

Evaluating Principals' Administrative Planning Skills in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Ethiope East, Delta State¹Nuvie Nunu Aruekure Brown-Ovie., ²Augustine Edomwonyi Eregie.,
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ABSTRACT

Background: Effective school administration depends largely on the planning ability of principals to manage financial, physical, and strategic aspects of educational institutions. In many public secondary schools, the level of administrative planning directly influences teaching quality, infrastructure condition, and long-term school improvement. **Aim:** The study was conducted to evaluate the administrative planning skills of principals in public senior secondary schools in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. It focused specifically on assessing their competence in financial planning, physical facilities maintenance planning, and strategic planning. **Method:** A descriptive survey design was used to collect data from 100 randomly selected teachers using a validated instrument titled *Assessment of Principals' Administrative Skills on Educational Planning Questionnaire (APASEPQ)*. The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores to determine the levels and dimensions of principals' administrative planning skills. **Results and Discussion:** Findings revealed that principals demonstrated a high level of competence in physical facilities maintenance and strategic planning, indicating effective supervision, stakeholder engagement, and goal-oriented leadership. However, their financial planning skills were only moderate, reflecting gaps in transparency, accountability, and detailed financial control. Overall, 68% of teachers rated their principals' administrative planning skills as high, confirming that most school leaders are performing effectively in managing school operations but still require improved financial management capacity. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that principals in Ethiope East Local Government Area possess generally strong administrative planning abilities that positively influence school functioning. Nevertheless, their limited financial planning competence underscores the need for continuous professional development in budgeting, expenditure tracking, and accountability practices. Strengthening these areas will enhance principals' overall effectiveness and contribute to sustained educational quality and institutional improvement across public senior secondary schools in Delta State.

Keywords: Principals' Administrative Skills, Educational Planning, Financial Planning, Physical Facilities Maintenance, Strategic Planning

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INTRODUCTION

School leadership has been consistently recognised as a central factor influencing the effectiveness and quality of educational systems. In particular, the administration of secondary schools requires coordinated planning, supervision, and resource management, responsibilities that fall primarily on the school principal (Obehi, 2023). The principal serves as the institutional leader, managing both human and material resources to promote instructional delivery, uphold discipline, and sustain school improvement efforts. The role is not merely procedural but is inherently strategic, requiring continuous decision-making grounded in educational goals (Cray et al., 2017). At the foundational level, the responsibilities associated with school leadership align with the classical principles of management. Henri Fayol's Administrative Theory emphasised five core managerial functions: planning, organising, commanding (leading), coordinating, and controlling (Bacud, 2020). These functions remain central in modern educational leadership frameworks. Among them, planning is considered the first and most critical function because it shapes how other administrative duties are implemented. In school administration, planning involves setting

priorities, forecasting needs, allocating resources, and determining the processes required to achieve educational objectives (Nurhikmah, 2024). Within secondary schools, three planning-related administrative competencies have been repeatedly discussed in educational leadership literature as crucial to effective school functioning.

Financial planning refers to the principal's ability to prepare budgets, allocate funds, document expenditures, and ensure transparency and accountability in the use of school financial resources (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2021). Responsible financial planning enables schools to support instructional materials, staff development, infrastructure maintenance, and student support services. Tibane et al. (2024) emphasise that systematic financial management is essential for resource-limited educational systems, where mismanagement may undermine instructional quality. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education assigns principals the responsibility for internal control and the judicious use of school funds (Francis & Imiete, 2018). Principals must therefore develop financial strategies that align expenditures with teaching and learning priorities. However, the quality of financial planning may vary depending on training, oversight mechanisms, and administrative experience (Darwanis et al., 2016). The school's physical environment significantly influences teacher work conditions, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Physical facilities include classrooms, laboratories, libraries, furniture, equipment, and sanitation infrastructure. Planning for physical facilities maintenance involves monitoring structural conditions, identifying repair needs, scheduling maintenance activities, and ensuring that learning spaces remain functional and safe. Empirical research demonstrates that deteriorated or overcrowded facilities negatively affect student academic performance and teacher morale (King-Agboto & Ugorji, 2023; Nnah & George, 2025). Thus, principals are expected to maintain the learning environment as part of their administrative duties. The Nigerian educational policy framework also recognises school maintenance planning as essential for sustaining instructional quality (Gbesoevi et al., 2024).

