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## Basics in Educational Administration and Planning to Strengthen Practice for Beginners

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### Abstract

This paper is focused on providing simplistic but comprehensive explanations on the fundamental underpinnings in educational administration and planning. Its major purpose is to meet the needs of entry level students/beginners and other novices in the educational enterprise, who have difficulties understanding the presentations in core textbooks on the subject matter. The paper discusses important topics such as the dynamics of the administrative process, the school and the processes for educating, planning and the educational planning process among other things. It also attempts to link success in achieving educational goals with effective school administration and planning with the ultimate attainment of societal needs and aspirations. The article should not be seen as an attempt to replace the textbooks in the field, but is offered as an appetizer to arouse and maintain the interest of knowledge seekers and to point them to the richness in the major texts on the subject matter. It is therefore so recommended.

**Keywords:** Educational Administration, Educational Planning, Thoughts, Beginners, Strengthen Practice.

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### INTRODUCTION

Self-preservation is one of the critical laws of nature. Thus, human societies do not just fold their arms and stand by to watch themselves go into extinction. They make necessary efforts to ensure the continuity of their societies. It is therefore not uncommon for nations while defending their territories and sovereignties from internal and external aggression to also strive to improve the living conditions of their citizens by implementing strategic plans which will usher in growth and development.

Two major ingredients are for this survival. First, the ability to procreate and maintain a dynamic population while the second is the ability to adapt to the environment by developing and utilizing the available resources. The first aspect is usually taken care of by the natural processes of procreation which ensures the continuity of the human species. Nations whose citizens disregard this natural phenomenon would have a diminished human population that could threaten their very existence. To meet the second need, nations make deliberate plans to develop their societies, through conquest of their environments and to pass on their accumulated knowledge, skills, history and technical know-how to succeeding generations. This, they deliberately do through nurturing and training to prepare citizens for adult roles in the future societies. This, in summary, is what the various processes of education accomplishes in societies of the world. Nations who neglect to make concrete educational plans to develop their citizens are disadvantaged and maybe unable to favourably compete with other nations. The burden of this paper is to provide simplified, intelligent and

insightful appreciation of the meaning of educational administration, the environment in which schools function, how educational processes are administered, what administrators do in school organizations, how to make educational plans and some of the factors that militate against educational planning in Nigeria.

To educate, involves the processes of teaching and learning; the ultimate goal of which is to bring about changes in the behaviour and attitudes of the recipients. Several nations have employed the instrumentality of education with measurable indices in preparing their citizens for effective living, thus assuring the continuity and successes of future generations. Education has therefore come to be regarded by many scholars as a veritable tool for sustainable development of nations.

### **Educational Administration and the Processes for Educating**

Educational administration exists as a process that directs and takes charge of planned educational endeavours. As societies grow and develop, the needs and aspirations of those societies which can only be transmitted by education become prominent as the society strives to prepare its young for adult life. In gaining prominence and acceptability, these needs evolve and eventually develop into educational goals. When a system is supported by specific policies and plans, it achieves the identified goals. These goals provide the framework for the identification of relevant personnel to perform identified tasks, organized into jobs and positions to facilitate the achievement of the goals. The system is organized into a network that would require specific material resources to perform the tasks effectively. For this system to function maximally leaders are needed in the system. The roles of the leaders are to plan, organize, coordinate and supervise the activities of this “entity” or ‘organized whole’. The execution of the tasks, management of the complex network of interrelationships and the available resources towards achieving the predetermined goals of education, is what educational administration sets out to achieve. Consequently, several countries around the world, create educational systems and organizations that support the achievement of the predetermined educational goals, in a bid to provide formal education for their citizens. It is therefore not uncommon to find educational systems organized into various levels and programmes drawn up to meet the needs and aspirations of these nations.

Nigeria has three distinct levels of organization for its formal system of education. These are the Basic, Secondary and Tertiary levels. Recently, the Pre-primary or Early childhood level of schooling has received a lot of attention from Educational planners and researchers. The goals, curriculum and learning activities are now being integrated to the existing system streamlined to meet the specific needs of the pre-school child in the educational system. Thus Early childhood education has been recognized as another level in the Nigerian Educational System. In addition, the Primary and Junior Secondary levels have been merged into what is now referred to as Basic Education which comprises of Basic Classes 1-9. For effective management, the planners of the Basic Education Programme have explained that this organizational arrangement has allowed the system to be managed as a single entity thus creating room for greater effectiveness (FRN, 2014). Other forms of education that were not originally part of the established three levels, have also been brought in and have also developed over time to meet the specific needs of other categories of citizens not taken care of in the previous arrangement. The following organized structures have been developed to manage the processes in order to ensure effectiveness and cater for the need of all citizens. They include:

- Nomadic/Migrant Fishermen Education;
- Non-formal education;

- Adult education;
- Technical Education;
- Vocational Education;
- Special education; and
- Teacher education.

