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TRANSNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT



A PUBLICATION OF WORD ASTRA
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Volume 1 Issue 2, November 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9431

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Practicum in Educational Management and Planning at Emperor High School, Ukana East, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17731625>

Citation: Iwok, M. S., Essien, F. G., & Odejimi, I. O. (2025). Suggested topic: Practicum in Educational Management and Planning at Emperor High School, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Transnational Journal of Education and Scientific Development*, 1(2).

Abstract

The practicum was conducted at Emperor High School, a secondary school located in Ukana East, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The student administrator spent a total of six weeks as a participant observer to evaluate the viability of the school's entire curriculum, assess the performance of both teachers and students, and examine the general functions and administrative system of the institution. At the end of the practicum exercise, it was observed that private schools contribute significantly to the educational development of society. It was therefore recommended that the government should support such institutions to ensure their survival and coexistence alongside public schools in order to achieve broader educational goals for societal development.

Keywords: Practicum, educational management, participant observer, curriculum, teachers, students, educational goals

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Introduction

Practicum in educational management and planning is a practical course designed to expose students to relevant field experiences. It is designed to assist students in developing relevant managerial skills that are required to administer educational and other related institutions.

The rationale behind practicums in educational management and planning is that students, having been taught the principles, theories, methodologies, skills and behavioural requirements for institutional administration, need a practical platform to gain real-life experience.

This practical exercise is expected to equip students with hands-on experience in handling real-life managerial responsibilities such as leading, organising, coordinating, planning, budgeting, analysing, directing, collaborating, and making decisions, among others. It is also anticipated that the practicum will enable students to demonstrate the personal qualities required of a manager, principal, administrator, or leader of any institution. Some of these attributes may include intelligence, accommodatingness, empathy, tolerance, honesty, tactfulness, emotional intelligence, and innovation, among others.

It is the belief of the researcher that “practicum” may simply be understood by a simple coinage, “pract” and “cum”, meaning “practice cumulatively”. Having been taught the theoretical aspect of educational management and planning, the need to crown it with the practical aspect becomes imperative.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that many educational managers and administrators progress through their academic journey without gaining practical experience that complements their classroom learning. As a result, they often acquire theoretical knowledge without the ability to demonstrate its application. Consequently, such individuals may display a level of mediocrity in their professional careers at the end of their academic pursuits. To this end, curriculum designers find it essential to incorporate a practical course known as “Practicum”. This course aims to provide aspiring educational managers and administrators with valuable experience during their studies, thereby equipping them for the challenges they will face upon completing their degree.

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It is in light of this context that this practicum was undertaken to address the existing gap, thereby leading to the creation of this report.

Purpose of Practicum

The main purpose of the practicum is to enable students to assess their personal strengths and identify areas where they lack experience, using a self-assessment tool developed during the practicum period. It also helps student administrators to begin setting goals for professional development, integrating both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The practicum aims to expose students of educational management to the knowledge, experience, skills, and motivation needed to develop the attitudes and values that align with the professional code of conduct expected of an administrator.

Significance

The knowledge of practicum would be of immense benefit to educational managers, curriculum planners, student administrators, policymakers, researchers, teachers and students at large. It would also add to the existing body of knowledge and be a source of literature for reviewers.

Theoretical Framework

Path-Goal Theory of Leadership Effectiveness – House (1971)

According to the path-goal theory, as developed by House (1971) and cited in Uyanga (2012), subordinates are motivated to achieve organisational goals when leaders clearly define the objectives, outline the steps required to attain them, remove any obstacles, and provide the necessary support to ensure successful completion. According to the path-goal theory, leaders achieve these in two main ways. Firstly, leaders can enhance their subordinates' ability to achieve goals by actively providing essential information and the resources required for success. Secondly, leaders can undertake actions to eliminate obstacles that may impede goal attainment, for instance, by addressing workplace factors that reduce the likelihood of success.

