

Principals' Goal Setting and Use of Technological Tools as Correlates of Secondary School Effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Adesina Ajayi Adedapo

Ekiti State University, Ado - Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the influence of principals' goal setting and use of technological tools on the effectiveness of secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The research aimed to assess the overall level of school effectiveness in the state and to determine the relationship between goal setting, technology usage, and school effectiveness. Adopting a descriptive survey design, the study sampled 54 public secondary schools and 594 teachers through a multistage sampling procedure across three senatorial districts. Data were collected using two researcher-designed instruments: the "Goal Setting and Use of Technological Tools Questionnaire (GSUTTQ)" and the "Secondary School Effectiveness Questionnaire (SSEQ)." The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management and Test and Measurement, and their reliability was confirmed through the test-retest method, yielding coefficients of 0.82 and 0.83, respectively. Data analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed a significant and strong positive relationship between principals' goal setting and school effectiveness ($r = 0.774$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, a moderate but significant relationship was found between the use of technological tools and school effectiveness ($r = 0.496$, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that clear goal-setting practices and the effective integration of technology by school leaders substantially contribute to enhanced school performance. The study concludes that strategic planning and technological adoption are vital components for improving the effectiveness of secondary schools. It recommends targeted training for principals in goal setting, investment in ICT infrastructure, and the organisation of capacity-building programmes to promote educational excellence across secondary schools in the state.*

Keywords: goal setting, school effectiveness, technology tools, secondary education, principal

INTRODUCTION

Education remains a powerful driver of socio-economic development, as it equips individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills, and values necessary for productive living and societal advancement. It provides the human capital that transforms other economic resources into value-added outputs. According to the National Policy on Education, achieving educational goals in Nigeria depends on well-structured systems, clear delivery standards, and efficient management strategies aimed at

ensuring quality control, improving teacher capacity, and promoting overall school effectiveness (Akinola, 2019). Central to this process are school principals, who serve as leaders and administrators of educational institutions, particularly at the secondary school level. Their leadership practices, including goal-setting and the adoption of technological tools, are increasingly recognised as essential factors influencing school effectiveness.

Secondary schools serve as the bridge between basic education and tertiary learning, and they are vital for shaping the academic, social, and emotional development of young learners. As a result, school effectiveness in this context refers to the extent to which a school successfully meets its objectives ranging from intellectual development and moral grooming to equipping students with foundational life skills (Benstowe & Obianwu, 2023). Principals play a pivotal role in achieving these objectives by effectively managing human and material resources and ensuring optimal teaching and learning conditions (Lema & Otieno, 2022). In many instances, a principal's ability to plan, set goals, and leverage technology determines how successfully a school achieves its mission. School effectiveness, particularly in secondary schools, can be evaluated using a range of indicators including teacher performance, student achievement, staff stability, discipline, and stakeholder collaboration. Where these indicators are weak evidenced by low academic outcomes, irregular staff attendance, or poor communication effectiveness is compromised. According to Allison et al., (2020), the root causes of school ineffectiveness often stem from poor time management, weak supervisory practices, and a failure to adapt to changes in educational policy and curriculum. These challenges are particularly evident in some secondary schools across Ekiti State, where systemic inefficiencies contribute to inconsistent learning outcomes and declining standards.

In Ekiti State, factors such as teachers' irregularity and poor lesson delivery have negatively impacted student performance. Many teachers appear to lack adequate mastery of their subjects and are often unable to adapt to curriculum updates, which results in outdated and ineffective teaching methods. Additionally, schools frequently suffer from insufficient instructional materials, and teachers seldom improvise or seek alternative resources to enhance student learning. Inconsistent enforcement of school rules and discipline further undermines efforts to foster a conducive learning environment. These deficiencies highlight the importance of leadership and management in driving change.

