

HEAD TEACHER LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ABI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE

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(Received 5, November 2019; Revision Accepted 21, November 2019)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between head teacher leadership style and mathematics student's academic performance in Abi local government area of Cross river state, Nigeria. Three null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. A random stratified sampling technique was used to select or sample one hundred and ninety (190) students and ten (10) head teachers from the population of the study. Two instruments were developed for data collection known as Head Teacher Leadership Style Questionnaire (HTLSQ) and mathematics achievement test (MAT). Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) was used to analyze all the three null hypothesis. The findings revealed that: there is a significant positive relationship between democratic leadership style and student's academic performance and there is no significant relationship between laissez fair leadership style and student's academic performance. It was concluded that head teacher leadership style influence student's academic performance. It was therefore recommended that head teachers should undergo in-service training on leadership style of administration of schools and as a matter of concern use mostly the democratic leadership style.

KEYWORDS: head teacher, leadership, democratic, laissez fair, academic performances.

INTRODUCTION:

It is a proven fact that the success of any organization has its leafages on the leadership style. The role of the head teachers to school is also a critical factor in determining successful implementation of a school based management and satisfaction of teachers (Machumu, and Mafwimbo, 2014). Common wealth secretariat (1996) comments that one of the key factors influencing school effectiveness is the nature and quality of leadership style and management

provided by each school. Good leadership provides necessary guidance, clarity of direction and rewards for effective performance of an organization. Okumbe, (2001) said that in any organization, human resources are the most important resources and as such the success of the organization depends entirely on how effectively its workers are managed. It is therefore important that great efforts be put in place to achieve integration with a sense of actualizing the organizational goals.

A school consists of the head teacher, teachers,

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non-teaching staff as well as the students who interact with one another so as to accomplish a common goal. For a school organization to be held together, good leadership and efficient management are a must (Farrant, 1997).

Leadership is the ability to conduct or guide the subjects. Achieng, (2000) sees leadership as the ability to assimilate and translate ideas, rules, regulations and procedures to guide subjects in carrying out a mission within a defined mandate. Luthern, (2002) contends that the difference between success and failure, whether in war, business, a protest moment or basketball will be attributed to leadership. Cole (2005) advocates for the leadership of a head teacher to be democratic combining, self-confidence, friendliness, firmness and tact and should merely consist of issuing orders.

Democratic leadership also known as participative leadership or shared leadership, is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision making process. It can be applied to any organization, from private businesses to schools and to government. This leadership style focuses on group equality and the free flow of ideas. The leader of the group is still there to give or offer guidance and control. Researchers have found that the democratic leadership style is one of the most effective type and leads to higher productivity, better contributions from group members as well as increasing group morale.

Democratic style of leadership practiced by head teachers, proper delegation of duties relieves the school from their many tasks and also inculcate a sense of responsibility, hardworking and commitment among the subordinates which in turn enhances teacher's performance.

Nzuve (2005) argued that a democratic leader is one who obtains ideas and opinions from workers. He gives them a chance to express their feelings about how things should be done. The manager considers the ideas and opinions of the workers and still makes the final decision. The head teacher allows staff to participate in decision making within the frame work of the mission and objectives of the school.

Democratic style of leadership means that leaders work together with others, including discussing matters with the teachers before taking decision. Leadership is distributed among the teachers. This helps to create a cooperative atmosphere in the schools. Schools become more democratic through the practice of participative decision making and actions. Leadership requires participation from everyone

so that all members are engaged in creating a meaning and acting on the meaning (Harris, 2002).

Mbiti (2007), Laissez-faire leadership style refers to a freed-reign style where the leader doesn't lead but leave the group entirely to itself. Such a leader allows maximum freedom to subjects. They are given a free hand in deciding their own policies and methods. The leaders who use this style of leadership believe that there should be no rules and regulations since everybody has inborn sense of responsibility.

Laissez-faire leadership style also known as delegative leadership is a type of leadership style in which leaders are hands-off and allow group members to make the decisions. Researchers have found that this is generally the leadership style that leads to the lowest productivity among group members. However, it is pertinent to realize that the leadership style can have both benefits and possible pitfalls. There are also certain settings and restrictions where a laissez-faire leadership style might be the most appropriate, knowing your dominant leadership style can be helpful for understanding your own strengths and potential weakness.

In laissez-faire leadership, the head teacher believes that there should be no rules and regulations since everyone has a sense of responsibility (Pont et al, 2008).

A laissez-faire school environment may be more creative and fulfilling for those involved in school management system. The extent to which a head teacher succeeds in attaining the school objectives, mission, vision and philosophy depends on how he or she uses suitable management style to a specific school contextual environment (David and Obadia, 2017).