The path-goal theory, however, identifies four main types of leadership behaviours, namely supportive, directive, participative and achievement-orientated

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leadership types, each of which could help subordinates attain their goals. Supportive leadership involves being considerate of the needs of subordinates and creating a friendly atmosphere for subordinates to work in. Directive leadership involves letting subordinates know what is expected of them, giving clear guidelines, and making sure that they know the rules and procedures to get the work done. Participative leadership involves consulting with subordinates and taking account of their opinions and suggestions when making decisions. Achievement-orientated work in. Achievement-orientated leadership involves setting challenging work goals, emphasising the need for excellence in performance, and showing confidence that the subordinates will attain high work standards. emphasising

The choice of which behaviour to use, however, depends on two groups of contingency variables. One group concerns organisational factors that are outside the control of the subordinate (e.g., personality, experience, and abilities).

According to Path-Goal theory, to be effective, leaders need to balance the organisational factors with the factors personal to the subordinates. These include recognising the needs of those they manage and trying to satisfy these needs through the workplace, rewarding people for achieving their goals, helping subordinates identify the most effective paths they need to take to reach their goals, and clearing those paths so that subordinates can reach their goals. The particular style of leadership that is effective in achieving these outcomes will depend on the contingency factors described above.

Relevance of the Theory to this Report

The path-goal theory is relevant to the practicum because it emphasises leadership qualities that promote the achievement of organisational goals. These qualities include supportive, directive, participative, and achievement-orientated leadership.

Since the practicum is a practical course that allows student administrators to engage in hands-on management, adherence to the leadership principles outlined by the path-goal theory can foster a positive and collaborative relationship between the school management, where the practicum is conducted, and the student administrator in their dual role as manager and subordinate.

The theory is also relevant to the practicum because it emphasises directive leadership. As a student administrator, the trainee gains valuable experience by receiving clear guidance on the execution of administrative tasks, learning firsthand

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how leadership directives are applied in real organisational settings. This experience also equips the trainee to manage a goal-orientated organisation upon graduation.

History of the Institution

The school is a private institution founded in the year 2000 by an educationist and a seasoned administrator named Lady Marvellous Akaninyene, B.Ed. (English), University of Uyo, M.Ed. (Management and Planning), University of Calabar.

According to the proprietress and founder of the school, the burden to establish an educational institution came when she realised that the few available public secondary schools were overcrowded with more than 90 students per class. Coupled with the fact that more public schools were not built and enrolment kept increasing, she resolved to venture into running a high school to help reduce the overcrowded public schools in order to enhance effective teaching and learning situations. With government emphasis on private industry, the school has been duly registered and has been given approval by the state government to operate as a fully fledged secondary school.

Structure of the School

The organisation follows a line-and-staff structure, with the administrator at the helm, followed by the principal, teachers, and other subordinate staff, all working collaboratively to achieve the institution's goals.

Organisational structure defines how activities such as task allocation, coordination, and supervision are directed toward achieving organisational goals (Pugh, 2018). It determines how an organisation operates and performs its functions by assigning responsibilities for various tasks and processes to different workgroups and individuals. In the school, the day-to-day operations are managed by the principal, under the overall supervision of the proprietress, who holds ultimate authority. Major decisions are made by the proprietress in consultation with the principal, while specific duties and functions are delegated to the vice principals, assisted by administrative and supporting staff.

Organisationally, teaching in the school is grouped into six (6) departments, with each being headed by a subject specialist as head of department. The school is organised into classrooms, with the school day divided into periods, and students grouped into streams based on their grade level and examination performance.

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The Vision and Mission Statement of the Institution

Vision

According to the school manual, the school's vision is to provide a comprehensive and nurturing environment that fosters the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of each child. It also aims to adopt a distinctive approach to the teacher-student relationship, one that cultivates creativity, critical thinking, positive attitudes, and confidence in the students. The school aims to engage in a talent search among children in order to properly guide them in their career choices.

Mission

The mission of the school includes providing a safe and positive learning environment that fosters the acquisition of knowledge, skills, virtues, and excellent morals, and guiding students to apply these qualities in every aspect of their future professions as leaders of tomorrow. Additionally, the school is committed to delivering high-quality education and instilling an excellent spirit in its students, equipping them to assume their rightful roles of leadership in the wider world.

