

PRINCIPALS’ LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This study examined Principals’ Leadership Capacities as perceived by teachers in secondary schools in Ekiti state. A total of 250 teachers were sampled from Public secondary schools in Ekiti state, using multi-stage, and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using self-constructed questionnaire. Three research questions were raised and answered. Research questions were subjected to descriptive analysis using mean rating and standard deviation. The study identified ten dimensions of principals’ leadership capacities as : school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum leadership, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time and resourcefulness. The finding also showed that the teachers had positive perception of their principals’ leadership capacities. It further revealed that strong leadership capacities were identified in collaboration, motivation, delegation and executive behaviour. It was recommended that the principals should develop their leadership capacities generally on school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum leadership, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time, and resourcefulness. Furthermore the school principals required more strengths of leadership capacities in: school vision, capacity building, curriculum leadership, school discipline, managing time, and resourcefulness, due to moderate strength identified in these leadership variables and dimensions.

Keywords: Leadership capacities, Principals, dimensions of leadership capacities. Strength of capacities

1.Introduction

School leadership desires greater attention in the this age of globalization. Globalization which is a manifestation of high traffic of people, ideas, and information across the world, desires leaders that could meet the challenges of this age. The capacity of school leaders to wield immense influence in both professional and administrative functions go a long way in accomplishment of the goal of the school organization. The societal expectation seems higher on the leadership performance, furthermore, the level of exposure and education of teachers have posed more challenge in this age of technology. Leadership has been described as the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Definitions more inclusive of followers have also emerged. Alan Keith stated that, "Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen." According to Ken "SKC" Ogbonnia, "effective leadership is the ability to successfully integrate and maximize available resources within the internal and external environment for the attainment of organizational or societal goals." Definition of leadership needs to change for a knowledge driven world that is no longer rigidly hierarchical, stable or static but one that is fluid, fast changing and less formally structured. But in this knowledge driven world, business is a war of ideas where the power to innovate and promote new products is the new basis of leadership. This is in tune with Richard Florida's book, "The Rise of the Creative Class" which argues that more and more work requires creative thinking. This is the power on which leadership will be based in the future.

Leadership capacities is the ability and manifestation of competence of leaders in discharge of his duties and skillful performance of his functions in accomplishment of school objectives. According to Lambert (2000) leadership capacity is defined as the broad-based, skillful participating in the work of leadership that leads to lasting school improvement. Leadership capacities arise from the extent of manager's personal life, which include self-awareness and self-management (Integral City Managers n.d). Leadership competence in the professional arena is developed as the leader becomes able to lead progressively, more responsibilities, larger accountabilities, more people, more complex situation, and more complex organizations. Managers can seek mentorship and or coaching from senior; study through professional association training; and invest in individual self-development (Integral City Managers n.d).

Leadership in concept and practice has received the attention of researchers across ages. Empirical researches have delved much on leadership styles, functions, types of

leadership and theories of leadership among others. Further more literature has focused on leadership in various dimensions however not much attention has been paid to the dimensions and strength of leadership capacities. Identification of dimensions of strength of leadership capacities in discharging their duties with the purpose of encouraging better performance, meeting the challenges of the job, getting along with world trend, and subsequently the success of the school organization, desire school organization attention.

School system's accomplishment of its goal seems to be dwindling over the years, based on observations of students' poor performance, students' poor attitude to learning, and general apathy of teachers to their work. It appears the roles of school leaders are becoming more cumbersome with the introduction of the new technology, inadequate resources available for the job at hand, and the need for curriculum innovation to meet the global trend. However, the school leadership seems to be saddled with more roles and assignments to meet the challenges ahead.

This study therefore was to examine leadership capacities focusing on certain salient dimensions. Such as: school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum innovation, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time and, resourcefulness .Further more the study was not only restricted to identifying the leadership capacities but also to examine the strength of principals' leadership capacities.

2.Literature review

The review of related literature paid attention on various variables identified as dimensions of leadership capacities linking them with leadership, and the extent to which they could be ready tools in the hand of skillful leaders and school administrators. The review therefore focused on the following variables: school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum leadership, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time and resourcefulness.

