Full Length Research

Principal leadership styles as correlates of secondary school teachers work attitude in South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated the relationship between principal leadership style and teachers work attitude. It adopted the descriptive survey. The population of the study consisted of 125 public secondary school principals and 1,523 teachers in the South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria. Of the seven Local Government Areas, three were sampled for analysis while 175 teachers were sub-set of the study. Three research questions were raised. While one was answered directly, the other two were hypothesised. Descriptive statistics and Pearson moment correlation coefficient were used to analyse data. While 60% of respondents believe their principals used democratic leadership style, 25.6% of respondents believe their principals employ an autocratic leadership style whereas 18 teachers (14.4%) feel their principals are neither democratic nor autocratic but laissez-faire in their style of leadership. Thus, the study found that secondary school principals in sampled schools predominantly employed a democratic leadership style. Perhaps the newfound democratic governance in the country since 1999 may be influencing the democratic leadership disposition of the secondary school management. Suggestions were made to sustain the team spirit existing in the public secondary schools in the district.

Keywords: Leadership, leadership styles, post covid-19, principal, secondary school, teachers, work attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in education like every other organisation is pivotal to the success or failure of the group goals. When two or more persons have a task to accomplish there is a need for leadership to direct actions toward the attainment of the objectives. The principal is the leader of a secondary school. Personal characteristics of principals and their adopted leadership style are very germane to the success or otherwise of the group goals. Teachers on the other hand, are workers under the supervision of the principal who provides them with support in their professional development; lesson preparation, instructional delivery, counselling, mentoring, reporting and the co-curricular activities. Principals as instructional leaders in the management of the secondary schools, contribute to the professional development of subordinates through various initiatives. The leadership style adopted by the principals could influence how teachers accept or otherwise reject his contribution to the development of learning in the school. In a study, it was established that principals do influence teachers participation in mentoring, peer observation, coaching and other forms of professional development (Kim and Lee, 2020).

Lesson preparation and delivery form the main fulcrum of the teachers' tasks. A teacher is expected to deliver prepared lessons to his students using the most appropriate effective teachin g method. Prior to covid-19

pandemics, the face to face classroom instructional delivery was the only delivery mode known to most secondary schools in Edo State. The covid-19 pandemics introduced a new dimension in instructional delivery through technology. Until then, online classes were not widely practised in the country but certainly would influence how teaching and learning would be conducted in post covid-19 era. Still, the principal must show leadership irrespective of the new approach to lesson note preparation and mode of delivery. The leadership style of the principal may contribute to the acceptability of suggested new approach to instructional delivery. Bredeson and Johansson (2000) identified four areas where principals have substantial influence on teacher learning viz; as an instructional leader and learner, the creation of a learning environment, direct involvement in the design, delivery and content of professional development, and the assessment of professional development outcomes. Certainly, the principals set the pace for the teachers to teach and also learn themselves.

But that is not all that the teachers do. The teachers support schools in co-curricular activities as well. The co-curricular activities create avenues for the students in developing their hidden talents in other aspects of life apart from cognitive learning. Rahman et al. (2021) explains that:

> *Co-curricular activities benefit students by providing opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills, develop new abilities and interests, and strengthen their social and organizational skills. Students may acquire practical expertise by taking part in co-curricular activities related to their topics.*

Co-curricular activities are school activities that are related to cognitive learning but mostly not restricted to the classrooms though complementary to school learning. They include school club activities, singing, dancing, field trips, games, debates, story-telling, cultural events, exhibitions and other forms of creativity such as photography. Thus, the leadership style adopted by the principal could either enhance or hinder the engagement of teachers in any of these activities.

