

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Leadership plays a fundamental role in providing force to coordinate human activities and continuously shrinking limited resources in most efficient manner for the maintenance of quality in educational industry. Thus, the study examined strategies for effective leadership in Nigerian school system. The concept of leadership was examined from different perspectives. Also, the elements of leadership as well as factors affecting leadership styles in educational industry were meticulously looked into. Besides, various styles of leadership in the school system were consecutively elucidated. In addition, diverse challenges confronting educational leadership in the school system as well as the strategies for enhancing leadership effectiveness in educational industry were critically scrutinized. The study concluded that effective administration of educational system depends largely on sound leadership. It was recommended among others that: teamwork should be promoted by educational administrators to dispel the idea of forming cliques and factions among staff within the school system, synergy must be established between educational leaders and political analysts for critical and periodical appraisal of government ideology before embarking on fundamental decisions in the educational industry and adequate sensitization on the enforcement of educational laws should be embarked upon by educational leaders to ensure peace, justice and respect for human dignity in the school system.

Keyword: Educational Administrators, Leadership Styles, Nigerian School System.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an indispensable factor among all social being which has assumed position of dominance and prestige accompanied by the ability to direct, motivate and assist others in achieving specified purpose. In every established organization, there must be someone saddled with the responsibility of executing policies and decisions for the realization of the stated goals. The success or failure of an organization on many occasions is attributable to leadership behaviour of the heads as leadership plays a vital role in

school effectiveness (Jhaji, 2020; Mosindi, 2020; Pranitasari, 2020).

The complex nature of school as a channel of formal education due to ever increasing demand necessitated the formulation of policies, rules and procedures to channel and direct diverse behavior of many individuals towards the accomplishment of overall set goals. Despite the policies formulated, the need for an individual called the leader to influence and motivate organizational involvement become inevitable. When the school excels in service delivery, the institutions' administrators such as Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts, Principals, Head Teachers and senior education officers from the schools or Ministry of education often receive the credit and when failure predominantly attributed to the school, the same individual at the top will be reprimanded. Accusing fingers are pointed

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at the school heads leadership behaviour when there is a problem in the system and vice versa. These Pressures have resulted from the increasing complexity of the task of the leader, the size of the groups being led, their dispersion and complexity of the task performed (Adeola, 2016; Hidayat, Patras, Hardhienata & Agustin, 2020; Nartgün, Limon & Dilekçi, 2020).

In the administration of school as a formal organized group in Nigeria, leadership behaviour is influenced by stakeholders in education such as: principals, headteachers, vice-chancellors, provosts, rectors, board members, teachers and traditional rulers of where the school is located. Leadership is one of the fundamental factors that could provide force to coordinate activities and motivate people to maximally and efficiently utilize shrinking the limited resources for the maintenance of quality in educational industry. Therefore, it is of prime importance for the school administrators to have a deep understanding of different components that constitute the school system for ensuring administrative effectiveness because achieving the objectives of education in Nigeria as contained in the National Policy of Education is often mixed with societal factor (Harpe, 2020; Isibor, Kanmodi, Adebayo, Olaopa, Igbokwe, Adufe & Egbuchulem, 2020; Nair & Sivakumar, 2020). Obasa (2013) affirmed that administration of schools demands the best leadership skills being provided by the institutions' administrators. The dynamic nature of the society, change in human attitudes, abilities and feelings are incessantly growing through life which affects the school system and the relationship with subordinates, superiors and co-workers thus subjected to alteration. Ruth (2014) affirmed that lackadaisical attitude of teachers toward teaching profession, in-disciplinary acts on the part of the students and mass failure in internal and external examinations are attributable to ineffectiveness of the school leaders in Nigeria. In view of the foregoing, this study