Whatever the nomenclature, formal structures have been put in place at each level and resources provided, to enable the management of the systems to achieve predetermined educational goals.

### Schools as Open Systems

At a general level according to Hoy and Miskel (2001), educational organisations such as schools, are easily pictured as open systems.

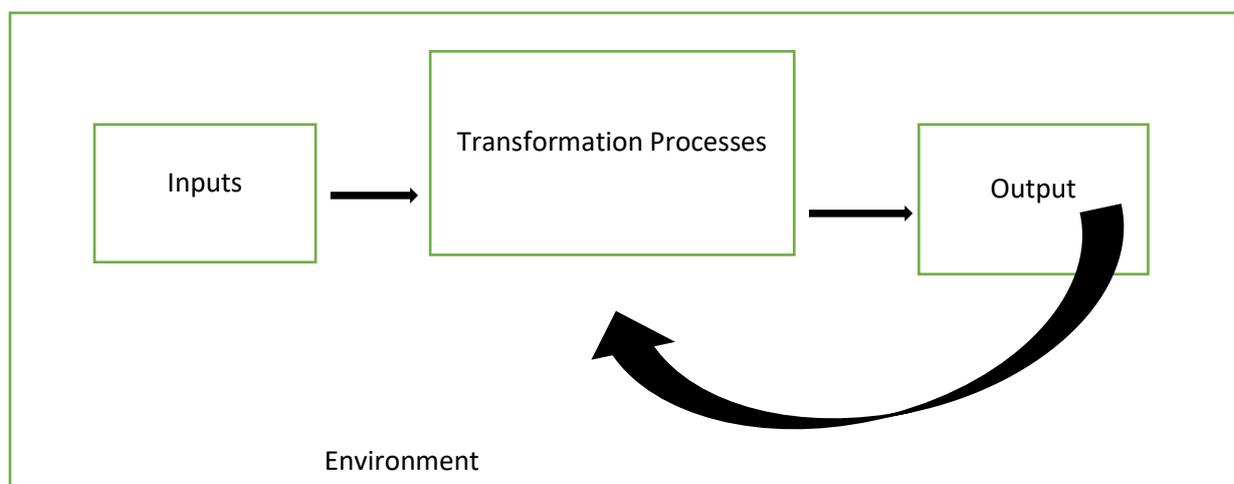


Figure 1: A simple illustration of the components of a school as an open System  
Source: Adapted from Hoy and Miskel (2001, p. 19).

Figure 1 is a simple illustration of the components of an open system. The inputs include the students, all employees and other resources that are fed into the system. The inputs pass through the transformation processes constituting the interplay of the individuals, bureaucracies, culture and politics within the system. The resultant outcome constitutes the output, which incidentally are the products and services that leave the system into the environment or the society. The arrow pointing from the output back into the transformation processes, in the figure, is the feedback loop; a mechanism that brings information back into the system in respect of the quality of the products or services. The feedback can be used to make needed changes to improve the quality of the products or services. The environment component consists of individuals or groups that relate with the organization in one way or another. The school organization here is an open system because information flows freely from the school to its external environment and from its environment back into the internal arrangement of the system. As open systems, schools have the following characteristics:

- Schools have people who perform different roles; some are the administrators, teachers, students and other personnel.
- The school is structured into many parts also referred to as departments or units and the activities of one part affect the functioning of the other parts.

