

**LEADERSHIP AS A CRITICAL RESPONSIBILITY THAT REQUIRES EFFECTIVE
ATTENTION ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STANDARD IN ENUGU
EDUCATION ZONE OF ENUGU STATE****Dr. Mariagoretti Ijeoma Obiakor**

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mi.obiakor@unizik.edu.ng**Abstract**

The study was on Leadership as a critical responsibility that requires effective attention on the improvement of educational standard in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The main purpose of this study was to study was to explore leadership as a tool for improvement of educational standard in Enugu Education Zone. Design of the study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The population of the study comprises of the principals and teacher of Secondary Schools in Enugu Education Zone. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire of Fifty (50) teachers and students who were randomly selected from five (5) secondary schools. The instrument was face validated. Test retest was used for the reliability of the study. From the findings of the study it was concluded that Democratic leadership style is the least used leadership style by principals. In this style, there is high consultation before making decisions. Giving teachers autonomy in decision making about improving academic performance was less used. Teachers were in agreement with the principals on consultation before making decisions. It was also recommended that the directorate of quality assurance standards and Federal Ministry of Education can use the findings to formulate training programmes for principals of the public secondary schools. These programmes should be focused to use of transformational, democratic and transactional leadership styles to improve standard of education through principal leadership.

Introduction

Education can be rated as an ideal approach for the development of the society. The principle institutional mechanism for developing human capital is the formal education system of primary, secondary, and tertiary training (Nsubuga, 2013). Since education is an investment, there is a significant positive correlation between education and economic-social productivity. The role of education therefore, is not just to impart knowledge and skills that enable the beneficiaries to function as economies and social change agents in society, but also to impart values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations for overall development. Effective leadership in organizations has been widely noted as a

factor that will make a difference between achievers and non achievers in institutional objectives (Luthans, 2012). In many ways, the principal is the most important and influential individual in the school. It is the principal's leadership style, communication skills and decision making that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching/ learning process and the morale of teachers (Dean, 2015). The leadership styles associated with educational administration are: autocratic leadership style, the democratic leadership style, the laissez faire leadership style and charismatic leadership style (Mbiti, 2007).

Thus, leadership incorporates the accomplishment of a task, which is an

organizational requirement and the satisfaction of employees, which is the human resource requirement (Okumbe, 1998). Maicibi (2015) contends that, without a proper leadership style, effective performance cannot be realized in schools. Even if the school has all the required instructional materials and financial resources, it will not be able to use them effectively, if the students are not directed in their use, or if the teachers who guide in their usage are not properly trained to implement them effectively. Armstrong (2004) defines leadership as influence, power and the legitimate authority acquired by a leader to be able to effectively transform the organization through the direction of the human resources that are the most important organizational assets, leading to the achievement of desired purpose. This can be done through the articulation of the vision and mission of the organization at every moment, and influence the staff to define their power to share this vision. This is also described by Sashkin (2013) cited in Hartog, Muijen&Koopman (2007) as visionary leadership. However, according to them, the concept of leadership that matters is not being limited to those at the top of the organization such as the chief executive officer or principal, but depends on certain characteristics and personality and ability to mutate followers of the leader.

Statement of the Problem

When consideration is given to the demands made on educators today, school climate and counselor morale become serious issues that must be addressed by school leaders. One of the jobs of the school leader is to create a school climate where the classroom teachers can feel safe and confident to perform their jobs. The factors that contribute to poor quality education and care for children are many and varied. It is generally not one

particular aspect of the service that results in poor quality, but a combination of factors that have a negative effect on children's learning. Factors such as leadership, vision and professional learning and development that contribute to high quality in some services are lacking or ineffective in poor quality services. Rigidly implemented routines, poorly resourced or unsafe learning environments and inappropriate teaching practice are also factors in poor quality education and care.

In many services where quality is poor, there is little sense or understanding by managers and/or educators of what high quality looks like. Managers and educators lack the capability to change practice, often believing that their service is operating well, and are unaware of issues or risks to children. Poor quality practice is often entrenched and a lack of willingness or motivation to change prevails.

Ineffective leadership can result from lack of experience. Some leaders, although technically qualified, take on the role too early in their careers or are without the necessary support to do the job well. Some people in leadership roles are not well informed about what constitutes effective practice. Often they do not seek or have access to opportunities to engage in relevant professional learning and development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore leadership as a tool for improvement of educational standard in Enugu Education Zone. The study was guided by the following i. To establish the extent to which transformational leadership styles influence teacher's performance in Enugu Education Zone.