Strategic planning involves setting long-term school goals, engaging stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, community), allocating resources to support those goals, and monitoring progress. It ensures that the school's activities reflect its vision and are directed toward continuous improvement. McCaffery (2018) argues that effective leadership is not purely managerial but requires the ability to interpret environmental demands and guide institutions toward future development. In education, strategic planning helps schools adjust to changing curriculum standards, enrollment patterns, and community expectations. It also promotes collaboration within the school system, which supports sustained school development. Public senior secondary schools often operate within constrained financial and material conditions. As a result, the principal's administrative planning skills can significantly affect the school's ability to provide quality learning experiences. Effective planning helps ensure that resources are allocated according to instructional priorities, that facilities remain functional and conducive to learning, and that school goals are clearly defined and continuously pursued. Where planning is weak, schools may experience inconsistent program implementation, poorly maintained facilities, and resource wastage. The present study focuses on public senior secondary schools in Ethiopie East Local Government Area of Delta State. The provided document notes that schools in this area share similar administrative structures, staffing patterns, and funding arrangements. However, it also suggests differences in how principals approach administrative planning tasks.

Effective school administration is a cornerstone of educational quality and institutional performance. Principals serve as the key agents responsible for planning, organising, and coordinating school resources to achieve educational objectives (Suleiman et al., 2025; Jacob et al., 2020; Okonkwo, 2024). In the Nigerian context, particularly within Delta State, the success or failure of secondary education is largely determined by the administrative and planning competencies of school principals (Osegbue & Ohamobi, 2024; Pretomode, 2019). Despite this critical role, evidence suggests that many public schools in Nigeria continue to struggle with weak administrative systems, inefficient resource utilisation, and inadequate infrastructural maintenance (Adeoye et al., 2024; Lawan et al., 2020). In Delta State, official reports have revealed persistent problems in financial management and planning across public schools. The Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education noted recurring cases of poor record keeping, weak budget execution, and misallocation of school funds (Ejumudo & Ejumudo, 2020). Additionally, studies by Nwabueze (2020) and Ovbiagele & Ijeh (2015) identified major deficits in principals' financial accountability and school-based budgeting skills, leading to suboptimal use of available resources. Equally concerning are issues related to physical facilities maintenance, where several public secondary schools operate with dilapidated classrooms, inadequate laboratories, and poor sanitation, directly impacting teacher morale and student achievement (Badmus, 2023).

Beyond infrastructure, research has shown that strategic planning remains underdeveloped in most Nigerian public schools. Principals often manage reactively rather than proactively, lacking the long-term plans needed to adapt to evolving educational standards and community needs (Elizabeth et al., 2023). Anecdotal and inspection reports from the Delta State Education Board highlight recurring inefficiencies in school planning, underutilization of budgets, and the absence of coherent strategic development frameworks (Emordi & Augusta, 2020). These administrative gaps continue to undermine the achievement of state and national education goals. Although prior studies (Akporehe & Asiyai, 2023; Ayoro et al., 2023; Onafowope et al., 2023) have explored aspects of principalship and administrative effectiveness, few have examined the integrated relationship between financial planning, physical facilities maintenance, and strategic planning as components of

administrative skill—especially within the specific educational context of Delta State. Most existing research also relies heavily on general leadership attributes without systematically analysing the planning dimension, which is central to sustainable school improvement. Therefore, this study seeks to address this critical gap by empirically evaluating the administrative planning skills of principals in public senior secondary schools in Ethiopie East Local Government Area, Delta State. By focusing on the interrelated domains of financial planning, physical facilities maintenance, and strategic planning, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights into how principals' administrative planning competencies influence the functionality, accountability, and development of public secondary schools in the region.