Goal-setting is a strategic leadership practice that enables principals to prioritise tasks, allocate resources, and maintain a clear focus on institutional objectives. By defining measurable goals, school leaders can align teaching responsibilities and administrative operations with broader educational targets. Studies have shown that goal-setting supports effective time management and enhances organisational efficiency (Trentepohl et al., 2022; Valente et al., 2024). When principals communicate clear expectations and performance benchmarks to their staff, it fosters a culture of accountability, ensuring that all stakeholders work collaboratively towards common goals. Furthermore, structured goal-setting allows for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of school progress. Ayeni (2020) note that when principals adopt time management strategies built on realistic and measurable goals, they are better able to focus on essential administrative tasks and respond proactively to emerging challenges. Setting clear targets helps prevent delays and promotes timely decision-making, particularly in the areas of lesson planning, staff supervision, and resource mobilisation. Valente et al. (2024) further argue that effective goal-setting mitigates procrastination and supports balanced time distribution across academic and administrative responsibilities.

Technological tools provide further support for principals in enhancing school effectiveness. The integration of digital platforms in administrative functions can streamline task scheduling, automate reminders, and facilitate data analysis, each of which is crucial in optimising instructional time and improving decision-making processes. According to Trentepohl et al. (2022), time management becomes more effective when supported by appropriate technology, as it reduces inefficiencies and supports better planning. In Ekiti State, where many schools face resource and infrastructure challenges, technology adoption could help bridge gaps and support better learning outcomes.

For example, scheduling software can assist principals in managing staff timetables and monitoring class coverage, while analytics tools can track student performance and teacher effectiveness in real time. These platforms allow principals to identify areas of weakness quickly and allocate support or resources where needed. Lema and Otieno (2022) note that with the aid of data-driven tools particularly those incorporating Internet of Things (IoT) or machine learning, principals can monitor lesson delivery, track attendance, and evaluate staff performance with greater accuracy. This not only improves operational efficiency but also contributes to better academic results. Communication is another area where technological tools can enhance school effectiveness. Poor communication among administrators, teachers, and parents often results in misalignment of goals and ineffective implementation of school policies. Digital platforms, such as messaging apps or online portals, can facilitate real-time communication and help keep all stakeholders informed about school activities, student progress, and administrative updates. Trentepohl et al. (2022) argue that effective communication channels are fundamental to creating a collaborative school environment where teachers, students, and parents share responsibilities in achieving educational objectives.

Moreover, technological innovations can help principals design intervention strategies for underperforming students. With the ability to track performance data, schools can implement early interventions, offer tailored remediation, and address academic challenges before they escalate. Valente et al. (2024) emphasise that the ability to access timely data allows for evidence-based planning, which is critical for improving teaching quality and learning outcomes.

In view of the above, the study examined principals' goal setting and use of technological tools as correlates of secondary school effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria

1. the level of secondary school effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria;
2. the relationship between goals setting and secondary school effectiveness, and relationship between use of technology tools, and secondary school effectiveness.

The following research hypotheses are formulated for this study

Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between goals setting and secondary school effectiveness

Ho 2: There is no significant relationship between use of technology tools and secondary school effectiveness

LITERATURE REVIEW

Goal setting plays a fundamental role in enhancing time management, particularly in educational settings where time is often constrained. In Nigerian secondary schools, where academic workloads are heavy and learning conditions are often challenging, effective goal setting enables both students and teachers to prioritise tasks, manage their time, and improve productivity. When aligned with

efficient time management practices, goal setting helps individuals maximise limited resources and achieve higher academic performance and personal development. One of the key benefits of goal setting is that it provides clear direction. Students who set academic goals are better positioned to understand what they want to achieve and how to go about it. According to Makinde (2021), establishing specific and realistic goals helps students remain focused and committed to their studies, even in the face of distractions. In a context like Nigeria, where students frequently juggle multiple subjects and extra-curricular obligations, setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals allows them to break down complex academic responsibilities into manageable tasks.

