

Principals' Application of Risk Management Strategies for Secondary Schools Improvement in Riverine Communities in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated secondary school principals' application of risk management strategies for secondary school improvement in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all 28 public secondary schools principals in Otuocha Education Zone. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument for data collection was validated by three experts in the faculty of education, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. A pilot test was conducted to test the reliability of the instrument. The test of reliability using Cronbach Alpha method yielded coefficient values of 0.80, 0.77 and 0.72 for clusters B1 to B3 respectively. The Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis on the obtained data yielded a score of 0.76 for internal consistency. Mean was used to answer the research questions. Findings showed that principals of public secondary schools applied risk identification, risk analysis and risk monitoring strategies for school improvement to a low extent. The researcher concludes that risk management strategies for school improvement were applied to a low extent by public secondary school principals. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended among others that the Post Primary School Service Commission should regularly organize in-service training for secondary school principals that is targeted at improving the skills of principals on ways of identifying risks and threats in their schools.

How to cite this paper: Onuorah, Helen C | Nwankwo Ngozi B | Okoye Ferdinard Nwafor "Principals' Application of Risk Management Strategies for Secondary Schools Improvement in Riverine Communities in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-6 | Issue-2, February 2022, pp.1099-1105, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd49384.pdf



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KEYWORDS: Principals, Application, Risk Management, School Improvement, Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education is a form of education offered to children between the ages of 11 years to 18 years plus. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) defined secondary education as education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The broad goals of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and higher education. Furthermore, secondary education helps to inspire students with the desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence; raises a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others and respect the dignity of labour (Federal Republic of

Nigeria, 2013). However, it appears that unsafe school environment is a problem to achieving the above aims of secondary education.

Secondary schools in most part of Nigeria generally and in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State are threatened by human and natural disasters. Communities in the Education Zone are faced with the problems of flooding which displaces indigenes from their homes and communities. This situation means that school children go months without any form of education. Beyond the issue of flooding in secondary schools in these communities, there are also cases where schools are exposed to erosions,

cultism, kidnapping, killer herdsmen, ritualist and arson (Ike, 2015). St Margaret's Anglican Girls School (2016) noted that secondary schools, and its stakeholders, may face a myriad of risks that threaten the achievement of academic, safety, financial, reputation, regulatory and strategic objectives. The need to manage risk is driven by numerous factors including changes in society, growing expectations from parents and regulators, increased litigation, competition and global events. This situation has increased calls by stakeholders in education for principals' application of risk management strategies to mitigate these risks that threaten school improvement.

Risk can be defined as the uncertainty connected with every kind of business activity. In consonance, Risk is any issue that can affect the objectives of an organization. Hence risk management can be defined as the identification and acceptance or offsetting of the risks threatening the existence of an organisation. In support, Boubala (2020) asserted that risk management involves minimizing things that may negatively impact upon a school and identifying and harnessing those things that will help to achieve the goals and objectives of a business. An effective risk management structure allows organisation like secondary schools to understand the risks in any initiative and take informed decisions on whether and how the risks should be managed. According to St Margaret's Anglican Girls School (2016), management of school's risks is an important and serious responsibility for stakeholders within the school.

Furthermore, St Margaret's Anglican Girls School highlighted the critical factors to the success of any school risk management strategy to include embedding a risk-aware culture throughout the school; communicating our risk management strategy to all stakeholders; acknowledging that 'it can happen here'; adopting innovative techniques to mitigate risks; effective identification and management of school-related strategic risks in addition to the operational risks; engaging staff and students in discussions on risk and control concepts; and adopting a continuous improvement philosophy.

The goals of risk management is to identify potential risks, to analyse risks to determine those that have the greatest probability of occurring, identifying the risks that have the greatest impact on the entity if they should occur, and defining plans that help mitigate or lessen the risk's impact or avoid the risks while making the most of the opportunity. Boubala (2020) suggested that risk management specifically concerns identifying and documenting risks, analysis and

prioritising risk, performing risk planning, monitoring risk plans and applying controls and performing risk audits and reviews. In this study the researcher will determine principals' application of risk identification, risk analysis and risk monitoring strategies for secondary school improvement.

Risk Identification is aimed at identifies all risks, which could interrupt or damage the school goals (St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, 2016). Identifying risk involves considering what, why, when, where and how things happen. Risk identification consists of determining which risks are likely to affect the project and documenting the characteristics of each. Similar to risk identification, risk analysis is also seen as a very important risk management strategy.