- ii. To determine the extent to which democratic leadership styles

Influence improves educational standard in Enugu Education Zone

- iii. To establish the influence of transactional leadership style on improvement of education in Enugu Education Zone

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions;

- i. To what extent does transformational leadership styles influence teacher's performance in Enugu Education Zone?
- ii. To what extent does democratic leadership styles influence improves educational standard in Enugu Education Zone?
- iii. Does transactional leadership style help the improvement of education in Enugu Education Zone?

Review of Literature

Concept of Leadership

Leadership clearly does not mean what it used to mean, especially in regards to educational leadership. Mahatma Gandhi said, "I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people." Definitions of leadership are as varied as the people who give them. Every governmental, business, and educational organization has their own definition and their own list of qualities that define excellent leadership. The literature on leadership is numerous and diverse. Definitions of leadership are plentiful, and theories on leadership are being constantly developed and refined. Perhaps a universally accepted definition of leadership will never be developed, but that does not stop authors from striving for a concise definition and understanding of leadership. For example,

according to Davis (2013), the term "leadership" implies "movement, taking the organization or some part of it in a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programs, building organizational structures, and improving quality". Researchers struggle with the definition of leadership because it is a multifaceted and complex concept. Bass and Stodgily (2010) found that more than 3,000 studies provided definitions of leadership. In spite of the number of definitions of leadership and the lack of precision regarding what defines a leader, Birnbaum (2012) made this assertion: "Any comprehensive consideration of academic leadership must be able to accommodate both the strong leader and the weak leader views, because evidence suggests that while both may be incomplete, both are in some measure correct".

In the past, scholars interested in leadership, leaders, or leadership theories were most concerned with the peripheries of leadership, such as traits, personality characteristics, and whether leaders are born or made (Roost, 2011). Discussion of leadership focused on the idea of the greatness of particular leaders and how they have impacted the societies in which they lived (Heifetz, 2014). Roost (2011) noted that modern leadership scholars are most "aimed at understanding the essential nature of what leadership is, and the processes whereby leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve a purpose". This is also the context in which leadership will be examined in this study.

A Brief History of Leadership

The importance of leadership has been understood throughout written history. Sanskrit literature, developed as many as 7,000 years ago, identified ten types of leaders (Sanskrit Textbook). Confucianistic beliefs on right living portray an aspect of leadership in how it depicts the scholar-

leader and his benevolent rule (Pockell, 2007). They believed that leadership was a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and discipline (Pockell, 2007). Throughout history, men have asserted their leadership in different ways, but primarily through authoritarian means and use of force (Roberts, 2007). In the 19th century, the propensity for rebellion and anarchy led citizens to question the idea of leadership itself. Historically, views of leadership have reflected the societies who held those views. Very often, the view of leadership and leaders was an outgrowth of the secularism or religion of a particular group of people (Pockell, 2007). Christian thinking on leadership usually focused on the idea that God divinely appoints leaders and then expects them to use their human and material resources according to God's wishes. Most recently, leadership theory and research has begun to focus less on leaders themselves and more on how leaders interact with their subordinates and their organizations. Add more modern leadership information and recent citations.

Key Functions of Leadership

According to White Stage Leadership Development (2011), there are three main functions of leadership. The first function is to assert authority. Leaders have the right to assert their authority by making decisions. Some leaders limit themselves to making major decisions for the organization, while delegating that right when smaller decisions are involved. Other leaders (often referred to as "micromanagers") prefer to be involved in all organizational decisions, whether big or small. Principals span the realm on this particular leadership function. Many are visionary leaders who set the course for their schools and lead the counselors toward realization of that vision, leaving the counselors and school personnel to handle the details. Others are detail-oriented leaders

who want to have a say in every decision that is made in their school.

Second function of leadership is taking responsibility by setting goals for the organization. A rudderless ship is impossible to guide; there must be a definite direction in which the leader seeks to guide his organization. This concept is very important in schools. Goal-setting is a fundamental function of principalship.

The third function of leadership is accountability. Leaders must accept the success or failure of the organizations that they lead. Accountability in leadership is a concept that has been lost in modern education. Principals often pass the blame for school failure on to either district administration, governmental regulation, or even the failure of their subordinates. This function of leadership is the one of the three that most clearly demonstrates the character of leaders.