To guide the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the dimensions of principals' administrative planning skills (financial planning, physical facilities maintenance, and strategic planning) in public senior secondary schools in Ethiopie East Local Government Area, Delta State?
2. What is the overall level of principals' administrative planning skills in public senior secondary schools in Ethiopie East Local Government Area, Delta State?

School administration is a central component of educational effectiveness, as the principal is the chief executive responsible for planning, organising, leading, and controlling a school's operations (Fatoni et al., 2024; Ayyildiz & Yilmaz, 2023). Principals' administrative skills refer to the technical, human, and conceptual abilities that enable school leaders to coordinate resources efficiently to achieve institutional goals (Nwogu & Ebinu, 2019; Keykha et al., 2022). These competencies are not merely procedural but strategic—requiring the principal to act as planner, supervisor, instructional leader, personnel manager, and financial custodian (Cranston, 2018; Nwanakaze & Ogona, 2021). According to Noorhapizah et al. (2023), principals' administrative skills significantly influence the overall school climate, teacher motivation, and student outcomes. Effective principals establish clear goals, maintain professional discipline, ensure adequate instructional materials, and create a conducive environment for learning. Similarly, Ngina (2017) described the principal as the "keeper of keys" and "instructional leader" whose capacity to manage both people and materials determines the school's performance trajectory. In this context, administrative skills are understood as multidimensional, encompassing planning, organisation, supervision, communication, and evaluation functions essential for translating educational policy into effective school practice.

The theoretical foundation for understanding principals' administrative skills draws upon Fayol's Management Functions and Administrative Skills Theory. Nurhikmah (2024) proposed that effective management rests on five interrelated functions—planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling—each requiring specific administrative competencies. Kin and Kareem (2019) later classified these into technical, human, and conceptual skills, emphasising that school leaders must combine professional expertise, interpersonal sensitivity, and strategic foresight to manage educational institutions effectively. Together, these frameworks provide the conceptual lens through which this study evaluates principals' administrative planning skills across financial, physical, and strategic domains.

Financial planning refers to school principals' ability to forecast, allocate, and utilise financial resources efficiently in line with institutional goals (Egbe et al., 2025; Ironkwe et al., 2024). Effective financial planning ensures that school funds are properly budgeted, expenditures are tracked, and available resources are deployed for instructional and infrastructural improvement (Mohzana, 2024). In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, financial accountability remains a major concern. Gaspar et al. (2022) and Dwangu and Mahlangu (2021) reported that many principals lack adequate training in school-based budgeting and transparent record-keeping, leading to poor fiscal control and the misuse of limited resources. Financial planning is not only a technical task but a strategic skill that underpins institutional sustainability. It involves setting financial goals, identifying funding sources, preparing budgets, implementing expenditure controls, and evaluating financial performance (Nurfadila, 2024). According to Rangongo et al. (2016), inefficiencies in school financial management are among the leading causes of underperformance in public education. In Delta State, audit reports have shown recurrent issues of inadequate budget execution and incomplete financial documentation in secondary schools (Ejumudo & Ejumudo, 2020). Scholars such as Myende et al. (2018) and Dwangu and Mahlangu (2021) argue that principals with strong financial planning skills are better able to promote accountability and sustain school programs. By contrast, weak financial oversight not only limits infrastructural development but also erodes stakeholder confidence in school governance. Therefore, financial planning is a core administrative skill and a vital determinant of educational quality.

