

Utilization of the Social Media in Decision Making and Communication in Secondary Schools in Delta State of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the utilization of the social media, in decision making and communication, in secondary schools, in Delta State of Nigeria. Two (2) research questions and 2 hypotheses were answered and tested in the study, respectively. The design of the study was the analytic descriptive survey, with the population as the 447 public secondary schools in Delta State, with a corresponding number of 447 principals, who served as participants. From the 447 principals, 358 were selected as the sample, for the study, using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The subjects of the study responded to a validated 23-item instrument titled 'Social Media Utilization in Secondary School Decision Making and Communication Scale' (SMUSSDMCS 1) designed by the researchers in the modified 4-point Likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.77, determined using the Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z. test was used in testing the hypotheses at 5% level of

significance. The results of the study show that, to a high extent and very high extent, the social media are utilized in secondary school decision making and communication, respectively apart from establishing no significant differences between the mean ratings of male and female principals on one hand and less experienced and experienced principals, on the extent, the social media are utilized in decision making and school communication in secondary schools in Delta State. It was therefore concluded that the social media are viable instrumentalities for secondary school decision making and communication. Recommendations are that school administrators and other stakeholders should continue to use the social media in their decision making and communication, while also embracing the use of other Information and Communication Technology (ICT) oriented applications and making sure that newly appointed principals are exposed to the demands of ICT.

Keywords: Utilization, social media, decision making, communication.

Introduction

Educational institutions, especially schools, exist in society, to transmit the worthwhile knowledge, skills and values of the society from one generation to another. To achieve these feats, educational institutions, make use of some inbuilt internal inputs and inputs from external sources. These resources include human, material, fiscal and unseen resources. Among the unseen resources include decision making and communication. These two resources are used in managing the other resources. Decisions are used by school leaders, to determine the dosages of every other resource for procurement and utilization while communication is used to convey information, action, policies and procedures in both administrative and teaching matters.

In taking valid decisions in schools and communicating same to school members and others stakeholders, school leaders, make use of varieties of avenues, some of which are the social media. The social media are websites and other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information and develop social and professional contacts (Dictionary.com, 2016). Since the processes in decision making and communication involve interactions with people,

the social media should provide avenues for collaboration, communication and sharing of information, before taking decisions and communicating same to those concerned.

As part of the processes, meant to ensure that the school as a learning institution achieves its specific objective and achieve general aims, the school leaders and members must take rational decisions. Buttrressing this comment or proposition, Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development (FMEYD) (1993) notes that, school heads frequently find themselves in situations which require them to make decisions. They make decisions when they delegate work or responsibilities to staff and when they communicate to superiors or colleagues at work.

Literary, decision making has to do with deciding on a course to follow in putting things in order. Conceptually, FMEYD (1993) perceives decision making as the process of identifying and selecting a course of action to be taken to solve a problem. Continuing, the organization maintains that, decision making is a process, through which human, material and financial resources of an organization, are allocated or committed toward the achievement of intended goals and objectives and may also be seen as the process through which information, ideas, objectives and knowledge are brought together for action. For Okorie (2012), it is the process of choosing from among alternative courses of action, in order to achieve desired results. In this study, decision making refers to deliberate efforts, made by organizational leaders and members, to adopt specific and general ways of conducting their activities, to ensure the achievement of set objectives. Decision making is considered as very important in the life of individuals and organizations, which include schools, the military, non-governmental organizations and the main stream bureaucratic organizations and gives impetus to Adesina (1984), that decision making is the central function of administration and for Thompson (1968), it is considered as the crux of administrative action. In the act of decision making, whether in educational or mainstream bureaucratic organizations, certain steps are followed, using the classical approach to take rational decisions. These steps are problems identification and definition, search for alternatives, evaluate the alternatives, choosing the best alternative, implementation of the decision and evaluation of decision effectiveness (Okorie, 2012; Federal Ministry

of Education & Youth Development, 1993; Okorie & Oluwuo, 2009). Although, there appears to be other approaches in making decisions, the classical approach, appears to be, the one recommended for educational organizations, arising from the rational processes involved. Decisions normally taken in educational organizations are creative, generic, intermediary and appellate decisions. While creative decisions require going beyond the established procedures for solving problems and are initiated by organizational leaders, concerned for solving some exceptional problems that are not adequately addressed by general principles and rules, generic decisions can stem from problems emanating from organizational policies, principles, procedures, rules and organizational policies (Okorie, 2012). On the question of intermediary decisions, they are decisions delegated to the managerial leader, by his superiors, just as appellate decisions, are made in response to cases referred to the manager by his subordinates. This presentation underscores the position of Okorie (2012) that managers and administrators are always making decisions.