- Schools have goals to achieve; the core of which is teaching and learning to prepare students for future adult roles in their societies.
- Formal rules and regulations are in place to control behaviour. When people relate in the work environment, systems of informal norms and interrelations also develop. These informal norms are sometimes very strong and powerful to the extent that they threaten the formal structures and sometimes attempt to control the behaviour of workers in the system. Thus the system of informal relationships has certain implications for the growth of the organisation and must be seen for what it is and carefully managed by the administrators to maintain a stable environment for the entire group.
- Schools have distinct cultures. These are dominant sets of shared values, ways of living and ways of doing things. The culture quickly develops as people interact within the internal work environment.
- Schools are influenced by their external environments. The environment of the school consists of individuals or groups, external to the school which relate with the school in one way or another. Geographically, this can be the immediate community where the school is located. It also includes such groups as the regulatory agencies (e.g. Ministry of Education, Schools Management Boards, etc.), state legislative assembly, accrediting agencies, educational associations, tax offices, unions/professional bodies, other educational institutions, parents, guardians, vendors, etc. Given that the environment is the system's source of energy, it usually constraints the organisation, by regulating the actions and behaviours of the individuals within its confines since it provides the resources, values, technology, etc., The values of the community, politics, history and other factors, impact the functioning of the system.

There are four major elements within a school system that influence the behaviour of individuals. These are:

- The structure of the system:
  - this is the formal bureaucratic arrangement organized to facilitate the achievement of the goals.
  - It lays down the formal system of work relationships that outlines formal reporting lines for communications, responsibility and authority distributions to clarify job positions and makes room for efficiency in the system.
- The individual in the system:
  - This addresses the needs, goals and beliefs of individuals in the organisation, and their perception of their work roles.
  - the individual provides the energy, skills and the capacity to perform the tasks aimed at achievement of organisational goals.
  - Motivation at the work place is a key ingredient in the achievement of organizational goals; this must be provided and encouraged.
  - Motivation encourages workers to put in extra effort to get the job done and efficiently too.
- Culture of the system:
  - This is the dominant set of shared values and beliefs that emerges as members work together.
  - It gives the organisation its identity or 'feel'.
- Politics:
  - This is a system of informal power relations that emerges in a formal organization.

- Sometimes it emerges to complement and at times even resist the formal systems of control.
- Politics within an organisation are sometimes divisive, often creating conflicts and pitching individuals/groups against each other or against the organisation.

In educational organizations, unacceptable behaviours are controlled and regulated by the dynamics and complex interactions of the four elements in the context of teaching and learning. The more harmonious the interactions, the more effectively the organisation will function to achieve the predetermined goals. Thus the role of educational administration in school organisations, is to manage or take charge of these elements to ensure that a continuous harmonious state exists. This will assure that the system is effective and goal oriented.

### **The Dynamics of the Administrative Process**

Historically, it should be borne in mind that early educational administrators depended on their past experiences to solve problems in the educational system. Today research in organisational behaviour has nurtured the development of sound theories and principles for practitioners. These gains have contributed immensely to the ease and the effectiveness of the management of educational systems. Practices are no longer based on trial and error or guess work but on sound empirical principles. Thus, effective administrators no longer lead by impulse or by erroneous beliefs, but through practical training and espousal of developmental programmes. Nowadays, administrators are encouraged to develop mental habits that promote sound reasoning, based on proven facts and accumulated body of organised knowledge about organisational behaviour. The primary aim of educational administration therefore is to solve real problems in educational organisation.

Over time, administrative practices have become more systematic, reflective and effective because it is now guided by sound theories which have developed from numerous researches in administration and organizations. Recent studies have established four key administrative processes accepted as central to effective administration in school organizations. These are:

#### **Deciding (Decision making):**

- This is simply defined as the process of choosing a course of action from a number of alternatives;
- Decision making occurs in all other administrative functions;
- All administrators make decisions daily and each decision affects the organization positively or negatively; and
- Therefore, good administrators are required to have good decision making skills which will enable them continually make choices that benefit the organization.

#### **Motivating:**

- A person is generally said not to be motivated when he/she lacks the drive and commitment to work.
- Some have described motivation as the internal state of energy in a person that directs efforts towards the achievement of specific goals.
- According to Johns (2000), motivation means three things; the person works hard, keeps at his/her work and directs his/her behaviour towards appropriate goals.

- It is in the interest of administrators that workers in an organization remain motivated. That way, they will willingly put in effort at their jobs without being compelled or coerced.

### **Communicating:**

- This is the process of exchanging information between a sender and a receiver;
- It has been described by Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) as the lifeblood of every school organization;
- Administrators plan, organize staff, direct, co-ordinate and review, and none of these functions can be accomplished without adequate communication;
- Studies have shown that school administrations spend 70-80% of their time communicating (Mintzberg, 1997, Lunenburg and Irby 2006); and
- Thus whether in setting objectives, organizing tasks, motivating employees, reviewing results and making decisions, administrators communicate.