Risk analysis is the next phase after risk identification. Boubala (2020) averred that once the risks are identified, they need to be analysed and evaluated. The aim of the risk evaluation is to determine the degree of the identified risks and quantify their financial impact on the school. It is therefore necessary to analyse the ways through which the risk could affect the school goals. At this stage the measures to handle the risk will be chosen. Those measures range from risk avoidance or prevention, over risk reduction, to transfer of risks and finally acceptance of the risk. After analyzing risk, the next phase is risk monitoring.

Risk monitoring is the last phase of risk management. It is at the risk monitoring phase that the success of risk identification, analysis and assessment have been successful (Raji & Akanbi, 2019). This phase is crucial for taking appropriate measures in time, in case of deviations between the actual and planned risk situation are identified. This includes reviewing the effectiveness of risk controls and treatments. Continuous monitoring and review of risks are also conducted by the internal risk committee to ensure new risks, and any changes to existing risks, are identified and managed to provide an up-to-date view of the risk status (St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, 2016). The application of these strategies according to Raji and Akanbi (2019) would help and lead to high performing schools and ultimate school improvement.

School improvement according to Igwegbe (2021) is defined as a distinct approach to educational change that aims to enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. Similarly, Freddy cited in Igwegbe defined school improvement as, an effort to determine and provide, from within and without, conditions under which the adults and youngsters who inhabit schools will promote and sustain learning among them.

School improvement is simply what comes out of an activity for what the principals put in, in terms of commitment to the work. According to these definitions, the purpose of school improvement is to impact ostensibly on the relationship between the teaching and learning process and the conditions that support it.

It is therefore, expected that secondary school principals in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone in particular and secondary schools in Anambra State in general apply these strategies in their schools. However, the extents to which these risk management strategies have not been empirically proven. It is against this background that the researcher empirically determined principals' application of risk management strategies for secondary school improvement in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The need to ensure safety in secondary schools is imperative to the academic development of secondary school students which subsequently result to national development. Sadly, secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone are faced with various environmental, physical and human risks which threaten to derail the attainment of the stipulated goals of the National Policy on Education. Furthermore, there are also cases of hazards and risks like the problems of strips and falls, violence, accidents, chemical injuries, electrocution, dilapidated facilities, and increase in the number of staff deaths and illness which present occupational hazards to teachers.

These issues leads to cases where staff are increasingly faced with several occupational hazards, withdrawal, absenteeism, low morale, unproductivity and lack of commitment, might continue to manifest, thus hindering effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State. The principal is in a unique position to manage these risks, yet, the strategies which principals adopt in managing these risks have not received much research attention. Therefore, the problem that this study addressed is: Which risk management strategies do principals in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State apply for secondary schools improvement?

Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine principals' application of risk management strategies for secondary school improvement in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined the extent to which secondary school principals' in Anambra State apply:

1. Risk identification strategy for secondary schools improvement in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State.
2. Risk analysis strategy for secondary schools improvement in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State.
3. Risk monitoring strategy for secondary schools improvement in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do principals apply risk identification strategies for secondary school improvement in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State?
2. To what extent do principals apply risk analysis strategies for secondary school improvement in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State?
3. To what extent do principals apply risk monitoring strategies for secondary school improvement in Otuocha Education Zone in Anambra State?

Method

The research design adopted in this study is descriptive survey. This design is considered appropriate for the study because it will collect information from principals on their application of risk management strategies. The study was carried out in Otuocha Education Zone. The zone comprises of three local government areas. Anambra East, Anambra West and Ayamelum, there are 28 secondary schools in the zone. The population of the study comprised 28 principals from the 28 public secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra State. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher from the reviewed literature. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on Principals Application of Risk Management Strategies for Secondary Schools Improvement (QPARMSSSI)". The instrument contains 28 items in three clusters of B1, B2 and B3 according to the three research questions guiding the study. The three clusters contain 11, 10 and 7 items respectively. All the items are structured on a 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLB) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The face validation of the instrument was determined. To do this, the research questions. Purpose of the study, two lecturers in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one in Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the Department

of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka.

A pilot test was conducted to establish the instrument's reliability whereby the questionnaire was administered on 10 principals of secondary schools in Enugu State who were not included in the population of the study. As a result of the fact that the instrument is in three clusters, the researcher had to ascertain the reliability of each cluster using Cronbach Alpha reliability method, which yielded coefficient values of 0.80, 0.77 and 0.72 for clusters B1 to B3 respectively. The Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis on the obtained data yielded a score of 0.76 for internal consistency, which was deemed high for the study. The research developed a structured questionnaire used for data collection. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher on the spot to the principals' in their offices in their schools. Yet those principals who were not disposed to fill the item for immediate retrieval, an appointment of revisit was

booked with the researcher and this exercise lasted for two weeks. The reason was to ensure and facilitate high return rate of the item for analysis.

