

CHALLENGES TO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP IN NORTHERN REGION OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The authors of this article promise of establishing a constructive conversation with the secondary schools board on issues of principal leadership position. This study investigated challenges to secondary school principals' leadership in government own secondary schools in the areas of instructional supervision and provision of funds. The sample for the study was 133 principals of government own secondary schools, selected on the basis of 7 principals from each state of the 19 states that constitute northern region of Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a 20 items questionnaire title: Challenges to Secondary School Principals Leadership Challenges Questionnaires (CSSPLQ). Two research questions were formulated, data collected were converted to mean, standard deviation and used to answer the research questions. It was recommended that, principals of government secondary schools should be re-train through attending conference and seminars for improvement in instructional supervision. The government should provide adequate fund directly to the state schools bank account for principals to execute their school activities effectively.*

KEYWORDS: Leadership, Management, Challenges, Principals.

INTRODUCTION

Education can be regarded as the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potential and all other kinds of rights and powers in the world. The increasing awareness of the importance of education for sustainable development in Africa is paramount. Education for sustainable development in Africa, can be define as the educational process of accomplishing sustainable human development which includes economic growth, social development, environmental protection, scientific development and employment opportunities in an equitable manner. Balogun (2010) opined that education is the light, without which, the world would be in darkness. It is the basis for modernity, scientific and technological breakthrough, which have made all nations of the world accord immense priority to education.

Nigeria as a nation strives toward the provision of quality and affordable education for its citizens through the guiding principle of National Policy on Education (2004). The guiding principles of education in Nigeria is the equipping of every citizens with acquisition of knowledge, desirable skills, attitude and values as well as to enables him or her to derive maximum benefits from his or her society, and also contribute his quota meaningfully towards the development of the nation at large. Secondary school education is one among the levels of education in Nigeria.

Fabunmi (2005) defined Secondary school education as the form of education, which children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. It is the second level of education

in Nigeria headed by a school administrator called principal. Certainly, Principal is the head of an institution that occupies a pivotal position, requires initiatives and skills for the day to day administration of a secondary school. As a school leader, principal must have foresight for effective, efficient and dynamic principles in handling matters between the school, staff and the host community.

Similarly a principal must be in a position to guide and provide expertise guardian in regards to curriculum development, teaching methods, and evaluation as well as supervision of human and material resources. For the school to function well, the principal must be in a position to exploit all possible means to keep a healthy environment for the students, staff and the general public. Therefore as a principal, who is the chief executive officer of a school, should guides and inspires the teachers' for job satisfaction. It also sets the direction of polices, acceptable standards for academic and behavioural achievement of students, establishes a friendly school climate and influences the commitment of every stakeholder in the society for the achievement of the educational goals.

Principal as a leader is also the liaison officer that mediates between the school and the society. A critical role of a principal is to mobilize the teaching and non-teaching staff towards the achievement of the school objectives. Ibukun (2004) views leadership as a position of dominance and prestige accompanied by the ability to direct, motivate and to assist others in achieving a specified purpose. Aina (2011) posited that leadership is about concern for social justice, a compassion for the under privileged, dedicated to the growth of self-reliance, commitment, ability to communicate, courage to take risks, make bold decisions, ability to achieve the desired result and faith in the people's ability.

Aghenta (2006) viewed school principal as a leader that provides direction and expert advice on development of teaching and learning in school. The principal has a duty to lead, guide, conduct, direct and motivate both the teaching and non-teaching staff toward achievement of the school goals and objectives. The principal position is a high-pressure job in the context of instructional supervision and funds management in his or her day to day running of school. It is also a job that the remuneration is less compare with the responsibilities attached to it. The secondary school principals are face with many challenges in their daily routine; these challenges are enormous which hinder the progression of the secondary schools aim and objectives in Nigeria.

Literally, Northern region is the northern part of Nigeria which comprises of nineteen states out of thirty-six states of Federal Republic Nigeria. Certainly, this northern region is still struggling to reach its climax in educational attainment level in Nigeria. The secondary schools in this region are facing numerous challenges, which prompted the researchers to conduct this study on challenges to secondary school principals' leadership, in order to proffer viable solutions for the principals with leadership problems in their schools.