### **Leading:**

- Administrators play leadership roles in organisations;
- Leadership, according to Clark (1999), is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organisation in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent;
- Leaders influence others to accomplish goals;
- The quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes (Bush, 2007);
- Schools require effective leaders and management if they are to provide the best possible education for their students who are regarded as the leaders of tomorrow;
- While schools need trained and committed teachers, the teachers in turn require the leadership of highly effective school heads in the schools;
- Numerous approaches to leadership exist; some are democratic and participative, others are autocratic and coercive, some Laissez fair, some situational and others transformational;
- Leaders who are well loved according to Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) are excellent in “motivating power”, “empathy”, “integrity” and “intuitive abilities”;
- Leaders in educational organizations are encouraged to espouse these attributes.

Practitioners are however, often limited by their positions, responsibilities, power and authority from achieving their objectives. Often the problems require urgent interventions. To carry out their responsibilities, administrators are usually involved in decision making processes on a regular basis. Theories provide them a framework with which to systematically examine and reflect on the issues facing them as they work with people in the organization. Consequently, administration can be further defined as the process of applying knowledge to solve administrative and organisational problems. This emphasises the need for administrators to procure requisite knowledge for decisions- making and for problem solving. This is a justification for the formal training of administrators to enable them perform their functions effectively. A good experience alone is not sufficient to get the job done as does not equip the practitioner with the needed repertoire of knowledge and skills required for their roles in organizations.

Studies in organizational science have described and explained the forms of acceptable and regular behaviour of individuals and groups within organizations. These studies have outlined the basic principles that provide general understanding of the structure

and dynamics of organisational life. Researchers in a bid to understand the methodology, carry out studies and from their observations, theories are developed to explain behaviour. The primary form of knowledge in all disciplines consists of concepts, generalizations and principles. In organizational theories; principles are developed to explain the structure and dynamics of the organisation and the roles of individuals. Thus, theories help to provide reliable general underpinnings that guide behaviour (Kerlinger, 1986). Good theories as Hoy and Miskel (2001) puts it; helps us understand and solve all kinds of problems. Theories give practising administrators a tool and a frame of reference to sharpen and focus the analysis of problems they face daily at work. When administrators are so equipped, they develop alternative solutions to solve problems because they are provided with ways of thinking about or analysing situations.

### **Educational Administration and the Process of Managing Schools**

The term “Administration” as earlier explained, does not refer to any single process or act. It is rather, an umbrella word that encompasses a number of processes, involving careful planning of various programmes and activities in the organization. It also involves organising these activities with the effort of other people, while motivating and co-ordinating their efforts as well as directing and exercising control over all to see that the collective goals and purposes are achieved. Administrators also provide feedback to members of the group and sometimes, modify plans when the need arises; to improve services. The totality of the operation of these processes in an educational organization is the function of Educational Administration. Thus, it does not refer to any single process but the totality of the different processes that constitute managing an educational system.

In the context of formal education, educational administration is the study and practice of managing the resources, tasks and communications involved in running a school. Craig (unknown) explains that the goal of an administrator is to keep the school’s overall process flowing seamlessly by making decisions that facilitate successful education. To achieve this, the administrator identifies and articulates the school’s mission and goals, making them happen by implementing programmes, delegating tasks and allocating resources. In a primary or secondary school, the head of the school referred to as the headmaster/mistress or principal respectively, is the equivalent of a chief executive officer in a business enterprise. He/she plays an active role in personnel issues, budget decisions, curriculum planning and setting policies that staff and students will abide by. The way the school heads carry out these activities sets the tone for the institution and is indicative of the “public face” of the institution. To be effective at their jobs, school heads and other personnel in various positions of responsibilities are trained in leadership and managerial skills.

Educational systems should be adequately managed in order to be effective. Some scholars define “administration” as processes of overseeing an organization while “management” refers to the skills of getting the job done by others in an organization. For educational systems to function optimally, both administrative and management processes have to be applied. However, some scholars are not in complete agreement about the exact differences between the two concepts, but there is a general consensus that both processes are important ingredients, to enhance the smooth running of educational organisations. Therefore, whether educational administration refers to the main functions of formulation of plans, policies and procedures done at the top levels and Management refers to policy implementation and execution or vice-versa, the two processes should be regarded as indispensable for the smooth running of the organizations. While one process lays down the policies and establishes the objectives of the organisation (the planning and organising functions), the other is concerned with directing and guiding the operations of the

organisation (directing and controlling functions). Whichever nomenclature is adopted, it is important to understand the two distinctive functions and to ensure that both are given their proper places in the running of educational organisations.