Teachers also benefit from goal setting, particularly in managing their instructional time and planning lessons more effectively. Ajayi (2022) asserts that when educators have clear goals, they can develop targeted lesson plans that are aligned with curriculum objectives. This enhances teaching efficiency and ensures that classroom time is used productively. Moreover, goal setting supports teachers in tracking students' progress, adjusting instructional methods where necessary, and fostering an environment of continuous improvement. Another crucial advantage of goal setting is the development of self-discipline among students. Olatunde (2019) highlights that students who consistently set and review academic goals are more likely to avoid procrastination and manage their workload efficiently. By dividing large tasks into smaller segments, students can complete assignments within deadlines, reducing stress and improving academic outcomes. This is particularly important in Nigerian schools where overcrowded classrooms and limited teacher attention can hinder individualised support.

Motivation is another benefit closely tied to goal setting. Students with well-defined academic goals are more driven to achieve them, especially when they can measure their progress and celebrate small milestones. Ajayi (2022) notes that the ability to track progress enhances students' confidence and reinforces their commitment to academic pursuits. Motivation, in turn, strengthens time management habits, encouraging students to remain consistent in their studies and focused on long-term achievements. In many Nigerian schools, especially in rural areas, students face additional social and economic barriers. Goal setting helps them manage competing demands more effectively, improving their sense of control and reducing stress. It allows them to structure their time around essential activities, balancing academic work with household or income-generating responsibilities. This sense of control contributes to better mental health and academic resilience.

Moreover, goal setting supports long-term academic and career planning. When students align their academic goals with future aspirations, they can make informed decisions about time use and personal development. Teachers can also use students' goals to personalise learning, making instruction more relevant and engaging. As Adeyemi (2019) observes, this approach increases students' interest in learning and strengthens time management by encouraging them to take ownership of their educational journey.

The integration of technological tools in educational settings has significantly reshaped time management practices among students and educators. These tools aid in organising schedules, prioritising tasks, and enhancing overall productivity, ultimately reducing stress and improving academic performance. In secondary schools, particularly in Ekiti State, Nigeria, these tools have become invaluable for fostering institutional efficiency and improving individual academic outcomes. With the widespread use of smartphones, tablets, and computers, digital applications designed for time management such as Google Calendar and Microsoft Outlook have become essential. These tools

enable users to schedule lessons, set deadlines, and receive timely notifications for academic events (Rosen et al., 2020). Students benefit from a structured academic routine, minimising procrastination and enhancing task prioritisation. Similarly, educators can efficiently manage their responsibilities, ensuring effective lesson delivery and feedback provision.

Beyond individual use, technology also facilitates collaborative time management. Applications like Trello, Asana, and Slack allow for effective team coordination, task assignment, and progress tracking in real-time. These platforms enhance the efficiency of group projects by ensuring transparency and accountability among team members (Higgins, 2019). Such collaboration tools are particularly useful in project-based learning environments where collective effort is crucial. Moreover, learning management systems (LMS) such as Moodle, Canvas, and Google Classroom centralise course materials, assignment submissions, grading, and discussions. This integration allows students to monitor their academic workload and deadlines in one accessible platform, reducing the risk of missing important tasks (Chang & Chou, 2018). Automated notifications on these platforms help maintain students' focus and promote timely completion of academic requirements.

However, the use of digital tools is not without challenges. Distractions from social media and entertainment apps can hinder productivity. Therefore, digital literacy and self-discipline are crucial for effective time management (Junco & Cotten, 2019). Furthermore, not all students and teachers are proficient in using these tools. Proper training and support through workshops or tutorials are essential for maximising the benefits of technology (Khan & Ebrahim, 2020).