The Problem

In recent time, students' academic achievement in northern region secondary schools has been a major concern to the parents, teachers and even the education board officers. Research has also shown that some secondary school principals are lacking leadership competencies, resulting in low quality of instruction, indiscipline among staff and students (Aina, 2011).

Most principals have been receiving blame from the education stakeholders. These problems reoccur yearly and transformed into major challenges. This study is poised to provide possible solutions to principal leadership challenges in order to improve quality of instruction and good students' academic achievement in school examinations.

The Research Questions

1. What are the major challenges facing principals of secondary schools in northern of Nigeria?
2. What are the possible solutions to principal leadership challenges in northern region of Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study, the population comprises all principals in government own secondary schools in northern region of Nigeria. Simple random sampling method was used to sample 7 principals from each of the sampled 19 northern states that gave a summation sample size of 133 principals.

An instrument developed by the researcher titled: Challenges to Secondary School Principals' Leadership Questionnaires (CSSPLQ) were used for data collection from the respondents. It was validated by an expert in the field of educational management and administered it personally with the help of other 9 research assistants. All copies of the instrument administered were returned and found valid for analysis. A 4 point modified likert scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used for the items.

The researcher adopted the test –retest method to determine the reliability of the instrument. A correlation coefficient of 0.81 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance postulating a high reliability. The two research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation for the analysis. An item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while an item with a mean score of less than 2.50 was not accepted.

FINDINGS

- The principal are not actively involved in the instructional supervision process in schools, rather they delegated it to the senior maters in their various schools.
- The second findings also reveal that poor funding of schools is a major problem of principals' leadership ineffectiveness and lack of availability of funds directly to the schools account to run the schools appear also as problem.
- The third finding reveals that, secondary school education board (overseer of secondary school in the region) did not have a system of organizing seminars for capacity building to re-train and improve leadership effectiveness of principals in the region.
- The forth finding posited that, principals have lesser authority to discipline teachers who were not committed to their duties base on external interference from the secondary school board.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first discussion on finding is posed on principals who are not actively involved in the instructional supervision; from the instruments, there is higher response on principals'

delegating senior masters to carryout instructional supervision on teachers. Certainly principals need to focus on effective instructional supervision themselves in order to strengthening teachers' effectiveness and students' academic achievement. This finding was in line with Fafunwa (1990) who asserted that frequent class visitation, operating with the school policies, attending to teacher's problem and maintaining students discipline will lead to good leadership effectiveness in school.

The second discussion on the finding is that, there is statistically high response on non-availability of fund to run the school by the principals. This weakens the leadership potentials of secondary school principals. This finding has justified the submission of Ogunsaju (2006) who reported that principals have the leadership challenges of coping with limited educational resources.

The third discussion on finding is the inability of secondary school board to conduct regular conference, workshop which serves as capacity building for principals'. The finding also agrees with the revelation of Ogunu (2000) who asserted that retraining of teachers and principal can improves their range of administrative strategies positively.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

1. The Study has drawn the attention of northern Nigerian government forum to see and response to the challenges of secondary school principal their region
2. The study has drawn attention of school principals' to many roles they could play within and outside the school.
3. This article also hinges on various ways in which secondary school board can enhance principals' leadership effectiveness in their schools

CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges to secondary school principals' leadership in northern region of Nigeria. The study investigated leadership challenges of principals in line with the raising concern of students' academic failures in secondary schools. It was observed that principals lost focus on instructional supervision of teaching and learning in their schools. The study also reveals that principals and teachers need seminar, workshops for capacity building at least once in an academic year. Lastly, Northern region governments' forum should provide fund directly to school bank accounts for principals' to effectively execute their daily school activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Northern region governments' forum should make the principals' job more appealing and manageable through the power to lead, including total authority over staff decision matters and operation.
- Northern region governments' forum should provide adequate funds and send it directly into the school bank account for financial prudence.
- Northern region governments' forum should not interfere in principal decision on teachers and non-teaching staff disciplinary matters in school.

- Students academic achievement should be used as a mean of teachers' promotion in schools.
- Late payment of teachers' salaries weakens their abilities to work and it should be made a thing of the past.
- Northern region government forum should design a system of conducting termly conferences, workshops, seminar for capacity building for principals and teachers in the schools for leadership and instructional effectiveness.

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