

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN COUNSELLING FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN BENU STATE

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**Abstract:** The study examined ethical considerations in counseling for primary school administration in Benue state. The study was a descriptive survey. The population of the study comprised 126 primary school head-teachers and 1,242 primary school teachers in public primary schools in Benue state. Out of the population, samples of 18 head-teachers and 198 teachers were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was 24-item questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-statistic. The finding of the study shows that excellent ethical exemplary behaviour, profession knowledge on ethical issues and moral sensitivity are the issues to be considered in school discipline. The results of the study also indicates zero tolerance to examination malpractices, punctuality to examination venues, conducive examination hall and communication of examination values as ethical considerations in the administration of examination in primary school in Benue state. It was recommended that Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria should ensure that teachers comply with the code of conduct that guides teachers on school disciplinary problems. It was also recommended that Benue state Examination Board should spell out examination ethics clearly to both teachers and students.

**Keywords:** Ethical, Counselling, School and Administration

### Introduction

Education is the medium for transformation and the main tool for accelerating individual, societal and national development. Education is a pillar on which all other developmental components are hinged. However, it seems that teachers in public schools in Nigeria, Benue State in particular have abdicated their responsibilities to hawking and are preoccupied with money-making ventures with little attention to the teaching job. Teachers and school proprietors have devised ingenious means of extracting money from parents and students. These tend to have negative effect on academic performance of students. According to West African Examination Council, more candidates fail in their examination due to lack of quality teaching compared to what most adults got during their school days. Kanu and Ursula (2012) observed that in Nigeria, students are under compulsion to buy learning materials from teachers, teachers asking for sex in exchange for mark in institutions of learning, primary schools inclusive.

Primary education as the name implies is prime and needs attention. National Policy on Education (FRN, 2012) defines primary education as education given in institutions of learning for children aged 6-11 years. Opoh, Okou and Ubung (2014) define primary education as the first stage six years of the nine years of basic education. In the context of this paper, primary education implies the basic and fundamental education the child received in preparation for secondary education. A sound primary education is a pre-requisite to a sound secondary and tertiary education. Maduewesi (2005) revealed that children need a sound primary education as much as house needs real solid foundation in order to stand. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2012) stated that the objectives of primary education as:

- Inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and ability to communicate
- Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
- Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation
- Mould the character and develop sound attitude in the child
- Give the child opportunity for developing skills

- Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement.

Achieving the above objectives requires commitment of teachers in training and preparing the individual child at the primary school with a strict adherence to set down rules and regulation. The teacher is required to conduct classroom activities in accordance to the ethics of the teaching profession and ethical conducts as enunciated in the National Policy on Education 2012.

Ethics is a concept that does not have a broadly and generally acceptable definition. Alutu and Aluede (2005) defines ethic as a laid down guidelines, principles, codes of conducts, rules and regulations guiding behaviour of a group or an organization. Collins (2001) defines ethics as a moral principle or a set of moral values held by an individual. In the context of this paper, ethics connotes the guidelines or rules of conduct by which primary school teachers' aim to live, exhibit positive character and socialize with primary school pupils. The primary school teacher must perform their professional duties within the context of the school administration.

Administration is the fulcrum of any organization the school inclusive. Peretomode in Ochai (2012) defines administration as a discipline that is concerned with facilitating accomplishment of the school organization through systematic utilization of the available human and material resources. In the context of this paper, administration refers to an individual who by virtue of occupation initiate, plan, organize, direct and unifies human and material resources towards inculcating discipline in the early life of the child.