The Philosophy/Objectives of the Institution

The philosophy and objectives of Emperor High School include the following:

- To contribute to the standardisation and development of education at the post-primary level.
- To support the implementation of the secondary school curriculum for the holistic development of youth and nation-building.
- To prepare students for higher levels of education.
- To provide foundational qualifications through Junior Secondary (JS) and Senior Secondary (SS) examinations, serving as a stepping stone for admission into tertiary institutions.
- To offer adequate care, guidance, and supervision for students during their transition from childhood to adolescence.
- To instil in students the value of cooperation and teamwork, fostering collaborative learning.
- To teach students the fundamentals of self-discipline, self-confidence, and self-reliance in their academic pursuits.

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- To cultivate in students good habits, moral values, and lifestyles free from delinquency and social vices.
- To create employment opportunities for teachers and school leavers, among other goals.

Student Management

The school has a total student population of five hundred and eighty-five – 585 – comprising the senior and junior secondary classes. Total enrolment for junior secondary (JS) classes is three hundred and fifty-three (353), while the total enrolment for senior secondary (SS) classes is two hundred and thirty-two (232) for the present school session (2021/2022).

Out of the total population of five hundred and eighty-five (585) students in the school, four hundred and ninety-one students are presently boarders, while ninety-four (94) are day students.

Emperor High School operates a system that facilitates the flow and dissemination of information, promoting accountability, relevance, and retention of knowledge within the school environment.

According to the administrator and the principal, as a student manager, the following goals are upheld to ensure proper management of students, which represents the ultimate purpose of the institution:

- Creation of classroom instructional resources
- Development of academic-related programmes
- Monitoring the progress of students in academic matters
- Teachers' adequacy and resources
- Career counselling
- Administration, records and accountability
- Supervision of teachers, school administrators and student support officials
- Creating contact points for parents.

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Other measures adopted by the school for student management include discipline and correction, care and guidance, redirection and restoration, enrichment and empowerment, and support and sustenance, as well as teaching and training. These approaches aim to nurture students into well-rounded, self-reliant individuals who can become responsible citizens and a source of pride to their alma mater.

Enrolment growth rate is seen to be positive as it keeps increasing every year. This positive growth rate is attributed to the high level of discipline instilled by the school authority. Students are seen concentrating on their studies, as laxity is viewed as a punishable offence. The student disciplinary committee chairman, who also is a guidance counsellor in the school, moves around monitoring the conduct of students and reporting offenders for discipline and correction.

Teachers are also found permanently on their duty post, as the proprietress does not hesitate to relieve any nonchalant teacher of his/her duty and replace him/her with another one since, according to her, she wants to protect the image of the school and, by dint of hard work on the part of both staff and students, bring the school to an enviable height.

The efficiency of the school administration is evident in the students' academic performance, which has been consistently strong in both Junior Secondary (JS) and Senior Secondary (SS) examinations over the past four years, encouraging more parents to enrol their children each year. Qualified teachers are employed to teach exclusively within their areas of specialisation, thereby ensuring maximum effectiveness in instruction.

School Timetable Analysis

The significance of timetables in the school system cannot be overstated. Both school-wide and class-specific timetables play a critical role in organising curricular and extracurricular activities. They facilitate effective planning, coordination, control, and management of school operations, ensuring that multiple activities occur simultaneously without conflict (Awanbi, 2015). Timetables coordinate the activities of teachers, students, classrooms, time slots, and lesson periods. Specifically, the class timetable outlines lesson periods, the subjects to be taught, and the assigned teachers, as well as break times and daily dismissal schedules. For boarders, the timetable further organises students' daily routines, including wake-up times, morning duties, meals, devotion, prep classes, sports activities, visiting hours and days, and bedtime.

