

Head Teachers Leadership Practices and School Culture Among Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West Municipality

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the effects of head teacher's leadership practices on school culture using Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Data were collected from 230 respondents, comprising of school Heads, Teachers and non-teaching staff in five Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West Municipality using questionnaire. The data collected was analysed using inferential statistics. The results of the analysis revealed that the key school cultures reported were the involvement of parents in school management and development of effective coordination among staff, parents and students. The study recommends that leadership of schools should be sensitive to the concerns of subordinates as this will result in positive school culture conducive for teaching and learning.*

KEYWORDS: school leadership, school culture, school management, school development, leadership effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Most learners and staff of educational institutions would arguably be faithful and punctual to school and also improve in their academic performance, and work output if they feel accepted, valued, respected and included. It is also debatably factual that the conduct of the school staff has both positive and negative influence on students' attendance to school and their behaviour in school. Creating a congenial cultural atmosphere inside a school can directly and indirectly rouse teachers' interest and propel them to participate in exercises that would advance the development of institutions (Turan and Bektas, 2013). School culture is norms, behaviours, the services, images and stories that make a school different from others. The stakeholders of schools can run the affairs of their schools with the help of these expected dispositions (Deal and Peterson, 1998).

Every organization has a culture, which sheathes the totality and lifestyle of the general population in the school. Each school is thought to have its own unique culture, with no two schools alike. Deal and Peterson (1998) assert that, every school has its own particular elements and touch. The attributes that make up a school's way of life ranges from the staff's identities to the principal's leadership style. Culture has been examined for quite a long time by specialists in the fields of brain research, human sciences, sociology and organizational development. Exchanges inside these fields contain basic themes like qualities, convictions and ceremonies. School leaders are a fundamental part in developing a positive school culture (Aidla and Vadi, 2007). All responsibilities performed by a school leader are vital yet making a positive school culture is imperative. They know that school culture is the heart of improvement and growth of every school. Hinde (2004) argues that, for leadership to be effective the leader should go beyond just knowing what to do, how, when and why should also be answered. Lakomski (2001) also submits that for a school to succeed, it depends on the leader of the school. The leader is in the best position to enhance the quality of a school. In this way, the head or principal decides the scope of school culture to be in existence. It is imperative for leaders to comprehend the environment which they are leading. Most leaders know about the professional environment they find themselves yet they for the most part neglect to consider the cultural environment they live in (Aidla and Vadi, 2007). School leaders endeavour to see how matters are led. They investigate cultural and social alienation, the techniques related with the running of the school (Lakomski, 2001).

Leaders should have background knowledge of school cultures which includes understanding the type of school behaviour and the reasons for it, and learning values on which it is based. Such knowledge also requires the leaders to examine the social and inter-personal dynamics, the organisational structure, history and politics in the school (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2000). They also face problems connected to the level of performance, strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities to develop and learn, that exist in the school. They must also consider the pecuniary factors and the character of the community that the school serves as Lakomski, (2001) asserted. It is therefore important to assess the effects of leadership practices on school culture.

There have been several educational reforms in Ghana, which aimed at creating a favourable environment for students to learn and achieve higher heights. The role of the head of an institution and his or her assistants as well as other leaders in a school is very important in cultivating and sustaining a positive school culture and students' orientation; as such demands on school leaders have continuously increased. Works of researchers, example Hinde (2004), confirms that leaders are the vital ingredients in building a positive school culture. In spite of this leaders do not pay attention to school culture because they do not recognise the effect that school culture can have on teaching and learning.

According to Aidla and Vadi (2007), learner's character is also a reflection of the culture he or she is exposed to in school. These characteristics are depicted by students' orientation towards tutors, supervisors, colleagues and society in which he/she lives. A positive school culture brings out good students and vice

versa. Where the culture is awful, it can have a intimidating effect on the school as a society Turan and Bektas (2013). Since school culture has a significant impact on students' achievement, it is imperative that leaders of a school realise the influence they have in shaping the culture of their schools so that position themselves well to contribute positively in building positive organisations (Lakomski, 2001).