examined strategies for effective leadership in Nigerian school system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is a widespread concept of concern in a business organization or social and political institutions as different interpretations have been advanced to a person holding leadership position. Researchers and theorists have defined leadership in many different ways, yet no universally accepted definition of the concept has been reached (Bediako & Jordans, 2020; Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Wardell, Bever, McCarty, Smith, Mulvaney & Niesz, 2020). Mullins (2014) defined leadership as that behavior which initiates a new structure in interaction within a social system. Francisco Sr. (2020) viewed leadership as the process involving two or more people which one attempts to influence the other's behavior towards the accomplishment of goals. Oketcho, Sempala, Ujeyo and Atibuni (2020) defined leadership as a position or ability to lead a group of people in an organization for the attainment of an objective. Leadership, as viewed by Thomas (2014), refers to the process of social influence through which one person is capable to enlist the help and support of others towards the actualization of a general task. Leadership, therefore, involves the achievement of an organization's goals through a process of influencing, directing and coordinating group activities towards the attainment of set goals or solution to a mutual problem. No matter what the concept of leadership one prefers, it must be admitted that leadership connotes getting things done through the support and teamwork of subordinates within the establishment, organization or system. In the school system, for instance, there must be a force to guide the activities of the staff and students towards the accomplishment of the institution's stated objectives.

Elements of Leadership

Ogunsaju (2006) identified certain elements of leadership position. Prominent among them are:

1. **Power:** Power is an indispensable element required by any leader to ensure the realization of organization goals. It is the capacity to influence, affect and control the behaviour of others through the use of sanction, threat or coercion (Dutish, 2014). Power is the force through which the leader in an organization influences the subordinates' behavior towards achieving the set goals. Thus, an effective educational leader needs power in order to be successful in a leadership position. Ogunsaju (2006) emphasized that perception, psychological force, control and influence are fundamental components of power that a leader requires for effective service delivery.
2. **Authority:** This is an essential ingredient required by leaders for the survival of an organization. Most established organizations have been hierarchically arranged through effective application of authority. Raphael (2014) posited the authority to be legitimate or socially approved within any social order to ensure individual submissiveness to the necessities of a cooperative system. It can flow from down to top in any organization and thus make it feasible for leaders to delegate responsibilities and tasks to the subordinates for administrative conveniences. The authority can either be line or staff authority. In the former, each position in the establishment has a general right above the lower positions, while the latter plays an advisory role to the line structure with no right to take actions.
3. **Sense of duty:** This is another germane element of effective leadership that is basically concern with knowing what to do when it should be done and how it should be done for maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. A leader with a good sense of duty identifies the direction to follow as well

as the required materials for the actualization of the organizational goals. This may not be unproblematic for many leaders to possess since it is concerned with a package of interest, openness and integrity to rationalize the leadership stateliness.

DISCUSSION

Factors Affecting Leadership Behaviour in Nigerian School System

There are many factors that affect leadership behaviour in the administration of Nigerian schools most especially since individuals are involved in leadership (Okoye, & Ukwuoma, 2020; Olanrewaju, Alhaji, Okpara & Abdulraheem, 2020). These include:

1. **Personality Factor:** Personality characteristics or traits such as: intelligence, enthusiasm, self-confidence, social participation and equalitarianism of leaders often contribute immensely to the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the school system. Paul (2013) noted that individual holding a leadership position must possess certain traits that will influence the realization of institutional goals and objectives.
2. **Position Factor:** The manner in which the individual occupying leadership position in the school system is a fundamental factor that affects leadership behaviour and functionality in the school system. Hollander (2013) emphasized that role play and societal expectation from the person holding a leadership position in the school system are prime factors that determine the success and failure of the educational enterprise. Such expectations may emanate from the personal or cultural organization within or outside the institution's environment. The school head is expected to be worthy of emulation to staff, students and the community at large, thus it becomes imperative for such head to have a

better understanding of the expectation of groups to work with.

- 3. Situational Factor:** Different circumstances may warrant various leadership roles and personality qualities. Therefore, in the process of growth, an institution may give the leadership position to a different category of people within the school environment. A person leading in one circumstance may not necessarily be a leader in another situation. In this respect, it is the situation that determines the leadership tasks and functions. Such a leader must be capable of providing skills and ready to meet the needs of the group as well as what the situation demands.