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The official timetable stipulates commencement of morning devotion from 7.45am to 8.00am daily. Each lesson commences at 8.05am daily, and each subject period is allocated a 40-minute time limit. The break period lasts from 11.30am to 12 noon. The school timetable provides that basic subjects like English language and mathematics are taught in the morning for four (4) periods per week for each class and stream of junior and senior secondary one (1) only. Other subjects taught to this category of students are allocated 3 periods per week, making a total teaching period of eight (8) periods (5.33 hours) per day and (26.65) hours per week. The senior secondary 2 and 3 classes have a different number of periods allocated for the teaching of English language and mathematics in a week. While English language is allocated 3 periods (2 hours) per week, mathematics is allocated 4 periods (2.66 hours) per week. Other subjects at this level are allocated 3 periods each per week. The dismal period for the school is 2.00pm daily.

According to the timetable schedule, each subject is allocated 40 minutes; where it involves a double period, 1 hour 20 minutes is allocated as appropriate. Core subjects like mathematics and English language are allocated more periods than other subjects. For instance, mathematics as a core subject is scheduled between four and five periods per week; English language is scheduled for four periods per week, while other subjects are given two to three periods per week, as shown in the frequency distribution of subjects below. It is also noted that mathematics is permanently scheduled for morning periods, as it involves calculations in order to ensure maximum understanding.

Staff Personnel Administration - Teachers Analysis

The school has a total of thirty-nine teachers on its nominal roll, comprising seventeen males and twenty-two females. Teachers are assigned to teach only the subjects within their areas of specialisation. The table below provides a breakdown of the subjects taught, the number of teachers assigned to each, and the total weekly credit load.

School Income Analysis

As a private school, fees are charged for the running of daily expenses and payment of staff salaries. Such fees include tuition fees, caution fees, contingency fees, boarding fees (for boarders only), and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) fees.

The fees keep increasing yearly as the school management's wage bills keep rising due to certain innovations and development carried out in the school to ensure a maximum and conducive learning environment.

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School Records Analysis

Records are a vital tool for maintaining the health and continuity of an organisation. Information, therefore, is one of the most fundamental and valuable assets of any institution. Nwaoku (2018) defines records as information or data on a particular subject that is collected and preserved for future reference. In schools, information on students, teachers, supporting staff, facilities, funds, and school activities is regularly collected and maintained. These collections constitute the school's records, which include official documents, books, and files containing essential information on actions and events. These records are preserved in the school office for reference, retrieval, and effective utilisation when needed (Osakwe, 2011).

The school maintains proper and comprehensive records to monitor students' achievements and development, manage school activities, and support overall institutional efficiency and effectiveness. Without such records, accountability would be compromised, making it nearly impossible to assign responsibility or hold individuals accountable for their actions (Iwhiwhu, 2016).

To ensure security and organisation, the school has a dedicated room, known as the “strong room”, where all records are stored. The strong room contains seven steel cabinets, each labelled according to the type of records it holds, allowing for easy identification. The records are organised under the following headings:

- Admissions - All matters pertaining to admission of students are kept here.
- Registers - This cabinet contains all registers in the school.
- Reports - Documents kept here include – time book, movement book, inspection reports, corporal punishment book, black book or death sentence, etc.
- Results - This includes examination results, report slips etc. cards/duplicates, continuous assessment, certificates
- Time table - This include school time table, examination timetable, scheme of work, etc.
- finance - School budget, fees receipt/duplicates, inventory register, cashbook and all documents pertaining to purchases
- Diaries - This includes weekly diaries, logbooks, excursion reports, visitors' books, transfer certificates, student records, etc.

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The cabinets are securely maintained to prevent damage from rodents, termites, or other destructive elements. They are systematically organised so that each document can be easily located and understood at a glance. The school employs twelve non-teaching staff who manage the offices and perform various clerical duties. While the documents remain under the custody of the principal, they are managed by the clerical staff. Access to the cabinets, particularly those containing examination results, is strictly controlled, and no one can open them without the principal's consent.