As enunciated in the earlier part of the review, the school administrator takes decisions on the management of educational personnel, decisions, finances, instructional programmes, communication, environment, facilities, among others. This, he does, by using the instrument of communication which must also be managed as a rule.

School communication has traditionally been done through the normal face to face communication, written communication and the use of the grapevine, apart from the use of traditional means of communication, like the use of palm fronds and other symbols of communication. These have been the practice, all the while, in the Nigerian schools.

However, since the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), from which social media uses, to come into limelight, administrators of organizations, among them educational organizations, now use the social media for the generation of information for taking educational decisions. As Roy (2013) notes, entrepreneurs use the social media to get customers feedback and so take better decisions on the

types of services they provide to them. For the scholar, the social media are strong instruments for getting information, for use in taking viable organizational decisions. Differently, Java, Song, Finin and Tseng (2007) and Naaman, Boase and Lai (2010), in their studies, provide appreciable evidences, that the social media, especially the Facebook and Tweeter provide opportunities, to get information, from customers, when conducting researches to get findings to take good decisions in organizations. According to Java *et al.* (2007), the Tweeter is a good instrument for opinion making and information sharing. In the views of Bortree & Seltzer (2009), Greenberg and Macaulay (2009), and Water, Burrett, Lam and Lucas (2009), the social media create opportunities for appreciable dialogue with organizational leaders, during which processes they arrive at agreeable points that help in taking viable decisions for adoption and implementation. Little wonder, Agbo (2016) notes that, the social media provide suggestions for taking decisions, which help in taking viable decisions. According to Lovejay & Saxton (2015), all these capabilities of the social media in decision making has scholarly and empirical backings. For these researchers, the social media have the potentialities to create opportunities for inter-personal engagement, interactions and dialogues that are qualitatively different from those offered by traditional websites.

In the presentation by what is Tech target (2016), the social media, assist organizations in mining customers' sentiments and this helps employers in making decisions that are used in solving organizational problems. These decisions may be on crowd sourcing and monitoring of brand.

In educational institutions, especially schools, school administrators can equally make use of the social media for gathering information, useful for making decisions on all aspect of school life. This becomes plausible because, schools like the mainstream business organizations are social organizations, who can interact with their clients and stakeholders, to get what they desire and decide on what to package for the different audiences. This is exactly what this study intended to ascertain.

In the business of school administration, whether in intra school or external administration, one basic phenomenon appears very important and inevitable. This is the question of communication. Literary,

communication is the exchange of information or messages between one person and another. It may also be seen as the transfer of intelligible information from the sender to the receiver and for the purpose of achieving pre-designed objectives. Maduagwu (2004) corroborates the former and latter meanings of communication, by stating that, it is a process, by which information or messages are passed from the sender to the receiver. Put rather differently, “communication is the transferring of a thought, message, idea, feeling or knowledge to another person, in such a way that it is understood” (Ocho, 2008, p.1). The scholar furthers that, it is a means, through which people are linked together for mutual understanding. It is also the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions and information, through speech, writing, gestures and bodily expressions.

Based on the meaning and concept of communication as reviewed, it appears that, it is an instrument, upon which every other aspect of school administration revolves. This may be explained in the fact that, communication is needed in the management of the school instructional programmes, as teachers use it to teach their students, communicate with themselves, management, colleagues, and society representatives. Students need communication to relate with one another, their teachers and the school management, while management needs communication to conduct general school administration, relate with students, teachers and the general public. Consequently, it may not be an overstatement to note that communication is the oil that lubricates the processes and acts in school administration.

In educational institutions, communication appears to be the life-wire. It is used in general school administration, teaching, interpersonal interactions and financial documentation and communication with both internal and external stakeholders in the school system.

Before the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), school communication had been done using the face to face and written styles in all communication between teachers and students and even teachers and administration, apart from the one between administration and other school members and stakeholders. Okwori and Ede (2012), Peretomode (1996) and Okorie (2009) subscribe to this position. For these scholars, this communication is

subsumed into the normal upward, downward, horizontal communication, apart from the ones through the instrumentality of the grapevine.

However, today, the social media have assumed the position of assisting man and organizations to conduct their activities, in ways that are less cumbersome. Roy (2013) summarizes that the social media are the easiest ways to reach out to clients. This contribution is subsumed into the fact that the social media help in its regularity in scheduling meetings and passing out urgent information. For Etejere and Ogundele (2013), the social media aid communication between students, make general communication easy, apart from making for easy information dissemination.