Out of the 28 copies of the questionnaire administered, 27 copies were returned. These 27 copies representing 96 percent return rate of the questionnaire distributed were used for data analysis.

The data collected were analyzed using mean. The mean value was used to answer the research questions. The decision rule was done using the item by item and cluster mean both relative to real limits of the 4-point rating scale as shown below:

Response option	Values	Real Limit
Very High Extent	4	3.50-4.00
High Extent	3	2.50-3.49
Low Extent	2	1.50-2.49
Very Low Extent	1	0.50- 1.49

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do principals apply risk identification strategies for secondary school improvement in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Rating on the Extent Principals Apply Risk Identification Strategies for School Improvement

S/N	Item Statements	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	D
1.	Identifying school risks through brainstorming.	2	5	20	0	2.33	LE
2.	Providing an inventory of risks that are to the school	5	3	19	0	2.48	LE
3.	Defining risks specific to the school	0	4	23	0	2.17	LE
4.	Organizing workshops among staff to discuss the risk potential of the school.	0	8	17	2	2.23	LE
5.	Conducting self assessment test among determine risks that could impede the achievement of school goals.	5	3	19	0	2.48	LE
6.	Conducting interview sessions among staff different units to determine risks specific to each unit or department of the school.	2	5	20	0	2.33	LE
7.	Conducting a risk facilitated workshop comprising of team leaders or unit heads.	2	5	20	0	2.33	LE
8.	Ensuring that activities are safe and appropriate for the students' age	3	3	19	3	2.29	LE
9.	Undertaking a risk survey that includes a series of questions on both internal and external events that can be used effectively to identify risks.	5	3	19	0	2.48	LE
10.	Making sure that students are properly instructed and prepared for each school activities in the playground	0	8	17	2	2.23	LE
11.	Seeking the input of external consultants on risks peculiar to the school.	3	3	19	3	2.29	LE
	Cluster Mean					2.33	LE

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents opined that the respondents rated items 1-11 to a low extent with mean ratings ranging between 2.17 to 2.48. The cluster mean of 2.33 indicates that principals apply risk identification strategies for secondary school improvement in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State to a low extent.

Research Question 2

To what extent do principals apply risk analysis strategies for secondary school improvement in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents Mean Rating on the Extent Principals Apply Risk Analysis Strategies for School Improvement

S/NO	Item Statements	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	D
12.	Ranking of risks in the schools	0	2	18	7	1.81	VLE
13.	Adopting an impact probability scale for measuring risk	1	4	17	5	2.03	LE
14.	Mapping out the risks facing the school	1	6	20	0	2.29	LE
15.	Validating the impact and probability of risks	1	5	18	3	2.14	LE
16.	Determining measures for handling risk	0	3	23	1	2.07	LE
17	Undertaking a scenario analysis to identifying strategic risks where the situation is less defined and “what-if questions should be explored.	2	6	19	0	2.37	LE
18.	Ensuring that school facilities are safe for use	1	7	19	0	2.33	LE
19.	Putting rules to ensure safety measures are given high priority in the schools	0	4	23	0	2.14	LE
20.	Providing safety tool and gadgets for Students	2	1	22	2	2.11	LE
21	Conducting a SWOT (strengths- weaknesses- opportunities- threats) analysis to determine risk potentials of the school.	0	2	25	0	2.07	LE
Cluster Mean						2.13	LE

Data in Table 2 reveal that the respondents opined that the respondents rated items 12-21 to a low extent with mean ratings ranging between 1.81 to 2.37. The cluster mean of 2.13 indicates that principal apply risk analysis strategies for secondary school improvement in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State to a low extent.