### **The Administrative Functions**

Historically, Henry Fayol, a French Mining Engineer was the first to teach that administrative behaviour consists of five functions. Planning, organizing, commanding, co-ordinating and controlling. Luther Gulick later expanded these concepts into seven administrative processes in answer to the question “What is the work of a Chief Executive?” He summarized this in an acronym POSDCoRB which stands for: Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Co-ordinating, Reporting and Budgeting.

- **Planning:** this means deciding what needs to be done in the future and how it should be done.
- **Organizing:** this has to do with putting together the human and material resources needed to get the job done. Here jobs are identified and assigned to specific individuals in the organization.
- **Commanding:** involves giving commands to individuals to get the job done.
- **Co-ordinating:** means harnessing the efforts of all workers who have been grouped into departments or units towards the achievement of organizational goals.
- **Controlling:** means checking work done against established standards. It involves measuring and monitoring performances in accordance with plans and taking remedial actions where necessary.
- **Directing:** means influencing people to perform their assigned tasks. It provides adequate guidelines and motivates workers towards the goals.
- **Budgeting:** involves making financial plans.

### **Objectives of the Administrative Process**

The administrative process aims at:

- Managing schools in such a way that the right kind of education is provided with the right calibre of teachers at a reasonable cost;
- Ensuring adequate utilisation of available resources; both human, material and financial;
- Providing adequate opportunity for training, motivation and utilization of teacher skills optimally;
- Providing opportunities to interphase with the community to provide the best opportunities for learning and meeting educational needs of all citizens;
- Providing the best environment for learning for the development of students’ talents, skills and abilities.

Principles of management are the guidelines that govern decision making and behaviour in an organisation. Henry Fayol in developing the general theory of administration, identified 14 principles of management. These are:

- **Division of Labour:** This is a basic principle of an organisation. The more a task is broken down into its components, the more specialized and therefore the more

effective the worker would be in performing the task. Tasks are grouped into jobs, and the jobs are integrated into departments;

- Authority and Responsibility: implies the right to give command and to obtain obedience, while responsibility is the sense of dutifulness;
- Discipline; refers to the act of obedience to organisations' rules. It is to ensure compliance and respect for seniors;
- Unity of command: this ensures that an employee will receive orders from one boss only;
- Unity of direction: all the units should all work towards achieving the same objectives;
- Subordination: here individual's interest should be surrendered for the general group interest;
- Centralization: this is the extent to which decision making is concentrated at the top levels only;
- Remuneration: this states that workers should be given commensurate pay for work done;
- Scalar chain: this refers to the hierarchical relationship of superiors and subordinates in the organisation;
- Order: this advocates that there should be orderliness in the organization. Actions should be guided by rules and regulations;
- Equity: that there should be equal treatment of all;
- Stability of tenure of personnel: this provides that job positions should be fairly stable and that organisations should not be able to dismiss workers at will;
- Initiative: this refers to the ability to take steps to be creative in actions; and
- Esprit de Corps: this refers to maintaining a sense of belonging and team spirit.

These 14 principles are basic truths about organisations and when applied increase the effective functioning of the organizations

### **Planning in Education**

To plan means to project, forecast, design, mark or chart out a course of action. Planning in education is a deliberate process of making decisions for the future. It literary has to do with deciding what needs to be done in the educational system and the methods with which it will be done. According to Ndu (1991), educational planning is the process of consciously and systemically developing a course of future action that will control the process of educational growth in such a way that the identified goals are achieved with the most possible level of efficiency. Similarly, Ibara (2010) has described educational planning as a systematic process in which deliberate efforts are made to devise a course of future action in education for the purpose of attaining specific goals in an effective and efficient manner. Thus educational planning is a course of activities to be carried out, showing the steps to be followed in order to achieve the desired goals.