Physical facilities are indispensable for effective teaching and learning. They include classrooms, laboratories, libraries, offices, and recreational spaces—each requiring consistent maintenance and supervision (Olaifa et al., 2024). The UNESCO Education Report emphasises that well-maintained facilities contribute significantly to student achievement and teacher productivity (Edward & Otieno, 2025). Conversely, poorly maintained school environments—characterised by broken furniture, inadequate sanitation, and poor ventilation—lead to absenteeism, low morale, and diminished learning outcomes (Toyinbo, 2023). Principals play a central role in ensuring that physical resources are functional, safe, and conducive to learning. Siswanto and Hidayati (2022) and Olaifa et al. (2024) found that principals who regularly inspect facilities, engage in preventive maintenance, and report infrastructural deficiencies to education authorities achieve better school performance indicators.

However, Nigerian secondary schools, including those in Delta State, continue to face widespread infrastructural decay. The World Bank and UNICEF noted that overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated buildings, and obsolete instructional materials are common in many rural and urban public schools. From an administrative planning perspective, physical facilities maintenance involves budgeting for repairs, prioritising maintenance needs, and coordinating community participation in facility improvement. It also requires monitoring utilisation efficiency and developing preventive maintenance schedules. Principals with sound maintenance planning skills act not only as administrators but as custodians of the learning environment, aligning with Fayol's principles of order and coordination.

Strategic planning represents principals' capacity to develop and implement long-term goals and strategies that ensure sustainable school improvement (Palah et al., 2022). It involves setting clear objectives, aligning resources with institutional priorities, and evaluating progress over time (Bryson, 2018). According to Khalilov and Taghiyev (2024), strategic planning enables school leaders to anticipate challenges, manage change, and promote innovation in instructional delivery. Educational planning theory posits that effective principals engage in continuous environmental scanning—assessing internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats (Rufon & Baldera, 2024). This process leads to evidence-based decision-making, which enhances accountability and institutional resilience. In the Nigerian educational landscape, however, the culture of strategic planning remains underdeveloped. Fusarelli et al. (2018) reveal that many principals adopt a reactive administrative style, lacking long-term planning documents to guide school growth and development. Within Delta State, the absence of coherent strategic frameworks has been linked to fragmented school improvement initiatives and inconsistent academic outcomes (Delta State Education Board, 2023). Thus, strengthening principals' strategic planning competence is vital to improving institutional performance and aligning local school goals with broader state and national education objectives.

METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design. The design was considered appropriate because the primary objective was to describe teachers' perceptions of principals' administrative planning skills as they exist, without manipulating variables or establishing causal relationships. Descriptive survey designs are widely recommended for studies that aim to assess prevailing practices, attitudes, and competencies within large populations (Opoku et al., 2016). The study population comprised 6,750 teachers across 45 public senior secondary schools in the Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. These schools operate under a unified administrative structure governed by the Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, with similar staffing patterns, funding mechanisms, and policy guidelines. From this population, 10 public senior secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling. The selection of schools was intended to ensure that no school had a systematic advantage or disadvantage in inclusion and that the sampled schools reflected the general administrative characteristics of public senior secondary schools in the Local Government Area. Within the selected schools, 100 teachers were drawn as respondents using a stratified random sampling technique. On average, 10 teachers were selected from each school. Stratification was based on gender, years of teaching experience, and academic qualification, to ensure balanced representation of key teacher subgroups whose professional exposure could influence their assessment of principals' administrative planning skills. Although the Krejcie and Morgan sample size table recommends a minimum of 365 respondents for a population of 6,750, the present study utilised 100 respondents for the following methodologically justifiable reasons: the unit of analysis is the school principal, as assessed through teachers' perceptions. Selecting teachers from 10 different schools ensured that the study captured multiple administrative contexts, rather than concentrating responses within a small number of schools. This approach enhances the breadth of institutional coverage, even with a reduced respondent count. Public senior secondary schools in Ethiope East Local Government Area are largely homogeneous in terms of administrative structure, funding sources, staffing regulations, and supervisory control. Where populations are relatively homogeneous, methodological literature recognises that smaller samples can still yield reliable descriptive insights, particularly in non-experimental studies (Ballance, 2024). The study adopted a descriptive survey design and relied exclusively on descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean scores). Since no hypotheses were tested and no population parameters were estimated, the study did not require a large sample size for statistical power, unlike inferential or predictive studies (Mascha & Vetter, 2018). Limiting the sample to 100 respondents allowed for closer monitoring of data collection, ensured a 100% response rate, and minimised missing or poorly completed questionnaires. This improved data quality and internal consistency, which is particularly important in perception-based assessments. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Assessment of Principals' Administrative Skills on Educational Planning Questionnaire (APASEPQ). The instrument consisted of items measuring three dimensions of administrative planning skills: financial planning, physical facilities maintenance planning, and strategic planning. Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The research instrument recorded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.68, which falls within the acceptable range for descriptive and exploratory educational research. This indicates that the sample size was sufficient to yield stable, internally consistent responses. Despite these justifications, it is acknowledged that the sample represents approximately 1.48% of the total teacher