Alabi (2021) explored the relationship between delegation and professional development in Nigerian schools, with a focus on how goal-setting contributes to enhanced school performance. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from 250 teachers and school leaders across five Nigerian states through questionnaires. The findings revealed that clearly defined delegation, guided by specific goals, significantly promoted teachers' professional development, leading to improved institutional performance. Alabi concluded that effective goal-setting when assigning responsibilities fosters both teacher growth and the overall efficiency of schools. Similarly, Nwafor (2022) investigated the role of collaborative practices in Nigerian schools and their impact on educational outcomes. The researchers adopted a mixed-methods approach, collecting data from 300 educators and administrators through interviews and questionnaires. Their study highlighted goal-setting as a central element of successful collaboration, as it helps create a shared vision and measurable objectives among stakeholders. The study concluded that embedding goal-setting in collaborative efforts strengthens teamwork, promotes accountability, and enhances educational performance in schools.

Ajayi (2022) assessed the effect of goal-setting on teaching effectiveness within Nigerian schools. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the study involved 200 teachers divided into an experimental group, which participated in goal-setting training, and a control group, which maintained traditional teaching practices. The results showed that teachers who engaged in goal-setting demonstrated improved classroom management and instructional delivery. Ajayi concluded that incorporating goal-setting into teachers' professional routines is vital for boosting teaching quality and institutional success. Makinde (2021) explored Nigerian students' experiences with goal-setting and time management to understand their impact on academic achievement. Adopting a qualitative research design, interviews were conducted with 100 students from different parts of the country. The findings showed that students who applied the SMART goal framework specific, measurable, achievable,

relevant, and time-bound were more effective in managing their time and performed better academically. Makinde concluded that goal-setting plays a critical role in students' academic success and recommended its integration into school curricula as a vital skill for personal and academic development

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. The population comprised all public secondary schools in Ekiti State Nigeria, from which a sample of 54 schools was drawn. A total of 594 teachers were selected using a multistage sampling procedure. In the first stage, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were chosen from each of the three senatorial districts in the state, resulting in a total of nine LGAs. In the second stage, six public secondary schools were selected from each of the nine LGAs using stratified random sampling. At the third stage, teachers were chosen from each school through proportionate random sampling. In the fourth stage, the principals of the sampled schools were selected using purposive sampling to assess their goal-setting skills and use of technological tools. Two self-designed research instruments titled "Goal Setting and Use of Technological Tools Questionnaire (GSUTTQ)" and "Secondary School Effectiveness Questionnaire (SSEQ)" were used for data collection. The GSUTTQ consisted of two sections: Section A gathered bio-data, while Section B included 10 items on goal setting and use of technological tools, rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The SSEQ was divided into three sections, with Section A obtaining bio-data and Section B consisting of 20 items assessing school effectiveness on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Excellent (5) to Poor (1).

The face and content validity of the instruments were established by presenting the questionnaires to experts in Educational Management and Tests and Measurement within the Faculty of Education. These experts evaluated the appropriateness, relevance, and clarity of the items, offering valuable feedback that helped refine the structure, wording, and coherence of the instruments. Their input ensured alignment with the research objectives. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed through the test-retest method. A pilot study was conducted in two public secondary schools outside the sampled schools, where the instruments were administered twice within a two-week interval to 40 teachers and 4 principals. Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.82 for GSUTTQ and 0.83 for SSEQ. The researcher personally visited each of the sampled schools to administer the instruments, assisted by two trained research assistants from each of the three selected states. This personal contact enhanced respondents' understanding and facilitated easy retrieval of the instruments. Data collected were analysed using inferential statistics, with hypotheses tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at a 0.05 level of significance