Laissez-faire leadership style is not suited for use by head teacher because complete delegation without follow-up mechanism creates performance problems. "Teachers and students are motivated when they are afforded opportunities to make their own decisions". The acceptance of their opinions and ideas, together with the monitoring of their performance by head teachers is a healthy way of enhancing discipline in the school system (Wu and Shiu, 2009).

Authoritarian leadership style exemplified when a leader dictates policies and procedures, decides what goals are to be achieve and directs and controls all activities without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. Such leaders have full control of the team, leaving no autonomy within the group. The leader has a vision in mind and must be able to effectively

motivate their group to finish the task. The group is expected to complete the task under very close supervision.

Authoritarian leaders receive aggressive behavior from their subordinates. Productivity is slightly higher under the authoritarian leader than under the democratic one. However, it is the lowest under the laissez-faire leader supervision (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2012). In authoritarian leadership, the leaders make most or all the decisions, without involvement or inputs of the employees. Wu and Shiu, (2009) explained that authoritarian leadership is gained through punishments, threats, demands, orders, rules and regulations.

The authoritarian leader functions are unilateral rule making, task assignment and problem solving. While the authoritarian followers adhere strictly to the leader's instructions without questions or comments.

Head master often encounters with the need to transform the school from low performance to acceptable performance. To accomplish these purposes, the transformational leader attempts to have a strong teachers' commitment towards the school. The increasing range and complexity of leadership responsibilities in schools means that it is no longer possible for the head teacher to be the sole leader (Michel and Peter, 2007). Brown (2003) was unable to find any statistically significant correlation among any of the transformational leadership behavior and continuance commitment. The leadership behaviours may not be related to how employees feel about having to stay in the current organization.

Head teachers should do everything possible to give information and experience to teachers in order to accomplish certain tasks or jobs, especially for those who are new in the field. This could improve their early job experience. Head teachers also should provide opportunities for committing acts and the school must show high level of commitments to the teachers in return. There is also a need for training programme designed to improve and increase head teachers transformational leadership (Michel and Peter, 2007).

Okumu (2006) in his study on delegation of duties, positive effects on management of secondary school in terms of motivation, commitment satisfaction, discipline and general improvement in teacher performance and management of schools opined that delegation of duties is the process of a supervisor dividing up his total work load and giving part of it to his

subordinates. He identified that effective delegation is efficient, motivating and developmental toward work performance. Delegation can operate within two ends of a continuum. At one end is a loose control but wide freedom while at the other end is a tight control with little freedom (Maicibi, 2005).

Students' academic performance could be explained as the extent of learning activities of the learners. It is a set of learning activities that lead to expected outcome which is graduation. Students' academic performance may be in terms of effective learning, good study habits, classroom participation, engagement in curriculum activity, active participation in examination with good grades and successful graduation.

Despite all the various contributions to ensuring effective academic performance, it is still wanting the style of leadership influences student's academic performance. It is on this premise that this study seeks to examine the relationship between the head teacher leadership style and student's academic performance in Abi local government area of Cross River State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent times, the performance of students over the years in mathematics has remained an issue of concern to parents, educationists and stakeholders. Researchers have shown that the behavior of students especially in relation to sciences generally and mathematics in particular is greatly influenced by certain psychological factors. Thus, the need for this study. The problem of this study is posed in form of a question. Does head teacher leadership style relates to student's academic performance in Abi local government area?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may be of great help to all educational stakeholders such as policy makers for effective leadership and management of schools. It will also enable the head teachers to always use more than one leadership style in the administration of their school. It will further encourage government to have in-service training for head teachers for effective leadership style.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study examines the relationship between head teacher leadership style and mathematics students' academic performance. Specifically, the study will determine the relationship between:

- i) Democratic leadership style and student’s academic performance
- ii) Authoritarian leadership style and student’s academic performance
- iii) Laissez-faire leadership style and student’s academic performance.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- i) There is no significant relationship between democratic leadership style and students’ academic performance.
- ii) There is no significant relationship between authoritarian leadership style and students’ academic performance.
- iii) There is no significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and students’ academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design. A correlational research design is that which establishes the extent of relationship or association between two or more variables. The extent of correlation between variables is usually expressed as a coefficient known as correlation coefficient which reveals both magnitude and direction of association (Nworgu, 1991). The study was conducted in some selected secondary schools in Abi local government area. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and ninety (190) students and ten (10) head teachers from the population of the study (2000). Two instruments were developed for data collection by the researchers known as Head teacher leadership style questionnaire (HLSQ) and mathematics

achievement test (MAT).The MAT was drawn from the SS II mathematics syllabus using five (5) topics. MAT was used to determine the academic performance of students because mathematics is a compulsory subject in secondary schools offered by both arts and science students. The mathematics achievement test was forwarded to experts in Mathematics Education who after much scrutiny brought the instrument to a twenty (20) items. This ascertained the face and content validity of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to the head teachers based on the different leadership style and the MAT was administered to their students.