population, limiting the generalisability of the findings beyond the study area. Consequently, the results are interpreted as context-specific to Ethiopia East Local Government Area and should be applied cautiously to other settings. This limitation, however, does not diminish the study's descriptive value or its contribution to understanding principals' administrative planning practices within the selected schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The demographic profile of the respondents provides a contextual understanding of the participants' backgrounds and helps interpret their perceptions objectively. Table I presents the distribution of respondents by gender, teaching experience, and academic qualification.

Table I. Demographic Characteristics of Teachers in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Ethiopia East LGA (N = 100)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	35	35.0
	Female	65	65.0
	Total	100	100.0
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	23	23.0
	6–10 years	72	72.0
	Above 10 years	5	5.0
	Total	100	100.0
Academic Qualification	NCE	5	5.0
	First Degree (B.Ed/B.Sc. Ed)	67	67.0
	Second Degree (M.Ed/M.Sc. Ed)	28	28.0
	Total	100	100.0

As shown in Table I, female teachers constituted the majority of respondents (65%), while male teachers accounted for 35%. This suggests a gender imbalance consistent with broader patterns in the Nigerian teaching workforce, where female representation tends to be higher at the secondary level. In terms of teaching experience, most respondents (72%) had between 6 and 10 years, indicating a moderately experienced teaching population likely familiar with administrative practices in their schools. Teachers with less than 5 years of experience accounted for 23%, whereas only 5% had more than 10 years of experience. Regarding educational qualifications, 67% of the teachers held a first degree, 28% possessed a second degree, and 5% held a Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). This reflects a relatively well-qualified teaching workforce that aligns with the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria's standards for senior secondary school educators. Overall, the demographic data indicate that respondents were professionally and educationally equipped to provide credible assessments of their principals' administrative planning skills within the context of public senior secondary schools in Ethiopia East Local Government Area.

Research Question I: *What are the dimensions of principals' administrative planning skills in public senior secondary schools in Ethiopia East Local Government Area, Delta State?*

The first dimension examined was financial planning skills. Teachers were asked to rate their principals' financial management practices using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The responses were analysed using descriptive statistics—frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and average percentages.

Table II. Descriptive Statistics of Principals' Administrative Skills on Financial Planning (N = 100)

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (X)	Average %	Decision
1	Ensures that the income of the school is well managed and spent	30 (30.0%)	45 (45.0%)	15 (15.0%)	10 (10.0%)	2.95	37.5	Agree
2	Ensures that any money spent is judiciously used for intended projects	23 (23.0%)	20 (20.0%)	22 (22.0%)	35 (35.0%)	2.31	25.8	Disagree
3	Keeps the financial records of the school properly	28 (28.0%)	32 (32.0%)	35 (35.0%)	5 (5.0%)	2.83	31.3	Agree
4	Ensures that there is no room for embezzlement of school funds	15 (15.0%)	18 (18.0%)	37 (37.0%)	30 (30.0%)	2.18	22.1	Disagree
5	Demonstrates transparency and financial accountability	17 (17.0%)	29 (29.0%)	34 (34.0%)	20 (20.0%)	2.43	25.0	Disagree