In quite a separate presentation, Williams (2016) lists seven ways the social media are used in school communication. These include creating relationships among school members, building relationships among school members, enhancing the involvements of parents and enhancing the involvements of employees, apart from providing avenues, to get comments on schools and school leadership. The list also include the maintenance of school image, creating opportunities to get immediate responses, building a community and making sure that schools stay connected with their stakeholders. These are agreed on by Porter and Carner (2010) (as cited in Education Partnership Initiative, 2017) and Afangideh and Aliezi (2016).

With special emphasis, Williams, (2016) enunciates that the Facebook is very important. This, it is explained, is because; it makes school communication up-to-date and comfortable with a more transparent environment which is capable of spreading or disseminating information quickly. Others are that the Tweeter enhances communication and information, apart from making it possible for school leaders to communicate with experts, create articles, and sharing information (Smith, 2010).

Statement of Problem

With the emergence of Information and Communication Technology, which resulted from advances and breakthroughs in the sciences and technology, a lot of scientific and technological inventions that can typically be added to the hitherto existing 'wonders of the world' have come into existence, with much influences on the lives of individuals, groups,

organizations and even nations. Some of these wonders are the social media, which are seen internationally as the strongest instrumentalities for collaboration, communication and sharing of information and ideas. Following from these, individuals, groups, organizations and nations, which among them are schools, use them in their day to day interactions. In schools, research findings, comments from opinion leaders and scholarly contributions present empirical and scholarly evidences that school administrators and other school members use the social media in decision making and school communication, as this makes collaboration, communication and sharing of information possible. However, the researchers were bothered by the constant frictions between school administrators and other stakeholders, over accusation of unilateral decision making without wider consultations and poor school outcomes arising from perceived poor communication among school members and other stakeholders. Evidences, such as these, call to question whether school administrators make use of the social media in the buildup to decision making and communication of school policies and procedures to those concerned, as the social media should provide the needed collaboration, communication and sharing of ideas and information with stakeholders. Consequently, it became imperative to examine the extent of utilization of the social media in decision making and communication in secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed and answered in the study:

1. To what extent are the social media employed in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State?
2. To what extent are the social media utilized in school communication in secondary schools in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent the social media are employed in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of less experienced and experienced principals on the extent the social media are utilized in school communication in secondary schools in Delta State.

Methodology

The design for the study was the analytic descriptive survey. The population was the 447 public secondary schools in Delta State. These schools have a corresponding number of 447 principals, who acted as the participants in the study, from which 358, representing 80%, were selected as sample, using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique, the instrument of the study was a 23-item instrument, titled 'Social Media Utilization in Secondary School Decision Making and Communication Scale' (SMUSSDMCS), designed by the researchers in the modified 4-point Likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.77, determined using the Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z. test was used in testing the hypotheses at 5% level of significance.

Results

Research Question I: To what extent are the social media employed in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Mean Ratings of Less Experienced and Experienced Principals on the Extent the Social Media are Utilized in School Communication in Secondary Schools in Delta State

S/N	Item	RESPONSES					Remark
		\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	$\bar{w\bar{X}}$	
1	School administrators get feedback from school members to be able to make valid decisions with the use of the social media.	3.88	0.43	3.77	0.59	3.83	VHE
2	The social media help school administrators with opportunities for getting information from school members before taking decisions.	1.42	0.97	1.79	1.23	1.61	LE
3	School administrators use the social media to get the opinions of school members before taking decisions.	1.59	1.02	1.39	0.94	1.49	LE
4	School administrators use the social media to share information with other school members before taking decisions.	3.76	0.63	3.63	0.96	3.70	VHE
5	School administrators use the social media as opportunities for dialoging with school members before taking decisions.	1.49	1.03	1.43	1.94	1.46	LE
6	The use of the social media provide suggestions to school administration which help in taking valid decision.	3.57	0.37	3.35	1.21	3.46	VHE
7	The social media create opportunities for inter personal engagements between school members that result in taking valid decisions.	3.42	0.94	3.22	1.19	3.33	VHE
8	The social media create opportunities for interactions among school members that make decision making easy	3.82	0.57	3.63	0.76	3.73	VHE
9	The social media are veritable instruments that help in mining school members sentiments before taking school related decisions.	3.79	0.70	3.85	0.44	3.82	VHE
Criterion $\bar{X} = 2.50$		2.97	0.79	2.89	0.92	2.94	HE

