

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS IN THE PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF PLATEAU STATE

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The study examined the principals' leadership behaviours in the public senior secondary schools in Barkinladi and Langtang North Local Government Areas of Plateau State. The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey design. The sample consisted of 31 principals and 137 teachers out of the population of 39 principals and 229 teachers respectively, of the public senior secondary schools of the two LGAs. The Principals' Leadership Styles Description Questionnaire (PLSDQ), was used to gather data for the study. The statistical technique used for analysing the data was the mean. One research question was answered in the study. Results confirmed that teachers perceived principals to be more democratic in decision-making, communication, delegation, motivation, provision of resources and were both democratic and laissez-faire in interpersonal relationship. In addition, teachers perceived their principals to be autocratic in supervision in their leadership behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary school principals are faced with challenges in their leadership approaches due to the complexity of the contemporary educational system that requires skilful individuals to effectively manage schools. School leadership is concerned with stimulating and influencing staffs and students by persuading and harnessing their efforts to willingly cooperate towards the achievement of the organization's set goals. These involve providing coherence to the school instructional goals, setting high academic standards, staying informed of policies and teachers problems, providing resources, making frequent classroom visitation, creating incentives and using adequate motivating strategies to ensure higher outcome (Varaki, 2003). These leadership behaviours are essential for boosting teachers' morale in schools.

Principals are blamed for the performance of their duties and failure to exhibit appropriate leadership behaviours to solve some perennial problems besieging secondary school education (Oluremi, 2008). In the same vein, Madugu (2009) observed that oftentimes principals seem too busy with all the day-to-day responsibilities of running their schools that they do not have enough time to practice instructional leadership that can boost teachers' morale. Tella, Ayeni and Popoola, (2007) observed that high proportions of principals in secondary schools in Nigeria are highhanded and autocratic in their dealing with teachers. This frustrates teachers because teachers dislike being admonished. Teachers of autocratic leader are disenfranchised with no self worth. In addition, principals seem to practice poor communication network that often prevents

teachers from understanding issues concerning the school and what affects their personal interest. Principals hardly involve teachers in the decision-making process and delegations of responsibilities are done with favouritism (Adams, 2008). In such circumstances, teachers cannot take and implement quality decisions by themselves and their morale will tend to be lower than expected. Also principals are not concerned about teachers' welfare and so provide no incentives to motivate them. In most cases, principals are authoritative and seem not to go round classes for supervision and inspection. Curricula are not well interpreted by teachers due to lack of principals' guidance and support. As a result, teachers feel demoralized and interpersonal relationship between the principals and teachers became unfriendly leading to poor rapport among members (Danladi, 2003). Moreover, many principals fail to provide teaching aids for teaching in schools. This may lead to lack of job satisfaction and low morale on the part of teachers.

Bentley and Rempel defined staff morale as "the professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays towards the achievement of individual and group goals in a job situation" (1980, p. 2). Teachers' feelings about the job situations meeting their needs and expectations will determine their morale level. High morale is associated with satisfaction of needs where teachers appear happy, comfortable with positive attitudes to work. Low morale is associated with teacher dissatisfaction of needs where teachers appear difficult, unfriendly, unhappy at work, uncooperative with the authority and appear hostile and aggressive. These kinds of behaviours can be characterised by low productivity, confrontational attitude and conflicts in the schools (Rowland, 2008). Personal experiences have shown that most teachers seem not to be comfortable with the principals' leadership behaviours. This is reflected in teachers' nonchalant attitude to their work. It is common to find teachers absenting from work with flimsy excuses. The principals owe it a duty to modify the attitude of teachers in order to put in their best for the schools' achievement of goals.

Hansson and Andersen (2003) conducted a study to determine its importance in the Swedish schools. They adopted the survey research design and used questionnaire to gather data for the study. A sample of 200 principals out of 8,000 principals' was used for the study. Results showed that 49% of the principals had a change centred leadership styles, 38% were primarily intuitive when making decisions and 44% were achievement motivated. The leadership style that best fulfils the requirements on the Swedish principal of school improvement and teacher enhancement is the change-centered style. Teachers reported greater satisfaction in their work when the head shares information and keeps open channels of communication with the teachers. On the other hand, intuitive decision-making style principals were more likely than other managers to be able to make decisions in times of change. The dominant motivation profile is the achievement motivation. This means the principals' motivation is important in achieving results: Power motivation (the will to influence others and work through others) to achieve goals appear to be the most effective profile but teachers felt frustrated and preferred achievement motivation.