Discipline and ethics are issues that tend to undermine the administration of primary education. Ajayi and Adeniji (2009) define discipline as the training of the individual to produce a specific character or pattern. Discipline can be viewed from either negative or positive perspective. Unethical conduct in primary school can lead to indiscipline. Alhassan in Oghuvbu and Okpilike (2012) identified truancy, lateness to school, cheating at examination, indecent dressing, and drug abuse and student unrest as unethical issues that generate indiscipline. Indiscipline interferes with the learning of pupil. Oghuvbu and Okpilike (2012) argued that a primary school where unethical practice is highly in operation such school cannot produce disciplined and quality primary school leavers. Benniga (2003) observed that teachers with high level of moral professionalism have the responsibility to help the pupil learn instruction for self - discipline. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2012) emphasizes respect for the worth and dignity of the individual learners. The National Policy on Education promote ethics of discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, self -respect and patriotism in classroom teaching, learning and in the conduct of school examinations.

Examinations occupy an important position in primary school administration. Nweze (2009) defines examination as the passing of value judgment on an individual, on the basis of the individual performance in a set of questions, statement or series of tasks given, with the intention of assessing how much of a desire trait, skill or knowledge the individual possesses. The moral principles, rules and regulations for conducting examination must be adhered to and not truncated by either the student or the teachers. Article 39 of the Teachers Code of Conduct states that teacher should keep all examination records and knowledge at their disposal with absolute secrecy. It is expected that the teacher set examination questions on the level of the learner and be based on what the teacher taught.

Base more in Ajibola and Ali (2014) posits that safe environment for examination depends on students, parents and staff. Every student has the right to study, learn and write examination in an environment free from threat, intimidation and bullying. The students have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity in the administration of examination. Terry (2004) maintained that every school has rules and regulation that guide the conduct of examination. The school makes reasonable rules for the good order of the school and for smooth administration of examinations. However, it has been observed that anomalies exist in primary school organization in Benue state because of unethical behaviours. It became necessary to conduct a study on ethical considerations in primary school administration in Benue state.

## Statement of the Problem

The enormous increase of unethical conduct in primary school administration has been observed by many educationists. This has negative consequences on moral development, societal value, conducts of examination and academic performance of the learners. The increase rate of indecent dressing, examination malpractices, school drop-out, lackadaisical attitude to work, extortion of cash, sexual harassment and secret cult activities are unethical activities in public primary schools in Benue State. Since students, parents, and teachers have continued to decry

this poor state of school administration, the study is a response to this challenge by striving to investigate ethical considerations on primary school administration in Benue State.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate ethical considerations in primary school administration in Benue State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Find out ethical considerations on school discipline in primary school in Benue State.
2. Ascertain ethical considerations on administration of examination in primary school administration in Benue State.

### Researcher Questions

The following researcher questions guided the study.

1. What are the ethical considerations on school discipline in primary school in Benue State?
2. What are the ethical considerations on administration of examination in primary school in Benue State?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Ethical consideration has no significance on school discipline in primary school in Benue State.
2. Ethical consideration has no significance on administration of examination in primary school in Benue State.

### Methodology

The research is a survey design aimed at ascertaining ethical considerations in primary school administration in Benue State. Benue state has three Senatorial District Zone A, B and C). The study was carried out in Zone B Senatorial District. Zone B has seven local government areas.

The population of the study consist 126 primary school head-teachers and 1,242 teachers. The respondents were chosen in order to ensure that those used for the study were sufficiently knowledgeable on the variables used and could supply useful information on the research instrument.

The sample of the study comprises 216 primary school head-teachers and teachers (18 head-teachers and 198 primary school teachers) in zone B Senatorial District of Benue state. Applying proportionate random sampling technique three local governments were selected from the seven local governments areas. Six schools were randomly selected. 11 primary school teachers were selected from each local government area making a total of 198 teachers and 18 head-teachers with a total sample of 216 respondents.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher's developed questionnaire titled: Ethical Consideration Questionnaire. A twenty-four item survey questionnaire was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agreed, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The items on the questionnaire were developed based on information obtained from the literature reviewed and was based on the two research questions that guided the study. The items on the questionnaire elicit information on ethical considerations in primary school administration in Benue State.

