

# The Role of Stakeholders' Accountability in Enhancing Secondary School Administration

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the relationship between stakeholders' accountability practices and the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Delta State, Nigeria. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study, which adopted an ex-post facto correlational design. From a population of 473 principals and 11,777 teachers in public secondary schools, a sample of 606 respondents (85 principals and 521 teachers) was drawn using a multi-stage/cluster sampling technique. Two researcher-developed instruments — the Stakeholders' Involvement in Accountability Questionnaire (SIAQ) and the Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ) — were used for data collection. Their face and content validity were established by experts in educational administration and in measurement and evaluation at the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, while their internal consistency, assessed with Cronbach Alpha, yielded reliability coefficients of 0.81 and 0.78 respectively. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation, coefficient of determination, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, with the hypothesis tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that stakeholders' involvement in principals' accountability was generally high, and that stakeholders' accountability practices were significantly and positively related to principals' administrative effectiveness ( $r = .864$ ,  $p < .05$ ), accounting for 54.2% of the variance in administrative effectiveness. The study concluded that stakeholders' accountability practices are a strong predictor of principals' effective administration of secondary schools, and recommended that the Ministry of Education and school boards institute structured platforms for regular consultation with stakeholders, including parents, community leaders, and alumni, to strengthen transparency and shared responsibility in school administration.

**Keywords:** Accountability, effective administration, secondary school, stakeholders.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Secondary education occupies a central place in the socialisation of young people. It affords students the opportunity to interact with peers, acquire social competencies, and take part in extracurricular activities — experiences that jointly nurture personal development and a sense of community (Buchmann & Dalton, 2022). Beyond socialisation, secondary schooling cultivates civic consciousness: students become acquainted with their rights and obligations as citizens, an awareness that in turn encourages participation in democratic and community life. Its economic value is equally well established, as individuals who complete secondary education generally command higher earnings and experience lower rates of unemployment than those who do not (Genevive, 2023), with attendant benefits for national economic development. The quality of secondary education, however, does not rest with the school alone; it is shaped by an array of stakeholders whose involvement helps determine the character of the learning environment and the outcomes it produces.

Active stakeholder participation is associated with a healthier school climate, itself a precondition for student learning and wellbeing. Cohen et al. (2019) observe that a positive school climate fosters belonging and safety among students, conditions that tend to raise engagement and lower dropout. Where stakeholders work together to build a supportive environment, students are correspondingly more likely to flourish. Local businesses and community organisations, for their

part, can extend a school's resource base — through land, funding, internship placements, and mentorship — thereby strengthening extracurricular provision and connecting classroom learning to real-world demands.

Accountability in education denotes the obligation of school principals to ensure that their schools attain defined standards of performance and to answer for the outcomes of their leadership. It spans several dimensions, including academic performance, financial management, and compliance with policy and regulation, and requires principals to build an environment conducive to learning, deploy resources prudently, and engage the wider community in the pursuit of educational success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2023). Principals bear direct responsibility for student achievement and must therefore set academic goals, track progress, and use data to guide instruction. They are equally expected to administer budgets responsibly, allocating funds in ways that support educational programmes while maintaining transparent financial reporting in line with regulatory requirements (Baker, 2016). A further dimension concerns engagement with parents, teachers, and the community, so that the school remains responsive to the needs of its students; principals must, in this regard, welcome feedback and work collaboratively with stakeholders to raise educational quality.

Stakeholder involvement bears directly on how principals are held accountable. Active parental involvement, for instance, tends to improve student outcomes while simultaneously deepening the accountability of principals, since engaged parents are more likely to press for answers on their children's education, fostering a collaborative climate that underpins student success (Epstein, 2021). Teachers, too, are essential stakeholders: their input and collaboration with principals can strengthen accountability by ensuring that leadership decisions are grounded in classroom realities, and teachers who feel valued and involved are more inclined to support school initiatives and contribute to a positive school culture. Partnerships with local organisations and businesses can likewise reinforce accountability by expanding the resources available to schools, while offering principals insight into local needs and expectations against which to align institutional goals. Policymakers and educational authorities, meanwhile, set the framework within which principals operate; accountability instruments such as standardised testing and performance evaluation can exert pressure on principals to prioritise particular outcomes, sometimes at the expense of broader educational goals.