It is therefore understandable that the school leaders are very essential in cultivating a positive school culture, yet whether their leadership practices influence school culture is another area to be looked at. For a school to be successful it is important to study the activities of leaders and how they assist in building and sustaining a positive school culture (Gruenert, 2005). Unfortunately, much research has not been done on school culture as it is on leadership. Hinde (2004), states that when much attention is not given to school culture it affects the schools' achievements. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the effects of school culture on leadership practices in selected Senior High Schools in Kwahu-West municipality. How do head teachers leadership practices affect school culture among Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West municipality?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leading and Leadership

Change and its acceptance have been effective in schools that do not really need them (Elmore, 1995). Such schools are usually with officially entrenched procedures and limits set up on which to work, as opposed to those schools frequently of worry to those implementing the change. This is applicable to the considerations of leadership since leadership is about hierarchical change; more particularly, it is tied in with setting up broadly settled upon and beneficial bearings for the association, encourage individuals so that they can tow that line. Management as one of the roles of a leader has several objectives of which one of them is steadiness. The key objective of leadership is to make better the activities of institution or organisation (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Leithwood et al, 2001).

There are roles for every organisational leader to undertake for effective and efficient running of the organisation, which results in positive achievement. According to Ezeuwa (2005), leadership is the ability of a leader to persuade his/her subordinates towards the attainment of a common goal is known as leadership. Motivating, guiding and encouraging others to actively contribute towards the achievement of institutional/organisational objectives is leadership. Leadership implies affecting individuals to work energetically with enthusiasm towards the accomplishment of the organisational objectives (Berry and Goldman, 2000).

There is no way a leader can work alone; he/she needs others to be able to exhibit his/her roles towards achieving the corporate goal (Ukeje, 1999). Leadership style is the way that a leader plays these roles and coordinates the issues of the association. Mullins (2007) alludes that often, one encounters a group leaders who are particular about jobs to be done at the work place and they do not pay attention to how they relate with their workers. Mullins (2007) again explains that there is also an individual who is capable to delegate

and influence his/her subordinates so that specific objectives can be achieved is perceived as a leader. Careful cooperation with individuals in an organisation/institution is one of the expectations of a leader towards the attainment of the organisational goals.

Types of leadership in the Ghanaian Setting

Many leaders in Ghana have performed tasks in different fields of endeavour from the pre-colonial era. However, every setting has its own preferred and choice of leadership style. In the Ghanaian context, the Laissez-faire type of leadership is highly resistive. This is because this leadership style blocks the workers who need direct guidance from their superiors the opportunity to do their best. Such people are seen as sluggish and are not up to the task (Spector, 1992).

Ghanaians and the culture they engage in hate oppression and thus autocratic leadership is highly detestable. The way that nobody challenges the choices of leaders is despicable. In spite of the fact that this leadership style is beneficial to those who need direct guidance, imaginative workers who efficiently on their own hate this leadership style. According to Stevens (1996), this type of leadership if persistent is a big task and it is highly not practiced in the Ghanaian setting. Even in schools and political fronts, candidates who are tagged as oppressors often lose elections.

In democratic leadership style also known as participative leadership, the role that every individual or group play is so cherished by the leader. That notwithstanding, it is the responsibility of the leader to be very selective in order to come out with the best out of the options available to help achieve the stated goals. It gives room for subordinates to be responsible for their own actions or deeds in their bid to help achieve their organisational objectives and also considers their welfare to a great extent. Employees are quick to accept changes in the organisation since this style allows them to also play key roles in the change process. It is a very proactive way of solving urgent issues in the organisation. Every Ghanaian worker expects that his/her boss talks to him/her clearly so that they can also contribute their best towards the attainment of the stated goals. The subordinates need to be delegated to perform specific task so that the achievements of the organisational goals would be hastened (Stogdill, 1989).

Leaders of Schools

School leaders are vital to moulding school culture irrespective of their level of leadership. Principals convey centre esteems in their ordinary work. Instructors strengthen values in their activities and words. Parents and Guardians support soul when they visit school, take an interest in administration, and praise achievement. In the most grounded schools, leadership originates from many sources. Examples abound in many facets of our environment. Deal and Peterson (1998) are of the view that the responsibilities played by school leaders in making norms, values are unavoidable. School leaders' verbal, nonverbal words, their activities, achievements, contributions all help in shaping culture. They are seen as writers, performing artists, models, healers, potters, historians, anthropologists, visionaries and dreamers of institutions. School cultures can wind up plainly lethal and ineffective when leaders' attention is firm. Leaders can assist build up an establishment for achievement and transformation.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a case study which employs quantitative approach to assess the leadership practices and school culture in the Kwahu-West Municipality. The quantitative approach is adopted because; it helped to the researcher to gain numerical understanding on the effect of leadership practices on school culture. Creswell (2009), explains that case study research design, offers researchers the opportunity of studying a phenomena in detail and in context. Case study also makes research easy to comprehend a particular phenomenon. In this era of information systems, case study can help stakeholders of education adjust positively to change (Dubé and Paré, 2003).