The study derived its strength from the use of survey design and questionnaire to gather data. This study will support the present study in terms of establishing leadership behaviours; decision-making and motivation skills in principals' leadership practice. However, findings on leadership behaviours in Plateau State (in developing country

Nigeria) might differ from the one conducted in the developed country due to the difference in schools and conditions of service that might influence the leadership behaviours of the principals. In addition, the present study will use methodological triangulation in conducting the study which will serve as a means to strengthen the findings of the previous study where triangulation was not used.

Ajobiewe (2008) asserted that one way principals can stimulate motivation is to give relevant information, involve teachers in decision-making, delegate responsibility and create good interpersonal relationships within members. Any breakdown of communication can lead to misunderstanding, confusion and frustration among teachers. Teachers prefer warmth, empathy and open face-to-face communication where they can interact and express their feelings (William, 2006). Similarly, Babayemi (2006) noted that principals who celebrate teachers' achievement even with just a simple thank you, a pat, or recognition in the mist of colleagues get a great deal of teacher motivation. In addition, Dogra (2010) maintain that to improve morale involves making people feel valued for their contributions, being there to listen to them and making sure that they get the support they need to do their work, and delegation of responsibilities bring staff closer to the authority and may ultimately boost their morale.

It is likely that the principals operate either the autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire leadership behaviours that resulted to different atmospheres in the senior secondary schools where in some schools teachers tend to be relaxed and are confident in their work. Others are seen to be unfriendly with their students roaming about aimlessly with less control. The autocratic leader does not involve teachers in decision making and demoralises teachers effort while the democratic leader often carry teachers along with cordial relationship which could boost the morale of teachers and improve students' performance. The laissez-faire leader is carefree and stands a figure head, can breed anarchy and chaos in the work place (Adepoju, 2008). However, it takes a combination of different leadership behaviours to effectively operate effective leadership in school whereby different situations demand certain behaviours to effectively manage (Randolph-Robinson, 2007). Principals' leadership has been affected by their inability to be innovative and resourceful, to clarify goals and positively influence their teachers. They tend to be authoritative and careless over the schools affairs. It is against this background that this study will examine principals' leadership behaviours in Barkinladi and Langtang North LGAs of Plateau State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Personal experiences have shown that the school heads in senior secondary schools are blamed for ineffective leadership behaviours that contributed to teachers' low morale in Plateau State. It is observed that they hardly make effort to motivate their teachers and prefer to take decisions without involving the teachers. The principals' leadership problems are noticed in their refusal or inability to effectively influence teachers for hard work and greater commitment. Teachers' morale appears to be low as they are found exhibiting truancy, lateness to work, absenteeism, and lack of zeal to the teaching job. This allegation against them seems to be upheld because principals are the driving force of the schools and stand accountable for the outcome of their schools.

to PLSDQ using a 5-point Likert Scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The scores were rated at the mean of from 1 to 5. A mean from 1 to 2 was considered low, 3 was average and from 4 to 5 was considered high score.

PROCEDURES

The face-to-face method of data collection was used to gather the data. This was to ensure effective data capturing for the study. This facilitated 100% return of the questionnaires.

RESULTS

The research question asked, what is the perception of teachers of the leadership behaviours of their principals in senior secondary schools? The mean scores for teachers' perception of principals leadership behaviours in each of the seven domains are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Perception of Their Principals' Leadership Behaviours.

S/N	Leadership Behaviours	Leadership Style		
		Autocratic Mean	Democratic Mean	Laissez-faire Mean
1	Decision-making	2.63	2.95	2.76
2	Communication	2.99	3.23	2.16
3	Supervision	3.20	2.70	2.51
4	Motivation	2.81	3.00	2.54
5	Interpersonal relations	2.70	3.03	3.05
6	Delegation	2.78	3.19	3.02
7	Provision of resources	2.31	2.60	2.37

Table 1 shows that for autocratic leadership style teachers perceived their principals to be more autocratic in supervision with the mean of 3.20, for democratic leadership style teachers perceived their principals to be more democratic in communication with the mean of 3.23 and for laissez-faire leadership style teachers perceived their principals to be more laissez-faire in interpersonal relationship with the mean of 3.05. From the findings, principals were more democratic in communication with the highest mean at average level. The result signified that the teachers perceived their principals to be more democratic in their leadership behaviours and tend to be autocratic in supervision and laissez-faire in interpersonal relationships. Result is presented graphically in bar chart Figure 1.

Also, the Plateau State government declared a state of emergency in the educational sector in 2007 high rate of failure in schools. The blame was shifted to the heads of schools and teachers for being ineffective in their duty posts. Principals are always away from school without adequate delegation of authority, and whenever in school, they appear authoritative with one-way communication and no effort to provide or improvise teaching aids for effective teaching (Danladi, 2003). In such circumstances, teachers could be demoralized and become ineffective in the teaching process. This calls for an empirical search to determine the principals' leadership behaviours in the senior secondary schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the principals' leadership behaviours in Barkinladi and Langtang North Local Government Areas (LGA's) of Plateau State. The specific objective is to:

- i. Determine the perception of teachers on the leadership behaviours of their principals in senior secondary schools.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the leadership behaviours of their principals in senior secondary schools?

METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted the descriptive design. Data was gathered from a portion of the population and served as a representative of the entire population. This was used to describe teachers' perception of their principals' leadership behaviours.

PARTICIPANTS

The population of the study comprised of 39 principals and 229 teachers of the public senior secondary schools of Barkinladi and Langtang North LGAs of Plateau State. These consist of principals and teachers who have worked for at least three years together. The rationale for this choice of population is to ensure that the principals and teachers have enough time to get acquainted with each other in order to express feelings about the principals' leadership behaviours. The sample consisted of 31 (80%) principals and 137 (60%) teachers selected out of the population of the study.

The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique for selection of the sample. The consideration for the use of multi-stage sampling technique is to obtain a good representative sample for the study. At the first stage, schools were selected using the simple random sampling technique without replacement, the principals of the schools selected automatically became the sample principal since only one principal heads a school at a time. The second stage involved stratifying teachers according to schools and teachers were selected proportionately using the simple random sampling technique.

INSTRUMENT

The instrument used for data gathering was the Principals' Leadership Style Description Questionnaire (PLSDQ) which comprised of 30 items. This was adapted and modified from leadership survey questionnaire constructed by Clark (2004). Teachers responded

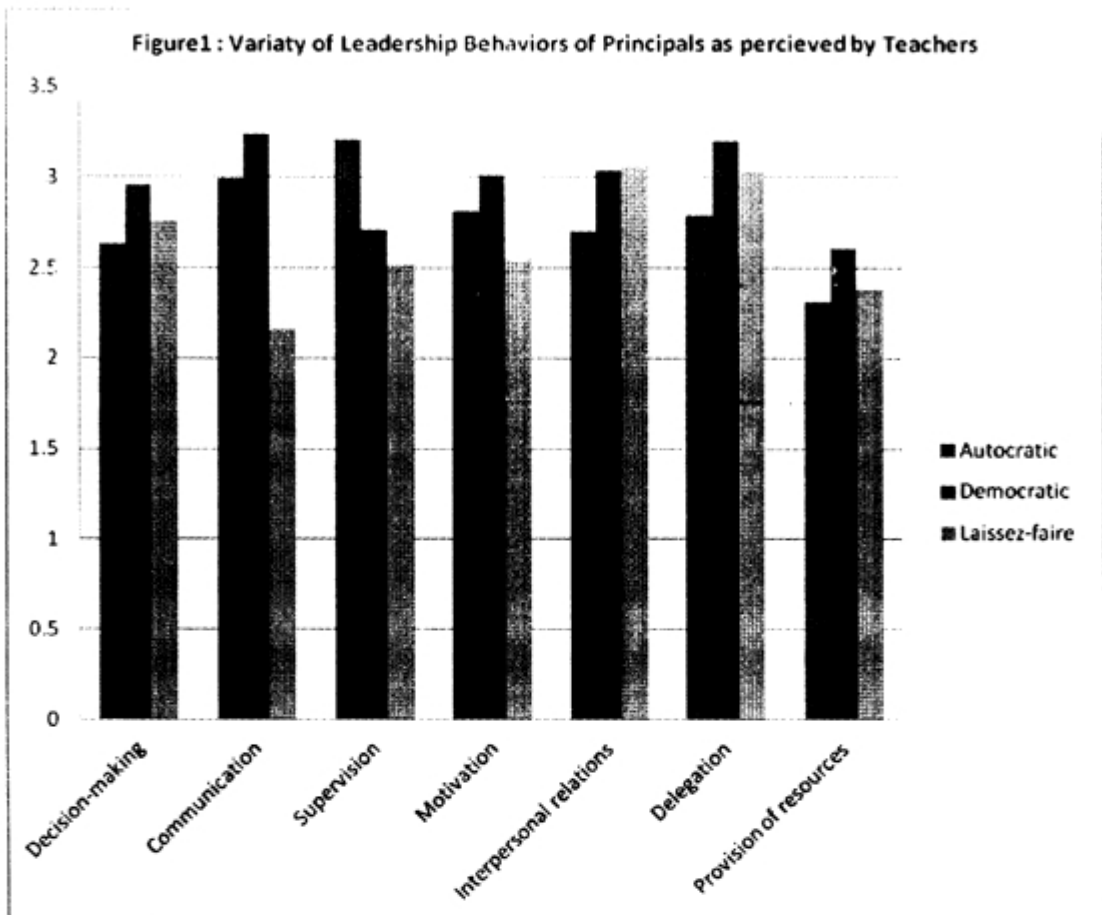


Figure 1. Leadership Behaviours used by Principals of Senior Secondary Schools as perceived by their Teachers

