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## The Head Teachers' Leadership Role For Effective School Performance

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper assesses the administrative leadership style and roles of primary head teacher in Nigeria. The need for this arises from the writers' conviction that effective primary administration depends largely on sound leadership. The main purpose is to highlight how the head teachers in Nigerian primary schools should carry out their functions in order to achieve the objectives and philosophy of Nigerian education as it concerns primary schools. The researchers established the leadership styles of head teachers in Nigeria and how they affected their administration viz - a - viz their staff, students, community, school board and ministry of Education. Recommendations are made to help the primary school head teachers improve in their contributions and performance for effective management. Among others it is recommended that primary school head teachers should attend management courses which will help them to develop necessary skills and knowledge for effective leadership.*

**Key words:** Head teacher, leadership, school management, leadership style, administration, management courses, leadership perspective

### **1. Introduction**

The head-teacher occupies the position of the chief executive in school. He is the leader of the institution who has a number of staff – both academics and non academics- working under him. The head teacher as a leader cannot work alone successfully without the co-operation of the staff. This is so because leadership is a rational attribute which emphasizes the behaviour of the person being led. Olaitan (cited in Ode1992) defines leadership as “the behaviour of the leader functioning vis- a-vis members of a group which is determined by both the leader and the led.” Leadership is therefore followership as corroborated by Okorochoa (2012)

In the same vein, Brown (cited in Ode 1992) views leadership “as a transaction, a state of total group, which is determined by both the leader and the led.” Leadership can therefore be seen as the acts that affect others. It gets into the midst of and reacts with behaviour already presented in the group. The interaction results into a new activity which may not have been possible without an act of leadership. Hence in studying the leadership role of a head teacher, the focus should be on the behaviour of the head teacher as it relates to his staff, students, the community, the primary school as well as the Ministry of Education.

The concern of this paper is not limited to how the head teacher behaves but how the subordinates perceives his administrative behaviour for better school performance. It is this perception that influences the subordinate actions and consequently determined what is referred to as leadership.

The present demand for leadership in studies in Nigeria stems partly from the gigantic investment on education and partly from the faith placed on education. The present National Development Plan stresses increased faith in education through increased investment for expansion of educational institutions and increase in enrolment. Leadership is one of the factors that will bring about the desired result of education.

Leadership in primary school should not be taken for granted. It is a necessary requirement for effective organization and management.

Leadership in education has to become an asset to nation building and economic productivity. There should be more of educational leadership training than academic training. The educational leaders should acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for leadership in mobilizing the people to work. Specialized training for educational leadership should be seen as sine -qua- non to educational development.

As stated earlier, no head teacher can do alone all the work in the school. He needs the co operation of other members of staff of his school, students, the community, the Primary School Board and the Ministry of Education. The extent he will be able to get their cooperation and assistance depends on the type of leadership styles he adopts. The leadership style may be democratic, authoritarian or laissez- faire?

### **2. Leadership Style Of Head Teachers**

The head teacher's leadership style is an important factor in primary school administration. According to Nwachukwu (2000), leadership is a social influencing process for the achievement of goals. The head teacher is the most influential person in the school who provides direction, guides group activities and ensures that group objectives are attained. A good and effective head teacher is the one who is capable of persuading other staff to move enthusiastically towards the achievement of group goals. He is the person with power over his staff and exercises the powers for the purpose of influencing their behaviours.

We can say that the head teachers

- have influence
- provide directions
- help in the achievement of group goals.

Philip (cited in Ode 1992) presents four leadership styles – tells, sells, consults and joins. He observed that the four leadership styles are meaningful to people in that they are able to express a preference for one of them though the consultative style is most preferred. Any head teacher that wants to carry his people along for better school performance needs to adopt a consultative style of leadership. This can be done by involving pupils through the head-boy, the staff, the community, and other stake holders in vital discussion that affects the school. Head teachers who are seen as having distinct and identified styles of leadership are more effective in promoting confidence and satisfaction in the staff and pupils.

This suggests that one most important characteristic of a successful head teacher is consistency of behaviour which enables his subordinates to know where they stand and to predict his actions and reactions. In this case a head teacher has to be open to his subordinates so as to win their confidence and support for better school performance.