Leadership that is effective always begins with a clear vision. It has been said, where there is no vision, the people will perish. The stakes in schools are too high to lead without a clear and compelling vision (Marcy Paulson 2008). Seeley (1992) describes vision as a "goal-oriented mental construct that guides people's behavior." For educational leaders who implement change in their school or district, vision is "a hunger to see improvement" (Pejza, 1985). Vision has been described by Manasse (1986) as "the force which holds meaning for the people of an organization." It is a force that provides meaning and purpose to the work of an organization. Vision is a compelling picture of the future that inspires commitment. Vision

encourages people to work, to strive for its attainment. Vision provides guidance to an organization by articulating what it wishes to attain. It serves as "a signpost pointing the way for all who need to understand what the organization is and where it intends to go" (Nanus, 1992), (Vision, Leadership, and Change 1993).

Leadership behavior is perceived by Akomolafe (2002) as the observable actions of leaders in the performance of their job. Reddin (1970) in his classification of leadership, identified executive behavior of a leadership, as a leader who exhibits integrated style appropriately, showing high concern for welfare of staff and the task of the organization. Executive behaviour is a reflection of a real manager. The leader who manifests this type of behaviour sets high standard and knows how to motivate staff to achieve a desired goal. He prefers to work with people as a team, and cherishes high decisional participation. He ensures workers' commitment to organisation task through an atmosphere of respect and trust.

Buchanam(2008) identified delegation as an administrators' tool to accomplish organisation's goal. According to him, delegation involves entrusting another person with a task for which the delegate remains ultimately responsible. Delegation is the administrator's key to efficiency, and it benefits all. To create more time for an administrator, more routine work must be handed down by delegation. Also the more frequently a leader delegates the more experienced staff becomes. They feel motivated and more confident (Akomolafe, 2004.)

Capacity building is defined as the "process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world." (Ann Philbin 1996), The education manager's main task for which skills is needed is to help his teachers develop their skills (Akomolafe,2004). The principal has an obligation to seek and provide opportunities for his teachers to grow professionally, for as they make this growth, they make a greater contribution to education itself. According to Fafunwa & Aderalegbe (1974), Team building and delegation have been perceived as important methods to use in developing teacher. Delegation enables the principal to express faith in teaching, increases motivation and staff loyalty, and promote staff development (Phelan 1986).

Collaboration is the vehicle for sharing responsibility and combining knowledge, creativity, and experience of others. Leaders who believe in the power of collaboration can produce extraordinary results, while maintaining a healthy team environment. According to Hank Rubin (n.d) "A collaboration is a purposeful relationship in which all parties strategically choose to cooperate in order to accomplish a shared outcome."(collaborative leadership). Even with the best and most skilful managers, organizations must be able to tap

into the varied skills and wider perspectives of other employees. So it is essential that leaders know how to collaborate and develop effective partnerships with others. It is one of the elements that make a manager a true leader. Fundamentally, collaboration starts with the leader because they must be willing to share some aspects of their control. Andrew Carnegie said: "No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit for doing it. "One of the most important things a leader needs to be able to do to collaborate with his/her team members is to create a culture where members value and listen to alternative views and seek the means to achieve objectives. A leader can also foster collaboration by encouraging active involvement and the free exchange of information. The leader, also must set the tone by keeping an open mind to different ideas. Furthermore, when the team members engage in collaborative activities, it is essential for the leader to validate and reinforce the collaboration in order to sustain the behavior.(An Important Leadership Development Skill n.d).

Motivation is a goal-oriented characteristic that helps a person achieve his objectives. It pushes an individual to work hard at achieving his or her goals. An executive must have the right leadership traits to influence motivation. However, there is no specific blueprint for motivation. As a leader, one should keep an open perspective on human nature. Knowing different needs of subordinates will certainly make the decision-making process easier. An effective leader must have a thorough knowledge of motivational factors for others. He must understand the basic needs of employees, peers and his superiors. Leadership is used as a means of motivating others.(Leadership and Motivation n.d).