The research instrument was validated by experts from University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State. The validated instrument was trial-test with teachers that possess the same characteristics with primary school teachers in Zone B Senatorial District of Benue State. This was done to ensure the reliability of the instrument.

The validated instrument was analyzed using Cronbach alpha method. The reliability co-efficient was 0.79, this indicated that the instrument is reliability and can measure what is expected to measure. Two research assistants

were instructed and employed in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. This was done to ensure that the entire questionnaire were duly completed and returned.

Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The t-test statistic was used to answer the two null hypotheses formulated for the study. The level of significance was set at 0.05 with 214 as degree of freedom. The null hypotheses were rejected if the t-calculated is equal or higher than the table value. A mean score less than 2.50 was adjusted rejected and a mean score of 2.50 and above constitutes accepted.

## Results

The results are presented in table 1-4 according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study. Researcher Question 1: What are the ethical considerations in school discipline in primary schools in Benue State?

**Table 1: Responses on Ethical Considerations in School Discipline**

S/N	ITEMS	Head Teachers			Teachers		
		X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec
1	Rules and regulations to guide staff and students	2.25	0.48	Agree	3.83	0.32	Agree
2	Observe school policies	3.50	0.50	Agree	3.61	0.31	Agree
3	Excellent ethical exemplary behaviours	3.35	0.48	Agree	3.25	0.30	Agree
4	Professional knowledge on ethical values	3.50	0.50	Agree	3.52	0.31	Agree
5	Corporate culture founded on ethical and moral values	2.85	0.45	Agree	3.00	0.28	Agree
6	Staff with record of integrity	3.50	0.50	Agree	3.38	0.30	Agree
7	Matured personality for responsibility	3.28	0.48	Agree	3.48	0.31	Agree
8	Punishment in regards to rules and regulation	2.50	0.42	Agree	3.61	0.31	Agree
9	Explicit statement of the school intents and expects	2.57	0.42	Agree	3.11	0.29	Agree
10	Training of the mind to understand the school system	3.35	0.48	Agree	3.55	0.31	Agree
11	Strong stand on ethical issues	3.35	0.48	Agree	3.44	0.30	Agree
12	Avenue for moral sensitivity	3.28	0.48	Agree	3.61	0.31	Agree
<b>Grand Total</b>		3.19	0.42	Agree	3.44	0.30	Agree

Table 1 reveals the responses of head teachers and teachers on ethical considerations on school discipline in primary school administration. A look at the table indicates that both primary school-head teachers and the teachers agreed to all the items on the table as ethical considerations in school discipline in primary school administration.

**Research Question 2:** What are the ethical considerations in the administration of examination in primary schools in Benue State?

Table 2: Responses on Ethical Consideration in Administration of Examination

S/N	ITEMS	Head Teachers			Teachers		
		X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec
13	Zero tolerance to exam malpractices	3.00	0.46	Agree	3.52	0.31	Agree
14	Test construction centered on level of students	3.57	0.50	Agree	3.25	0.30	Agree
15	Obedience to examination rules and regulations	3.92	0.52	Agree	3.91	0.32	Agree
16	Communication of examination values to students	3.57	0.50	Agree	3.38	0.30	Agree
17	Makes student active participant in teaching cur learning	3.50	0.50	Agree	4.08	0.33	Agree
18	Sufficient exam question papers and answer scripts	3.85	0.52	Agree	3.69	0.32	Agree
19	Conducive examination hall (environment)	3.78	0.51	Agree	3.52	0.31	Agree
20	Appropriate class size for each exam	3.35	0.48	Agree	3.86	0.32	Agree
21	Seventy five percent (75%) class attendance	3.64	0.50	Agree	3.41	0.30	Agree
22	Proper sitting arrangement	3.50	0.50	Agree	3.72	0.32	Agree
23	Punctuality to examination venue	3.35	0.48	Agree	3.38	0.32	Agree
24	Sufficient time allocation for exam	4.00	0.53	Agree	3.77	0.32	Agree
<b>Grand Total</b>		3.58	0.54	Agree	3.66	0.30	Agree

Table 2 indicates the views of head-teachers and teachers on ethical considerations on the administration of examination in primary schools. The mean response of head teachers and teachers are above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, both head-teachers and teachers agreed to all the items on the table as ethical considerations on the administration of examination in public primary schools in Benue state.