For primary school head teachers to be effective in their work, they must adopt transformational leadership style. That is, he must be interested in changing and motivating his followers. Here, he is a model of values and he keeps transforming those societal values in order to bring about the realization of their vision. The head teacher has to be transformational in his leadership style. This involves directing and controlling people working under him. The relationship between the head teacher and his staff is based on his expectation for the workers which must be satisfactory.

The head teacher carries a heavy responsibility of leading his staff and the learners to be productive by coercing, directing and even threatening them to work. Whenever the staff are not ready to work, the head teacher can use transactional leadership style to persuade the people to work and can adopt transformational style when the staff want to be carried along. These depend on the ability of the head teacher to establish confidence and support of his staff.

Hill- Mcshane(2009) identifies five different perspective on leadership namely

- power-influence perspective
- the traits or competence perspective
- the behaviour perspective
- the contingency perspective
- the transformational perspective

The power influence perspective attempts to explain leadership effectiveness in terms of the amount of power possessed by a head teacher and how that power is used to influence others within the school.

The traits or competence perspective identifies the traits and competence of an effective leader.

The behaviour perspective asserts that certain behaviours are related to leadership effectiveness.

The contingency perspective argues that the appropriate behaviour to adopt depends on context and that what works in some situation may not work in others.

The transformational perspective suggests that effective head teachers transform schools through their vision, communication and ability to build commitment to that vision among his staff. A head teacher who uses this approach is capable of transforming his school by articulating a different vision for all the segments of his school, relentlessly communicating that vision to staff and learners rewarding the staff for improving performance and empowering them to take actions that are consistent with the vision.

These perspectives are not mutually exclusive. For instance a transformational head teacher may require some competencies, engage in certain behaviour and needs to acquire and use power to achieve his transformational goals effectively. Together the five perspectives give us a complete portrait of what it takes to be an effective head teacher or a leader.

Blake and Moutor (cited in Ede 2000) developed managerial grid from which they identified five styles of leadership on production namely:

Impoverished leadership: this type of leadership requires minimum effort to get work done. The supervisor passes information down the ladder and has little or no influence on them. Lack of leadership is easily noticeable.

Task oriented leadership: This type of leadership places emphasis on work. The leader maintains good relationship though uses formal authority to get high productivity.

People-oriented leadership: The needs of people are of primary concern to the detriment of organizational needs. Members are appeased through parties, gifts etc to avoid conflicts and develop high morale among workers for high productivity.

Balance leadership: The leader tries to achieve equilibrium by striking a balance between high productivity and good relations. The needs of the organisation people are balanced.

Integrated Leadership: There is a high concern for both people and production. Participation is open and communication is assured to aid team work and group discussion. This style is most desirable for commitment and high productivity.

The head teacher should choose the best or combine two or three of these styles for effective productivity.

It is good to point out here that in order to be effective or result oriented, a head teacher must be an expert in school management through his previous training and his personal attributes such as his eloquence, energy, focus and integrity all of which earn him respect of his staff and influence their behaviour.

Besides, an effective head teacher must learn to play his power game with skills, combining his hierarchical power, his expertise, a network of allies and personal power to achieve his goals. He does this by liaising with higher authorities other bodies like P.T.A., state primary school board and ministry of education for necessary assistance when necessary. As declared by Hill-Mcshane (2009), effective head teachers are skilled organizational politicians. They know how to use power to win over important constituencies to their course and remove obstacles to their strategies.

Head teacher's personality trait is another factor that can bring about his effectiveness and productivity in school. Personality traits such as intelligence, motivation drive, self confidence and desire for power can bring about his success in his leadership roles in school. Strategic thinking ability, achievement motivation power, charismatic traits and emotional intelligence are other traits that can be of help. Some of these traits have been renamed "competencies" which implies that they can be acquired through learning

### 3.The Head Teacher's Leadership Role

Headship is a well established role in the field of education, yet there are some disagreement concerning the nature and boundaries of the major functional categories of the head teacher's roles. The head teacher as defined in the Nigerian context is the administrative head of the primary institution (Anguwa cited in Ode 1992)

Akabogu (cited in Ode 1992) has this to say about the role of the head teacher.

"The duty of the head teacher is not to do the work of the school but to see that it is done."

That is why the head teacher must be a planner, organizer, implementer and supervisor at school level; a guardian, a counsellor, an inspirer and financial administrator. The technical and managerial competencies enable him to apply information and concept in his work. This involves the ability to see the school as a whole and to understand how various parts of the school relate to and affect one another which requires diagnosis and analysis.