### **Benefits of Planning in Education**

When plans are made, it means that the conditions surrounding the problem area have been critically analysed. This also means that alternative courses of action will be sought out for the planners, who have to choose among best alternatives that helps realise organisational goals. Thus, when plans are made, the best options are likely to be selected because the

planners can see the total picture and also have enough time to examine/ select the best methods. The benefits are that it will:

- Save time;
- Save resources, both human and material resources. Resources are usually scarce in societies, therefore when plans are made prudence will be applied;
- Produce a standard to which products or services can be measured for quality or lack of it;
- Reduce emergencies and crises because actions to be taken are determined in advance;
- Prevent unnecessary loss of energy since tasks will be carried out as specified;
- Facilitate delegating of duties because procedure for carrying out the tasks is already determined and all the subordinate needs to do is to follow the laid down steps or procedures;
- Help in assigning tasks. This is because while planning, the administrator has enough time to consider the experiences and strengths of his staff and will know who is best suited to perform certain tasks;
- Compel the managers to focus on goals of organization, thus help in goal realization.

### **Types of Plans in Educational Organization**

There are different types of planning carried out commonly in the educational system. The most common are those grouped according to the time or duration of the plans. Thus there are:

- Short-term plans:  
These are plans of short duration. Administrators and managers in education in carrying out their functions, make plans on a regular basis. Examples include:
  - Planning daily activities at work such as a work day, which will include, when to attend to visitors, when to see staff, supervise instruction, staff meeting, board meeting, visit the ministry, etc.
  - One-day school activity: school day, class timetable, lesson plans, examinations, “open day”, inter-house sports competition, cultural day, prize giving day, excursions, visits including interschool visits, etc.
  - Week long activities: such as examinations, camping activities, tours, etc.
  - Other school programmes of less than One-year duration can all fall under short time plans. E.g. curriculum, scheme of work, short courses, etc.
- Medium-term plans:  
These are between 1-5 years’ duration. E.g.s are educational programmes that last within this time frame.
- Long-term plans:  
The time frame for this category of plans range from 5 years and above. Mostly broad National educational plans fall within this category. These are not school based but carried out by planning experts in designated organizations.

### **Steps in Educational Planning**

There are laid down steps commonly followed to make plans in educational organizations. To make short-term plans such as plans for a school day, school activity like inter-house sports

competition, timetable, etc. may involve selecting the activities, assigning exact time and days the activities are to be performed and devoting resources to them where necessary. However, making long-term plans involve more rigorous activities. Enaohwo (1987) in Okogbaa (2005) identified 6 steps to be followed in making such plans. These are:

- The identification of problems from problem surveys;
- The definition of goals and objectives from identified problems;
- The definition of programmes for the realization of the set goals and objectives;
- The simulation (trial-run) of programmes to ascertain the most appropriate alternatives;
- The provision, implementation and supervision of the relevant programme after the trial run;
- Programme evaluation and review.

### **Some Constraints to Educational Planning in Nigeria**

Some constraints to educational planning that have been identified include:

- Finance: Inadequate funding has been a major problem in educational planning. Due to lack of funds, adequate infrastructure cannot be provided, staff cannot be employed and trained, existing facilities cannot be expanded and additional schools are not built to expand access to include all citizens demanding education at that level.
- Politics: Due to political undertones, existing plans may not be fully implemented, are sometimes abandoned or de-emphasized by succeeding political class.
- Lack of statistical data: In educational planning, information about population of age cohort for which plans are made is indispensable. This helps in making estimates and projections. Plans made with incorrect statistical data are bound to fail.

### **SUMMARY**

Schools are formal organizations, which have been deliberately put in place to achieve selected goals. This means that there are rules developed to guide behaviour and jobs are carefully defined, relationships between roles are determined and work flow are clearly specified. The formal structure promotes the effective functioning of the organization, it promotes discipline and decision making that is based on facts and not on emotional inclinations and feelings. Thus, the functioning of the school organization is not based on any particular individuals but on the system of rules and regulations guiding behaviour and the system of organized relationships. Administration in Education helps create and manage a structure of complex interrelationships to get the work done efficiently to achieve educational goals. When administrators receive formal training for their jobs, they are armed with the right skills to make wise decisions.

### **Recommendations**

In consideration of the simplistic nature of this write-up, recommendations are made as follows:

- That this material be used alongside core textbooks to improve understandings on the subject matter among entry level students and practitioners alike.

- That a clue should be taken from this to make other articles available, that address other aspects of the field to serve as additional tools to improve understandings in the subject matter, thereby strengthening practice.

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