

EFFECTIVE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDENTS' CODE OF CONDUCT IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WARRI/EFFURUN METROPOLISES, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study was carried out to determine teachers' and students' perceptions of the factors that determine effective learners' code of conduct formulation and implementation in some selected private secondary schools in Warri and Effurun metropolises. Ex-post- facto design which employed the survey method was used in the study. The instrument tagged „Private Secondary Schools' Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions of the Effective Formulation and Implementation of Learners' Code of Conduct Questionnaire (PSSLPEFILCCQ) which comprised twenty-nine items was used to obtain data from 84 respondents in the study area. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation for research questions at 2.50 and above as level of acceptance and t-test for hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that factors such as meaningful engagement of all the stakeholders in the school, consideration for legal issues both at the learners' code formulation and implementation processes are key factors for the effective formulation and implantation of learners' code; it was also revealed that the code is effectively implemented, hypotheses analysis revealed significant differences in mean perception of teachers and learners as to the determinants of effective learners' code formulation and implementation. Arising from the findings, it was recommended that secondary school authorities should endeavour to involve all the stakeholders of the school as well as give apt consideration to legal and cultural issues in the course of formulation and implementation of learners' code of conduct.

Introduction

Education is a transformation tool. It is the only tool known to man as a means of individual character transformation and society reformation. The substance of education is to produce refined individuals with the capacity to engender an orderly society. Thus, Pontua (2015) observed that education is the critical tool used in the transformation of individual in particular and society in general. The believe that education is transformational, presupposes that uneducated individual or society will remain primitive, crude and uncouth with the capacity for anarchy and social disharmony. For the school to succeed in the task of individual and societal transformation, it must have in place rules and regulations that only do not determine behaviour, but must also model behaviour among stakeholders of the school community. Federal Government of Nigeria (2019), noted that education is an important mechanism for the social, emotional and psychological development of young people; thus, school rules play vital roles which enable the school to run smoothly. In fact, the FGN (2019) document observed that rules enable the learners to benefit from the education that the school offers, and that if such rules did not exist the school could become chaotic and deter learning. What many schools (especially private) in Nigeria have done is to fine tune the federal government school rules to suit their context. In doing this, they however seem not to give credence to such factors that determine the success or the otherwise of the rules. These rules are generally termed code of conduct.

The cardinal pursuit of the school is to provide formal (organised) education. This indicates that the school is saddled with the task of producing organised individuals with the acceptable social behaviour. Although, there is the thinking that the content of the curriculum as designed and developed is capable of transforming the individual, it must be stated that these individuals come to the school as raw input with varying behavioural tendencies, as reflected in their various background and circumstances (Bill 2015). It is to this end that learners display behaviour that are inimical to the success of the cardinal purpose of the

school both for the individual learner and the community or society in general. These varying behavioural tendencies pose a serious discipline issue in schools. The challenge of learners' misbehaviour or indiscipline is a world-wide problem. According to Patrick & Ursulla, (2018), Aswani (2010), Sushila (2004), researches conducted in developed countries such as the USA, Europe, UK, France, and Spain highlight the deteriorating discipline nature in their schools. To curb this problem, a democratic discipline measure is being adopted in the form of collective school rules and regulations.

One of the challenges faced by secondary school heads/administrators is that of disciplinary problems. The exposure of students to the media (print, electric and especially social) and globalization have complicated learners' behavioural problems as they have learnt all manners of unacceptable behavioural exhibition geared towards distractive, disruptive and destructive conduct. No school can survive, or achieve its goal of learners' transformation where the focus or object (learners) of the transformation process is unwilling to cooperate with the system. The incessant report of learners' different forms of misbehaviour like noise making, unacceptable sexual behaviour, refusal to engage in curricular activities within and outside the classroom, engaging in nefarious group activities, destruction of other learners' property and school's property among others has necessitated heads and administrators of secondary schools to design various means of curbing this ugly tide in Nigeria. One of such means or measures designed by secondary schools' heads/administrators to curb these misbehaviour tendencies is the articulation, drafting and implementation of code of conduct for learners.

In recent times, most private schools in Nigeria are beginning to take seriously the issue of code of conduct for learners. Thus, they have woken up to the exigencies of well-articulated and written code for learners in secondary schools. Copies of these codes are also given to and signed by either the learner, parents or in often cases by both the learner and parents. Of note are the big private schools in major cities in Nigeria. This is becoming more so as the historical religiously dominated schools are giving way for secularism. Thus, the religious philosophy upon which most pre-independent and early post independent schools were based and administered no longer subsist. Also, the wave of globalization and constitutional (human rights) issues have made it imperative that discipline requirement/enforcement must be a kind of mutual agreement between the schools and the learners on the one hand, and between the schools and the parents on the other hand.

