

Assessment of Awareness of Legal Duties of School Personnel in Secondary Schools in Kebbi State, Nigeria

SANI DANTANI MANGA

Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria.

Abstract. This paper assessed the awareness of legal duties of school personnel in secondary schools in Kebbi State, Nigeria. The paper raised three research questions focusing on legal duties of teachers, school administrators and students. In conducting this study a descriptive survey design was used. A validated instrument titled: Assessment of Legal Duties of School Personnel Questionnaire (ALSPQ) with a reliability index of 0.83 was used to collect. A population of 400 participants from four Education Zones of Kebbi State made up of 20 Principals and 60 Vice Principals was deliberately selected, while 120 Teachers and 200 Students were selected by Stratified and Simple Random Sampling Techniques. The instrument was based on a 4 point Likert Scale with Criterion Mean of 2.50 for acceptance and rejection. Mean Set was used to determine Rank Order of items while Aggregate Mean Set was used to decide on the level of awareness. The findings indicated that teachers, principals and students had a good awareness of their legal duties. The paper therefore recommended the continuous improvement of awareness of legal duties through seminars; workshops; training of school principals on Education Law as well as updating Students Handbook to upgrade rules and penalties for violation.

Keywords: Legal Duties, School Personnel, Awareness, Education Law.

1. Introduction

The survival and progress of schools depends largely on the extent to which schools personnel perform their duties efficiently and effectively. But the satisfactory fulfilment of duty to a large extent depends on the level of awareness school administrators, teachers and students have on the duties imposed on them by law (McLeod, 2003). Education Law as expressed in policies, rules and school regulations describes what should be done and what should not be done by school personnel for the smooth managing of school affairs (Ogunu, 2015). Awareness of legal duties that fall within the purview of every school personnel is necessary to avoid cases of negligence, breach of contract and other actions that might lead to legal entanglements (Barrel, 2005). School personnel in this paper refer to teachers, school administrators, and students. Staff comprises of teachers and school administrators. Awareness is the level of consciousness of one's legal responsibilities.

1.1 Statement of Problem

It is generally assumed that all teachers, students and school administrators are aware of their legal duties as spelt out in student handbooks, staff regulations and other laws that guide academic and co-curricular activities in the school system. Anuna (2004) however, noted that there is a high level of ignorance among teachers and students on the scope of their legal duties. That is probably the reason why there are increasing cases of negligence of duty by

teachers, misconduct by students, as well as violation of due process by some school administrators. Thus, the main thrust of this study is to assess the level of awareness of legal duties of school principals, teachers and students in secondary schools in Kebbi State. This is with a view to increasing the level of awareness of school personnel on the scope of their legal duties so as to enhance satisfactory fulfillment of their obligations.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this paper include:

- To find out the level of awareness of staff and students on the legal duties of teachers in secondary schools in Kebbi State.
- To investigate the level of awareness of staff and students in the legal duties of school administrators in secondary schools in Kebbi State.
- To ascertain the level of awareness of staff and students on the legal duties of students in secondary schools in Kebbi State.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study.

- What is the level of awareness of staff and students on the legal duties of teachers in secondary schools in Kebbi State?
- What is the level of awareness of staff and students on the legal duties of school administrators in secondary schools in Kebbi State?
- What is the level of awareness of staff and students on the legal duties of students in Kebbi State?

2. Review of Related Literature

Teachers play a significant role in the success of school policies and programme. In this regard, they must be fully aware of their duties and responsibilities. According to Alexander (2008),

the first legal duty of teachers is to attend classes regularly and punctually every working day of the week. Fuller (2009) pointed out that the primary duty of teachers is to teach efficiently and effectively. In addition, teachers have the legal duties to engage in continuous assessment of students by way of assignments, tests and examinations (Fisher 2007). According to Hamilton (2010) teachers are expected by law to process student's examination results promptly and release the result in record time. Jennings (2015) stated that teachers are expected to keep and update relevant school records within their line of duty. Manga (2018) outlined teacher's legal duties to include exercising reasonable care to ensure the safety and security of students under their care; discipline erring students; render community service in their area of specialization; as well as maintenance of school property and facilities in their care. Malemi (2017) opines that teachers have a legal duty to participate actively in all school co-curricular activities as well as diligently discharge all additional responsibilities and ad hoc duties that might be assigned to them by the school head.

School administrators' job is guided by law. According to Nwagwu (2007), the legal duties of school administrators include the formulation of plans and policies; enforcement of rules and regulations that will guide the activities and conduct of staff and students; assigning duties, tasks and responsibilities to teachers and non-teaching staff; directing all academics and co-curricular activities and supervision of all school personnel. Obilade (2009) notes that school heads, have the duty to discipline staff and students; Cather for their welfare and ensure the security of lives and property in the school environment. Okonkwo (2010) stated that school administrators have legal duty to keep custody of vital records, manage school finances, ensure proper utilization and maintenance of school facilities as well as protect the image of the school. Sagay (2007) highlighted school administrator's duties to include: maintaining cordial school-communal relations as well as ensuring the attainment of the vision and mission of the school within the context of national philosophy and societal expectations.