RESULTS**Table 1: Descriptive analysis of secondary school effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria N = 540**
Mean Cut-Off: 3.00

| N | Items | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----|--|------|------|--------|
| 1. | The principal provides a clear vision and direction for academic excellence. | 3.53 | 0.64 | High |
| 2. | Teacher are effectively supported by the principal in achieving instructional goals. | 3.42 | 0.75 | High |
| 3. | The principal fosters a culture of collaboration among staff and stakeholders. | 3.51 | 0.83 | High |
| 4. | Teachers use diverse and effective instructional methods to enhance learning. | 3.11 | 0.84 | High |
| 5 | Lessons are well-structured and aligned with students' learning needs. | 3.27 | 0.68 | High |
| 6. | The Curriculum is well-structured and meets national education standards. | 3.71 | 0.54 | High |
| 7. | The Curriculum is adaptable to students' diverse learning needs. | 3.57 | 0.86 | High |
| 8. | students consistently perform well in academic assessments. | 3.49 | 0.73 | High |
| 9. | The school creates an inclusive learning environment that caters to diverse learners. | 3.33 | 0.84 | High |
| 10. | School provides a supportive, and inclusive learning environment. | 3.43 | 0.93 | High |
| 11. | students and teachers maintain positive relationships. | 3.19 | 0.88 | High |
| 12. | The school engages parents in students' academic progress through regular communication. | 3.40 | 0.82 | High |
| 13. | The school fosters partnerships between the school and the community. | 3.63 | 0.55 | High |
| 14. | School has functional learning materials and resources (e.g., books, teaching aids). | 3.31 | 0.91 | High |
| 15. | Classroom facilities are conducive to effective teaching and learning (e.g., lighting, seating). | 2.94 | 0.62 | Low |
| 16. | Disciplinary tone among the students is positive and conducive to learning. | 2.83 | 0.95 | Low |
| 17. | Disciplinary tone among the teachers promotes respect and professionalism. | 2.95 | 0.79 | Low |
| 18. | Teachers are punctual and committed to their teaching schedules. | 3.46 | 0.80 | High |
| 19. | students consistently arrive on time and are engaged in the learning process. | 3.35 | 1.00 | High |
| 20. | ICT and digital resources are effectively integrated into instruction to enhance learning. | 3.10 | 0.68 | High |

Table 1 revealed a generally high level of school effectiveness as perceived through various indicators, particularly in leadership, curriculum implementation, instructional support, and stakeholder

engagement. Principals are seen as providing clear direction (Mean = 3.53) and fostering collaboration (Mean = 3.51), while also supporting teachers in instructional delivery (Mean = 3.42). The curriculum is regarded as structured and adaptable (Mean = 3.71 and 3.57, respectively), and there is strong evidence of inclusive learning practices and positive academic performance. Parental and community involvement is also rated highly, with strong communication and partnerships evident. However, notable areas of concern include the condition of classroom facilities (Mean = 2.94), student discipline (Mean = 2.83), and teacher professionalism in disciplinary conduct (Mean = 2.95), all of which fall into the low category. These suggest a need for targeted interventions to improve learning environments and behavioural standards. Overall, the findings indicate that while leadership and instructional processes are strong, physical infrastructure and discipline management require attention.

Testing of Hypotheses

Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between goals setting and secondary school effectiveness

Table 2: Relationship between goals setting and secondary school effectiveness

| Variables | N | Mean | Stand Dev | r-cal | P-value |
|--------------------------------|----|-------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Goals Setting | 54 | 14.08 | 1.94 | 0.774* | 0.000 |
| Secondary School Effectiveness | 54 | 67.93 | 3.78 | | |

*P<0.05

Table 2 showed that the r-cal value of 0.774 is significant at 0.05 level of significance because the P-value (0.000) < 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between goals setting and secondary school effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between use of technology tools and secondary school effectiveness

Table 3: Relationship between use of technology tools and secondary school effectiveness

| Variables | N | Mean | Stand Dev | r-cal | P-value |
|--------------------------------|----|-------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Use of Technology Tools | 54 | 10.38 | 1.74 | 0.496* | 0.000 |
| Secondary School Effectiveness | 54 | 67.93 | 3.78 | | |

*P<0.05

Table 3 showed that the r-cal value of 0.496 is significant at 0.05 level of significance because the P-value (0.000) < 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between use of technology tools and secondary school effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicated that secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, demonstrated a high level of effectiveness. This elevated level of effectiveness may be linked to the principals' efficient utilisation of time management practices. This outcome is consistent with the conclusions of Benstowe and Obianwu (2023), who observed that secondary schools tend to perform more effectively compared

to other tiers of education. Consequently, the implication is that when school leaders focus on setting strategic objectives and incorporating technological innovations, they significantly improve the overall performance of the school and create an environment that supports academic excellence.