Leadership Styles

A leadership style is the cumulative effect of a leader's philosophy, personality, and experience. Potentially, different situations could require different leadership styles. One particular style is not the answer to every situation. When adopting a particular leadership style, the leaders should make sure that the style chosen is the one that most effectively achieves the group's common goals while still meeting the individual needs of the members. Following are the most commonly accepted (by leadership researchers) leadership styles:

Democratic/Participative leadership style: The leaders invite and encourage the team members to play an important role in decision-making process, though the ultimate decision-making power rests with the leader. The leader guides the employees on what to perform and how to perform, while the employees communicate to the leader their experience and the suggestions if any. The

advantages of this leadership style are that it leads to satisfied, motivated and more skilled employees. It leads to an optimistic work environment and also encourages creativity. This leadership style has the only drawback that it is time-consuming.

Transformational

The transformational leadership style is similar to the coach style in that it focuses on clear communication, goal-setting and employee motivation. However, instead of placing the majority of the energy into each employee's individual goals, the transformational leader is driven by a commitment to organizational objectives. Because these types of leaders spend much of their time on the big picture, this style of leading is best for teams that can handle many delegated tasks without constant supervision.

Transactional

A transactional leader is someone who is laser-focused on performance, similar to a pacesetter. Under this leadership style, the manager establishes predetermined incentives—usually in the form of monetary reward for success and disciplinary action for failure. Unlike the pacesetter leadership style, though, transactional leaders are also focused on mentorship, instruction and training to achieve goals and enjoy the rewards.

While this type of leader is great for organizations or teams tasked with hitting specific goals, such as sales and revenue, it's not the best leadership style for driving creativity.

The Effect of Leadership on Academic Performance

The research connecting leadership to academic performance is sparser than the

research that connects leadership to poor educational standard. Perhaps this is because school leaders, such as principals, do not interact directly with teachers and students on daily basis, so the impact is more difficult to measure. The effect of a school leader is filtered through teacher. The research that does exist demonstrates that the effect of leadership on standard of education outcomes is generally weak (Harris, 2007). However, those students who have high expectations thrust upon them by school leadership do seem to rise to the occasion and perform better than those who do not have high expectations (Daniels, 2011). The important piece of information for researchers to learn is which amongst the leadership practices mentioned by Kouzes and Posner (2003) changes school climate favorably and leads to positive changes in student behavior, attendance, and academic performance and improved standard of Education. That is partially what this research seeks to learn.

Method

The design of the study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The population of the study comprises of the principals and teacher of Secondary Schools in Enugu Education Zone. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Fifty (50) teachers and students were randomly selected from five (5) secondary schools. Leadership as a Tool for Improved Standard of Education Questionnaire (LTISEQ). The instrument is a 4 point modified likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was given to three experts for face validation, two from educational foundations and one from measurement and Evaluation Department. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, test

retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha was used to calculate the internal consistency of the instrument gave coefficient score of 0.65. This score confirmed that the instrument is reliable. The researcher and one research assistant administered the

instrument to both the Principals and teachers in Secondary School in Enugu Education Zone. Research questions were answered using mean deviation. Based on the four (4) point modified likert scale, the acceptance level for the mean score was 2.50 and above and anything below 2.50.

Results

Research Question 1

1. To what extent does a transformational leadership style influence teacher's performance in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 1: Responses on extent transformational leadership style influence standard of

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SA	N	X	REMARK
1	Providing moral support, showing appreciation for the work of individual teacher and taking account of their opinions.	15	15	12	8	137	2.74	Agreed
2	Promoting an atmosphere of caring and trust among teachers, setting the tone for respectful interaction with students, and demonstrating a willingness to change practices in the light of new understandings.	29	12	4	5	116	3.3	Agreed
3	Establishing a school structure that promotes participative decision making, supporting delegation and distributive leadership, and encouraging teacher decision-making autonomy.	13	15	10	12	129	2.58	Agreed
4	Working toward whole-staff consensus on school priorities and communicating these to students and teachers to establish a strong sense of overall purpose.	21	18	9	8	164	3.28	Agreed
5	Having high expectations for students and for teachers to be effective and innovative.	30	14	2	4	170	3.4	Agreed
6	Intellectual Stimulation – encouraging staff to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with students and how they are doing it; facilitates opportunities for staff to learn from each other and models continual learning in his or her own practice	15	15	12	8	137	2.74	Agreed

Research Question 2

2. To what extent does Transactional leadership styles improve educational standard in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 2: Responses on extent democratic leadership styles improve educational standard in Enugu Education Zone.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	REMARK
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7	Motivate teachers to go beyond self interest	32	16	2	0	180	3.6	Agreed
8	Displays high values and reinforces them symbolically	5	27	12	12	131	2.62	Agreed
9	Allows them to give their opinion on the factors that can improve standard of Education.	21	20	8	1	161	3.22	Agreed