The head teacher must understand the essential characteristics of and distinction among major groups and must be familiar with educational technology. He must understand organisational theory and basic concepts associated with leadership decision making, formal and informal organisations, bureaucracy, professionalism, administrative and supervisory behaviour, system theory, political science and numerous constraints deriving primarily from social sciences.

Another role of the head teacher is the use of his human and political skills. This is his ability to manage and resolve conflicts, empathize, inspire confidence, promote growth in his staff and challenge the by his examples he should be able to recognise and meet the individual needs of his staff and students and at the same time tapping their full potentials to contribute to the achievement of the school objectives.

The technical and managerial skills or roles of a head teacher require him to know the rules and regulations under which he works. He should also have the knowledge of architecture, engineering and accounting even though he is not one.

The Nigerian head teacher may also require more political skills to manoeuvre through contradicting demands of various political parties. He needs more skills and patience to work with ill-informed half-literate and fanatical political appointees.

Another role of the head teacher is that of school management. The head teacher is regarded as the financial controller of his school though other bodies like Parents Teachers Association (PTA) play one part or the other in financial management of the school. The income and expenditure are however subject to occasional auditing from the higher authority.

The head teacher while performing his roles has to work hand in hand with the community through the PTA to get better results. The aim of PTA is to help restructure the school system by bringing the educational process to bear on the community in an attempt to define a reality based curriculum.

In addition to the roles highlighted, the head teacher should be healthy with physical stamina. His intelligence should be above average and he should be a person of even disposition and possess a sense of humour.

From the above discourse, it is obvious that headship in primary schools entails the head teacher's functions and tasks, qualities, role expectation, his style of leadership to powers necessary for effective performance of his functions. The presenters assessed how the head teacher would lead in order to keep the school working harmoniously and make the school conducive for academic work and thus make the achievement of academic excellence a reality.

#### 4.Recommendations

Based on the discourse, it is recommended that the head teacher as an administrative head of the school should be trained professionally and should have the desirable qualities which include the followings:

- The head teacher should adopt the leadership style that is favourable to his administration and his staff as well.
- The head teacher should maintain pleasant personality and be courteous in particular to parents and guardians.
- He should be of exemplary character in honesty, moral rectitude and unassailable integrity. This should be evident in the way he handles school finances and other resources as well as in his dealing with other people.
- The head teacher should be firm, fair and flexible.
- There is need for him to supervise both school activities and the physical structures of the school regularly.
- He should always consult with his members of staff before allocating duties to them.
- The head teacher should keep abreast of modern changes and innovations in educational thoughts and practices and encourage his staff to do so.
- He should have cordial relationship with all his staff and maintain transparent impartiality among them.
- He should master and practice the art of delegating responsibility to his staff.
- The head teacher should hold regular staff meetings most importantly at the beginning and end of the term.
- He should give academic leadership to his teachers since the school is an academic community.
- The head teacher should be able know his teachers and pupils in person so as to be able to identify and solve their problems
- There should be an establishment of a well defined channel of communication between the head teacher and staff, head teacher and students and vice-versa.
- The head teacher should make rational decision and maintain reasonable consistency in implementing them.
- He should involve both staff and students in finding appropriate solutions to disciplinary problems in school.
- It is desirable for the head teacher to provide a code of conduct consisting of a few rules to guide pupils' behaviour with regards to matters such as inter personal relations, attitude to school property and attitude to school work.
- The head teacher should, within the Ministry of Education regulations, foster co-operation within the school and the community where the school is located.
- The head teacher should regularly give accurate account and objective report of the school to the appropriate authorities such as the Primary School Board, advisory councils and Ministry of Education.

#### 5.Conclusion

In conclusion, educational leaders should attend management courses which will help them develop the necessary skills and knowledge for effective leadership. Appointment of head teacher should be based on their management background and experience. Teachers should not be promoted from the classroom to become head teachers on political grounds.

Older head teachers need to update their competencies in order to keep abreast of the changes taking place in educational leadership. Head teachers as leaders should be seen as having distinct and identified leadership style as this is considered to be more effective in promoting confidence and satisfaction in the subordinates.

Head teachers should also be consistent in their behaviour while dealing with their staff and students. Besides, modern supervision techniques which are done under friendly atmosphere should be employed by the head teachers instead of the old rigid method of instilling fears in their subordinates.

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