An Assessment of Leadership Styles in School

Since leadership involves getting tasks accomplished by people within an established institution, it then becomes imperative for the leader to provide the required force for the actualization of set goals. Leadership style is the behaviour a leader exhibits while guiding organizational member in appropriate directions. The leadership style adopted by the school heads plays a fundamental role in the effectiveness of the school administration (Aunga & Masare, 2017; Osagie & Momoh, 2016). Leadership style is a set of activities which influence subordinates or individual towards achieving the set goals in an organization. It is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. Mauchau, Kaita & Zougbo (2014) unanimously emphasized that one of the key factors that influence school effectiveness is the nature and quality of the leadership style provided by the school administrator. Thus, the leadership style is a critical factor influencing the effectiveness and performance of an organization. The first major study of leadership styles was advanced by Lewin in 1939 when he led a group of researches to identify different

styles of leadership. Leadership styles are the manner in which managers exercise their jurisdiction in their place of work to ensure that their goals are achieved. It shows clearly how managers plan and organize work in their area of jurisdiction and, in particular, about how they relate to, and deal with their colleagues and team members. The key parts of management and leadership style are convictions and deportment, including what a manager says; how they say it; the example they set; their body language; and their general conduct and demeanour. (Adedokun, & Kayode, 2019; Chartered Management Institute, 2015).

Autocratic Style: The autocratic leadership reflects a narrow span of management where leaders make decisions without consulting the subordinates. This style is used when leaders tell their employees what they want them done and how they want it accomplished. The autocratic leaders argue that end justifies the means, make his own decisions and announce to the subordinates to carry out the decisions without getting their advice or questions. Autocratic leaders are egocentric, greedy, desire to be flattered, feared and not respected (Igwe & Chidi, 2017; Imhangbe, Okecha & Obozuwa, 2019; Parrek, 2010). Lewin (2014) found that this style resulted in a high degree of displeasure. This style is effective if there is no need for the subordinates to have a say in decision making and when motivation is not a factor critically considered in the implementation of a decision. The autocratic leadership style is also known as tell-style involves the head administering the school practically via decree, where the views, opinions and philosophy of the staff, students, community, parents and relevant stakeholders in the educational industry are often neglected. Ogunsaju (2014) and Sizeak (2014) noted that autocratic school administrator is authoritarian, dictatorial, despotic and resistance to school development committee. The autocratic leader is the Alpha and Omega of the school, who determine the policy, assigns

duties to staff without previous notification and single-handedly takes decisions that affects the school system.

Democratic style: The democratic leadership style consists of the leader sharing the decision-making abilities with the group members by promoting the interest of the group through social equality. It encompasses discussion, debate, deliberation and sharing of ideas and encouragement of the people to feel about their involvement. It boosts employee's morale as they contribute to decision making process. This style of leadership is also known as participative or consults style where the leader reserves the right to make a final decision (Eboka, 2016; Sizeak, 2014). Here, the leader and the subordinates shared an equal voice and these groups didn't showcase hierarchy. The leadership style involved an appraisal of both the leader and the subordinates, with strong feedback structures available. The leader would expect the subordinates to exhibit self-confidence and the ability to get things done without constant supervision (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015; Dajani & Mohamad, 2016; Martin, 2016; Smith, Minor, Brashen & Remaly, 2017). In this style of leadership, consensus were reached through consultation with staff, parents and heads informed decision based on experience and astuteness of other professional within out outside the school system. All members of the school including the students have contribution in the administration of the institution. Subordinates derive satisfaction in that the school heads solicit for their experience and expertise toward ensuring real institutional development (Adserias, Charleston & Jackson, 2017; Farmer, 2019; Nyenyembe, Maslowski, Nimrod & Peter, 2016; Saxena, Desanghere, Stobart & Walker, 2017).

Laissez-faire: This takes a passive and carefree attitude towards the problems of the individual and the accomplishment of organizational objectives. This is where all the rights and power to make decisions are fully given to the workers or subordinates.