Students are the number one beneficiaries of the education system and such; they have legal duties and responsibility for attainment of educational goals. Ujo (2007) notes that the fundamental legal duties of students include attending school and lessons regularly and punctually; do all their assignments, tests and examinations in accordance with the rules and regulations. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN, 2004) states that students must at all conduct themselves in orderly manner. They are expected to observe safety regulations, report security threats and obey school rules and regulations (Ogunu, 2015; Tsav, 2017 & Madumere, 2007).

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 400 students and 200 staff from 20 secondary schools drawn from four Educational Zones in Kebbi State. The school comprises of those in urban and rural areas, Day and Boarding schools, as well as single sex and mixed sexed schools. They also include Science Schools, Technical Colleges and Grammar Schools. The staff comprises of Principals, Vice Principals and teachers of various specializations and qualifications. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 20 schools. Purposive sampling was used to select all the 20 principals and 60 vice principals. Deliberate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 120 teachers and 400 students. This gives a total population sample of 600 participants.

A researcher designed questionnaire titled: Awareness of Legal Duties of School Personnel Questionnaire

(ALDSPQ) with three sections was used to collect data. The instrument was validated by experts in Education Law. Test re-test method was used to obtain a reliability index of 0.83 using Pearson Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 alpha level. A four point Likert Scale was used and Criterion Mean of 2.50 and above was used for acceptance, while below 2.50 was used for rejection. The Mean Set of the two groups was used to determine the Rank Order of the items while the Aggregate Mean of all the items was used to determine the level of awareness. And aggregate mean of 2.50 and above indicated high awareness while below 2.50 indicated poor awareness. Trained research assistants were used to administer the instruments on the selected schools. All the copies of the instrument administered where retrieved and used for the analysis.

4. Results

Results of research questions one to three were presented and analyzed in tables one to three.

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of staff and students on the legal duties of teachers in secondary schools in Kebbi state?

This research question was answered and presented in table 1.

Table 1: Awareness of Legal Duties of Teachers in Secondary Schools in Kebbi State.

S/N	Legal Duties of Teachers	Staff		Students		Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		\bar{x}_1	SD	\bar{x}_2	SD			
1	Attend school and class regularly	3.80	0.80	2.75	0.67	3.28	2 nd	Accept
2	Attend school and class punctually	3.04	0.65	3.12	0.72	3.08	6 th	Accept
3	Teach efficiently and effectively	3.19	0.89	3.14	0.78	3.16	4 th	Accept
4	Assess and examine students	2.68	0.83	2.80	0.81	2.74	11 th	Accept
5	Process and release results promptly	3.31	0.74	3.38	0.61	3.35	1 st	Accept
6	Keep and update school records	3.00	0.71	2.93	0.74	2.97	7 th	Accept
7	Ensure student safety and security	2.85	0.81	3.01	0.72	2.93	9 th	Accept
8	Discipline erring students	3.05	0.66	2.74	0.75	2.90	10 th	Accept
9	Participate in co-curricular activities	3.20	0.90	3.13	0.82	3.17	3 rd	Accept
10	Discharge additional responsibilities	2.75	0.84	3.15	0.77	2.95	8 th	Accept
11	Render community service	3.33	0.64	2.87	0.63	3.10	5 th	Accept
Aggregate Mean Set		3.10	0.77	3.00	0.72	2.81		Accept

Table 1 indicates that all items had mean set above the criterion mean of 2.50. They were all accepted as legal duties of teachers in secondary schools in Kebbi State. The Aggregate Mean Set of 2.81 suggests that teachers in secondary school in Kebbi State have a high level of awareness of their legal duties.

Research Question 2: What is the level of awareness of staff and students on the legal duties of school administration in secondary schools in Kebbi state?

This research question was answered and presented on table 2.

Table 2: Awareness of Legal Duties of School Administrators in Secondary Schools in Kebbi State.

S/N	Legal Duties of School Administrators	Staff		Students		Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		\bar{x}_1	SD	\bar{x}_2	SD			
1	Attend office regularly and punctually	2.90	0.89	2.89	0.66	2.90	1 st	Accept
2	Formulates rules and regulations	2.55	0.70	2.84	0.72	2.70	7 th	Accept
3	Enforce rules and regulations	2.80	0.60	2.79	0.78	2.80	4 th	Accept
4	Assign duties, tasks and responsibilities	2.65	0.81	2.64	0.81	2.65	9 th	Accept
5	Direct and supervise school activities	2.70	0.88	2.69	0.61	2.69	8 th	Accept
6	Resolves conflicts	2.75	0.75	2.74	0.74	2.75	6 th	Accept
7	Discipline erring staff and students	2.60	0.80	2.59	0.72	2.60	11 th	Accept
8	Cater for welfare of staff and students	2.85	0.90	2.85	0.82	2.85	2 nd	Accept
9	Keep custody of vital school records	2.57	0.77	2.56	0.85	2.57	12 th	Accept
10	Manage school finances	2.76	0.61	2.76	0.86	2.76	5 th	Accept
11	Ensure safety and security all	2.63	0.83	2.62	0.76	2.63	10 th	Accept
12	Maintain school facilities	2.84	0.78	2.83	0.77	2.84	3 rd	Accept
13	Maintain school-community relationship	2.55	0.75	2.54	0.73	2.55	13 th	Accept
14	Attainment of school vision and mission	2.50	0.65	2.51	0.70	2.51	14 th	Accept
Aggregate Mean Set		2.69	0.77	2.70	0.75	2.60		Accept

Table 2 shows that all items had the mean set score above the criterion mean 2.50. They were accepted as legal duties of school administrators in secondary schools in Kebbi state. The Aggregate Mean Set of 2.60 suggests that school administrators in Kebbi State secondary schools have a high awareness of their legal duties.