Research Question 3

To what extent it do principals apply risk monitoring strategies for secondary school improvement in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 3: Respondents Mean Rating on the Extent Principals Apply Risk Monitoring Strategies for School Improvement

S/NO	Item Statements	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	D
22.	Building risk management vision, strategy and awareness for the school	0	3	24	0	2.11	LE
23.	Ensuring that the initial risk management foundation of structure, resources and operating model for the school are put in place	0	4	23	0	2.14	LE
24.	Aligning expectations through a risk management commitment in the school.	0	4	23	0	2.17	LE
25.	Engaging in specific risk issues to help fulfill the risk management commitment of the school.	2	1	22	2	2.11	LE
26.	Fully engaging all unit heads in the risk management process of the school.	1	4	17	5	2.03	LE
27	Enhancing risk management coordination with other organizations.	5	3	19	0	2.48	LE
28.	Ensuring that the school risk management is fully integrated with the school risk planning.	2	1	22	2	2.11	LE
Cluster Mean						2.16	LE

Data in Table 3 reveal that the respondents opined that the respondents rated items 12-21 with mean ratings ranging between 2.11 to 2.48 to a low extent. The cluster mean of 2.16 indicates that principals apply risk monitoring strategies for secondary school improvement in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State to a low extent.

Discussion

Findings revealed that principals of public secondary schools in riverine communities in Otuocha education Zone applied risk identification strategies to a low extent. This finding may have resulted because secondary school principals are not adequately trained on ways of managing risks exposures in and around the schools. This finding is in agreement with Rugar (2020) who noted that school administrators fail in the task of adequately managing risk within their school. Rugar highlighted the need for appropriately utilizing mechanism for efficiently managing risk in schools. Similarly, Wandee, Sirisuthi and Leamvijarn (2017) averred that secondary school administrators should engage in risk identification strategies that so as to be able to know the types and levels of risk their schools could be exposed to. This will assist school administrators in mapping out strategies to mitigate risk. Raji and Akanbi (2019) posited that several formalized risk identification methods are available to schools, and are usually used in combination to identify the broad school risk.

Findings revealed that principals of public secondary schools in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone applied risk analysis strategies to a low extent. Furthermore, findings of the study showed that risk analysis strategies like ranking of risks in the schools, adopting an impact probability scale for measuring risk, mapping out the risks facing the school, validating the impact and probability of risks and determining measures for handling risk were applied by principals of public secondary schools to a low extent. This finding is in disagreement with Chris (2012) revealed that secondary school principals applied risk analysis strategies such as having fire extinguishers, emergency team members available in the schools, dormitories in many schools had emergency doors. Again, most of the dormitories in the schools were fitted with emergency doors. This study is contradictory to the present study because the findings proved that there is proper management of risks in the public schools while the present study is working on the risk management strategies in public secondary schools. Furthermore, Nkporbu, Asuquo and Douglas (2016) opined that in carrying out risk analysis, all staff should be involved with analysing risk to ensure an understanding of each risk, its consequences and the likelihood of the risk occurring is prevented.

Findings revealed that principals of public secondary schools in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone applied risk monitoring strategies to a low extent. Findings further revealed that the

respondents applied risk monitoring strategies such as building risk management vision, strategy and awareness for the school; ensuring that the initial risk management foundation of structure, resources and operating model for the school are put in place, aligning expectations through a risk management commitment in the school, engaging in specific risk issues to help fulfill the risk management commitment of the school; fully engaging all unit heads in the risk management process of the school, enhancing risk management is fully coordination with other organizations and ensuring that the school risk management is fully integrated with the school risk planning to a low extent. This finding is in line with Edo, Umanah and Uzogara (2017) who noted the rate at which risks are managed in secondary schools is poor. Edo et al (2017) stated that principals and teachers' have roles in management of safety and management have significant relationship with the extent of teaching and learning in senior secondary schools. Similarly, Arop, Owan and Ekpang (2018) revealed a significant relationship between physical hazard management, psychological management, environmental hazard management, noise hazard management and teachers job effectiveness in terms of punctuality, classroom management, instructional delivery, lesson evaluation, dressing and record keeping respectively. Edo, Umanah and Uzogara (2017) recommended that secondary school administrators should adopt foolproof safety systems be designed and incorporated into the educational system to ensure the implementation of risk management and safety principles.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that principals of public secondary schools in riverine communities in Otuocha Education Zone do not apply risk management strategies for school improvement. It is therefore imperative that adequate measures need to put in place to improve on principals' application of risk management strategies given the plethora of risks the schools are exposed to.

Recommendations

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

1. The Post Primary School Service Commission should regularly organize in service training for secondary school principals that is targeted at improving the skills of principals on ways of identifying risks and threats in their schools.
2. Secondary school principals should contract the services of private risks management consultants to help the schools in analysing the identified

risks in the school and suggest possible solutions for managing risks.

3. Secondary school principals should consistently carry out risk monitoring drills and activities in their schools. This will keep them update on the level of risk readiness of their schools and areas where improvements need to be made.

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