A code of conduct is a set of guidelines that details the set of recognised ethical norms, or values or standards of acceptable behaviour (Efayena, 2021). Codes of conduct are typically developed at national levels and rolled out among schools to ensure institutional and legal back up (Elmene, 2005). The import of the above indicates that any code of that does not derive from the educational legal framework of the state is likely going to be regarded as null and void. The objective of code of conduct for learners is to make the school orderly, safe place where learners learn good behaviour, and consideration for others which will ultimately lead to a better future for both the individual and society at large. Also of great importance is the fact that the content of the code of conduct has to be properly implemented and enforced to ensure it serves the purpose of assisting to achieve the transformational objective of the educational system.

The presence of a well-articulated code of conduct, that has its tenets hinged on the Education Law and the National Constitution are pivotal in several ways. Some of the relevance of the code of conduct in secondary schools according to Pierre and Vusi (2018) are but not limited to: i) acquaint the learner with the moral expectation of the school. ii) gives the learners' parents an insight into the behaviour expected of their wards, iii) serves as document of agreement between the learner and the school, and between the parents and the school on the other hand, iv) helps the teacher to ascertain what constitutes an offence, as well as the commensurate punishment, v) guides the teacher against overreaching his/her bounds, vi) sets out to protect learners among peers, vii) reflects the school's overall mission, vision and objectives, viii) ensures general school safety and protection, ix) prevents learners generally from making bad or bias decision, etc.

The above, ultimately, suggests that compliance to the code of conduct ensures the successful realization of the school disciplinary policies, by extension a measure factor for the achievement of the school general goal. Elmene (2005) concluded in his work that a code of conduct promotes a disciplined school and safe school environment, and is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of quality

education. As a legal document, the code must comply with certain legal requirements because possible legal consequences for learners may ensue; fundamentally, a school code of conduct must give serious consideration to issues of fundamental human rights (Joubert 2008). Thus, Mariette (2019), Rolien (2003) reported that failure to incorporate constitutional developments that impact on school discipline have implication for the success of the code. The studies revealed that regard for legal issues in the code for learners will invariably safe-guide the school against breach of learners' fundamental human rights, as well as protect the learner. Federal Government of Nigeria, TCRN (2013), clearly states that the rights of the child must be given adequate place in any form of discipline. Section 33 of the TCRN (2013), states the teacher should have respect for the learners right and dignity without prejudice to gender, race, religion, tribe, colour, physical characteristics, place of origin, age, etc. Of course, the code is a discipline management instrument within the teaching and learning space. In Turkey for instance, there is clear and detailed regulations regarding discipline at every level of education (Ricardo and Irem, 2013). In situation such as the Turkey experience, all the school head has to do is simply rely on the state document in the discharge of disciplinary measures.

An effective implementation of any code would depend on the involvement of the stakeholders. Hence the involvement of the school board from the very beginning is crucial. The school board, if any, must not be brought in for the purpose of ratification (Heystek, 2004). In essence, the school board should be at the forefront of the drafting and the implementation of the code. Unfortunately, most private schools in Nigeria lack school boards.

Another stakeholder relevant to effective implementation of learners' code of conduct is the Parents Teachers' Association (PTA). This is a formal recognised body which membership include teachers, and individuals whose wards, are officially registered as learners in a certain school (Mutinda, 2013). A functional PTA plays a major role in almost every activity of the school. The PTA provides parents and teachers the opportunity to deliberate on issues and ways of up scaling the quality of education rendered in the school (Chidi and Akinwale, 2018). The involvement of PTA in the drafting and execution of learners' code of conduct becomes pertinent due to the fact that they are the closest to the learners. Because parents are the closest to learners, they understand learners' behaviour and needs better (Akpan, 2014). The relationship and extent of time parents spend with their children at home, provide the parents ample knowledge that they would need to bring to the code formulation and implementation table. Hence, the school must make frantic efforts to bring the parents on board from the outset of the learners' code formulation (Manamela, 2015). The involvement of the parents serves as a buffer for the implementation of the code from the outset, they should be considered as cardinal part of the evolvement of the code.