The study further revealed that there was a significant relationship between goals setting and secondary school effectiveness. The probable reason is that well-defined goals help to establish direction, provide structure, and inspire both teachers and students. This perspective is strongly supported by various research findings. According to Alabi (2021), incorporating clear goals into delegated tasks not only promoted teachers' professional growth but also led to notable improvements in school performance, illustrating how goal clarity can serve both motivational and organisational purposes. In a related study, Oluwatayo and Adebayo (2020) found that goal-setting played a vital role in encouraging teamwork, accountability, and better educational outcomes by aligning stakeholders around a common purpose with measurable objectives in Nigerian schools. Ajayi (2022) also demonstrated that teachers who engaged with systematic goal-setting approaches showed greater instructional efficiency and classroom control compared to their counterparts who relied on traditional practices. Similarly, Makinde (2021) affirmed that the application of SMART goals helped students to manage their time more effectively and achieve better academic results, showing the wide-reaching benefits of goal-setting across all educational tiers. These findings suggest that school leaders and education policymakers should adopt and embed goal-setting frameworks among principals and teaching staff, as doing so can significantly promote school development, enhance teaching quality, strengthen cooperation, and ultimately raise the standard and effectiveness of secondary education in Nigeria.

The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between use of technology tools and secondary school effectiveness. The effectiveness observed may be linked to the ability of digital technologies to simplify administrative duties while simultaneously boosting the efficiency of teaching and learning processes. This result is consistent with the findings of Khasawneh (2024), who observed that information and communication technologies (ICTs) significantly enhanced time management skills among school leaders, thus promoting more structured and effective school administration. In a similar vein, Montenegro-Rueda et al. (2023) identified that digital tools and collaborative applications supported harmonious school interactions by facilitating communication and aiding in conflict resolution, which in turn fostered a supportive learning atmosphere. Correspondingly, Haigh and Tully (2018) found that interactive digital resources played a vital role in promoting social and emotional learning by nurturing collaboration and empathy among secondary school students. Additionally, Ullah and Anwar (2020) demonstrated that the integration of ICT considerably improved student engagement and motivation, highlighting the role of technology in enhancing participation and academic achievement in the classroom. Together, these studies suggest that the thoughtful adoption of technology contributes to overall school improvement by advancing both administrative functionality and the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, the findings imply that educational policymakers and administrators should invest in the provision of suitable technological infrastructure and ongoing training for school leaders and teachers to maintain and strengthen the effectiveness of secondary education

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that secondary school effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria, is positively influenced by strategic goal setting and the use of technological tools. The results affirm

that when school administrators clearly define educational goals and effectively integrate modern technology into school management and instructional delivery, it significantly enhances the operational effectiveness of secondary schools. These outcomes suggest that administrative practices focused on planning and innovation are vital for improving school performance and achieving educational excellence in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made

- 1) Principals and school heads should be trained and encouraged to set clear, measurable, and achievable goals that align with national and state educational objectives. This will provide a structured direction and enhance accountability in school operations.
- 2) Education authorities should provide adequate technological infrastructure and training to ensure that school leaders and teachers are well-equipped to use digital tools in administration and classroom instruction, thereby improving overall school efficiency.
- 3) Workshops, seminars, and continuous professional development sessions should be held to improve the leadership and planning skills of school administrators, especially in the areas of goal formulation and execution.
- 4) State Ministry of Education and policymakers should allocate resources towards the provision and maintenance of ICT facilities in schools, as the integration of technology plays a critical role in enhancing educational effectiveness in today's digital age.

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