



Leadership Style: A Panacea for Administrative Efficiency in a School System

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Abstract

This paper examined leadership styles and administrative efficiency in school systems. The paper emphasized on the meaning of administration, the concept of efficiency, leadership style for improving the school systems. It is obvious that the topic under discussion actually suggest the need for effective leadership styles in school system. This implies that for the school system to realize its aims and objectives, appropriate leadership style must be applied. Leadership is a process of influencing support of others, sustaining such support overtime, re-engineering it and directing such support to the attainment of goals of the school system. It further examined theories of leadership, principles of leadership, leadership styles and factors that determine leadership style in the school system. In the context of this paper, leadership is focused on the achievement of the objectives of secondary education. Leadership in secondary schools can be classified as functional leadership because the leadership role is entrusted on the principal by virtue of his possession of certain educational and administrative competencies considered paramount for the administration of the secondary school education.

Keywords: Administration, Efficiency, Leadership Style, School System, Panacea, Principal, Principles, Theories.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Igbegiri, D. C., & Mbagwu, J. U. (2019). Leadership Style: A Panacea for Administrative Efficiency in a School System. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 12(4), 553-563.

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INTRODUCTION

Present day leadership in our secondary schools demand or requires a leadership that is abreast with the current leadership tenets and can adopt administrative techniques to bring about

efficiency and effectiveness in the school system. Ololube (2013) explained that in order to be a good leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience and most importantly the skill to negotiate and work with others to achieve goals. Leadership involves applying a good initiative to achieve a group predetermined goals. Therefore, leadership is the fundamental duty of a leader. In an educational institution such as secondary schools, principals could direct the efforts of their subordinates like the teachers and other non-teaching staff towards goal attainment. It is obvious that every head of the educational organization has the ability to lead a group towards the attainment of a common goal. In another hand, a school principal is capable of exerting some influence on his teachers and non-teaching staff for the realization of the organizational goal. This implies that the school manager should undergo or acquire leadership qualities to enable him stand the test of time.

Okorie (2010) opined that leadership involve the maintenance of organization in terms of keeping the organization together, satisfying individual needs, encouraging self-direction, promoting interdependence and preserving harmony. This means that leadership is a process of influencing others in making decisions, setting goals and achieving desired goals and keeping the individual group voluntarily together.

Leadership is a long standing and widespread topic of concern. Few issues have received as much attention from various writers. In school system, leadership is emphasized. Interest in leadership and leadership styles are stressed every day. Yet, there is little consensus on universal aspects of leadership. No universally accepted definition of the word has yet been reached. The reason for the different opinions on what leadership is or what it is not is a fundamental fact that many people see leadership from different perspectives. Some define the leader in socio metric terms, others in psychometric and political terms. In political term, the leader is either appointed or elected, in socio metric and psychometric terms; leaders may be imposed or may impose themselves. Some consider the leader as the person contributing the best ideas in the group or possessing maximum knowledge of the situation, or offering best guidance. Thus, the leader is the person who gets things done through people. The effective leader is the person who is not only able to make his subordinate want to do what they have to do, but also recognizes that they must be motivated to ensure that the goals and objectives of the school system are achieved. A good leader inspires, motivates and directs activities to help achieve organizational goals. According to Ololube (2013), ineffective leader does not contribute to organizational progress and can, in fact, detract from organizational goal accomplishment. He further explains that leadership involves a type of responsibility aimed at achieving particular ends by applying the available resources (human and material) and ensuring a cohesive and coherent organization in the process. Northouse and Rowe in Ololube (2013) described leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Udofot (2009) opined that leadership is about an individual exercising social influence over other members of a group, that leadership involves the use of non-coercive but motivational influence for repositioning advantage. He further explains that leadership charts the course for the future, provides for stability in times of change, develops the capacity to engage the urgent with the eminent and operates from a framework of consistent values.

According to Johnie in Oluwuo (2004) leadership emanates from five basic sources of power:

- Reward power;
- Coercive power;
- Legitimate power;
- Expert power;
- Deferent power.

Reward power: This is power to compensate or give rewards for tasks satisfactorily completed.

Coercive power: Punishes or reprimands who errs.