Taken together, principals' accountability is a multifaceted construct shaped substantially by stakeholder involvement. Engaging parents, teachers, and the community can build a collaborative environment that both improves educational outcomes and holds principals to account for their leadership. As the educational landscape in Delta State's secondary schools continues to evolve, understanding how stakeholder involvement relates to principals' accountability becomes increasingly important for effective school leadership. It is this concern that motivates the present study, which sets out to establish the nature of the relationship between stakeholders' involvement in education and the accountability of secondary school principals in Delta State.

The National School Boards Association (2015) contends that inclusive decision-making tends to yield better educational outcomes and stronger accountability, in part because involving stakeholders cultivates a sense of ownership and empowerment. When parents and community members feel that their voices are heard, they are more inclined to support school initiatives and advocate on behalf of their children's education, an empowerment that can, over time, translate into greater volunteerism and advocacy for educational improvement. Engaging a diverse range of stakeholders also helps keep curricula and school policies culturally relevant and inclusive — a consideration of particular importance in secondary education, where the student population is drawn from widely varying backgrounds. On this view, stakeholder involvement is indispensable to a supportive, effective, and inclusive secondary school system.

Closely related to accountability is the administrative effectiveness of principals, understood as their capacity to manage and lead schools efficiently and effectively (Sam, 2021). Effectiveness, in this sense, concerns the attainment of educational goals, while efficiency concerns attaining them at minimal cost and within reasonable time. It encompasses curriculum implementation, staff management, student discipline, community relations, and resource allocation, and effective principals are widely regarded as central to a positive school climate, improved student achievement, and the realisation of educational goals more broadly (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2020). Administrative effectiveness, like accountability, is bound up with stakeholder involvement: by fostering collaboration among parents, teachers, and community members, principals can strengthen their leadership capacity, operate with greater transparency, improve their decision-making, and ultimately achieve better outcomes for students. As educational systems continue to evolve, the contribution of stakeholders to effective school leadership is likely to remain a critical and enduring concern.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

In Delta State's public secondary schools, the challenges of school plant management are frequently compounded by limited financial resources, ageing infrastructure, and bureaucratic inefficiency (Akpotu, 2025). Stakeholders — parents, community members, local government officials, and educational authorities among them — occupy a pivotal position in shaping the educational environment and influencing principals' decision-making (Rados, 2022). Yet the extent to which stakeholders' accountability relates to principals' administrative effectiveness in Delta State's public secondary schools remains insufficiently examined. Despite the recognised importance of stakeholders' accountability for educational quality, empirical research on its specific bearing on effective secondary school administration in Delta State remains scarce. It is this gap that the present study seeks to address.

### ***Research Questions***

1. What is the level of accountability practices exhibited by stakeholders for the enhanced administration of secondary schools in Delta State?
2. What is the relationship between stakeholder accountability and the effective administration of secondary schools by principals in Delta State?

### ***Hypothesis***

H01: There is no significant relationship between stakeholder accountability and the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Delta State.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Stakeholders' involvement in education can shape principals' administrative effectiveness in several interlocking ways. Where stakeholders take part in decision-making, principals stand to benefit from a wider range of perspectives and insights, an infusion that tends to make decisions more informed and effective (Harris, 2004). Such involvement also cultivates a sense of accountability: when parents and community members are engaged, they are more disposed to hold school leaders answerable for their actions and decisions, with implications for improved performance (Bryk et al., 2020). Engaged stakeholders, moreover, are more likely to back school initiatives — whether through volunteering, fundraising, or advocacy — support that can supply additional resources and lift the overall effectiveness of school programmes.

Accountability in education has become a recurring concern for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders alike. In secondary schools specifically, principals occupy a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes, which makes their accountability central to the effective functioning of the school system.