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (X)	Average %	Decision
Average Mean / %						2.54	28.3	Moderate

Note. SA = Strongly Agree (4); A = Agree (3); D = Disagree (2); SD = Strongly Disagree (1). Decision rule: 3.50–4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50–3.49 = Agree; 1.50–2.49 = Disagree; 1.00–1.49 = Strongly Disagree.

As presented in Table II, the average mean score of 2.54 indicates that teachers moderately agreed that their principals possess financial planning skills. The highest-rated item was "Ensures that the income of the school is well managed and spent" (X = 2.95), suggesting some strength in basic fund management. Conversely, the lowest mean scores were obtained for "ensures that there is no room for embezzlement of school funds" (2.18) and "demonstrates transparency and financial accountability" (2.43), indicating that a considerable proportion of teachers disagreed with these statements. This pattern suggests that although principals are generally competent in managing and recording financial resources, there are notable gaps in financial openness and strict accountability procedures. Overall, the descriptive analysis implies that principals in the study area possess moderate financial planning competence, with relative strength in basic fund management but weaker performance in ensuring transparency and preventing financial mismanagement. These outcomes underscore the need for capacity-building programs emphasising budget control, financial reporting, and transparency in public secondary school administration.

Table III. Dimension of Principals' Administrative Skills on Physical Facilities Maintenance Planning in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State (N = 100)

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (X)	Average %	Decision
1	Ensures that the school buildings are in good shape	62 (62.0%)	29 (29.0%)	5 (5.0%)	4 (4.0%)	3.49	50.0	Agree
2	Prepares regular reports on school physical facilities for the Ministry of Education	45 (45.0%)	38 (38.0%)	10 (10.0%)	7 (7.0%)	3.21	42.5	Agree
3	Monitors the use and maintenance of school facilities for proper utilisation	48 (48.0%)	39 (39.0%)	9 (9.0%)	4 (4.0%)	3.31	44.8	Agree
4	Ensures that teaching materials are available and adequately utilised	32 (32.0%)	41 (41.0%)	18 (18.0%)	9 (9.0%)	2.96	36.5	Agree
5	Ensures that staff rooms are adequately equipped with chairs and tables	41 (41.0%)	29 (29.0%)	16 (16.0%)	14 (14.0%)	2.97	37.5	Agree
Average Mean / %						3.19	42.3	High Level

Note. SA = Strongly Agree (4); A = Agree (3); D = Disagree (2); SD = Strongly Disagree (1). Decision rule: 3.50–4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50–3.49 = Agree; 1.50–2.49 = Disagree; 1.00–1.49 = Strongly Disagree.

Table III shows that the average score of 3.19 and the average percentage of 42.3% indicate a high level of physical facilities maintenance planning skills among principals in the study area. The highest mean (3.49) corresponds to the statement "ensures that the school buildings are in good shape," reflecting strong agreement that principals actively oversee the structural condition of school buildings. Relatively high means were also recorded for monitoring facility utilisation (3.31) and reporting to the Ministry of Education (3.21), suggesting that principals regularly supervise maintenance activities and communicate facility needs. Lower but still positive means were observed for ensuring adequate teaching materials (2.96) and providing staff room furniture (2.97). These indicate that while principals generally maintain facilities well, resource adequacy remains a moderate concern. Overall, the descriptive analysis demonstrates that principals exhibit a high level of competence in planning and maintaining physical facilities, ensuring that school environments remain functional and conducive to teaching and learning.