A trial testing of the instrument was done using three (3) head teachers and twenty (20) students from three secondary schools outside the study area to ascertain the internal consistence of the instrument. Kuder Richardson 20 and 21 (KR20 and KR21) were used to estimate the reliability indices of the mathematics achievement test and questionnaires respectively. The reliability indices of the instrument shows 0.65 and 0.70 for the achievement test and questionnaire. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test all the three null hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The three null hypothesis formulated were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

Null Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between democratic leadership style and student’s academic performance.

The independent variable (Democratic leadership) and the dependent variable (academic performance) are both continuous variables.

Table 1: Summary Data of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) for no significant relationship between democratic leadership style and students’ academic performance.

Variables	N	x	SD	df	r	sig	Decision
Democratic leadership style	200	28.51	5.32	198	0.51	0.371	Rejected
Student’s Academic Performance		24.03	2.58				

P<0.05! critical r value = 0.062

In Table 1, since the calculated r-value of 0.51 is greater than critical r-value of 0.062 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom for two tailed test, it follows that there is significant

relationship between democratic leadership style and student’s academic performance. The null hypothesis of “no significant positive relationship is therefore rejected but the alternative

hypothesis is retained. This means that there is significant positive relationship between democratic leadership style and students' academic performance.

Null Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between authoritarian leadership style and student's academic performance. The independent variable (Authoritarian leadership

style) and the dependent variable (student's academic performance) are both continuous variables. To test the hypothesis of significant positive relationship between authoritarian leadership style and student's academic performance, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) was used as shown in table two below.

Table II: Summary Data of PPMCC for no significant relationship between authoritarian leadership style and student's academic performance.

Variable	N	X	SD	df	r	sig	Decision
Laissez-faire leadership style	200	36.95	9.878	198	0.43	0.014	Rejected
Student academic performance		21.16	3.97				

P>0.05, critical r=0.062

In table II above, the calculated r-value of 0.43 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.062 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom for the two tailed test. It therefore follows that there is a significant positive relationship between authoritarian leadership style and students' academic performance. The null hypothesis of "no significant relationship is rejected but the alternative hypothesis is retained.

Null Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between Laissez-faire leadership style and students' academic performance.

The independent variable (Laissez-faire leadership style) and dependent variable (students' academic performance) are both continuous variables. To test the null hypothesis of the significant relationship, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) was used as shown in the table III below.

Variable	N	X	SD	df	r	sig	Decision
Laissez-faire leadership style	200	36.95	9.878	198	-.02	0.94	Retained
Student academic performance		21.16	4.053				

P>0.05, critical r=0.062.

In Table III, since the calculated r-value of -0.02 is less than the critical r-value of 0.062 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom for the two tailed test, it follows that there is no significant positive relationship between Laissez-faire leadership style and student's academic performance. The null hypothesis of "no significant relationship" is therefore not rejected but the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings is done hypothesis by hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis One: The findings of the null hypothesis one revealed that there is significant

positive relationship between democratic leadership style and student's academic performance. This finding is in agreement with some popular literatures, Nzuve (2005), Cole (2005) and Harris (2002) stated that leadership requires participation from everyone so that all members are engaged in creating a meaning and acting on the meaning.

The second findings revealed that there is significant positive relationship between authoritarian leadership style and students' academic performance. This finding corroborates with Okumbe (2006), Micheal & Peter (2007) but disagrees with Brown (2003) who was unable to find any statistically significant correlation among

any of the transformational leadership behaviours and continuance commitment. The difference in the two findings may be as a result of sample size and geographical location. The result of the last findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between Laissez-faire leadership style and student's academic performance. This finding is in line with the works of Mbiti (2002), Nu and Shiu (2009) and David & Obadia (2017). Laissez-faire leadership style is not suited for use by head teachers as completed delegation without follow-up mechanism creates performance problems. Teachers and students are motivated when they are afforded opportunities to make their own decisions. The acceptance of their opinions and ideas together with the monitoring of their performance by head teachers as a healthy way of enhancing discipline in school systems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that leadership style of administration has significant relationship with mathematics students' academic performances in Abi local government area of Cross River state. This is because bad leadership style always lead to poor academic performance of students while good leadership style enhances effective academic performance of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made to educational stakeholders.

- Head teachers should always use democratic and authoritarian leadership styles in the administration of their schools.
- The government should organize seminars and conference for all head teachers based on leadership style of administration.
- There should also be in-service training in school management (leadership style) for head teachers.

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