Legitimate power: is formerly conferred by an organization.

Expert power: this shows mastery of skills.

Referent power: refer to the ability to cause followers to emulate or imitate a leader's personal style or behaviour.

Inyang in Oluwuo (2004) buttressed that internal dynamics of organization, changing environmental condition, inability of organization to take care of every member and availability of group interest within organizations are the major prerogatives that have necessitated leadership.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Administrative efficiency in a school system

First, according to Obeka (2007) administration in a complementary sense is the application of authority for the good of all people in the system; it has to do with enforcing compliance with policies, performances, circulars and other forms of instructions/directives from superior officers in the school system. This implies that administration is the application of all important statutory provisions in running the educational system in such a way that the goals and objectives of setting up the institution of learning will be achieved maximally. In a school system, administration emphasizes on bringing human resources and materials together for effective and functional teaching and learning in schools. All administrative efforts in the context of formal school education are directed towards the enhancement of teaching and learning process. School administrator as a leader deals with members of the public, his teachers and other officers, his students, the ministry or board of education, the governing council, all his effort and activities are ultimately aimed at effective teaching and learning process for the attainment of school objectives. Administration is an integral part of an organized society, it is crucially needed for maintaining and expanding the relevance, effectiveness and productivity of complex institution (Okoroma, 2007, p. 1).

Administrative efficiency could be conceptualized as workable approaches to creatively direct, control and utilize the efforts of people and available materials towards the achievement of stated goals and objectives of school within the provided regulations. Efficiency occurs when everything possible has been done by the school or a school manager to minimize cost while waste is kept to a minimum in a school system. Efficiency could be said to be the quality of doing something well without waste of time or money or the relationship between the amount of energy that goes into a machine or an engine (school system) and the amount (results) it produces.

The school system is an environment contrived for the purpose of giving education to persons who are referred to as learners. One key actor in this process is the school manager (principal). His traditionally assigned role in the education process is to coordinate the human resources (teachers) and material resources in ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the school system. Be that as it may, teachers also perform prominent role in the educational process.

In this vein, teaching is often referred to as the activity of the teacher by which knowledge in a particular subject matter is passed to the learner.

What is Leadership?

Okai (2013) defined leadership as the ability to lead a group of people in an organization for the attainment of an objective. He further explained that leadership occurs when leaders induce followers to act for certain goals that represent the values, needs, wants, aspirations and expectations of a leader. Leadership has to do with the art of coordination and motivating or stimulating individual workers and groups to achieve organizational goals. It also anchors on the ability to influence others to act in a certain way to achieve desired goals and objectives. This implies that the optional and judicious relationships of leadership with followership is based on identified typologies towards achievement of set goals.

Leadership remains a major function in any human activity, it is the “exercise of influence by one member of a group or organization over other members to help the group or organization achieve its goals” (George & Jones in Udofort, 2009, p. 109). However, the success in attaining set goals may never be guaranteed, the exercise of influence over subordinates is a major feature of leadership. The above definition expressed two elements in case of secondary schools, the principals (leader) and the teacher (subordinates).

A leader is an administrator (principal) who directs the activities of a group of workers (school teachers and non-teaching staff) and work towards motivating them to achieve organizational objectives. In this regard, leadership especially in a school system (school environment) deals with staff motivation, performance appraisal, staff development, discipline and control and direction of the activities of teaching and non-teaching staff in the school to achieve teaching and learning that is instructional objectives. For further explanation of the concept of leadership, Peretomode in Oluwuo (2004) addresses the basic concept of leadership:

- Leadership involves other people – followers or subordinates. Thus, there can be no leader without followers;
- Leadership involves the use of influence - a moderate form of power;
- The leadership process involves an unequal distribution of power between leaders and group members. Leaders can direct some of the activities of group members but the leader cannot similarly direct the leader’s activities;
- Leadership is a process that is an ongoing activity engaged in by certain individuals in an organization;
- Leadership focuses on the accomplishment of goals. The outcome of the leadership process is some form of goal accomplishment.

This paper focused on leadership on restricted view which holds that only people in leadership positions are leaders and such leadership position is institutionalized. For instance, principal of a school, the headmaster or head teacher, minister of education, commissioner of education etc. It is their statutory position that qualifies their being called leaders.