The principal plays an important leadership role in establishing school discipline, both by effective administration and by personal example. Principals of well-disciplined students are usually highly visible models. Effective principals are liked and respected, rather than feared, and communicate caring for students as well as willingness to impose punishment if necessary (NAESP 1983). Duckworth (1984) found that teachers' satisfaction with school discipline policy was related to their relationship with the principal. Good communication and shared values are important elements in this relationship. Ideally, a principal should be able to create consensus among staff on rules and their enforcement. (NAESP1983). (School discipline. ERIC Digest,).

Effective curriculum leader knows that the quality of teaching, in particular, is a significant influence on student learning and makes the most difference to educationally disadvantaged students (Marzano,. Waters and McNulty 2005). The P-12 Curriculum Framework defines curriculum as "...all the planned learning offered and enacted by a school,

dynamic and encompasses: the learning environment; resources; teaching approaches and strategies; assessment programmes and methods; the values and ethos of the school; and the relationships and behaviours among students and teachers (Curriculum Leadership n.d) A strong school leadership team is explicit about their expectations for high-quality teaching . In promoting an on-going commitment to improved practice, leaders need to develop a clear and shared vision of what this would ‘look like’ (i.e. what they would expect to see in practice in classrooms) and what teachers, students and school administrators will do differently in order to make the vision a reality. There is significant body of research that testifies to the role of the school principal in making substantial improvements to student outcomes in regard to teaching and learning in classrooms. This research points to the fact that principals need to have an in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning, curriculum, assessment and student achievement.(Hargreaves ,Earl and Manning 2001).

Studies carried as related to leadership capacities were also reviewed. Sailesh Sharma(2010) showed that the teachers perceived their principals as having moderate capacity to strong capacity. No principal was considered as having no capacity, somewhat capacity or excellent capacity.. The results of Sailesh Sharma(2010) further revealed that the teachers’ perception of their principals’ leadership capacities was positive. The result of a study conducted by Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) in America revealed that 67% of the principals were rated as ineffective principals by their teachers. Sailesh Sharma’s (2010) findings totally contradicted the researches carried out in Hongkong (Lee, Walker, and Bodycott,2000), in China (Luo and Najjar, 2007) and in Nigeria (Arikewuyo, 2007). Sailesh Sharma (2010) revealed that Internal leadership capacities which contained the leadership in the areas of vision, school culture, instruction, school organization and learning resources, received a rating between having moderate to strong leadership capacities. External leadership capacities which included collaborative partnership, moral perspective and larger-context politics, received a rating between having moderate to strong capacity.

3. Research questions

The following research questions were raised for this study

1. What is the teachers’ perception of their principals’ leadership capacities?
2. What are the dimensions of leadership capacities as identified by teachers?
3. What is the strength of the principals’ leadership capacities?

4.Methods

The study was a descriptive research of survey type. The information was obtained from a sample of the population, which enable the prevailing situation to be described. The subjects used for this study consisted of teachers in public secondary school in Ekiti state. Ten secondary schools were sampled from ten local government area of the state. Twenty five teachers were sampled from each school, making a total of 250 teachers as the total sampled.

A self-constructed questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire was titled “Dimensions of Leadership Capacities of Principals” (DLCP). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A sought information from personal data of the respondents. Section B contained items on dimensions of leadership capacities, all weighted on a 5-point likert scale.

The data collected were analysed using means and standard deviations for the research questions. The decision of strength on each dimension was based on mean rating of each item. The mean score obtainable on each item was 4.00. The mean rating of zero was no capacity, mean rating of up 1.00 was poor capacity, mean rating of 2.00 was moderate capacity, mean rating of 3.00 was strong capacity and mean rating of 4.00 was Excellent Capacity. The perception on each dimension was based on mean rating of each item. The mean rating of zero is negative, mean rating of 1.00 up to 4.00 was positive.

5.Data Analysis and results

Table : Mean and Standard Deviation of ten Dimensions of Leadership Capacities.