School Plant Management

Akpan (2013) defines 'school plant' as the sum total of buildings, equipment, and textbooks, including recreational space used for the achievement of educational objectives. In addition to the physical condition and overall appearance of the school buildings, the school plant encompasses various facilities and resources, including pathways, sports fields, playgrounds, classrooms, desks, school farms, vehicles, flower beds, the assembly hall, laboratories, libraries, and sanitary conveniences, among others.

Generally, the principal, with the aid of vice principals and school prefects, has made tremendous effort to maintain the school plant. Arrangements are made for cleaning and dusting of classrooms, administrative areas, chalkboards, entrances, walks and drives, playground equipment, toilet facilities and the general premises.

Emperor High School has beautifully designed school buildings. The unique design makes maximum use of available land space to create five-storey buildings and a bungalow to accommodate enough classrooms, dormitories, offices, libraries, and other supporting spaces for parking lodges, games and playgrounds. The facilities are designed with a healthy environment philosophy. Indoor spaces are large and brightly lit with copious amounts of natural lighting and adequate ventilation. There is a well-demarcated field enough for inter/intra-house competitions. The available parking lodge adjacent to the administrative block is enough to accommodate both staff and visitors' cars conveniently.

Location/Infrastructure

The school is located in a serene environment conducive for learning, as it is not a noisy area or situated near a highway. The landscape is adequate enough to accommodate the classroom blocks, laboratories, dormitories, refectory, and workshop/offices. There is a

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central laundry service provided for boarding students, equipped with a standby power supply generating set and washing machines to ease in washing. Water supply is constant as it is being drilled internally.

Equipment/Furniture

Other equipment and furniture provided by the school include mowing machines for grass cutting, flower trimmers, a school bus for transport services, computers, well-equipped laboratories for practicals, chairs and tables for staff, desks and lockers for students, double bunk beds in the dormitories, kitchenware for the school kitchen, and a fully equipped refectory for serving meals, among others; all provided in adequate proportions.

Institutional Management/Facility Maintenance Culture

The school has a stall to return all broken chairs, tables and other machines such as computers, fans, etc. The idea behind this is to periodically take inventory of damaged facilities with a view to repairing them and changing the obsolete ones. There is a consistent maintenance culture for all facilities to ensure their continuous functionality and sufficiency. The school buildings are painted periodically to maintain the aesthetic value of the school.

Grounds Maintenance Culture

The school surroundings are well kept; there are no traces of broken seats/tables. Small covered bins are kept everywhere to avoid littering. Any student caught dropping paper on the ground is punished. Paths and lawns are well lined, flowers are trimmed, grasses are cut, and the entire environment wears a decent look.

Stores and Storage Procedures

Among the non-teaching staff employed in the school is a storekeeper in charge of equipment purchases and filing of receipts/invoices as well as maintaining security of the equipment in the store. Everything regarding food and boarding facilities is managed in the food stores and accounted for by the school kitchen services.

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Library services

There is a well-furnished library in the school, managed by a designated library teacher. The teacher oversees the borrowing and returning of books, keeps accurate records of the daily use of the library by both staff and students, and provides periodic reports on books needed to update the collection when necessary. Students visit the library only during scheduled periods indicated on the school timetable, rather than at will, in order to ensure consistency between classroom activities and library usage.

Sick Bay

There is a provision of a sick bay with qualified nursing personnel employed to take care of sick students before a referral is done in cases of serious health challenges.

Tuck Shops

A central canteen is provided within the school premises by the school authority to provide a few things that students may need in order to restrict their movements from going outside to buy such items like snacks, pens, etc. It is supervised by the compound master/mistress.

Transport Facilities

The school has two coaster buses for students' outings. There is no official vehicle for day students, as parents/guardians are saddled with the responsibility of dropping off and picking up their children for daily school activities.

Boarding Facilities

The school has boarding facilities with a total number of 491 students out of the 585 students as boarders. The boarding system is optional except for SS3 students, who must live in the dormitory to devote a good part of their time to studies.