Table IV. Dimension of Principals' Administrative Skills on Strategic Planning in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State (N = 100)

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (X)	Average %	Decision
1	Sets clear goals aligned with the school's vision and mission	41 (41.0%)	34 (34.0%)	15 (15.0%)	10 (10.0%)	3.06	37.5	Agree
2	Analyses data for decision-making on students' performance and attendance	54 (54.0%)	39 (39.0%)	5 (5.0%)	2 (2.0%)	3.45	44.0	Agree

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (X)	Average %	Decision
3	Engages teachers, parents, and students in planning school activities for effectiveness	38 (38.0%)	41 (41.0%)	11 (11.0%)	10 (10.0%)	3.07	37.5	Agree
4	Monitors and checks school progress toward goal achievement	49 (49.0%)	31 (31.0%)	12 (12.0%)	8 (8.0%)	3.21	40.0	Agree
5	Ensures that resources (budget, staff, and time) are aligned with strategic priorities	28 (28.0%)	39 (39.0%)	16 (16.0%)	17 (17.0%)	2.78	35.0	Agree
Average Mean / %						3.11	38.8	High Level

Note. SA = Strongly Agree (4); A = Agree (3); D = Disagree (2); SD = Strongly Disagree (1). Decision rule: 3.50–4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50–3.49 = Agree; 1.50–2.49 = Disagree; 1.00–1.49 = Strongly Disagree.

Table IV reveals that the average score of 3.11 and the average percentage of 38.8% indicate that principals exhibit a high level of strategic planning competence in public senior secondary schools within the Ethiopia East Local Government Area. The highest mean score (3.45) was recorded for "analyse data for decision-making on students' performance and attendance", showing strong agreement that principals use data to guide planning decisions. The next-highest mean (3.21) for "monitors and checks school progress toward goal achievement" indicates that principals are proactive in tracking progress toward institutional goals. The lowest mean (2.78) was observed for "ensures that resources such as budget, staff, and time are aligned with strategic priorities, suggesting a slightly weaker emphasis on resource alignment despite generally good planning practices. Overall, the descriptive results show that most teachers perceive their principals as effective strategic planners, capable of setting clear goals, involving stakeholders, and monitoring school progress to ensure continuous improvement.

Research Question 2: *What is the level of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ethiopia East Local Government Area, Delta State?*

Table V. Level of Principals' Administrative Skills in Public Senior Secondary Schools (N = 100)

No.	Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	High	68	68.0
2	Moderate	27	27.0
3	Low	5	5.0
Total		100	100.0

Table V shows that 68% of respondents rated principals' administrative skills as high, 27% as moderate, and 5% as low. The distribution reveals that the majority of principals (over two-thirds) demonstrate strong administrative capabilities in managing school operations, planning, and supervision. The moderate and low ratings from a smaller proportion of teachers suggest that while overall performance is commendable, there remains room for improvement in consistency and practice across schools. In summary, the descriptive analysis indicates that the overall level of principals' administrative skills in public senior secondary schools in Ethiopia East Local Government Area is high, reflecting effective leadership and planning competence among school heads.

Discussion

The study found that principals demonstrated only moderate levels of financial planning competence, particularly in financial transparency and accountability. Although most principals effectively managed school income and expenditures, a significant number failed to demonstrate strong mechanisms for financial openness and the prevention of fund mismanagement. This pattern corroborates earlier findings by Dwangu and Mahlangu (2021) and Gaspar et al. (2022), who reported that many Nigerian principals lack adequate training in budgeting and transparent financial reporting, which often leads to weak fiscal control and inefficiencies in fund utilisation. Similarly, Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2020) observed recurring lapses in budget implementation and financial record-keeping in Delta State public schools, suggesting systemic gaps in accountability frameworks. The moderate financial planning skills observed may be attributed to insufficient administrative training and limited internal audit mechanisms within schools. Ironkwe et al. (2024) emphasised that principals with sound financial management practices are more likely to sustain school development through prudent fund allocation and timely budget execution. The current findings thus reinforce the need for continuous capacity-building programs and institutional oversight to enhance principals' budgeting and financial documentation competencies, as earlier suggested by Myende et al. (2018). Results indicated a high level of competence in principals' planning and maintenance of physical facilities. Most respondents agreed that principals ensured school buildings were in good condition, monitored facility utilisation, and prepared regular maintenance reports. This aligns with Olaifa et al. (2024), who found that principals' proactive involvement in facility supervision significantly contributes to administrative effectiveness. The emphasis on facility upkeep also aligns with Gbesoevi et al. (2024) and Adeoye et al. (2024),