According to Ijeoma (2005), the leader is able to get things done by enlisting the efforts of others. She believed that leadership involves the use of influence as distinct from forcible domination or coercion. The principal is the Chief Executive officer of the secondary school hence the success or otherwise of administrative and instructional achievements rests on his shoulder. He/she galvanises the available resources to provide the direction to which their energies should be channelled in order to achieve set goals. Pardosi and Utari (2022) define principal leadership as the principal's effort to influence, encourage, guide, and direct teachers, staff, students, parents, and other related

individuals to work together in achieving set goals. The value of leadership is more visible in time of crises. The covid-19 pandemics revealed principals with strong characters because they stood out as motivators of not only the teachers and the students but also the parents and the entire society as they pointed what direction to trend when learning was disrupted and restricted to the homes of students during the pandemics.

All human resources of the school matter to the principal hence he motivates student personnel, the teaching and non-teaching workforce as well as the community toward attainment of the school goals. Akpa (2002) asserted the expected qualities of the 21st-century principal viz;

- Having very clear and informed visions of what they want their schools to become- vision that focuses primarily on students and their needs;
- Translating these visions into goals for their schools and expectations for the teachers, students and administrations;
- Establishing a school climate that supports and encourages progress toward achieving these goals and expectations;
- Continuously monitoring progress and
- Intervening in a supportive or corrective manner, when and where necessary, such that optimal teaching and learning perpetually remain the goal.

These certainly call for the professional leadership of the school. Leadership involves the use of influence or power to elicit the co-operation of subordinates in achieving group goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is anchored on the Fiedler situation contingency leadership theory. Fiedler assumed that leadership comes from one's experience and the situation one operates. He believes that good leadership results in team work and the ability to move along with the well-defined task to the attainment of set goals. The school is such a place where individual efforts can hardly lead to the attainment of group goals. It is like a football team that thrives on team collaboration and cooperation at individual and department levels toward the attainment of set targets. Ijeoma (2005) discussed three leadership styles in the form of nomothetic, idiographic and transactional leadership. The nomothetic leadership style emphasises organisational rules and regulations to achieve goals. It is more concerned with production. Idiographic leadership on the other hand is more concerned with people rather than production while transactional leadership style tends to balance social relations among workers and environmental influence on productivity. It advocates for production while meeting workers needs and challenges.

Ejiogu and Ogonor (2014) handled leadership style through the path-goal leadership theory as applied to the school setting. The theory identifies four specific kinds of leadership styles viz; directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented leadership styles. The directive leadership believes that the leader should provide guidelines, details of what subordinates should or should not do, set performance level or standards, ensures rules are strictly followed and punishment given for infractions. Here, subordinates participation is not welcome in making decisions. The supportive leadership believes that subordinates should be supported with their needs to achieve the group goals. Principals employing the supportive leadership style give all needed support in terms of advice, counsel, mentorship, guidance, coaching etc so that school targets are realised. Participative leadership expects to consult subordinates before decisions are taken. He respects their ideas and considers subordinates when making decisions. Achievement-oriented leadership is poised towards goal attainment no matter what. Under achievement-oriented leadership style, goals should be challenging hence principals employing them set such and expects that they should be attained. Pardosi and Utari (2022) viewed leadership as a people-oriented leadership orientation and task-focused leadership orientation.

Edobor (2006) discussed leadership style in terms of principal's attitudinal behavioural tendencies such as democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire and democratic manipulator. Democratic leadership practice provides liberty for all to co-operate in the spirit of fairness toward goal attainment. On the other hand, the autocratic leadership style tends to be more coercive in eliciting workers contribution toward goal attainment. The laissez-faire leadership style is more or less not concerned with whatever approach the teacher wishes to employ toward group attainment. The democratic manipulator hides under democratic tendencies to manipulate workers to achieve his goals. Even though democratic tendencies have become fashionable in modern society, the democratic manipulator may only hide under the guise of committee to appoint people of like minds in other to achieve his aims through manipulating the process to achieve his goal. The Nigerian society is still replete with autocratic behavioural tendencies probably because of her colonial experience and military incursion into Nigerian political terrain which has permeated all social sectors of the society.