The population for this study consisted of all Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West Municipality. However, target respondents were the heads of institution, teaching and non-teaching staff of these Senior High Schools. Since school heads and teachers are key role players at SHS level and are directly involved with the students, the study sought to collect information from them. The study population therefore included all staffs (teaching and non-teaching) and heads (Headmasters, Headmistresses and Assistant Heads) of Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West Municipality. Aggregation of the number of teaching and non-teaching staff as well as Heads of the five Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West Municipality gave five hundred and forty (540) individuals. The researchers were able to assessed two hundred and thirty (230) teaching and non-teaching staff as well as Heads of Senior High Schools in the Kwahu-West Municipality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Leadership Practices on School Culture

Focusing on the educational context of Ghana, the study objective two assessed the effect of leadership practices on school culture. Studies have demonstrated that a leader must test and change the organizational culture so the vision will be satisfied (Bass, 1990). A solid culture is crucial to satisfying the school vision (Deal and Peterson, 1999; Marzano et al., 2005). Solid school societies additionally help facilitate the change between current practices and future objectives, which is basic for objective accomplishment (Hinde, 2004). The school culture plays a part in the ability of the transformational leader to set the direction (Campo, 1993). People are the organization (Leithwood et al., 2001). Good school culture comes from the improvement of the people most especially leadership who are members of the organization (Leithwood et al., 2001).

After reliability analysis, means are computed for remaining items measuring LP and SC respectively to create single indicant variables. In accordance with the second objective of the study, a simple linear regression is then run to determine the relationship between the Leadership Practices (LP) and School Culture (SC). The results as presented in Table 4.5 show that the independent variables (LP) showed a positive correlation (given $r = 0.315$) with the dependent variable (SC). Most points in the normal P-P plot lied in a reasonably straight diagonal line from bottom left to top right. Scatter plot of the standardized

residuals were roughly rectangular distributed with most scores concentrated in the center, along the 0 point.

From the results as presented in table below, Leadership Practices have a significant positive effect on school culture ($F(1,205) = 22.63, p < 0.01$). Given a number of factors and the complexities that influence school culture, the model explains 9.9% of the variance in school cultural practices. The model depicted that the leadership practices makes a statistically significant contribution (given $p < 0.05, \beta = .315; t = 4.757$) to school culture. This is consistent with findings of Godfrey (2016). It therefore behooves on school authorities to be committed to a positive leadership practice since it positively affects the overall school culture. Generally, assessment of the models demonstrated helpful in view of its factual importance and practical significance (Hair et al., 2014).

Summary Statistics of Regression output

Model Summary				
$R = 0.315$				
$R^2 = 0.099$				
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.095$				
S.E of estimates = 0.818				
$F(1,205) = 22.63, p < 0.01$				
Predictors	Co-efficient (β)	S.E	T	Significance
(Constant)	2.625	.249		.000
Mean Leadership Practices (MLP)	.375	.079	4.757	.000

Dependent variable: School Culture (SC)

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Challenges of Leadership Practices and School Culture

The challenges to effective leadership in the Kwahu West Municipality as show in the study are apathy in addressing worries, inadequate support from stakeholders, lack of human resource, lack of financial support, difficulty in building consensus, lack of knowledge about leadership and culture. Elsewhere, Fullan (2001) suggests that leaders with vision may end up destroying the school culture instead of helping to build a positive school culture. Concentrating on vision alone by leaders can be misleading. Leaders can be blinded by vision deteriorating a good school culture. It becomes not clear as many studies explore the challenges of leadership practice and school culture (Leithwood, 1996). Fullan agrees with Leithwood and even goes further to say that Principals are once in a while blinded by their own vision when they believe they should control the educators and the school culture to comply with their dreams (Fullan, 2007).

The study adapted as many as nineteen items in measuring the challenges of leadership practice and school culture. The Relative Importance Index (RII) analysis was performed to ascertain the severity of the challenges among the measures. The hindrances to effective leadership practice and school culture within

the Kwahu West Municipality can be inferred from table 4.6 based on a relative importance index (RII) method. With an overall relative importance index of 0.773 or 77.3% it indicates quite determinable challenge in building a good school culture and leadership practice. With little significant differences between RII's, the respondents attributed this to the top three factors of; Lack of knowledge about leadership and culture (RII = 0.916 or 91.6%), Lack of supervision on teaching and learning (RII = 0.901 or 90.1%) and apathy in addressing worries (RII = 0.897 or 89.7%). Three (3) indicators had little influence on challenges associated with effective leadership practice and school culture within the Kwahu West Municipality; Poor flow of information (RII = 0.676 or 67.6%), Poor support on the part of parents (RII = 0.691 or 69.1%) and Indiscipline on the part of students (RII = 0.696 or 69.6%).