The leadership has no hierarchy of education, no defined code of regulation; allow followers a high degree of autonomy and no way of determining whether someone is right or wrong in the given capacity. Though in educational administration, few leaders delegate their role due to lack of drive, initiate and intuitiveness. Staff are highly regarded and leaders have minimum involvement in decision making (Malap & Mehrotra, 2020; Spano, 2020; Zougba, 2015). This leadership can, however, be effective when followers are highly skilled, experienced and educated. In the milieu of the educational enterprise, the head does not initiate innovation, but the school operates on the impetus of staff while the head is unenthusiastic to intervene in the manner the institution is being governed. Thus, there is no clear and exact policy that guides the stakeholders involved in the administration of the schools. This French phrase means "let them do" and is used to describe a leader who leaves his or her colleagues to do whatever they want. It can be effective if the leader monitors what is being achieved and communicates this back to his or her team regularly. Most often, laissez-faire leadership works for teams in which the individuals are very experienced and skilled self-starters. Unfortunately, it can also refer to situations where managers are not exerting sufficient control (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Kalkan, Altınay Aksal, Altınay Gazi, Atasoy & Dağlı, 2020).

Transactional Leadership: This takes care of both organizational or institutional needs and expectations of the group members as much as it could lead to both efficiency and effectiveness. Transactional leaders focus on increasing the efficiency of established routine and procedures (Asgari, Mezginejad & Taherpour, 2020). This style of leadership starts with the premise that team members agree to obey their leader totally when they take a job on the transaction and the organization pays the team members, in return for their effort and compliance. As such, the leader has the right to punish team members if their work

doesn't meet the pre-determined standard. Team members can do little to improve their job satisfaction under transactional leadership. The leader could give team members some control of their income/reward by using incentives that encourage even higher standards or greater productivity. Alternatively, a transactional leader could practice "management by exception", whereby, rather than rewarding better work, he or she would take corrective action if the required standards were not met. Transactional leadership is really just a way of managing rather than a true leadership style, as the focus is on short-term tasks. It has serious limitations for knowledge-based or creative work but remains a common style in many organizations.

Contingency Leadership: Contingency leadership is a philosophy that a manager style is contingent on the surrounding environment. The theory postulated that there is no best or right leadership style that is applicable to all situations, but contingent on relationship, task structure and positional power. This was propounded by Fiedler. Therefore, the school manager must be an adaptive individual who can vary his or her leadership style as the situation demands. The contingency approach to leadership, therefore, suggested that there is no one best leadership style, but rather effectiveness depends on the situation or circumstances. The school administrator in any educational institution or establishment must be an adaptive individual who can diverge the leadership behaviour based on the suitability to the situation at hand (Guterres, Armanu & Rofiaty, 2020; Kindarto, Zhu & Gardner, 2020).

Challenges Facing Educational Leadership in the School System

There are numerous problems and constraints which stand in the way of excellence in educational leadership in the school system today. Ogunsaju (2006) affirmed that leadership problems in the contemporary era are universal. These include:

1. **Societal Expectation:** The diverse of interest and expectation possess a fundamental problem to educational leaders and make it complex for the society's expectation to be met as the society is full of diversified pressure and interest groups. The members of modern society have numerous power to influence the direction of the school system which become problematic to educational leaders. The most fundamental of these problems is how the educational leaders will maximally utilize the increased power to enhance their social and physical atmosphere.
2. **Paucity of Fund:** Effective administration of the school system depends greatly on the availability of financial resources for the implementation of its programme. This is why the cost of goods and services provided in the school system substantiates the emphasis often positioned on school finance. Adesina (2015) posited that the enormity of the quantity of staff, the buildings and facilities supplies used in the school system explains how vital school accounting and principles of financial resources allocation are to educational administrator. Thus, the financial status of the government or school proprietors' constitutes severe challenge to educational leaders.
3. **Government Policy:** The political ideology of the government in power poses a great challenge to educational leaders. While the most fundamental aspect of institutional administration are policy issues which often decided at the political stage, with or without advice from experts or dependable specialists in educational field, educational leaders should study, examine and analyze the political ideology of the government in power before taking decisions (Davidson & Hughes, 2020; Oketcho, Ssempala, Ujeyo & Atibuni, 2020).