Legend

\bar{X}_1 = Mean Rating for Group 1
 \bar{X}_2 = Mean Rating for Group 2
 SD_1 = standard deviation for \bar{X}_1
 SD_2 = standard deviation for \bar{X}_2
 $w\bar{X}$ = Weighted mean

Scale

0.00 – 0.99 = VLE
 1.00 – 1.99 = LE
 2.00 – 2.99 = HE
 3.00 – 4.00 = VHE

Data on Table I show that, items 1, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 had weighted mean ratings between 3.00 and 4.00, showing that to a very high extent, the social media are employed in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State. Differently, items 2, 3 and 5, had weighted mean ratings between 1.00 and 1.99, indicating that to a low extent, the social media are used in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean of 2.94, male and female principals, responded that to a high extent, the social media are used in decision making in secondary schools in Delta.

Research Question 2: To what extent are the social media utilized in school communication in secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Mean Ratings of Less Experienced and Experienced Principals on the Extent the Social Media are Utilized in School Communication in Secondary Schools in Delta State

S/N	Item	RESPONSES					Remark
		\bar{x}_1	SD_1	\bar{x}_2	SD_2	w_2	
10	The social media present easy ways to communicate in educational systems.	3.48	0.93	3.56	0.79	3.52	VHE
11	The social media help school administration in scheduling meetings.	3.61	0.76	3.70	0.67	3.66	VHE
12	The social media help in the urgent transfer of information to designated entities.	3.72	0.61	3.96	0.22	3.84	VHE
13	The social media make communication between students easy.	3.69	0.68	3.73	0.68	3.71	VHE
14	General communication among school members is easy with the use of the social media.	3.63	0.62	3.77	0.66	3.70	VHE
15	School pieces of information are easily disseminated using the social media.	3.32	1.06	3.79	0.62	3.56	VHE
16	The use of the social media creates relationships among people in schools.	3.75	0.73	3.88	0.44	3.82	VHE
17	The use of the social media in school administration creates relationships between school administrators.	3.72	0.69	3.59	0.78	3.66	VHE
18	The use of the social media creates opportunities that enhance the involvement of many hands in school administration.	1.92	1.19	1.44	0.81	1.68	LE
19	The use of the social media by school administrators makes it possible for them to get comments on issues under consideration.	3.72	0.65	3.53	0.79	3.63	VHE
20	The social media are strong instruments for maintaining the image of the school.	3.43	1.02	3.76	0.60	3.60	VHE
21	The social media create opportunities to get immediate responses on issues bothering on school administration.	3.81	0.70	3.94	0.29	3.88	VHE
22	The social media are strong communities that help in easy administration of schools.	3.69	0.82	3.86	0.44	3.78	VHE
23	The use of the social media presents opportunities for designated school officials to stay connected.	3.80	0.55	3.91	0.47	3.86	VHE
Criterion $\bar{x} = 2.50$		3.52	0.79	3.60	0.57	3.56	VHE

* The legend and scale for Table 1 apply

Data on Table 2 show that items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 had weighted mean ratings between the range of 3.00 — 4.00, showing that, to a very high extent, the social media are utilized in school communication in secondary schools in Delta State. Differently, item 18 had a mean rating between 1.00 and 1.99, showing that the social media are used in school communication to a low extent. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.56, less experienced and experienced secondary school principals, responded that, to a very high extent, the social media are utilized in secondary school administration in Delta State.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent the social media are employed in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 3: Summary of z.test Analysis on the Difference between the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Principals on the Extent the Social Media are Employed in Decision Making in Secondary Schools in Delta State

Subjects	N	$\bar{\chi}$	SD	z.cal	z.crit	df	Results
Male Principals	226	2.97	0.79	0.89	1.96	351	Not Significant (Failed to Reject)
Female Principals	127	2.88	0.92				

Legend

N = Number of Participants $\bar{\chi}$ = Mean Responses SD = Standard Deviation
Cal z = Calculated z-value z-crit = z Critical Value df = Degree of Freedom

Data on Table 3 show summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z.test of difference, between the mean ratings of, male and female principals, on the extent, the social media, are employed in decision making, in secondary schools in Delta State. The calculated z.value used in testing the hypothesis stood at 0.89 while the critical z.table value came out as 1.96, using 351 degrees of freedom, at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 351 degrees of freedom, the observed z.value of 0.89 is less than the critical z.value of 1.96. This shows that,

there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the study respondents. Following from this observation, the researchers failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent the social media are employed in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of less experienced and experienced principals on the extent the social media are utilized in school communication in secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Summary of z.test Analysis on the Difference between the Mean Ratings of Less Experienced and Experienced Principals on the Extent the Social Media are Utilized in School Communication in Secondary Schools in Delta State

Subjects	N	$\bar{\chi}$	SD	z.cal	z.crit	df	Results
Less Experienced Principals	72		3.52	0.79			
				0.89	1.96	351	Not Significant
Experienced Principals	281		3.60	0.59			(Failed to Reject)

* The legend for Table 3 applies.