Accountability, broadly conceived, is the obligation of school leaders to answer for their actions and decisions, particularly with respect to student performance and resource management (Elmore, 2014), and it embraces legal, moral, and professional dimensions. Legal accountability concerns adherence to relevant laws and regulations; moral accountability concerns the ethical obligations owed to students, parents, and the community; and professional accountability concerns conformity to the standards set by educational bodies and associations. Marzano (2023) further distinguishes academic, financial, ethical, and community accountability. Academic accountability, arguably the most visible of these, requires that students meet established academic standards and that schools demonstrate adequate progress; it obliges principals to implement curricula, monitor performance, analyse data to identify areas needing attention, and design strategies for improvement.

Financial accountability, for its part, requires principals to manage resources prudently and transparently — budgeting, allocating funds, and ensuring that expenditure aligns with educational goals, while complying with financial regulations and reporting obligations that can be demanding to meet (Baker, 2016); mismanagement of funds, where it occurs, can cost schools both funding and community trust. Ethical accountability concerns principals' moral obligation to act in the best interests of students and the community, including the promotion of equity, inclusivity, and respect for diversity (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016), which frequently requires principals to navigate genuine ethical dilemmas, such as balancing individual students' needs against the demands of standardised testing. Community accountability, finally, emphasises engagement with parents, community members, and other stakeholders; effective communication and collaboration can strengthen community support for the school and cultivate a shared sense of responsibility for student outcomes (Epstein, 2021), while transparency about policies, decisions, and performance builds trust and credibility.

Accountability is, in this sense, integral to effective educational leadership. Principals who embrace it are more likely to build a culture of continuous improvement that encourages collaboration among teachers, staff, and students and thereby enhances educational outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2020). It can also motivate principals to pursue professional development, seek innovative responses to challenges, and advocate for the resources their schools require. Establishing clear expectations for academic performance and behaviour is among principals' foremost responsibilities: measurable goals and standards give accountability a concrete framework that guides the conduct of teachers and students alike (Marzano, 2023), aligning effort and resources towards shared objectives.

Meeting accountability obligations also depends on the systematic use of data. Principals are expected to analyse performance and attendance records and related metrics to detect trends and identify areas needing attention (Elmore, 2014); such data-driven decision-making allows resources to be allocated more effectively, interventions to be targeted, and progress to be monitored over time. Continuous professional development for principals and staff is similarly indispensable, since it sharpens the skills and knowledge that ultimately benefit students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2020), and principals are well placed to foster a culture in which teachers share best practice and engage in reflective work.

Despite its importance, accountability presents secondary school principals with considerable challenges that can constrain effective leadership. The emphasis placed on high-stakes testing as a marker of accountability, for example, can generate pressure that is difficult to reconcile with the diverse needs of students, requiring principals to implement inclusive practices and differentiate instruction so that all students have equitable access to opportunity (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Principals, moreover, answer not only to their immediate school communities but also to external stakeholders — district officials, policymakers, and parents among them — a layered set of obligations that adds further complexity to the accountability principals must sustain.

### 3. METHOD AND MATERIALS

The study adopted a correlational research design, appropriate for examining the relationship between two or more variables and the extent to which they are associated. The population comprised 473 principals and 11,777 teaching staff in public secondary schools in Delta State, from which a sample of 606 respondents — 85 principals and 521 teachers — was drawn using a multi-stage/cluster sampling technique, with stratified random sampling employed at the point of selection.

Two instruments were used for data collection: the Stakeholders' Involvement in Accountability Questionnaire (SIAQ) and the Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ). The SIAQ comprised 16 items rated on a four-point scale of Very Low Involvement (VLI = 1), Low Involvement (LI = 2), High Involvement (HI = 3), and Very High Involvement (VHI = 4). The AEQ comprised 20 items rated on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Face and content validity of both instruments were established by two experts in educational administration and in measurement and evaluation at the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. Internal consistency, assessed using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielded reliability coefficients of 0.81 for the SIAQ and 0.78 for the AEQ. Data were collected by the researcher and two trained assistants; of the 606 questionnaires distributed, 589 (representing 97%) were retrieved in usable form and used for analysis. Mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of determination were used to answer the research questions, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

### 4. RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** *What is the level of accountability practices exhibited by stakeholders for the enhanced administration of secondary schools in Delta State?*