**Hypothesis 1:** Ethical consideration has no significance on school discipline in primary schools in Benue State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis on Ethical Consideration on School Discipline

S/N	Source	No	X	SD	df	Critical value	Table value	Level of Sign.
1	Head Teachers	18	3.55	0.63				
2	Teachers	198	2.61	0.40	214	2.42	1.96	Significant

Table 3 reveals that the calculated value is 2.42 at 214 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance is higher than the table value of 1.96. Since the calculated value is higher than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected as postulated. Therefore, ethical considerations are significance in school discipline in primary school

administration.

**Hypothesis 1:** Ethical consideration has no significance on administration of examination in primary schools.

**Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis on Ethical Consideration on Administration of Exam**

S/N	Source	No	X	SD	df	Critical value	Table value	Level of Sign.
1	Head Teachers	18	3.58	0.54				
2	Teachers	198	3.66	0.31	214	2.45	1.96	Significant

Table 4 indicate that the calculated value of 2.45 is higher than the table value of 1.96 at 214 degree of freedom and at 0,05 level of significance. Since the table value is less than the calculated value, the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that ethical considerations are significance on the administration of examination in primary schools in Benue state.

## Discussion

From the result of the analysis made, it is obvious that there are similarities between the responses of head-teachers and teachers. The result of research question one indicated that ethical considerations on school discipline include, rules and regulations to guide staff and students, observe school policies, professional knowledge on ethical issues and strong stand on ethical issues. The finding is in line with Ajibola and Ali (2014) who observed that student misbehavior is a prevailing problem affecting school not only in Nigeria but across many nations in the world. Staff and students misconduct in the classroom interferes with teaching and the learning process. Misbehavior is thought to be precursor to school drop-out and similar negative social outcomes among teachers and students.

The result from the respondents disagrees with the hypothesis made that ethical consideration has no significance on school discipline in primary school. The result of the analytical finding is in supportive in rejecting the null hypothesis stated above. Therefore, ethical consideration has significance on school discipline in primary school administration in Benue state.

The finding on ethical consideration on the administration of examination indicates zero tolerance to examination malpractices, test construction centered on level of learner, obedience to examination rules and regulations and punctuality to examination venues. The finding is in agreement with Nweze (2009) who revealed that ethical principle guide the management of examinations whether at the formal or informal level of education. Article 39 of Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria Code of Conduct states that teacher should keep all examination records with absolute secrecy and should not in any manner whatsoever aid and abet examination malpractice. Management of examination becomes a vital issue to be seriously considered if the examination result is to be both valid and reliable. The result from the respondents disagrees with the second hypothesis which stated that ethical consideration has no significance on administration of examination in Primary School in Benue state.

## Conclusion

Considering the findings of the study, it was concluded that ethical consideration could lead to effective school discipline. This evidence in the findings of the study which indicated establishment of rules and regulation to guide both staff and students, observation of school policies and professional knowledge on ethical issues. However, a reliable and valid result lies on zero tolerance to examination malpractices, test construction being centered on levels of learners and punctuality to examination venue. The findings have left the researchers to conclude that ethical consideration is significantly related to effective primary school administration in Benue state.



## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made bearing in mind the importance of ethics in school administration.

1. Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria should ensure that teachers all over the country comply with the teachers' professional code of conducts in schools. This will ensure justices in school disciplinary problems.
2. Benue State Examination Board should spell out examination ethics clearly before the teachers. This will guide the conduct of both teachers and students in the conduct of examinations.

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