Waters (2013) in her examination of leadership styles felt that it could be transformational or transactional. Transformational leadership as applied to the school provides a platform for both the principal and the teachers to perform their jobs by encouraging one another to attain greater heights. Waters (2013) considers transformational leaders to have high ethical and moral values and can motivate, influence and encourage people to work together. Transactional leadership style on the other hand

is effective in completing specific tasks by managing each people individually, little room can be left for group decision making and at times such leadership style could be viewed as controlling, bossing or dictatorial.

Whatever angle with which one looks at leadership style, what is clear is that some people want collaboration and motivation for the whole group to succeed together as we found in democratic, participative, supportive and transformational leadership styles. On the other hand, a principal may be applying elements of coercion in dictating the tune while the others are expected to follow accordingly as found in nomothetic, autocratic, directive and transactional leadership style. Principals must weigh the goals, the teachers, and the environmental imperatives before arriving at the most suitable leadership style to adopt. In any case, whatever leadership style a principal adopts is not mutually exclusive to any other leadership style. Time and events influence the leadership style that could work best.

Leadership behaviour depends on the personal and professional dispositions of the principal, his staff and the situation they operate in. For example, in Edo State, public secondary schools principals most often are not part of teacher recruitment, hiring, promotion processes and the like. The Ministry of Education or its agency; the Post Primary Education Board takes major decisions about the teaching personnel functions. Hence, "leadership is said to depend very much on the personal characteristics of the leader, the nature of the task he assigns and the character of the social context in which leadership is to be exercised" (Peretomode, 2012:377).

Audu and Oliha (2008) studied the relationship between principal leadership on teachers' morale and students' academic achievement in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. They adopted the descriptive survey design in which 200 subjects were randomly sampled. They used an internal examination from which three core subjects; English language, Mathematics and Biology were sampled for academic achievement analysis. It was found in the study that the majority of respondents opined that their principals are autocratic. They found significant relationship between principal leadership style and students' academic achievement. Omeke and Onah (2012) studied the influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' job satisfaction in Nsukka education zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. They found the principals adopted a pre-dominantly autocratic leadership style. However, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles have a negative influence on the job satisfaction of both male and female teachers. Atasoy (2020) investigated the relationship between school principals' leadership styles, school culture and organisational change in North Cyprus. Data collected from randomly selected 382 teachers were analysed using Pearson correlation, regression and path analysis. He found that school principals exhibited transformational leadership style characteristics. The

research established that teachers perceived their school culture as strong while the transformational leadership style of the principals strengthened organisational change process.

Adegbesan (2012) studied the phenomenon in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State and found that principals are autocratic in their leadership disposition. The study also found that there was a significant relationship between the principal style of leadership and the teaching/learning atmosphere among teachers and students. Udegbuname et al. (2020) investigation was in the Awka education zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. They conducted a descriptive survey and established a negative relationship between principals' transformational leadership style and the productivity of business studies teachers in secondary schools in the zone. On the contrary, they found a positive relationship between transactional leadership style and productivity of business studies teachers in secondary schools in the zone. It was recommended that principals should adopt a transactional leadership style rather than transformational leadership style to enhance business studies teachers motivation consistently.

Adeyemi (2010) focused on Ondo State of Nigeria where principals' leadership styles were investigated. The research found that the democratic leadership style was predominant in the administration of secondary schools in her area of coverage. It was however revealed that teachers' job performance was found to be better in schools having principals using autocratic leadership style than in schools having principals using democratic or laissez-faire leadership styles. She recommended that a mixture of autocratic and democratic leadership styles should be adopted in managing the secondary schools. Uwezulike (2008) found in a study that Nigeria is more an autocratic than democratic governance. Elements of militarisation abound in the social sector. However, democratic practices have been uninterrupted by the military in the country since October 1999 (over two decades). This could also influence the leadership style toward democratic tendencies. Adebowale (2020), focused on principals' leadership style and teachers motivation as correlates of classroom effectiveness in Ekiti State, Nigeria. He found that principals' leadership style influences teacher effectiveness.