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Level of Stakeholders' Accountability Practices**

| S/N | Stakeholders' Involvement in Accountability                                               | N   | Mean | SD   | Decision |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|------|----------|
| 1   | Ensures that the principal encourages collaboration among staff to improve accountability | 589 | 3.08 | 0.85 | HL       |
| 2   | Ensures that the principal rewards staff for their achievements                           | 589 | 3.01 | 1.12 | HL       |
| 3   | Ensures that the principal promotes professional development opportunities for staff      | 589 | 2.94 | 1.01 | HL       |

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| S/N | Stakeholders' Involvement in Accountability                                                      | N   | Mean        | SD          | Decision  |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| 4   | Ensures that the principal regularly reviews student performance data                            | 589 | 2.44        | 1.21        | LL        |
| 5   | Ensures that the principal encourages a culture of excellence among staff                        | 589 | 2.93        | 0.99        | HL        |
| 6   | Ensures that the principal takes responsibility for the academic performance of students         | 589 | 2.92        | 1.10        | HL        |
| 7   | Ensures that the principal manages school funds judiciously                                      | 589 | 2.68        | 1.06        | HL        |
| 8   | Ensures that the principal effectively manages school resources to enhance teaching and learning | 589 | 2.88        | 1.01        | HL        |
| 9   | Ensures that the principal collaborates with teachers to set performance goals                   | 589 | 2.70        | 0.82        | HL        |
| 10  | Ensures that the principal is committed to continuous improvement in school practices            | 589 | 2.78        | 1.00        | HL        |
| 11  | Ensures that the principal provides regular updates on school progress to the community          | 589 | 2.74        | 0.94        | HL        |
| 12  | Ensures that students are taught daily                                                           | 589 | 2.70        | 1.15        | HL        |
| 13  | Monitors the principal's transparency in decision-making processes                               | 589 | 2.46        | 1.26        | LL        |
| 14  | Ensures that the principal provides financial reports regularly                                  | 589 | 2.58        | 0.98        | HL        |
| 15  | Ensures that stakeholders are involved in decision-making                                        | 589 | 2.62        | 1.00        | HL        |
| 16  | Ensures that the principal clearly communicates school policies                                  | 589 | 2.54        | 1.07        | HL        |
|     | <b>Grand Mean</b>                                                                                |     | <b>2.76</b> | <b>1.03</b> | <b>HL</b> |

Decision rule: a mean score of 2.50 and above indicates a high level (HL) of involvement; a mean score below 2.50 indicates a low level (LL).

Table 1 presents the mean analysis of stakeholders' accountability practices in Delta State's secondary schools. With the exception of items 4 and 13, all items recorded mean scores above 2.50 — that is, items 1 to 3, 5 to 12, and 14 to 16 fell within the 2.50–3.49 band, indicating a high level of agreement. This suggests that respondents perceived stakeholders as highly involved in promoting principals' accountability, with individual item means ranging from 2.51 to 3.08. The grand mean of 2.76 confirms that stakeholders' overall involvement in ensuring principals' accountability was high.

**Research Question 2:** *What is the relationship between stakeholder accountability practices and the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Delta State?*

**Table 2: Relationship between Stakeholders' Accountability Practices and Administrative Effectiveness of Principals**

| Variable                               | N   | Mean | Std. Dev. | R    | R <sup>2</sup> (%) | Remark                |
|----------------------------------------|-----|------|-----------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Stakeholders' Accountability Practices | 589 | 2.77 | 1.08      | .750 | 54.2               | Positive relationship |
| Administrative Effectiveness           | 589 | 2.90 | 0.70      |      |                    |                       |

Table 2 shows a correlation coefficient (r) of .750 between stakeholders' accountability practices and principals' administrative effectiveness. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = .542$ ) indicates that stakeholders' accountability practices account for 54.2% of the variance in administrative effectiveness. The relationship between the two variables is therefore positive.

## Hypothesis Testing

H01: There is no significant relationship between stakeholder accountability and the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Delta State.

**Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Stakeholders' Accountability and the Effective Administration of Principals**

|                                                             |                     | Stakeholders' Accountability | Effective Administration |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Stakeholders' Accountability</b>                         | Pearson Correlation | 1                            | .864**                   |
|                                                             | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                              | .000                     |
|                                                             | N                   | 589                          | 589                      |
| <b>Effective Administration</b>                             | Pearson Correlation | .864**                       | 1                        |
|                                                             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                         |                          |
|                                                             | N                   | 589                          | 589                      |
| ** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). |                     |                              |                          |

Table 3 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between stakeholders' accountability and principals' administrative effectiveness. The correlation coefficient ( $r = .864$ ,  $p = .000$ ) is significant at the 0.05 level; the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. There is a significant relationship between stakeholders' accountability and the effective administration of secondary schools by principals in Delta State.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### *Level of Stakeholders' Accountability Practices*

Stakeholders' accountability practices were found to be high overall, with a grand mean of 2.76. Among the highest-rated items were the encouragement of collaboration among staff to improve accountability ( $M = 3.08$ ), the rewarding of staff for their achievements ( $M = 3.01$ ), the promotion of professional development opportunities ( $M = 2.94$ ), the cultivation of a culture of excellence among staff ( $M = 2.93$ ), and the monitoring of principals' responsibility for students' academic performance ( $M = 2.92$ ). Also rated highly were principals' effective management of school resources for teaching and learning ( $M = 2.88$ ), their commitment to continuous school improvement ( $M = 2.78$ ), the regularity of updates provided to parents on school progress ( $M = 2.74$ ), the daily supervision of teaching ( $M = 2.70$ ), collaboration with teachers on performance goals ( $M = 2.70$ ), and the judicious management of school funds ( $M = 2.68$ ), among others.

This outcome is plausibly linked to the extent to which mechanisms for monitoring school finances, staff performance, and policy implementation have become institutionalised in many of Delta State's public secondary schools. Parents, alumni associations, community leaders, and education board representatives increasingly take an active interest in the education of children and now participate more directly in accountability processes than was previously the case, when accountability was largely an internal school matter with limited external participation. Improvements in communication and feedback structures between principals and stakeholders appear, correspondingly, to have strengthened community interest in and transparency around school operations.

This finding is consistent with Bamidele and Yusuf (2019), who reported a high level of stakeholder involvement in accountability in private secondary schools, where governing boards and parent associations actively oversee financial management and staff evaluation. It similarly aligns with Iheanacho and Bello (2023), who found that schools with active stakeholder participation in record-keeping and resource management exhibited stronger accountability practices and improved administrative outcomes, and with Ekutie and Asiyai (2024), who reported high stakeholder participation in supporting schools in Anambra State through infrastructure development and the provision of security. It also supports Ogbodo and Eze (2020), who found stakeholder involvement in accountability in public secondary schools in south-eastern Nigeria to be above average overall, though with comparatively low participation in financial decision-making and performance evaluation.

The finding contrasts, however, with Adamu and Olayemi (2021), who reported that weak collaboration between school administrators and community-based organisations often results in only partial accountability and diminished trust in school leadership, and with Opara and Nwachukwu (2022), who observed that where stakeholders are not fully engaged in monitoring processes, administrative transparency and performance reporting tend to decline.

### ***Relationship between Stakeholders' Accountability Practices and Principals' Effective Administration of Secondary Schools***

The study found a significant positive relationship between stakeholders' accountability practices and principals' effective administration of secondary schools. This suggests that as stakeholders take a greater interest in holding principals accountable, principals correspondingly invest more effort in fostering meaningful teaching and learning, with positive implications for overall school administration. The finding aligns with Ogbodo and Nwachukwu (2022), who observed that stakeholder collaboration in safeguarding the school environment fosters a culture of responsibility and accountability among administrators, and with Emeka and Udo (2019), who reported that community members' accountability practices improved the availability of instructional resources, students' learning outcomes, and schools' overall effectiveness.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis of these findings, the study concludes that stakeholders' involvement in ensuring principals' accountability is a strong predictor of effective secondary school administration in Delta State. Arising from this conclusion, the study recommends that:

1. Secondary education stakeholders in Delta State should strengthen their accountability practices by ensuring closer monitoring of principals' regular review of students' performance data, so as to improve school administration.
2. Stakeholders should reinforce accountability practices by continuously monitoring principals' transparency in decision-making, so as to encourage collaborative processes that support school effectiveness.

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