

## EXPLORING THE DECISION-MAKING PATTERNS OF PRINCIPALS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN KWARA STATE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

**Olubukola OJO, Assoc. Prof. Ph.D.,**  
University of Ilorin  
[ojo.oj@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:ojo.oj@unilorin.edu.ng)

**Abstract:** *This paper explored the principal's pattern of decision-making in secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study makes use of descriptive design. The respondents consisted of 2,777 teaching staff in the 398 public schools and 7,969 teachers in the 249 private schools in Kwara. A sample size of 338 and 367 teaching staff in the two schools was used as respondents, respectively, using the table of sample size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). A researcher-designed instrument titled the Principals Decision-Making Patterns of Questionnaire (PDMPQ) was utilized for data collection. It was revealed in the study principals' decision-making patterns ( $P < .05$ ); there was a considerable difference in the decision-making pattern on instructional supervision ( $P < .05$ ); there was a significant difference in decision-making pattern of principals on conflict resolutions ( $P < .05$ ); and lastly, there was considerable difference in principals' decision-making pattern on disciplinary act ( $P < .05$ ) in Kwara State. In line with the results, it was recommended that principals of secondary schools should formulate clear instructional supervision decisions regarding the operations of their schools. Also, the principals should formulate effective conflict resolution decisions so as to improve the relationship of school members. Lastly, the principals, as a matter of urgency, make sound decisions on disciplinary measures and ensure that they are placed in conspicuous places for the students and staff to see.*

**Keywords:** decision-making patterns; principals; public; private; schools; comparative analysis.

### Introduction

The secondary school level of education is essential for an effective education system because it serves as the fulcrum upon which the student can proceed to a tertiary level so as to contribute maximally to national development. Consequently, it is regarded as a formal institution with the mandate to equip the recipients for practical living and tertiary education through teaching and learning activities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Notably, the principal in secondary schools perform a significant role in the actualization of educational goals.

Essentially, in Nigeria, the principal sit at the apex of the institution. As the leaders of the school, they are considered the first citizens, the decision-makers, the instructional supervisors, the conflict resolvers, and the disciplinary leaders. Similarly, many scholars referred to him as the manager because the daily running of the school programs rests on his shoulders. Consequently, the school head must be a person of integrity because he is the image of the school. The principals receive payment for the decisions they make, and their decisions determine the overall growth and development of the school.

One of the vital aspects of every organization is decision-making, and the school is no exception. Notably, decision-making involves choosing a course of action out of numerous actions (Mmejim, 2018). It involves identifying and picking an action in a bid to solve a problem. According to Oku et al. (2018), decision-making involves picking a course of action from a lot of other alternatives. As an institution of learning, secondary schools are guided by rules, procedures, and principles which provide the basis upon which decisions are made.

School principals' decision-making patterns directly influence the success of the institutions of learning. Principals are leaders of secondary schools and are expected to manage the administrative tasks going on in their schools. The decision-making pattern of principals covers many areas, including instructional supervision, conflict management, disciplinary actions, teachers' evaluation, funding, and resource management, among others. For principals to be effective in their roles as school heads, they have to be hard-working. The roles of principals are time-consuming, and as such, principals are to create time to supervise the activities of the school.

Decision-making, as regards supervision of instruction, according to Nwabueze (2016), is one of the principal's areas of operations. The principal, as an educational leader, plays a crucial role in the achievement of the educational system. Such roles include teaching, administration, planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and budgeting. For a principal to be successful in his or her position as an administrator, he or she needs to really examine himself or herself and

be aware of what he or she must believe. Importantly, decision-making is crucial at the personal and professional level because it is a cognitive process that results in picking the best action from numerous alternatives.

According to Obadimeji and Oredein (2022), decision-making is a management function that determines the overall success of an organization. Thus, it is perceived as a function of management that involves the choosing of a course of action based on possible outcomes. Decision-making is considered a vital management function that determines the goals and objectives of every organization. The principal's role is to make decisions on every operation of the school. Most importantly, the challenging and complex aspect of the job of a principal is decision-making because a bad decision is inimical to the overall effectiveness. Hence, the achievement of the school system is a function of the sound decision-making ability of the principal.

Principals' decision-making on instructional supervision is crucial for the practical realization of school objectives through adequate supervision, monitoring, and inspection. Decisions on instructional supervision, when undertaken by the school, are essential to improve every facet of the school so as to realize the school's goals (Chen, 2018). One of the significant roles played by the principal is instructional supervision. Principals are to monitor what goes on in the school system to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations.

Principals' decision-making on conflict management can also be described as an essential component of the school system. Consequently, conflicts have become part of human organizations the world over. Importantly, schools are made up of people with different attitudes, beliefs, abilities, and personalities. Therefore, conflict is inevitable. Conflict in school settings is a daily occurrence simply because a consensus concerning rules governing the school exists among the participants, for instance, administrators, students, teachers/lecturers, parents, and other participants in education. The principals are paid to enforce discipline in the school system. A fundamental variable necessary for students' success is the enforcement of discipline. Arguably, many scholars have noted that the poor performance of students is linked with a high rate of indiscipline.