Since the teacher plays a prominent part in the implementation process of the code, it behoves the school management to not only carry the teachers along, but ensures that the teachers from the very onset are meaningfully engaged in the drafting stage/process of the learners' code of conduct (Wanda, 2021). The teachers in the school system seem to be closest to the learners. This is as a result of their daily one-on-one relationship with the learners, which offers them quality insight into the behavioural tendencies of the learners. Again, the onset meaningful engagement of the teachers, foster their sense of commitment to the execution process rather than seat aloft. Several school boards/management only announce to teachers in staff meetings the presence of a ready code of conduct for learners (National Educational Welfare Board NEWB, Dublin, 2008). This situation gives the teachers a sense of inclusion and genuine participation. One of the very essential reasons for meaningful engagement of teachers during the process of the code formulation is that it does not only give them a sense of ownership but significantly enhance a collaborative implementation of the code among teachers (Rogers 2006, Lee, 2007). Vusi and Pierre (2018), in their study noted that the exercise and import of drafting and execution of learners' code of behaviour will amount to nothing, if all school stakeholders are not democratically engaged in the process. Majid, et-al (2016) reported that for any ethical code to be successful, it must give adequate concern to the cultural menu of the individual that make up the group. Regard and recognition for the basic cultural orientations of

the learners as accommodated in the code inspire both the learners and parents to comply as well as own the regulation instrument

This study becomes very significant today more than ever due to the very fact that our society is becoming more liberal as well as democratic. People want to be part of the decision making process of the rules and regulations that must govern their affairs, especially in a social context like the schools. Hence, the entire school stakeholders' participation in the learners' code formulation and implementation becomes justifiable. To these group, the findings of this study becomes essential. In every society, fairness, equity and justice are major pillars for individual and community survival. Any society or organization that fails to be fair in relating with its members, has clearly opted for lawlessness and disorder. So, no matter how well articulate and encompassing is a code, if the entire stakeholders are not given priority, it invariably fails to achieve its set goals.

Statement of the Problem

Parents, teachers, school authorities and other stakeholders within the education sector seemed to be agitated by why school regulations are failing to comprehensively serve their aim. The rising cases of learners' indiscipline which has resulted in obvious negative implication for the learners as indicated in the tense nature of many schools today; and also as manifested in the impeded achievements of the school goals in general and turning the school to a breeding ground for anarchy; no doubt gives credence to the school stakeholders concern. However, the school board or management is the most hit. This is so because the school management is daily on ground feeling the palpating and pulsating impact of learners' indiscipline. The democratic nature of society, legal or constitutional issues surrounding the child rights and educational legislation have made it imperative for schools to draft and execute learners' code of conduct. The question however, is what factors aid the effective formulation and implementation processes of learners' code of conduct? Thus, the crux of this study is to determine teachers' and learners' perceptions of the factors that determine the effective formulation and implementation of learners' code of conduct in private secondary schools in Warri and Effurun metropolises, Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been raised to guide the study.

1. What factors determine effective learners' code of conduct formulation in private secondary schools in Warri/Effurun Metropolises?
2. What are the factors that determine effective learners' code of conduct implementation in private secondary schools in Warr/Effurun Metropolises?
3. Is the learners' code of conduct effectively implemented in private secondary schools in Warri/Effurun Metropolises?

Hypotheses

1. **There is no** significant difference between teachers' and learners' mean perceptions of the factors that determine effective formulation of learners' code of conduct in private secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.
2. There is no significant difference between teachers' and learners' mean perceptions of the factors that determine effective implementation of learners' code of conduct in private secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.

Methods

This study adopted the *ex-post-facto* research design of the descriptive survey method. The participants for the study were drawn from six (6) secondary schools, three (3) schools from each metropolis. 280 teachers: 140 teachers from each metropolis; and 372 senior secondary school students; 186 from each metropolis. The population for the study is 652, from which a sample of 84 respondents were chosen using purposive sampling technique. The choice of metropolitan private secondary schools was influence by the fact that most rural areas do not have private secondary schools; and were they have, the schools operate below the standard of a conventional secondary school. Data were collected using a self-developed instrument entitled '_Private Secondary Schools' Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions on the Effective Formulation and Implementation of Learners' Code of Conduct Questionnaire (PSSTLPEFILCCQ)'. The