Leadership Style

According to Okai (2013), leadership style describes the behaviour leader’s exhibit in the course of directing subordinates to meet common goal. This implies that, in a school system, the principal’s leadership style could be seen through the behaviour they exhibit in the course of directing their staff to achieve school objectives. The function of a school principal is to initiate and influence staff towards achieving school goals and objectives by directing, planning, organizing, budgeting, coordinating the institution.

Ololube (2017) explained that leadership styles are the approaches used to motivate followers. He further opined that leadership styles should be selected and adopted to fit

organizations, situations, groups and individuals. Toolkit in Ololube (2017) identified seven leadership styles:

Autocratic Leadership Style

In this style of leadership, the leader alone dictates to the subordinate what should be done. This implies that in a school system, the principal as a leader takes decision alone and dictates to the teachers and other staff who are under him. In other words, he does not involve them in making decision. Autocratic leader do not allow their staff (teacher) to make use of their initiation and discretion as they take absolute control of the work. There is impossibility of free-flow of communication. A principal possessing this style of leadership maintain downward communication that is, communication from super ordinates (principals) to subordinates (the least staff). Principals with this style always reprimand their staff and hardly give praise for worker (teachers) good performance. Okorie (2000) buttress that this style of leadership tend to be personal in his praise and criticism of the work of each member

Bradford and Lippitt in Olowuo (2004) summarized the characteristics of autocratic style as follows:

- Autocratic leader is very conscious of his position;
- He has little trust and faith in his subordinates;
- He feels that pay is just reward for work and is the only reward that will motivate the worker;
- He gives orders and demand that they be carried out. No questions are allowed and no explanation given;
- Group members assume no responsibility for performance and merely do what they are told;
- Production is good when the leader is present but drops in his absence. All these features constitute an autocratic leader.

Bureaucratic Leadership Style

This style of leadership constitutes rules and regulations of the organization. Leaders in this case, follow rules to the latter, no compromise and also ensure that the subordinates follows procedures clearly. Shaefer (2005) opined that Bureaucratic leadership is useful in organization where employees (staff) do routine tasks. Sandrock (2007) explain that one of the setbacks of this type of leadership is that it is ineffective in teams and organizations that rely on flexibility, creativity or innovation.

Bureaucratic style of leadership emphasizes on effective supervision and efficiency, leads to unity of command, resulting into clarity and precision in the attainment of organizational goals.

Charismatic Leadership Style

Charismatic leadership style is transformational in nature. The charismatic leader relies on his aura, his personality and his inspirational qualities, he also relies on his ability, he is competent and he is tactical in approaching problems. In a school system, a principal with charismatic leadership commands an unchallengeable respect among staff because they are adored and loved. The negative side of charismatic leadership is the amount of confidence placed in the leader rather than in employees and this can create the risk of a project or even in an entire organization collapsing if the leader leaves (Ololube, 2013, p. 96).

Democratic/Participative Leadership Style

The democratic leadership encourages people to participate and involve themselves in decision making process. The democratic leader encourages creativity and initiative. In a school system, the principal that operate a democratic style of leadership promotes greater group productivity, teachers shaped by the type of leadership style are usually more mature, capable of achieving institutional objective and less aggressive.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style:

This style of leadership offers the subordinates complete freedom to do their work and set their own ultimatums. The teams are provided with resources and advice, if needed, but otherwise do not get involved. The leader is very tolerant and the followers are free to do whatever they want. They come to work and leave whenever they like. Under such leadership, there may be no definite code, regulations, no hierarchy of authority and no way of determining whether some are wrong or right. This been when principals or school administrators do not have sufficient control over their staff.

Transactional Leadership Style:

The transactional leadership style appreciate the need to achieve organizational goals but at the same time make sure that individuals members needs are not ignored as they strive towards institutional goals. In this type of leadership, the workers before getting the job will agree to obey their leader. In this case, the leader has a right to punish or discipline group members if their work does not meet an appropriate standard.