Innovative Ways to Enhance School Culture

The respondents were to indicate innovative ways that would enhance school culture. Some of the suggestions include leaders to be innovative instructional leaders, ability to obtain resources, adapt central initiative to fit local context, to sharpen the focus on academic program, establish a focus on student learning, endorse new programs to aid implementation, carefully monitor and evaluate implementation of school improvement plans. They also mentioned encouraging careful monitoring of teacher and student progress, develop school improvement plans from results of inquiry and reflection, as well as to deal with potential negative effects of student standards and testing.

Accordingly, the study looked at innovative ways to improve school culture. Within the study setting, obtaining resources, endorsing new programs to aid implementation of them and carefully monitoring/evaluating implementation of school improvement plans were perceived by respondents as most innovative in enhancing school culture that is a total of 47.7% of respondents. However, encouraging careful monitoring of teacher and student progress (6.3%) dealing with potential negative effects of student standards/testing (3.4%) and developing school improvement plans from results of inquiry and reflection (3.4%) depict least considered option in improving school culture of schools within the municipality.

Arrangement creators are right to start the school culture improvement process with school pioneers. Researchers as far back as Edmonds (1979) made the association between successful tutoring and solid initiative; be that as it may, the Principal/Head can't develop school culture alone (Campo, 1993). This is mostly in light of the fact that it is unrealistic for one individual to completely "run" a school; culture takes every authoritative part, not only those at the best, attempting to enhance the training for all students (Campo, 1993). It is an all hands-on deck approach. Indeed, even with the whole school moving in the direction of the objectives of school social changes, enhancing a school is a mind-boggling errand with no exact well-ordered arrangement to take after which will fulfill change goals (Fullan, 2001; Kilman, Saxton, and Serpa, 1986). Social change endeavors being pushed forward by strategy creators have the focal objective of enhancing the instruction of all students in school. This as per Cavanaugh and Dellar (1998); Danielson (2002), is the essential mission of the instructive framework.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There have been surges in concern about the contribution of leadership practices in shaping school culture and students' orientation. Contributing to the debate, this study examined the effects of leadership practices on school culture. Although the research was conducted as a case study, the findings have led to conclusions that may apply to most public schools in Ghana. As Yin (2009) noted, where the results of a case study conform to some broader theoretical propositions, analytical generalisation can be made with the findings. The result of this study revealed that there are several leadership practices among the SHSs in the study area, the most dominant leadership practices was the cultivation of leaders from the ranks of the education service and helping workers deal with change. The key School cultures also reported were the involving parents in school management and development of effective coordination among staff, parents and students. Further analysis show that leadership practices positively correlated with school culture.

Based on the findings the study concludes that leadership practices in schools significantly influence school culture. Positive school culture is created by positive leadership practices. School pioneers who concentrate the school culture on upgrading learning and instructing have the right stuff to create and actualize shared objectives and vision, create targets which set a desire that all students will encounter achievement in learning. They are likewise ready to make a culture in which collaboration is normal and esteemed, and in which instructors are empowered to go up against suitable positions of authority, construct appropriated leadership roles that safe duty and obligation regarding proceeded with change through all levels of the school and challenge and alter values and conventions which are not to students' greatest advantage

Based on the conclusion drawn from this study, the following are recommended for headmasters/mistresses, teaching and non-teaching staff and students;

1. The leadership practices and school cultures identified in this study should be nurtured and practiced in the various Senior High Schools in Ghana. A conscious effort must be made in cultivating these practices and cultures.
2. Those in higher positions should be sensitive to the concerns of subordinates. The workers contributions are paramount in achieving higher height and positive school cultures in school. Therefore, their welfare should be of concern to Heads of institutions. When this is addressed it may serve as a motivation for the worker to put up their best.
3. Heads alone cannot build effective school cultures in school; they need to delegate their authorities sometimes. To ensure effectiveness periodic in-service leadership training should be organized for workers as well as students leadership so that they would acquire and enhance their leadership skills.

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