Research Question 3: What is the level of awareness of staff and students on legal duties of students in secondary schools in Kebbi state?

This research question was answered and presented in table 3.

Table 3: Awareness of Legal Duties of Students in Secondary Schools in Kebbi State

S/N	Legal Duties of Students	Staff		Students		Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		\bar{x}_1	SD	\bar{x}_2	SD			
1	Attend school and lessons regularly	3.33	0.64	2.87	0.63	3.10	6 th	Accept
2	Attend school classes punctually	2.75	0.84	3.15	0.77	2.95	9 th	Accept
3	Do assignment, tests and examinations	3.20	0.90	3.13	0.82	3.18	3 rd	Accept
4	Maintain orderly conduct at all times	3.05	0.66	2.74	0.75	2.90	11 th	Accept
5	Observe safety regulations	2.85	0.81	3.01	0.72	2.93	10 th	Accept
6	Obey school rules and regulations	3.00	0.71	2.93	0.74	2.97	8 th	Accept
7	Pay required school fees	3.31	0.74	3.38	0.61	3.35	1 st	Accept
8	Maintain a clean school environment	2.68	0.83	2.80	0.81	2.74	12 th	Accept
9	Attend to co-curricular activities	3.19	0.89	3.14	0.78	3.17	4 th	Accept
10	Be security conscious	3.17	0.87	3.16	0.79	3.16	5 th	Accept
11	Protect the good image of the school	3.80	0.80	2.75	0.67	3.28	2 nd	Accept
12	Obey established school routine	3.13	0.81	2.78	0.70	3.06	7 th	Accept
Aggregate Mean Set		3.12	0.79	3.07	0.67	3.30		Accept

Table 3 shows that all the items had mean set above the criterion mean of 2.50. They were all accepted as legal duties of students in secondary schools in Kebbi state. The Aggregate Mean Set of 3.30 suggests that students in secondary school in Kebbi State are highly aware of their legal duties.

5. Discussions of Findings

The first finding of this study shows that both staff and students have good awareness of the legal duties of teachers in secondary schools in Kebbi state. This finding is in line with Alexandra (2008), Fuller (2009), Bernard (2005), Hamilton (2010) and Jennings (2015) all of who agreed that the legal duties of teachers include attendance of school and classes; teaching; examinations; record keeping; discipline of students; ensuring student's safety and security; performance of community service; and other ad hoc responsibilities. But the fact that several cases of negligence of duty by teachers abound in schools is a pointer that poor performance of duty is caused by other factors rather than ignorance of their legal duties. The causes of negligence of duty could stem from deliberate acts of omission or commission; corruption; indiscipline; lack of interest on the job; and professional incompetence among others.

The second finding of this study shows that school administrators in secondary schools in Kebbi have a good awareness of their legal duties. This agrees with Nwagwu (2007), Obilade (2009) Okonkwo (2010) and Sagay (2007) who posited that the duties of school administrators include formulation of plans and policies; directing all school activities; supervision of staff and students; as well as management of human, material and financial resources. This suggests that if there are cases of dereliction of duty by school administrators, it may not be due to lack of awareness but due to intervening factors not captured in this study. Some of the cause of negligence of duty by school administrators could be due to deliberate actions; non-challant attitude; external pressures; and poor managerial abilities among others.

The third finding of this study shows that students in secondary schools in Kebbi State are aware of their legal duties. This finding agrees with Iyo (2007), Ogunu (2015), Tsav (2017). This finding is supervising considering rampant cases of gross misconduct, truancy and disobedience exhibited across the school. It suggests that neglect of their legal duties probably stems from deliberate volition; peer

influence; lack of severe penalties and other factors not investigated by this study.

6. Conclusion

This study found that teachers, students and school administrators in secondary schools in Kebbi state are aware of their respective legal duties. In spite of their awareness there are still rampant cases of negligence of duty by teachers, school administrators and students in some schools. The violating of legal duties is not due to ignorance of legal duties but probably due to other factors not investigated by this study.

7. Recommendations

- Teacher awareness of legal duties should be improved by giving them opportunity to attend seminars, workshop and teaching programmes on Education Law.
- School administrators should be encouraged to pursue postgraduate programmes in the area of Educational Management so as to expose them to sound theoretical knowledge of education law for proper application in School Administration.
- Student Handbook should be regularly updated to provide more comprehensive rules and penalties for violation of school laws.

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