Theories of Leadership

Charry in Ololube (2013) identified eight major leadership theories. These theories are as follows:

Great Man Theory

This theory claimed that the capacity for leadership is inherent, that is, great leaders are born, not made. The theory always showcases leaders as destined to rise to leadership, heroic.

Trait Theory

Trait theory explains that those born to be leaders were believed to possess certain traits that made them effective leaders such as intelligence, dominance, self-confidence, energy or activity. That certain traits make them better suited or qualified to leadership.

Contingency Theories

This theory maintains that no single theory is best suited in all situations. Lamb (2013) buttressed that effective leadership depend on the degree of fit between a leader's qualities and leadership style and that demanded by a specific situation. Therefore, contingency theories of leadership focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which style of leadership is best suited for a particular work situation.

Situation Theory

According to Ololube (2013), situation theory proposes that leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational conditionals or circumstances, and that different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for different types of decision-making. This implies that action or personal attributes as well as the situation leaders find themselves in. Hoy and Miskel in Oluwole (2014) maintain that the situational theory or approach attempts to identify any distinctive characteristics of the setting to which the leaders' behaviour can be attributed. They state that the variables postulated as being situational determinants of leadership include:

- Structural properties of the organization (size, hierarchical structure, formalization).
- Organizational climate (openness, participativeness, group atmosphere).
- Role characteristics (position, power, type and difficulty of task, procedural roles).
- Subordinate characteristics (knowledge and experience, tolerance for ambiguity, responsibility, power).

The Behavioural Theory

This theory suggests that leadership effectiveness depends or is anchored on how leaders tend to behave in an organization. The search for effective leader behaviour gave rise to the behavioural theory. The theory aims at explaining leadership in the angle of what leaders do. This theory maintained that individuals can learn to become leaders through training and observation.

Participative Theory

This theory maintains that the appropriate leadership style is the type that takes cognizance and accepts the contributions and suggestions of other subordinates in an organization. This leadership style appreciates participation and suggestions from group members and aids group members to feel important and dedicated to the process of decision making. A school principal who utilizes participative leadership and commitment always leads to better quality decisions.

Transactional Theory

According to Charry (2012), transactional theory maintains that leadership is based on a system of rewards and punishment. This implies that when employees performed very well, they are rewarded and when they could not perform effectively they are not rewarded rather punished.

Relationship/Transformational Theory

These theories explain that leadership is the process whereby an individual engages with others and is fit to create a connection which brings about increase in motivation and ethical standard in both leaders and followers. These theories tend to create motivation and inspiration in individuals by aiding subordinates see the relevance of the tasks before them. In a school system, the principal focuses on the effective performance of teachers and also on each staff to achieve his or her potentials.

Principles of Leadership

The principles of leadership as identified by Ezeocha in Oluwuo (2004) include the following:

- Leadership must be legitimate and authoritative: This implies that no individual can lead unless given an authority by those being led. The authority to direct and control should be given to him or her.
- Leadership must subject itself to the demand of public advancement, responsibility and accountability. It is only within the above framework that good relations can be maintained between leaders and the led.
- Leadership must operate within limitations of the mandate entrusted to it by the people. Outside of the people's mandates, the leader ceases to lead legitimately.
- In the area of recruitment, leadership must be by merit and not by inheritance or usurpation.

The above principles exhibit principles of leadership in Western countries. In third world countries like African countries, such principles may not apply.

Factors that Determine Leadership Style in a School System

The factors that determine leadership style as identified by Ibara (2010, 74) include the following:

- Size of an institution;
- Degree of interaction;
- Personality of members;
- Goal congruency;
- Level of Decision making.

Size of an Institution

The size of an institution is a major factor that determine leadership style. Ololube (2013) stipulates that many organizations have the tendency to grow and as they grow, to divide into sub groups where the real decision making power lies. The growth or size of an institution determine the level of problem that arise which automatically result to less or more difficulties. This implies that as the institution grows larger, it will become more complicated but if grows lesser, it will become less complicated. In this situation, according to Ibara (2010), leaders may, if inclined, present ideas and invite input from employees. In a school system, a principal heading a larger institution, perhaps inclined in administration, he or she may seek for the suggestions and contribution of the teachers working under him.