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	SD	Strength	Perception
1.	School vision	250	2.80	1.43	Moderate	Positive
2.	Capacity building	250	2.54	0.87	Moderate	Positive
3.	Collaboration	250	3.54	1.00	Strong	Positive
4.	Motivation	250	3.00	1.15	Strong	Positive
5.	Curriculum leadership	250	2.42	1.00	Moderate	Positive
6.	School discipline	250	2.90	0.82	Moderate	Positive
7.	Delegation	250	3.55	2.44	Strong	Positive
8.	Executive behaviour	250	3.35	1.82	Strong	Positive
9.	Managing time	250	2.90	0.82	Moderate	Positive
10.	Resourcefulness	250	2.70	0.107	Moderate	Positive

5.1. Research question one: What is the teachers' perception of their principals' leadership capacities?

Based on the results shown on the table, the teachers have positive perception of their principals' leadership capacities.

5.2. Research question two: What are the dimensions of leadership capacities as identified by teachers.

The table revealed the responses of teachers to the ten dimensions of principals' leadership capacities. Based on their responses to all the ten dimensions : school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum leadership, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time and resourcefulness, were identified as leadership capacities of school principals.

5.3. Research question three: What is the strength of the principals' leadership capacities?

Based on the result from the table , moderate leadership capacities of principals were identified in school vision, capacity building, curriculum leadership, school discipline, managing time and resourcefulness. Strong leadership capacities were identified in collaboration, motivation, delegation and executive behaviour.

6. Discussion:

The finding of this study indicated that the teachers have positive perception of their principals' leadership capacities. This finding corroborated that of Sailesh Sharma(2010) which revealed that the teachers' perception of their principals' leadership capacities was positive. This finding therefore established that teachers perceived their principals as leaders that possess high and good vision for their schools and invariably high expectations.

This study revealed the ten dimensions of principals' leadership capacities as perceived by teachers. The dimensions of principals' leadership capacities identified include: school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum leadership, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time and resourcefulness, were identified as leadership capacities of school principals. The result of this study is similar to that of Sailesh Sharma (2010) who revealed that internal leadership capacities which contained the leadership in the areas of vision, school culture, instruction, school organization and learning resources, received a rating between having moderate to strong leadership capacities. External leadership capacities which included collaborative partnership, moral

perspective and larger-context politics, received a rating between having moderate to strong capacity. The teachers are in the best position to identify the capacity of their principals in the various dimension because of the close working relationship. The manifestation of the capacities of leaders in their administrative and professional duties of school principals, measures to a greater extent their level of success on their job.

This study also showed that the strength of the principals' leadership capacities were identified as moderate in school vision, capacity building, curriculum leadership, school discipline, managing time and resourcefulness. Moderate vision of principal in school vision as revealed by this study seems inadequate because of its importance in achieving school objectives. Vision as the force which holds meaning for the people of an organization, provides meaning and purpose to the work of an organization, and furthermore, a compelling picture of the future that inspires commitment; principal as a visionary leader, encourages people to work, and provides guidance to an organization by articulating what it wishes to attain.

The study further came out with the finding that strong leadership capacities were identified in collaboration, motivation, delegation and executive behaviour. The leaders could not afford to ignore collaboration because sharing of views and ideas enhances information dissemination, and subsequently meaningful staff participation. Delegation has been the tool in the hands of skilful administrators, based on the finding of Akomolafe (2006) that the principals were able to manifest abilities for effective delegation which include; trusting people, loyalty to staff, administrators and organization. Akomolafe (2006) also came out with the finding that the principals perceived delegation as purposely to enable the principal focus on area of priority, strategy to avoid waste of time on menial job and to reduce the workload. The capacities to carry members of school organization along in these identified dimensions, is a manifestation of leaders readiness to catch up with the knowledge explosion in various fields, and further more to meet up with challenges of globalization.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The ability and competence of leaders to manifest his skillfulness and managerial strategies, in running the affairs of organization, is desirable and of utmost importance in meeting the challenges of school organizations today. The identified dimensions of leadership capacities are important to build and develop the school system to meet the need and aspiration the society in this age of new technology. The leadership vision, gives direction to the school organization, and furthermore capacity building, motivation, and leaders'

behaviour enhance teachers' performance. The principals should develop their leadership capacities generally on school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum leadership, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time, and resourcefulness. Furthermore the school principals required more strengths of leadership capacities in: school vision, capacity building, curriculum leadership, school discipline, managing time, and resourcefulness, due to moderate strength identified in these leadership variables and dimensions.

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