Data on Table 4 shows summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z.test of difference, between the mean ratings of, less experienced and experienced principals, on the extent, the social media are used, in school communication, in secondary schools in Delta State. The observed z.value, used in testing the hypothesis stood at 0.89, while the z.critical value stood at 1.96 using 351 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 351 degrees of freedom, the observed z.value of 0.89, is less than the critical z.value of 1.96. This shows that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the respondents. Based on this observation, the researchers retained the null hypotheses that, there is no significant difference, between the mean ratings of, less experienced and experienced principals, on the extent the social media are utilized in school communication in secondary schools in Delta State.

Discussion of Findings and Implications

Utilization of the Social Media in School Decision Making

The first finding of the study is that the social media are used in decision making in secondary schools in Delta State to a high extent. This finding agrees with the positions taken by Roy (2013), Java, Song, Finin and Tseng (2007), Naaman, Boase and Lai (2010), Bortree and Seltzer (2009), Greenberg and Macaulay (2009), Waters, Burret, Lam and Lucaus (2009), Agbo (2016), and what is Techtarget (2016). These scholars and researchers, in their scholarly presentations and research reports, have established that, the social media are veritable instrumentalities for effective decision making in organizations, among them schools. A possible explanation for the trend in the finding, may be in fact that, with the use of the ubiquitous Java and Android phones, school leaders, now use them, in getting the opinions and suggestions of their school members before taking school decisions. However, in a corresponding hypothesis which sought to ascertain the difference between principals on the basis of gender, it was established that no significant difference exists between the respondents, in the extent, the social media are utilized in school decision making in secondary schools in Delta State.

This later corresponding finding is in disagreement with Roy (2013), Java *et al.* (2007), Naaman, Boase and Lai (2010), Bortree and Seltzer (2009), Greenberg and Macaulay (2009), Water, Burret, Lam and Lucaus (2009), Agbo (2016), What is Tech Target (2016) and Gulan, Law and Clemens (2015). Despite this negative outcome, it does not invalidate the fact that, the social media are used, in the build up to decision making in organizations, especially schools, where emphasis is made on participatory decision making. This trend may be the resultant consequence of the type of statistical tool, used in hypothesis testing or that, it must have come as a result of the differences in perception as a result of gender. This implies that, in schools where school members take part in decision making, the use of the social media may be a major booster although there may be some exceptions.

Utilization of the Social Media in School Communication

The second finding of the study is that, to a very high extent, the social media are utilized in school communication in secondary schools in Delta State. This finding is in tandem with Roy (2013), Williams (2016), Porter and Carnes (2013) (as cited in Education Partners Initiative, (2012), Afangideh and Aliezi (2016), and Smith (2010). These scholars and researchers, have in their scholarly contributions and research reports, established that, the social media play major roles in school communication from teaching to administration. A probable explanation for the present trend, in the finding, may not be unconnected with the fact that, with the use of the social media, teachers, students, and school administrators communicate with and among themselves in manners and styles considered as easy.

Quite surprisingly, a corresponding finding from hypothesis testing, found no significant difference between the mean ratings of less experienced and experienced principals. Though, this finding is antithetical to the works of Roy (2013), Williams (2016), Porter and Carnes (2013) as cited in Education Partners initiative (2012), Afangideh and Aliezi (2016), and Smith (2010), it does not jettison the fact that the social media as exemplified in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, among others play enormous roles in school communication in both teaching and general school administration. This difference may not be unconnected with the rigorous processes involved in the course of testing the hypothesis or that the gaps in years of experiences must have taken their toll on the finding. The two findings therefore imply that school administrators and other members who employ the use of the social media can always be sure of enhancing and achieving effective school communication.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings of the study, the discussion on them and their accompanying implications, it is concluded that the social media are viable instrumentation in secondary school decision making and communication, though with some variations on the basis of gender and administrative experiences.

Recommendations

- School administrators and other stakeholders in school administration should continue to make use of the social media in the build up to school decision making, apart from the use of other ICT oriented applications.
- Designated school officials and school administrators should continue to make use of the social media in school communication, as their benefits outweighs the disadvantages while making sure that newly appointed principals are exposed to the demands of ICT.

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