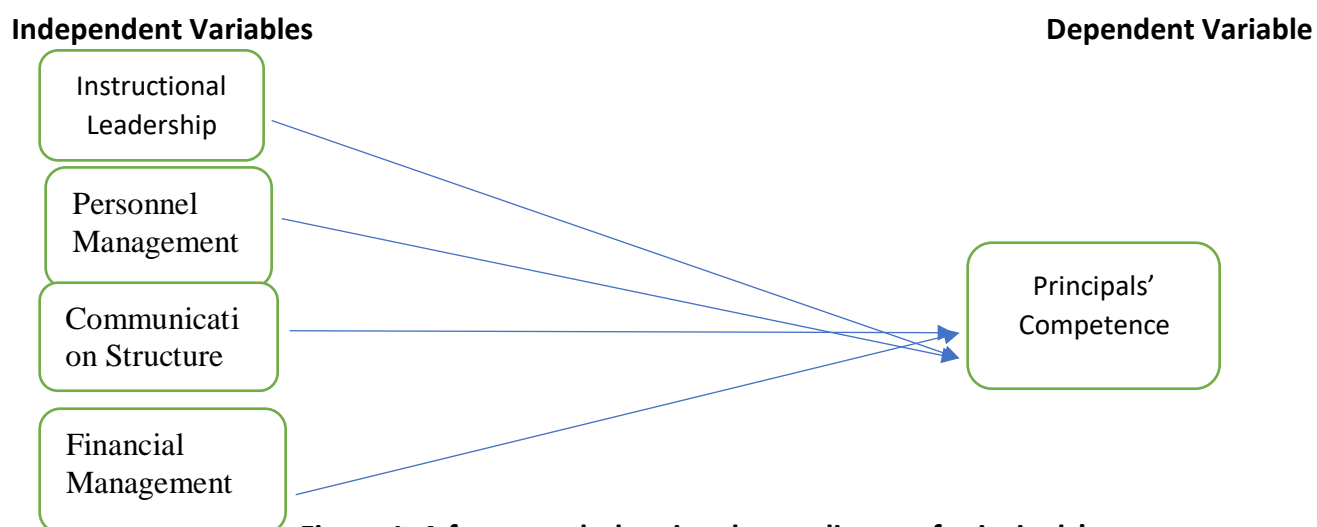


Figure 1: A framework showing the predictors of principals' competence

Conclusion

This article addresses the influence of selected factors of school principals' competence on skill acquisition of students in agricultural science subject. It explains how these predictors can enhance skill acquisition. These influencing factors must be identified and used in consideration of the strategy that can be used in implementing skill acquisition from the perspective of school principals' competence in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) specifically agricultural science subject. This framework suggests that skill acquisition can be facilitated by TVET as supported by skill acquisition theory. This is very possible through a well-planned formal and non-formal educational training such as students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES), apprenticeship, coaching and through the cooperative vocational education (CVE) (Saari and Rashid, 2013). This can be viewed, as the processes for improving skill acquisition and knowledge capability, which can essentially lead to improved work setting and eventually supporting the growth of entrepreneurship and employability (Duh, 2014; Swanson & Holton, 2010).

Theories, conceptualizing skill acquisition, allow to explain the changes in school management that encompass the transformation of school principals roles, functions, subsequently specific competencies have become relevant, what leads to the necessity to revise the principles of competencies development. The predictor variables in the framework are to be studied on individual bases leading to school principals' competencies. Thus, it is proposed that school principals' competencies that are supported by instructional management, personnel management, communication and financial management can be embark on the desire educational development track.

This paper provides a theoretical support for competence factors as predictors of school principals' competence. It is therefore, recommended that, research to empirically test and validate the propositions on the links between school principals' competencies and skill acquisition. Consequently, empirical evidence that could be obtained based on this model may contribute to the emerging literature on the role of school principals' competence leading to skill acquisition in agricultural science subject from the perspective of TVET. Upon model validation, this knowledge could offer practical interventions for TVET teachers to assist school principals towards skill acquisition in managing school activities to ensure educational development. In addition, the researcher suggested future research to use this framework with other intervening variables such as leadership skills and administrative competence that could further substantiate what predicts school principals' competence in TVET with specific contexts in developing countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria.

The findings in this study led me to draw conclusions on the influence of selected principals' competence factors on skill acquisition of students in agricultural science subject and make recommendations for future research. It is obvious that all the selected competence factors in this study are responsible for school principals' competence on skills acquisition in agricultural science subject. In developing countries like Nigeria, we lived in a society where we are constantly receiving information and opinions that are being formed accordingly. In order to gain acceptance of public assistance, policy makers must access all the factors that impact perceptions and get those factors to promote skills acquisition among our youths in order to encourage them to be self-reliant. Another conclusion that was drawn from this conceptual paper is that, there is no single principals'

competence factor that have more influence on skills acquisition in than others. Educators, parents and policy makers must always be in contact with the schools in order to promote skills acquisition among our youths.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research are below:

- 1: Further research should be conducted to look into the possibility of using demographic variables as an influential factor on skills acquisition among secondary school students.
- 2: For future research, researchers would like to propose a competency model for the principals administering public skills acquisition training institutions.
- 3: Further research is suggested to test and validate the framework of this study to provide empirical evidence.

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