instrument was designed to gather information on teachers' and learners' perception on effective learners' code formulation and implementation in private secondary schools. The instrument was sub-divided into two sections: A and B. Section A solicited information on respondent demographic variables while B focused on items which generated data bearing the crux of the study in mind. Four-point rating scales of Strongly Agreed (SA =4), Agreed (A=3), Disagreed (D=2) and Strongly Disagreed (SD=1) was used by respondents in rating their opinion without bias. Face and content validity were applied in validating the instrument which was further subjected to a reliability test using 30 respondents who were not part of the main study. Test re-test reliability test was used and the scores were computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and a coefficient of 0.82 was attained indicating a high reliability index. Data were analysed with descriptive statistics of mean ratings and standard deviation in providing answer to the research questions with 2.50 benchmark, and inferential statistics of t-test in testing the hypotheses employing 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the factors that determine effective learners' code of conduct formulation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of teachers and learners perceptions of the factors that determine effective learners' code of conduct formulation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.

SN	Determinants of effective learners' code formulation	Mean	SD	Decision
1	School management's involvement in the code formulation process	2.94	0.90	Agreed
2	Teachers' involvement in the code formulation process	2.57	0.50	Agreed
3	Engaging learners in the formulation process	2.55	0.87	Agreed
4	Parents involvement in the code formulation process	3.27	0.85	Agreed
5	Consideration for constitutional issues in the code formulation process	3.37	0.90	Agreed
6	Respect for fundamental human rights issues	1.24	0.67	Disagreed
7	Abiding by the provision of the Educational Law in the code formulation process	2.13	1.26	Disagreed
8	Consideration for cultural issues during the code formulation	3.07	0.58	Agreed
9	Engagement of all the school stakeholders	2.68	0.84	Agreed
	GRAND MEAN	2.65	0.82	Agreed

Table 1, showed that items 6 and 7 had a mean score below 2.50, while the remaining items have mean scores above the cut off mark of 2.50. However, the grand mean of 2.65 which exceeds the cut-off mark of 2.50 showed that respondents considered these factors as determinants of effective learners' code of conduct formation.

Research Question 2: What are the determinants of effective learners' code of conduct implementation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises?

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of teachers and learners perceptions of the effective learner's code of conduct implementation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises

S/N	Determinants of effective learners' code implementation	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1	School board should be involved in the implementation of the code for its effectiveness	3.24	0.77	Agreed
2	Learners' code is effectively implemented when school management is involved	3.12	0.95	Agreed
3	Learners' involvement enhances effective code implementation	3.05	0.69	Agreed
4	Parents Teachers Association PTA engagement boosts learners' code implementation	3.19	0.86	Agreed
5	Teachers' involvement in the implementation of learners' code enhances its effectiveness	3.07	0.60	Agreed
6	Learners' code of conduct enjoys seamless implementation with constitution backing	2.94	0.75	Agreed
7	Learners' code is effectively implemented when fundamental human rights issues are respected	3.34	0.95	Agreed
8	Possession of the learners' code of conduct by learners enhances its effective implementation	2.98	0.89	Agreed
9	Clear communication of the content of the learners' code of conduct boosts implementation	3.23	0.70	Agreed
10	Learners' code of conduct is effectively implemented when the entire school is involved	3.05	0.89	Agreed
11	Fairness to all learners is key to effective implementation of the code of conduct	2.89	1.24	Agreed
	GRAND MEAN	3.11	0.84	Agreed

Table 2 showed that all the items have mean score above the cut off mark of 2.50. This is an indication that all the respondents considered the items as determinants of effective learners' code of conduct implementation.

Research Question 3: Is the learners' code of conduct effectively implemented in secondary schools Warri/Effurun metropolises?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of teachers and learners perception of learners' code of conduct effective implementation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.

S/N	Determinants of effective learners' code	MEAN	SD	DECISION
12.	School management board rely on the learners' code when effecting disciplinary action	3.14	0.84	Agreed
13.	Teachers depend on the provisions of learners' code when discharging disciplinary responsibility	3.07	0.89	Agreed
14.	School management is fair in the implementation of the learners' code	3.10	0.61	Agreed
15.	The use of learners' code has reduced disciplinary problems among learners	2.69	0.92	Agreed
16.	Parents are satisfied with the implementation of the learners code	3.36	0.65	Agreed
17.	There has been less indiscipline in the school since the launch of the learners' code	3.12	0.94	Agreed
18.	The school disciplinary committee is fair in the implementation of the learners' code	2.83	0.95	Agreed
19.	The learners' code is generally fairly implemented within the school system	3.50	0.70	Agreed
20.	The learners' code of conduct is implemented without partiality within the school system	2.81	0.81	Agreed
	GRAND MEAN	3.07	0.81	

Table 3 shows that the learners' code of conduct is effectively implemented; as all the items under effective implementation of the learners' code recorded mean score above the 2.50 cut off benchmark.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between teachers' and learners' mean perceptions on the determinants of effective learners' code of conduct formulation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.