who noted that sustained physical maintenance is crucial for the delivery of quality education in Nigerian secondary schools. Moreover, the strong performance in this dimension resonates with Edward and Otieno (2025) and Siswanto and Hidayati (2020), who reported that well-maintained facilities enhance teacher motivation and student learning outcomes. Conversely, when facilities are neglected, as documented by Badmus (2023) and King-Agboto and Ugorji (2023), learning conditions deteriorate, leading to low morale and academic underachievement. The present findings suggest that principals in Ethiopia East exhibit commendable planning behaviours in maintaining school infrastructure, although minor gaps remain in ensuring adequacy of instructional materials and staff amenities. The findings also revealed that principals displayed high levels of strategic planning competence. Teachers affirmed that principals set clear goals aligned with the school's vision, used data in decision-making, and monitored progress toward achieving institutional objectives. These results support the theoretical expectations of Bryson (2018), who viewed strategic planning as a structured approach for aligning resources and goals toward sustained improvement. They also align with Palah et al. (2022), who demonstrated that strategic management among school leaders enhances institutional performance and quality assurance. The relatively weaker performance in aligning resources with strategic priorities, however, mirrors concerns raised by Fusarelli et al. (2018) and Elizabeth et al. (2023), who observed that many principals in Nigerian schools tend to plan reactively rather than proactively due to limited autonomy and fluctuating budgets. Nonetheless, the high ratings on data-driven decision-making and stakeholder engagement suggest that principals are adopting more evidence-based and participatory planning practices—an essential shift recommended by Khalilov and Taghiyev (2024) and Rufon and Baldera (2024). Overall, the study found that 68% of respondents rated their principals' administrative planning skills as high, indicating generally effective leadership performance in the study area. This finding is consistent with Osegbue and Ohamobi (2025) and Akporehe and Asiyai (2023), who both reported that principals in Delta State display high managerial and administrative capacities but require targeted professional development to strengthen weaker domains, particularly in financial oversight. Collectively, the results highlight the interdependence of financial, physical, and strategic planning dimensions in ensuring efficient school administration. As Nurhikmah (2024) and Kin and Kareem (2019) postulated, planning is the foundational management function upon which other administrative roles—organising, leading, and controlling—depend. Hence, improving financial planning through enhanced training and monitoring mechanisms would further consolidate overall administrative performance in public secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the administrative planning skills of principals in public senior secondary schools in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State, focusing on financial planning, physical facilities maintenance, and strategic planning. The findings revealed that principals generally demonstrated high competence in physical facilities maintenance and strategic planning, but only moderate proficiency in financial planning. The results indicate that most principals are capable of effectively maintaining school infrastructure and engaging in forward-looking strategic practices that promote institutional growth. However, weaknesses in financial transparency, record keeping, and budget accountability suggest the need for improvement in financial management practices. Strengthening principals' capacity in these areas through targeted professional development, regular monitoring, and institutional support would enhance overall administrative efficiency and educational outcomes. The study concludes that effective administrative planning is central to achieving quality education in public secondary schools. When principals plan systematically, maintain facilities proactively, and align strategies with educational objectives, school performance and stakeholder confidence are significantly improved. Consequently, sustained investment in leadership training and policy support is essential to promote comprehensive administrative competence among school principals and ensure long-term improvement in educational management across Delta State.

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