Research Question 3

Does Democratic leadership style help the improvement of education in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 3: Responses on how democratic leadership style help improve education in Enugu Education Zone.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	REMARK
10	It gives the teacher liberty to interact with students and discharge their duties well	19	11	15	5	144	2.88	Agreed
11	It helps in increasing teachers morale	14	10	9	17	121	2.56	Agreed
12	Its helps in motivating students and instilling high level of morality in them	30	10	7	3	167	3.34	Agreed
13	Democratic leadership style ensures everyone is involved in decision making of the school including the teachers.	19	11	15	5	144	2.88	Agreed

Discussion of Findings

Transactional leadership style is the most used leadership style by the principals. The findings revealed that there was high respect for transactional leadership style to teachers. This showed that there was pressure on teachers to produce results, demand to attain classes, insistence to complete the syllabus, close monitoring of teachers to attain results and much concentration to fulfilment of short term goals. These unfortunately compromised the quality of Education where little effort was made by the principals giving more attention to fulfilment of short-term goals. On accountability of teachers on their teaching, the results show that principals made their teachers

accountable during the trainings and through the use of professional documents. Teachers felt that principals ensured that lessons have been attended to in making them accountable. The results showed that transformational leadership style is not the most used leadership style in Enugu Education Zone. On this style, striving towards common goal of fulfilling the school vision and mission was the major influence of principals in who used transformational leadership style. Teachers said that displaying high values and reinforcing them symbolically influenced principals to use this leadership style. Findings found that the majority of principals believe in being role models to ensure ethical and moral conduct among teachers.

Democratic leadership style is the least used leadership style by principals. In this style, there is high consultation before making decisions. Giving teachers autonomy in decision making about improving academic performance was less used. Teachers were in agreement with the principals on consultation before making decisions.

The study concluded that transactional leadership style influenced students' performance on a greater extent. For example teachers reported that the leadership style of their principal was fair. The researcher also concluded that teachers and principals ensured that the teachers observed punctuality in lesson attendance. They ensured they were role model to display high levels of ethical and moral conduct while teachers indicated that their principal ensured that the syllabus was covered in time to ensure strategic improvement in school principal leadership behavior and counselor's morale.

The study rated the influences were rewarding teachers for job well done was rated high followed by ensure teachers and students do not deviate from academic performance pursuit, they do not frequently gauge performance against set targets and offer incentives and lastly giving more attention to fulfillment of short-term goals. Teachers on this aspect felt that much concentration to fulfillment of short-term goals was given by the principals, ensuring performance in improvement of the counselor's morale and lastly was to monitor the performance to ensure value added progress.

On transformational leadership style, the study concluded that principals strived towards common goal of fulfilling the school vision and mission with motivating teachers to go beyond self-interest following. The study also concluded that the least was to

ensure the personality influence the teachers, students and parents to do what the principal want them to do. The study concluded that teachers felt principals displayed high values and reinforced them symbolically. They also saw their principals as displaying an appealing personality that others can emulate. They did not feel that their principals ensured they were part and parcel of the school team that sets common goals, mission and vision.

Democracy leadership was the least used leadership style by principals. In this style, the study concluded that principals consulted before making decisions, respect the rights of the various groups in the school institution. Giving teachers autonomy in decision making about improving academic performance was least used. On the part of teachers, they felt that their principals consulted before making decisions and also accords them an opportunity to make contributions on performances of the counselors.

Recommendations

The following were the recommendations for the study

- (i) From the study's findings, the transactional leadership style of school principals was found to have a low effect on school performance in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. It was accordingly recommended that principals review their use of transactional leadership style in their management of schools to boost performance. Most recent conceptions of educational leadership indicate that there is a move away from autocratic leadership styles to a more transformative mode of decision making in schools. This is in a bid to ensure that decision-making takes place at the lowest possible level to boost academic outcome.

- (ii) This study has established that school performance and in particular students' academic excellence in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone was not as well positively related to the democratic leadership style employed by principals and that the democratic leadership style is the least used style in the secondary schools to improve performance. It was therefore recommended that the principals of secondary schools in particular be encouraged to increase use this style of leadership in the management of secondary schools to improve their academic attainment.
- (iii) The individual principals should make effort to interrogate their transformation styles of leadership to ensure that they challenge the process, continuously strive to be creative, innovative and yearn to improve results, identify the underlying factor that hinder their school's continued academic improvement and gather the courage of experimenting and risk taking.
- (iv) The directorate of quality assurance standards and Federal Ministry of Education can use the findings to formulate training programmes for principals of the public secondary schools. These programmes should be focused to use of transformational, democratic and transactional leadership styles to improve standard of education through principal leadership.

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