Table 4: t-test analysis of teachers' and learners' mean perception on the determinants of effect of learners' code of conduct formulation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	T	P-value
Teachers	34	23.06	2.40	82	-2.238	0.028
Learners	50	24.32	2.62			

Table 4, showed the t-value of -2.238 and a p-value of 0.028. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.028 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between teachers' and learners' mean perception on the determinants of effective learners code of conduct formulation in favour of learners.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between teachers' and learners' mean perception on the determinants of effective learners' code of conduct implementation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.

Table 5: t-test analysis of teachers' and learners' mean perception on the determinants of effective learners' code of conduct implementation in secondary schools in Warri/Effurun metropolises.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	t- cal	P-value
Teachers	34	31.47	4.05	82	-5.739	0.000
Learners	50	36.06	3.25			

Table 5, showed the t-value of -5.739 and a p-value of 0.000. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.000 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference between teachers' and learners' mean perceptions on determinants of effective learners' code of conduct implementation.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that for learners' code of conduct to be effectively formulated, it should entail a process in which the school management/board, teachers, parents, learners, and indeed all that is involved within the school system are meaningfully engaged in the process. This finding is in consonance with Joubert (2008) and Heystek (2004) who reported that school management/board play cardinal roles in learners' code of conduct success. As to the place of teachers in learners' code formulation, this study is in sync with the positions of Wanda (2021), Rogers (2006) and Lee (2007) on the need to actively engage teachers at the stage of drafting learners' code of conduct. The study clearly indicated that an effective learners' code formulation process should be democratic in nature by involving all the stakeholders; as such, the current study corroborates the findings of Pierre and Vusi (2018) which found that the engagement of the school community stakeholders is a veritable strategy for an effective learners' code of conduct. However, while on consideration for constitutional (human rights) issues, education law, the present study is not in sync with Mariette (2019) who reported that constitutional issues must be reflected in the code of conduct for all schools. Furthermore, cultural orientation gives credibility to learners' code of conduct as supported by the study of Majid, Ahad and Shirin (2016) which reported that consideration for cultural issues is key to the success of any code. Result of hypothesis showed that significant difference does exist between teachers' and learners' opinions on determinants of learners' code of conduct effective formulation process.

Findings showed that effective implementation of learners' code of conduct is a function of collegiate approach as such that it involves school management, parent teachers association, teachers and learners' active collaboration as well as prior clear communication of the code to every stakeholder of the school community, this is also the position of Mutinda(2013) and Akpan (2014) who hold that conscious involvement of the school community in both at formulation and implementation levels holds positive prospect for the success of the learners code of conduct. Manamela (2015) study revealed the conflict that exist when parents are not deliberately incorporated into their children's school life by the school, to this end, this study is in sync with Manamela's findings. Regard for legal issues as it concerns constitutional issues on human rights and the education law in the course of implementing the code is a sure way to its success. This finding on consideration for legal issues on code formulation is in agreement with Mariette (2019) and Richardo and Ireme (2013) whose study affirm that compliance with legal enactment improve school code execution level.. Hypothesis finding thus reveal that consequential difference exist in terms of difference in the mean perception of teachers and learners with regard to learners code of conduct implementation.

It was also revealed that the learners' code of conduct is effectively implemented as the school management/board rely on the provisions of the learners' code of behaviour to effect disciplinary actions and teachers also comply with the provision of the code in their disciplinary measures. Hence learners, parents and the entire school community perceived the code as effectively implemented. The import therefore is that for any code of conduct for learners to achieve its desired goal, it should ensure an effective formulation and implementation processes that does not undermine the collegiate approach.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is evident that for learners' code of conduct to achieve its set goals and objectives, it must actively and reasonably engage the school stakeholders both at the level of drafting and implementation, as such involvement will give a comprehensive community sense of ownership of the code as well as the readiness to defend it. Also of critical importance are legal and cultural issues which must be considered at all levels of the code process. Thus, it can be said that a democratic approach to the formulation and execution of the code is key to its goal achievement.

Recommendations

- 1 The school authority should ensure that the processes of the learners' code formulation and implementation are democratic involving all the school stakeholders.
- 2 Apt consideration should be accorded legal and cultural issues at both the formulation and implementation levels of the learners' code of conduct,

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