Boarders are charged specially for boarding facilities, which include dormitory facilities, accommodation, feeding, health services and 24-hour security services to ensure a safe environment. The report has it that no casualty has ever been recorded since the boarding system came into existence in 2006.

Fees charged for boarding services take care of snacks as well as three meals in quite decent refectories with a constant flow of water and electricity supply.

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Community Relationship

The school, Emperor High School, is located in an urban area and therefore has no cultural/religious problem. The community has a positive attitude toward education, and parents gladly send their children to the school because it has maintained strong discipline and good academic performance since it was founded in 2000. The school in turn maintains a cordial relationship with the community and carries them along appropriately.

Security Services

The school employs the ex-servicemen and ordinarily trained security personnel to guard the school premises on a routine basis. Strict checks and vigilance are maintained to safeguard the students from being picked up by non-parents or unauthorised persons at the close of schools, visiting days and outings. Restriction of movement by students during school hours is enforced to curb truancy and other forms of irregularities. Breaking of bounds by boarders is viewed as a serious violation of security principles as well as school regulations. Strange meetings and gatherings are highly prohibited in the school in order to check all forms of clandestine activities.

Security personnel are always alert and seen on surveillance round the clock to provide a serene and rancour-free environment for teaching and learning processes.

Guidance and Counselling Services

Guidance and counselling services are provided by two guidance counsellors who are employed as teachers. One of them covers the junior secondary section, while the other one covers the senior secondary section. According to a close observation, the guidance counsellors do not only teach but also counsel students on career choice, subject combination and tutorials.

To further ensure orderliness and adherence to school regulations, the guidance counsellors are involved in students' disciplinary committees to foster compliance with school rules.

Pattern of Communication

The school administration operates a downward and upward communication system. This is done through directives from the administrator (proprietress) to the principal, who then communicates with the subordinate staff for compliance. Such directives may take the form of circulars, memoranda or notices, as the case may be.

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The subordinate in turn communicates to the administrator through progress reports on students' performance and general conditions as they affect their various areas. Periodic evaluations are conducted for both staff and students to identify areas needing discipline, training, or adjustment. The feedback is then used for planning and further improving the school system.

Leadership Style

Emperor High School administration operates a semi-democratic leadership style. The school operates with limited democratic participation, as most decisions are made by the proprietress. It was explained that this approach is intended to protect the school's reputation and prevent the introduction of ideas that could negatively affect its growth. Nonetheless, she is flexible to a certain degree in that she accepts constructive contributions and suggestions from the staff members.

According to her, each staff member (both teaching and non-teaching) has inputs to contribute for the daily running of the school. This is done through what they term "interactive forum" and "periodic report". The proprietress/principal maintains a good rapport with staff members, which makes interpersonal relationships considerably cordial and harmonious.

Discipline/Conflict Management

The school maintains a high level of discipline between staff and students. Defaulting staff who fail to report at their duty posts without a genuine reason are not tolerated. Staff discipline includes suspension, interdiction, queries, warnings and summary dismissal/termination of appointment depending on the gravity of the offence. Conflict among staff members is reduced to the barest minimum as violence and rancour are prohibited. The administrator as an educationist shows a level of understanding with staff by neither being antagonistic with them nor rebuking them before students.

Discipline of students is handled by a disciplinary committee headed by an experienced teacher. Offences like truancy, indolence, and delinquent/deviant behaviours are viewed as serious indiscipline. Corporal punishment is not administered frequently but rather such punishment like cutting of grasses (after school hours), scrubbing of gutters/dining tables, making official reports to parents where students prove difficult and giving of suspension where serious offences are involved. Students found smoking or drinking are dismissed to serve as a deterrent to others. Absenteeism

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and lateness are not tolerated. General laxity and social vices are serious punishable offences. Corporal punishment can only be used when a student proves so stubborn that parents lodge reports and ask the school to discipline such a child with corporal punishment to get the child to submit by coercion. The last resort is to put a student name in the black book, which attracts summary dismissal.

Parents/Teachers Association (P.T.A.)