### **Problem Statement**

Teachers and students' performance is an issue of great importance to various education stakeholders. The pattern of principals' decision-making in schools can either make or mar the overall success of the school. Poor decision-making patterns of principals regarding instructional supervision, conflict management, and disciplinary

actions can lead to adverse outcomes in the school system. Furthermore, the complexity of decision-making patterns in schools has been linked to large enrolment, poor funding, and lack of instructional supervision, high rate of indiscipline, inadequate learning materials, low staff strength, and congested classrooms.

Consequently, all these challenges put pressure on school principals in the areas of making decisions. Therefore, the paper explored principals' decision-making patterns in public and private schools in Kwara State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This paper explored the patterns of principals' decision-making in Kwara State. Other objectives are to:

- i. examined decision-making patterns of principals on instructional supervision in Kwara State.
- ii. investigate the patterns of principals' decision-making regarding conflict resolutions.
- iii. assess the principals' decision-making pattern on disciplinary acts.

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** There exists no difference between the decision-making patterns of principals on instructional supervision.

**Ho2:** No difference exists between principals' decision-making patterns on conflict resolutions in Kwara State.

**Ho3:** No difference exists between principals' decision-making patterns on disciplinary action in Kwara State.

### **Literature reviewed**

Several studies have been done in and outside Nigeria on principals' decision-making, but the results have been inconclusive. For example, Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) determined the effectiveness of principals in decision-making in Kisumu District, Kenya. The study found that the sponsors of the school make most of the school decisions. A study that focused on principals' decision-making strategies and teachers' involvement in instructional task performance in Ondo, Nigeria, was undertaken by Ayeni (2018). The study found that principals' decision-making strategies are significantly related to teachers' instructional tasks and students' performance.

Mulwa et al. (2019) investigated principals' alternative ways of making decisions regarding the discipline of students in schools. Results indicated that no significant difference exists between students' discipline and collaborative decision-making. Essentially, the disciplinary act has to do with self-respect, control, dignity, and worth

against unethical behavior (Amaewhule & Nukan-Adebayo, 2019). Wordah and Ekwesianya (2020) investigated the decision-making of principalship and the performance of teachers'. It was found that a moderate relationship exist between decision-making and teachers' performance.

A study that examined the decision-making strategies of principals and discipline was undertaken by Okereke et al. (2021). The findings revealed that decisions implemented by the principal influence students' discipline. Yambo (2022) assessed the skills of principals in decision-making on students' academic outcomes in Kenya. It was found that the decision-making skills of principals accounted for 63% of the students' performance in Nyanza Region, Kenya.

In the year 2022, Akomolafe and Akinyemi investigated a study on principals' participatory decision-making, motivation, and teachers' effectiveness in southwest Nigeria. The result showed that secondary school teacher effectiveness was high. Furthermore, principals' participatory decision-making had a relationship with the effectiveness of teachers and also between motivation and teacher effectiveness. A study on job commitment and the process of principals making decisions was conducted by Akinjide (2022) at Oyo State. Results revealed a fair decision-making ability of the school principals but a low job commitment of teachers.

Owuor et al. (2022), in their study, investigated student participation in decision-making with regard to discipline in Kenya and found that students have an average level of discipline. However, students' participation in decision-making had a significant influence on discipline. The approaches employed by school principals when making decisions vary according to the exigencies of the situation at hand (Jonathan & Olukayode, 2022).

In 2023, Oredein and Opatunde investigated skills of decision-making by principals and effectiveness in Oyo State, Nigeria, with the result revealing a high level of effectiveness. Furthermore, decision-making skills and effectiveness had a significant relationship. The finding of William, Takon, Temilayo and Okafor (2023) indicated that directive decision-making approaches had a significant relationship with employees' job performance. Ekeh et al. (2023) found that consultative and consensus styles of decision-making influence the effectiveness of principals in schools. Offor and Obiekwe (2024) in their study on principals' decision-making enhances job performance in Anambra State's public secondary schools, while directive styles has a lower, but significant impact. Ojo et al. (2025) in their study on decision-making styles and polytechnic effectiveness in Kwara State, Nigeria found an average level of school effectiveness and that directive style was the

most prevalent style of decision by polytechnic administrators in Kwara State.

### Materials and methods

The descriptive design was adopted for this research. The design describes the attributes of a group of people and areas of interest. The entire population consists of 2,777 teachers in the 398 public and 7,969 teachers in the 249 private schools in Kwara State (source: Nigeria Digest of Education Statistics, 2022). A sample size of 338 and 367 public and private school teachers were used as respondents, respectively, using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table. The 705 respondents were selected via a random sampling technique. An instrument titled Principals' Decision-Making Pattern Questionnaire (PDMPQ) is structured along a four-point scale. Importantly, specialists in the test and measurement field validated the instrument, and the reliability coefficient yielded 0.84.