4. **The Media and Public Relations:** The press is the most horrible enemy of educational leaders that pose an enormous problem to them since the mass media act as people's megaphone, it becomes effortless for leaders to play into their hands. If the press had a positive relationship with educational leaders, such leaders will be accorded great recognition and vice-versa. It is often advisable to maintain high-quality public relations by going to the media before they come for discussing germane issues (Oran & Ünsar, 2020; Villet, 2020).
5. **Existence of Factions and Cliques Among Staff:** Factions and cliques are sometimes formed among staff which poses a fundamental challenge to educational leaders. Irrespective of what the leader is doing to enhance the image of the school, existence of factions and cliques among staff will definitely be disenchanting (Eboka, 2016; Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Francisco Sr, 2020).
6. **Students' Militancy:** Contemporary educational administrators are faced with the problem of students' militancy against the school management, community or among other students. A lot of causes have been ascribed to lack of indiscipline among students which hinder effective performance of the school head (Jhajj, 2020; Nair & Sivakumar, 2020). Taiwo (2015) disclosed that lack of indiscipline and self-control among students frequently has severe implications on effective administration of the school system in all ramifications. The educational leaders would be compelled by necessity to take tricky decisions within a short period of time.

Strategies for Effective Leadership in School System

For educational leaders to overcome and cope with the multitudinous challenges,

certain techniques should be devised among which are:

1. **Stalling for Time:** Leadership in educational enterprise should be conscious of the importance of timing due to its precious nature right from the moment for effective maneuver. An adequate understanding of personnel under such leaders should be well understood to know when to put the request before them without turning them down. Thus, timing factor is an opportunity and should be utilized whenever it comes if the leader is to achieve the institution's goals.
2. **Integration of Interest Group in Problem Solving:** Educational leaders should endeavor to identify the interest group and involve them in providing solutions to problems confronting the school system. Since they have been integrated as parts of the system, there is propensity for them to change their behaviour and develop a sense of belongingness in that they have been known through their participation in problem-solving.
3. **Anticipate Pressure for Preventive Measures:** Educational leadership should never overlook the happening in the educational enterprise as the system is complex in nature. Pressures should be anticipated from their followers and adequately prepare for providing solutions.
4. **Delegation of Responsibilities:** It is an undeniable fact that a tree can never make a forest, educational administrators are therefore advised to maximally delegate responsibilities to the subordinates to contribute their quota towards the successful accomplishment of the institution's goals.
5. **Impersonality:** Educational leaders should learn to dichotomize official matters from social interaction with the

subordinates within the school system. When the followers do not concur with official matters, the disagreement should not be allowed to affect the social relationship that has already been in existence.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is fundamental to effective and efficient administration of the school system in that it provides force to coordinate activities and motivate people to judiciously use the shrinking limited resources in most efficient way for the maintenance of quality in educational industry. Administrators' leadership effectiveness does not only hinge on the knowledge, skills and personality but also the tasks to be accomplished, skills required for team motivation as well as the circumstance in which the leader operates. Leadership is a question of choosing among the mutually exclusive leadership styles as there is no best approach to leadership effectiveness for all circumstances. Therefore, it is of prime importance for the school administrators to have a deep understanding of different components that constitute the school system for ensuring administrative effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the study:

1. Teamwork should be promoted by educational leaders to dispel the idea of forming cliques and factions among staff within the school system.
2. Synergy must be established between educational administrators and political analysts for critical and periodical appraisal of government ideology before embarking on fundamental decisions on educational industry.
3. Adequate sensitization on the enforcement of educational laws should be embarked upon by educational leaders to ensure peace, justice and respect for human dignity in the school system.
4. Seminars, conferences and workshops on leadership training should be periodically organized for educational administrators to enhance effective service delivery.
5. Interest groups in the school system should be maximally integrated in providing lasting solutions to the challenges affecting the school system.

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