There is a regular and consistent meeting periodically between the parents and teachers, which forms the Parents/Teachers Association. The purpose of the association is to keep all relevant parties informed about the school's guiding philosophy, mission, and vision. During PTA meetings, members discuss possible ways to support the children's education and promote their mental and physical development.

The association is meant to:

- Show their interest in and contribute to exhibitions mounted by the school from time to time on various aspects of the curriculum.
- Emphasise to parents and students the need for attendance and participation in all the activities of the school.
- Discuss and find solutions to the common problems of the school.
- Encourage its members to contribute in cash or kind to the school.
- Adopt ways and means to interest the members to attend meetings regularly and participate in all the decisions of the association.
- Provide an effective link between the parents and school and promote discipline.
- Encourage understanding and co-operation among teachers, parents and students.

The principal is utilising the PTA funds appropriately, as in the aspect of building a well-furnished computer centre for the teaching of students, which she claims is from the PTA funds. There are other development/maintenance services that the school still attributes to the PTA funds collection.

Quality Assurance

The school operates a comprehensive academic programme, as reflected in the timetable. The syllabus is cumulative and covers both science and commercial/technical subjects. Each subject is allocated between 13 and 27 credit hours per week to ensure sufficient time for completing the syllabus each term. Any teacher who fails to finish the

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TRANSNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT



A PUBLICATION OF WORD ASTRA
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Volume 1 Issue 2, November 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9431

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scheme of work before examinations is required to organise extra classes to cover the content or face disciplinary measures.

As a private school, with the proprietress closely monitoring weekly activities, the syllabus is not designed internally. Instead, it is centrally developed by curriculum planners at the State Education Board and distributed to all secondary schools to maintain uniformity. The school's role is to implement the syllabus, and it adheres strictly to it to achieve the desired objectives: improved student performance and strong quality assurance/control.

Educational Implication of Practicum

Almost all students of educational management regard their practicum as the most valuable, significant, and impactful learning experience in their formal education.

Bloom (1968), as cited in Etuk (2014), asserted that mastery learning is strengthened when adequate time is provided for practical instruction. It is during the practicum that classroom concepts, principles, and theories are translated into real-life practice.

During the practicum, students interact with real clients and apply the skills and techniques previously learnt in class. Role-playing and simulations are performed in practical situations as student-administrators participate in administrative duties. This experience enables students to develop self-awareness, understand their strengths and limitations, and examine how their personal values, attitudes, and life experiences influence their professional actions (Burrant & Kirby, 2012).

The practicum serves as a period where classroom theories are fully integrated with administrative practice and where students align with the core values of their chosen profession. It also provides opportunities to learn new ideas, receive encouragement, and apply professional ethics through guidance and caution.

Therefore, a student who undergoes a practicum experience is likely to emerge as a better educational administrator and planner, enriched by the practical knowledge and experience gained during the process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, involving students in practical administrative experiences in educational management is a valuable development. It contributes positively to the growth of education by allowing students to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-life situations. As the saying goes, experience is the best teacher:

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students identify common mistakes and learn effective solutions, thereby fostering mastery and professional growth.

A student of educational management and planning who has been exposed to practical administration is prone to be a better administrator and planner, as experience would point to where another person failed and succeeded for avoidance and emulation, respectively. The six-week practicum has actually broadened the horizon of the reporter and has created room for adjustment and assimilation for better academic prospects.

Recommendations

Considering the positive contributions of the school under study to children's education, parents, the community, and the general public, the following recommendations are made:

- The government should encourage private participation in education by providing subsidies to help maintain the viability of such institutions.
- The government should continue to monitor the operations of private schools to ensure strict compliance with regulations, thereby preventing irregularities and undue excesses.
- Would-be entrepreneurs should learn from the administration/management of an already established one, such as Emperor High School.
- Educational administrators should be involved in the education industry to bring the wealth of experience gained from both the classroom learning and the practical experience achieved in planning educational programmes for improved academic standards.

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Volume 1 Issue 2, November 2025 - ISSN: 3092-9431

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