### Results and discussion

This aspect focused on data analysis on the patterns of decision-making by principals in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### Main Hypothesis

**Ho:** There is no significant difference between public and private school principals' decision-making patterns in Kwara State.

**Table 1:** T-test comparing Public and Private Schools of principals' Decision- Making Patterns

Variable	N	<del><math>\bar{x}</math></del>	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Sig(2-tail)	Decision
Public	338	5.76	1.11	198	4.763	1.96	.000	Rejected
Private	367	3.60	2.24					

**\*Significant  $P < .05$**

Table 1 revealed that the calculated value of 4.76 is greater than the t-value of 1.96; hence, the hypothesis was rejected. This revealed that a difference exists between public and private school principals' decision-making patterns in Kwara State.

#### Operational Hypotheses

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between unity and private school principals' decision making pattern on instructional supervision in Kwara State.

**Table 2:**

T-test comparing Public and Private Schools of Principals' Decision-Making Pattern on Instructional Supervision

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Sig(2-tail)	Decision
Public	338	4.88	1.24	198	6.647	1.96	.000	Ho <sub>1</sub>
Private	367	2.83	.94					Rejected

**\*Significant P < .05**

Table 2 showed that the t-value of 6.647 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis between principals' decision-making patterns on instructional supervision is rejected. This shows that a difference exist between public and private school principals' decision-making patterns on instructional supervision in Kwara State.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between public and private school principals' decision making pattern on conflict resolutions in Kwara State.

**Table 3:**

T-test comparing Public and Private Schools of Principals' Decision Making Pattern on Conflict Resolutions

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Sig(2-tail)	Decision
Public	338	5.94	1.88	198	5.163	1.96	.000	Ho <sub>2</sub>
Private	367	3.44	1.74					Rejected

**\*Significant P < .05**

Table 3 revealed that the t-cal of 5.163 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Hence, the hypothesis on school principals' decision-making patterns on conflict resolutions is rejected. Therefore, a significant difference between public and private school principals' decision-making patterns on conflict resolutions in Kwara State.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference between public and private school principals' decision making pattern on disciplinary act in Kwara State.

**Table 4:**

T-test comparing Public and Private School of Principals' Decision Making Pattern on Disciplinary Act

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Sig(2-tail)	Decision
Public	338	4.76	.32	198	3.981	1.96	.000	Ho <sub>5</sub> Rejected
Private	367	2.68	.87					

**\*Significant P < .05**

From table 4, the result revealed that the calculated value was 3.981 and a critical t-value of 1.96. Since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value, the hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between unity and private school principals' decision-making patterns on disciplinary acts, is rejected. Therefore, a difference exists between unity and private school principals' decision-making patterns on disciplinary acts in Kwara State.

The finding from the central hypothesis in Table 1 revealed that differences exist between public and private principals' decision-making patterns in Kwara State. The finding disagreed with that of Menka (2016), who found no difference between the decision-making skills of government and private schools. Findings of the first null operational hypothesis, as contained in Table 2, revealed a difference between principals' decision-making patterns on instructional supervision in Kwara State. From the statistical result, the mean score of the public school principal decision-making pattern on instructional supervision was 4.88, and it is higher when compared with the private secondary school, which was 2.83. Hence, the public school principal performs better than the private school principal in the area of instructional supervision. The result of the study agreed with Nwabueze (2016) and Chen (2018) whose study found that decisions on instructional supervision, when undertaken by the school, are essential to improve every facet of the school so as to realize the school's goals.

The null operational hypothesis two in Table 3 shows a significant difference between principals' decision-making patterns on conflict resolutions. From the statistical result, the public school principal decision-making pattern on conflict resolutions was 5.94, which is very high compared to that of their private counterparts, which was 3.44. Hence, the public school principal performs better than the private school principal in the area of conflict resolution. The finding disagreed with the finding of Owulor (2023) that teachers were not involved in decision-making in spite of their eagerness.

The findings of null operational hypothesis three, revealed that there is a significant difference between public and private school principals' decision-making patterns on disciplinary acts. The findings further

revealed that the mean score of public school principals' decision-making pattern on disciplinary acts was 4.76, while that of private schools was 2.68. This shows that the public school principals were better at disciplining their staff than their counterparts. This low level of discipline can be said to account for the different defiant behaviors among secondary schoolgoers nowadays.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

In line with the findings, a significant difference exists between principal decision-making patterns in the two categories of schools in Kwara State. From the analysis done, public school principals perform better than private school principals in all the areas of decision-making studied (instructional supervision, conflict resolution, and disciplinary acts). In line with the findings, the study recommends that:

- i. The principals of public and private secondary schools should formulate clear instructional supervision decisions regarding the operations of their schools.
- ii. The principals should formulate effective conflict resolution decisions so as to improve the relationship of school members.
- iii. The principals, as a matter of urgency, make sound decisions on disciplinary measures and ensure that they are placed in conspicuous places for the students and staff to see.

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