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that most principals were more democratic in their leadership behaviours. Result confirms that teachers perceived their principals to be democratic in decision-making, communication, motivation, delegation and provision of resources. This finding is inconsistent with the idea of Tella, Ayeni and Popoola, (2007) who observed that high proportions of principals in the secondary schools in Nigeria are highhanded and autocratic in their dealing with teachers. Similarly, Adams (2008) maintained that principals hardly involve teachers in their decision-making process and delegations of responsibilities are done with favouritism. However, teachers perceived their principals to practice mostly the democratic behaviours in their leadership process. Democratic behaviours comprised of involving teachers in decision making, creating opportunities for teachers to be creative and ensuring that responsibilities are delegated appropriately. Communication becomes bi-directional where teachers can obtain and transact information freely in the school. In addition, a democratic leader provides incentives to teachers and takes care of their welfare services to ensure teachers are motivated for effective and efficient performance towards achievement of school goals. The implication of this finding is that teachers will derive some satisfaction in the job to higher commitment. Teachers' morale will tend to be higher leading to high productivity. This is supported with findings by Hansson and Andersen (2003) that teachers reported

greater satisfaction in their work when the head shares information and keeps open channels of communication with the teachers.

Further findings revealed that teachers perceived their principals to be both democratic and laissez-faire in interpersonal relationship in their leadership behaviours. These findings disagree with the views of Danladi (2003) that principals are authoritative and seem not to go round classes for supervision and inspection, curriculum are not well interpreted by teachers due to lack of principals' guidance and support. However, the laissez-faire behaviour of principals in interpersonal relationship will be detrimental to human relations in the work place which serves as an essential aspect of influencing subordinates in organisation. Cordial interpersonal relationship between the principal and teachers can help teachers have confidence and enthusiasm in their work. When the leader is careless over effective interaction teachers may not have a sense of direction to what they are expected to do. The implication of this finding is that teachers can become frustrated with their work and morale may dampen. Teachers can become resentful when they feel that their leader creates poor relationship with them.

In addition, teachers perceived their principals to be autocratic in supervision which means that the principals supervise strictly and tend to ensure achievement of goals. The implication of this finding is that perhaps, teachers could be frustrated and demoralised with the principals' supervisory behaviour and commitment to work may only be effective when the leader is watching. This kind of behaviour can be characterised by low productivity, confrontational attitude and conflicts in the schools (Rowland, 2008). Furthermore, findings signified that although the principals are more democratic in their leadership behaviours, they tend to exhibit and practice some characteristics behaviour of the autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles in some instances. The magnitude of variations between leadership behaviours used by the principals signifies that no one leadership style is used by a leader for all situations. Perhaps, what is prevailing is that a particular leadership style dominates the others in leadership process. This finding is compatible with findings by Randolph-Robinson (2007) that it takes a combination of different leadership behaviours to effectively operate leadership style. This implies that to obtain a particular leadership style, a leader must have to exhibit a collection of leadership behaviours including decision-making, communication, supervision, motivation, interpersonal relations, delegation and provision of resources. Effective leadership requires that the leader should operate a style of behaviour depending on situation to which it is favourable for effectiveness in school.

CONCLUSION

Principals' leadership behaviours are determinant factors for stimulating and influencing teachers in school for better performance. The way the teachers perceived their principals will determine their rate of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the work place. The behaviour of principal at work will depict the pattern of relationship between members and will determine how redundant, frustrated, demoralized, bored and relaxed the staff may be for effective and efficient job performance. Principals are expected to exhibit more of the democratic leadership behaviours and use the autocratic and laissez-faire at the appropriate moments to boost teachers' morale for effective teaching in schools. Teachers' motivation should be seen as an influencing agent that can induce teachers' job satisfaction. This can only be possible when the leader is capable of

mobilising the effort of members to have the enthusiasm that can facilitate achievement of goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School leadership requires skilful individuals who are capable and willing to devote time, talent and the leadership behaviours appropriate for managing the scarce resources available for effective teaching and learning in schools. Based on the findings in this study there is need for government to develop;

i. Special programmes on leadership strategies for principals and graduates who are aspiring principals for update of knowledge to ensure effective leadership behaviours in schools.

ii. To ensure principals' effective leadership behaviours, prompt and effective monitoring and evaluation should be carried out to detect the faults in leadership behaviours and ensure proper remedies through conferences, seminars and workshops, and to improve on the strengths identified. It is worth noting that the principal who innovates and initiates positive changes at all times and sensitively evaluates the subordinates' feelings towards the school and even the requirements of immediate community may experience a better performance in the school.

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