Scholars in other parts of the globe have also done works on principal leadership style. Waters (2013) studied leadership styles and job satisfaction in the primary schools in Australia. Participants perceived that their principals employ a more of transformational than transactional leadership style on the one hand and that they (teachers) were satisfied on their jobs. The finding suggests that teachers' perception of principals' leadership styles is significantly related to teacher job satisfaction.

Parveen et al. (2020) investigated impart of principal leadership styles on teacher's job performance in Faisalabad city, Punjab Pakistan. They found that most principals sampled utilized the autocratic leadership style while few explored the democratic leadership style to get the teachers accomplish set goals. The study found a strong and positive correlation between the principal autocratic leadership style and teacher job performance in Faisalabad city.

Chen et al. (2022) compared the relationship between principal leadership style and student achievement in Germany and China. They found significant differences between leadership styles adopted in Germany and China. According to them, principals in Germany explored transformational, instructional and integrated leadership styles while in China; they explored transformational and instructional leadership styles to drive their schools for set goal attainment. The study established also that 'compared with Germany, transformational and instructional leadership tend to greatly contribute to student achievement in China' (Chen et al. 2022:13).

Pedroso et al. (2022), studied the subject matter in the Philippines during the covid-19 pandemic era. It was a qualitative study. The study concluded that the principal has the professional responsibility and operational accountability of leading the school stake-holders to safety during and after the pandemics and they were not found wanting. Kim and Lee (2020) studied the phenomenon of principal instructional leadership for teacher participation in professional development in Japan, Singapore, and South Korea. They found that the influence of principal instructional leadership on teachers' participation in professional development varied across types of leadership style, learning activities and countries.

Saleem et al. (2020) studied principal leadership in China using the path-goal, directive, supportive, achievement-oriented and participative leadership styles. They found that the directive leadership style had a significant effect on teacher job performance in sampled schools. On the contrary, middle management did not find the participative leadership style as a significant predictor of teacher job performance. They explained that the result was not unexpected in a non-western setting where the research took place.

Lesson learnt, therefore, is that the empirical evidence proves that leadership and leadership styles can be influenced by contextual features of national, regional and educational systems. These studies are of special interest to our research in Nigeria; a country nursing nascent democracy having recently emerged from the military command system. They would also provide the school leadership with broader view of how principals and teachers would cooperate for the success of the school under different leadership styles.

Statement of problems

The main duty of a teacher is instruction delivery. Instruc-

tional plans, development and implementation centre on the learner. They have several other roles to fulfil for the intellectual and emotional development of the learners. Empirical studies have shown that principals' leadership style influences the culture of the school. Teacher work attitude cannot be divorced from the social milieu in which it operates. Nigeria has a long history of colonial and military intervention in governance which could have influenced the leadership style of every social sector of the Nigerian economy. On the other hand, the school system is undergoing changing as a result of better-educated workforce, increasing enrolment and diversified curriculum as well as the challenges posed by the advent of covid 19 pandemics in the education sector. These could separate result-oriented principals with a workable leadership qualities. Lessons learnt from the period could be influencing the way secondary school leadership operates in Edo State of Nigeria. Given the environmental imperatives surrounding the Nigerian educational system, what leadership style is currently influencing the administration of the public secondary schools in the South Senatorial District of Edo State? What leadership style pervades the administration of secondary school in the sampled senatorial district? Could the public school principal leadership style be influencing teachers' work attitude positively in a post covid-19 era in the sampled district? These questions are relevant to understand how schools are responding to the imperatives of a new dispensation.

Research questions

To guide the study a research question and two hypothesis were formulated. The question was answered directly.

What leadership style do principals predominantly employ in the administration of secondary schools in South Senatorial District of Edo State?