Degree of Interaction

Ololube (2012) stressed that organizational interaction or communication in this paradigm refers to a relational approach between two or more individuals on the basis of social and organizational structures aimed at achieving goals. In a school system, the principal need to relate effectively by adequately involving staff members inmost activities within the school. This can be achieved by ensuring that effective teaching and learning take place. The level of interaction between the principal and teachers and other staff in a school system is geared towards influencing the style of school management.

Personality of Members

The principals' behaviour and that of other staff can influence the leadership style of a school system. The school administrator is essentially a leader of the staff and students of the school. But, the personality of other staff or teachers can cause the principal to imbibe a particular leadership style which may tilt towards organizational objective.

Goal Congruency

Goal Congruency has to do with ensuring that the operations and activities of the schools are in line with the school goals and objectives. This implies that, school high goal congruence or low goal congruence must not limit or be an obstacle to the achievement of school goals and objectives.

LEVEL OF DECISION MAKING

First, decision making has to do with the selection of alternatives in order to achieve the organizational goals and objectives. Levels of decision making determine the leadership style put in place. Therefore, the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of a leader is anchored on the level of decision making in a school system.

Weddle (2013) mentioned five levels of decision making in an organization and these include:

- **Level one:** In this case, the leader makes the decision alone and pronounces the decision.
- **Level two:** Leaders collate inputs or ideas from individual staff (teachers) and makes the decision.
- **Level three:** The principal collates ideas or input from teachers and makes the decision.
- **Level four:** At this level, the principal is part of the entire staff and just entitled to one vote among the teachers.
- **Level five:** At this level, the principal assigns decision making to the teachers and may not be a part of the decision making process.

PROBLEMS OF LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOL SYSTEM

There is no one particular principal in our secondary schools that do not face one kind of leadership challenge or the other. These problems can be grouped or classified according to their causes.

Government Caused Problems

FRN (2004) the National Policy on Education stipulates that government has taken the responsibility to provide facilities, instructional materials and the likes. Government has also declared that the first three years of secondary education forms part of our basic education, therefore, it should be free. The inadequacy of these materials challenges the authority of the principal because his moral justification to keep students in school is eluded in the absence of these vital teaching materials and facilities. Government recruits and post teachers without the consent of the principal, teachers are transferred without due consultations with the principals. In this case, the principal is reduced to a mere stooge, thus denied the power to have a good

grip of teachers. The Ministry of Education has a total disregard for seniority among teachers, it is a common and unfortunate feature to see junior teachers lording over their seniors.

Principal Caused Problems

Laissez-faire, transactional, bureaucratic and autocratic principals are in themselves major causes of leadership problems in the school, because of their styles and practices.

Community Caused Problems

This problem emanate from the community, most especially host community. Sometimes community (parents) run into the school compound and challenge principal on trivial issues. We have cases of parents beating principals and teachers.

CONCLUSION

We have so far seen that administrative efficiency and effectiveness in a school system lies in the nature of leadership style adopted by the principals. This means that the realization of school goals to a greater extent depends on the style of leadership introduced by the principal. It is a fact that this paper focused on principals as leaders and as such they categorically fall under functional leadership, this is because of their possession of certain academic and administrative experiences. Obviously, one will say that principals should always embark on leadership training for them to be acquainted with recent administrative and leadership innovation in the system. The principal as leaders take initiative to assist the teachers to move towards the realization of goals that are acceptable.

Leadership has a number of theories and that no one theory is usually accepted but, it can be introduced depending on the circumstances that prevail. A leadership style according to Okoroma (2016) explains that it is a leader's typical way of behaving towards group members or followers. Leadership style varies from one leader to the other and every environment have its influence on the style of leadership to be adopted. This assertion anchored on the factors that determine leadership styles in the school system.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- Principals of schools should embark on regular leadership training to enable them understand current realities in leadership.
- Principals of schools should be able to adopt a type of leadership that is permissive in a given circumstance.
- The Government should appoint principals with wide range of experience that can handle the leadership of schools
- Government agencies such as Ministry of Education, Post Primary Schools' Board or the Universal Basic Education (UBE) should not interfere in all school matters as a way of destroying the initiatives of the principal as leader.

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