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There will be no significant relationship between principals' leadership style and involvement of teacher's in co-curriculum activities.
H_{02}: There will be no significant relationship between principal's leadership style and teachers' delivery of class lessons.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This Study was limited to the senior secondary schools in the South Senatorial District of Edo State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consists of the 125 secondary school principals and 1,523 teachers deplored in the 2020/2021 academic session in the seven Local Government Areas that make up South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria. Questionnaire titled Principal Leadership Style and Teachers Work Attitude (PLSTWAQ) was designed to elicit responses from teachers of secondary schools in Edo South Senatorial district of Edo State. Two experts in Educational Management validated the instrument while Cronbach's alpha was used to obtain a coefficient reliability of 0.782 showing the instrument is reliable for the study. Stratified sampling technique was employed to obtain the three Local Government Areas sampled. It was also adopted for obtaining schools which principals and teachers formed the object of the study. A sample size of 13 (approximately 10%) principals of secondary schools was involved while 11.5% of the 1,523 teachers (that is 175 teachers) were randomly sampled from the sub-set schools. Research Question 1 was analysed using the descriptive statistics; frequency and percentages while Pearson moment correlation was used to test hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. One research assistant per Local Government was employed to assist in administering and retrieving research instruments in sampled schools.

Ethical consideration

The instrument went through validity and reliability test after it was designed and corrections incorporated into the final draft. Authorization was obtained from Edo State Ministry of Education which supervises public secondary schools where the study was conducted. None of the respondents was coerced into participation but willingly agreed to participate in the study after the study intents were clearly explained to them. They were promised that their responses would be confidential and utilized for academic purposes only. We certainly adhered to that.

RESULTS

Research question 1: What leadership style do principals predominantly employ in the administration of secondary schools in South Senatorial District of Edo State?

Table 1 shows the distribution of the leadership style used by principals in the secondary schools in South Senatorial District of Edo State. A total of 75 respondents representing 60% believe their principals used democratic leadership style while 25.6% of respondents believe their principal employ an autocratic style whereas 18 teachers (14.4%) feel their principals are neither democratic nor autocratic but laissez-faire in their style of leadership.

Table 1. Predominant leadership style in South Senatorial District of Edo State.

Leadership Style	N	Democratic	Autocratic	Laissez faire	Total
Frequency	125	75	32	18	
Percentage distribution		60	25.6	14.4	100

Source: Researchers' fieldwork.

Table 2. Relationship between principals' leadership style and co- curricular activities.

Leadership style	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.	Remark
Principals Leadership Styles	125	45.70	6.113	0.065	0.392	Not Significant
co-curriculum activities involvement	175	12.15	4.751			

Source: Researchers' fieldwork.

Table 3. Relationship between principals' leadership style and lesson delivery.

Parameters	N	M	SD	R	Sig.	Remark
Principals Leadership Styles	125	45.70	6.113	-0.089	0.239	Not Significant
Lesson delivery.	175	15.15	3.439			

Source: Researchers' field work.

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between principals' leadership style and involvement of teacher's in co-curriculum activities

The findings in Table 2 show that the correlation coefficient between leadership styles and teachers involvement in co-curriculum activities is r = 0.065, the numerical value of the correlation coefficient *r* was 0.065 which means that in terms of strength and direction, there is a weak positive relationship between the variable of the determination, when N=125, p = 0.392>0.05. The null hypothesis is accepted showing that there is no significant relationship between leadership style and teachers involvement in extra curriculum activities.

$H_0 2$: There is no significant relationship between principal's leadership style and teachers' class lessons delivery

The findings in Table 3 show that the correlation coefficient between leadership styles and teachers class management is r = -0.089 which means that in terms of strength and direction, there is a weak negative relationship between the variable of the determination, p = 0.239>0.05, therefore the null hypothesis is accepted and we concluded that there is no significant relationship between leadership styles and teachers lesson delivery.

DISCUSSION

Nigeria was under colonial rule for over one hundred years until she gained political independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. Barely five years into civil rule, the military took over power on January 15, 1966. The country had its dosage of intermittent military dictatorship that permeated almost all sphere of life in the country; education sub-sector inclusive. In 1999 however, civil governance was restored. For over twenty years of uninterrupted civil administration in the country, it is fairly long enough to investigate the secondary school principals' leadership style that currently prevail in the schools. The advent of covid-19 herald a new dispensation in educational administration which includes varied methods of instruction delivering. The finding of this research shows that democratic leadership style is predominant in the senior secondary schools in South Senatorial District of Edo State. It reveals that principals are adapting to civil ways of administering their schools. This finding contrast Umezulike (2003), Audu and Oliha (2008), Omeke and Onah (2012), and Adegbesan (2012) who found that school administration in some states in Nigeria covered in their study was autocratic. It agrees with Adeyemi (2010) who found that principals used democratic leadership style in the administration of secondary schools in Ondo State of Nigeria. It is also in consonance with Atasoy (2020) and Waters (2013) who found in studies

conducted outside Nigeria that principals of sampled schools employ predominantly transformational leadership style to run the schools. This finding is therefore consolidating the new found democratic practices permeating the nation's social sector including education. Certainly, with the democratic disposition of the principal, the teachers are likely to accept their suggestions, corrections and assignments without bickering. Team spirit and collegiate disposition are likely to pervade the school working environments which could be a motivating factor for teachers to be learners too.

In response to H_{01}, it was found that teacher's involvement in co-curricular activities is not dictated by the leadership style being adopted by their principals in the school. Teacher's participation could be as a result of personal interest in these activities. It also consolidates the fact that democratic tendencies are permeating the administration of schools hence teachers have a free will to choose the type of co-curricular activities they get involved in and to what extent they lend their support. Rather than being in a straight-jacket, the teachers could be selective and well support the school efforts in creating additional avenue for students to learn even outside the classrooms.

H_{02} investigated whether there was significant relationship between principal's leadership style and teachers' delivery of class lessons. The null hypothesis was accepted. Teachers' lesson delivery was not dictated by the leadership style being adopted in the school by the principals. Thus, shows personal commitment to duty which implies that teachers are not coerced into adopting a specific lesson delivery method in the performance of the instructional task assigned to them. Under democratic atmosphere where teachers enjoy the freedom to deliver their lessons without autocratic tendencies, teachers could explore new methods of instructional delivering. The advent of Covid-19 increased the tempo of online delivery, blended learning as well as other forms of offline e-learning. Skilful teachers would be able to determine when to employ what would suit the learners at any given circumstance. Rather than adhering to a specific method of lesson delivering learnt over many years ago, democratic tendencies allowed the experimentation with emerging media. This fosters cordial working relationship between the principals and the teachers on the one hand and between the teachers and the learners on the other hand. On the contrary, Omeke and Onah (2012) found that autocratic and laissez faire leadership styles have a negative influence on the job satisfaction of both the male and female teachers. Democratic leadership broaden cordiality in the work environment as it tends to be firm also in directing all school personnel toward goal attainment.

Conclusion

This study investigated principal leadership style as correlate of secondary school teachers work attitude in South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria. It founds that principals predominantly employ democratic leadership styles. This robs off well on teachers' job performance under the democratic atmosphere prevailing in the public secondary schools even though the educational system was passing through a tempestuous situation occasioned by the advent of covid-19 pandemics. Secondary school management now imbibes democratic practices unlike findings of similar studies in the past in some states in Nigeria where principal leadership was more of autocracy. However, the lesson learnt from the literature reviewed and the findings of this study shows that no particular leadership style is inferior to the other for the context in which the school operates determines what leadership style works best under certain situation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to strengthen school leadership in the post covid-19 era.

1. In order to preserve a sustainable working environment, principals should not only support democratic leadership, but also allow it to pervade all facets of school life. Government should therefore provide secondary school leadership opportunities to deepen democratic practices by getting them involved in all teaching personnel issues such as recruitment, remuneration, promotion, disciplines etc.
2. The school leadership should continue to provide the teachers with the necessary resources; including conducive working environment to translate intentions into reality. It is here suggested that school teachers should not take principals democratic tendencies with levity rather they too should work unitedly with the school administration even as they explore new teaching methods and outlets for the success of all and the development of secondary education in the District.
3. The secondary school personnel should continue to support the co-curricular activities that best fit them so that the newfound democratic practices can continue to support school growth and development

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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