

Building Vision/Goals and Excellence in the Management of Personnel by Secondary School Principals

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between transformational leadership practices of building school vision/goals and Excellence in the personnel management by secondary school principals in Cross River State. The study adopted the correlation survey design. A research question and null hypothesis guided the study, with a population of 5614 respondents, Cluster random sampling technique was used to randomly select 375 out of 5382 teachers from 46 selected public secondary schools from the three education zones of Cross River State to respond to questionnaire items. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw 232 public secondary school principals for the study, using instruments entitled "Transformational Leadership Practice Questionnaire (TLPQ) and Excellence in Personnel Management Questionnaire (EPMQ) for data collection. Mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to answer the research questions, while multiple regression analysis was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The result was that; although, there is a low relationship between leadership practices of building school vision/goals, there exists significant relationship between school in personnel management by principals in Cross River State. It was recommended that ministries of education and institutions should mount capacity-building programmes like workshops, conferences and in-service training, to empower school principals in transformational leadership skills of building school vision/goals so as to solve leadership problems in Cross River State and the country as a whole. Curriculum planners and the government should include transformational leadership concept in the curriculum at all levels of education.

Introduction

Leadership practices of principals in Cross River State seem to be characterized by poor vision and goals for the schools, as they only implement the government visions/goals. Personnel are not intellectually stimulated to solve problems outside the prescribed method, nor are they provided opportunities for professional and social growth, but must only comply strictly with instructions based on state policies for education. These are serious leadership lapses by school principals that have been observed for sometime. These situations have resulted in various conflict situations which led to a conference being held in Calabar for public secondary school principals titled "The principal and issues of conflict handling in Cross River State". This study therefore sought to determine the relationship existing between transformational leadership of building school vision/goals and excellence in personnel management by secondary school principals in Cross River State.

Many school administrators do not have a clear and shared sense of purpose focused on students learning through personnel management. Without this sense of purpose, the school programme will be fragmented and uncoordinated without proper direction. This may result in personnel, especially teachers, losing motivation to put in their best, because schools are complex places, and teaching is a difficult and challenging job.

Schools are likely to be more successful in achieving in-depth learning when school principals work with personnel and the community to build a collective educational vision that is clear, compelling and connected to teaching and learning. This vision will help them focus attention on what is important and will motivate personnel and even students, and increase their sense of shared responsibility. Bamberg (1994) describes a school vision as an image of what the school can and should become. He stressed that it is embedded in values, hopes, and dreams. He added that, goals and objectives are more specific and concrete. They are derived from the vision, and can be used to focus on change and improvement efforts. Mission he concluded, are still more specific and often defines what the school is trying to accomplish and for whom. Vision therefore, is a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization. It could also be described as the leader's ambition of the organization. If a vision conveys an ideal, it communicates a standard for excellence and a clear choice of positive values.

Transformational leadership practice articulates a compelling vision of the future that will excite and convert potential followers. The school vision may be developed by the senior team or may emerge from a broad series of discussions, which the leader or school principal buys into it hook, line and sinker, when the principal sees that this collectively shared vision will bring about a positive change in the school. Weighing the important role that mission and vision play in an organization, especially the school organization, Bennis and Nanus (1986) affirm that,

To choose a direction, a leader must have first developed a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization. This image, which is called a vision, may be as vague as a dream or as precise as a goal or mission statement. The critical point is that a vision articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists (p. 21)

Principals along with teachers and parents should develop a clear vision and a specific mission statement. This, the school principals can do by collaborating with all the major stakeholders in

the community, whose hopes, dreams, expectations and values contribute to the school's goals and aspirations.

In this regard, Bennis and Nanus (1986), Deal and Peterson (1994) point out that the vision and mission of the school must be clear, engaging, attainable, motivating, and must touch deeper values and hopes of the school. It is true that all leaders in every organization, as well as the school should have the capacity to create a compelling vision that will take the organization and its members through the realities of the present to the possibilities of the future, in a unique way that is appropriate for the school organization. This is why Manasse (1986) points out that, a leader's vision needs to be shared by those who will be involved in the realization of the vision.

Murphy (1988) stressed the need for the development of a shared vision when arguing that, it is very rare to see a clearly defined vision articulated by a school leader at the top of the hierarchy and then installed by followers. In other words, vision only comes alive when it is shared and effectively communicated to the group and the entire community. Manasse (1986) views vision as the development, transmission and implementation of an image of a desirable future.

In his own view, Sergiovanni (1990) states that school leaders or principals have not only a vision but also the skills to communicate that vision to others, to develop a shared vision, a shared covenant. In which case, the development, transmission and implementation of this vision is the focal point of school leaders or principals of educational change. That is why these type of school leaders or principals and even others who are involved in taking major decisions concerning education must invite and encourage others, especially, the personnel to participate in determining and developing a shared vision, a process which promotes collegial and collaborative relationships. Sergiovanni (1990) described this aspect of leadership as "bonding", whereby leaders and followers have a shared set of values and commitment that bond them together in order to meet a common goal. No wonder, Bamberg (1994) observed that, schools with educational missions give educators stronger motivation and provide parents with a clearer picture of what the school values. If it not so, the schools can get side-tracked toward non- productive programmes, loose focus on control and become uncoordinated.

Bamberg (1994) also opined that, schools' vision can also incorporate values and goals related to equity and justice, respect and appreciation for multiculturalism and diversity as well as concern for academic success of students. He concluded that, these views of the school determine how the people within the school spend their time, what problems they solve and how resources are distributed. In which case, a clear understanding of the schools vision, goals and mission statement may lead to greater parents, community and other stakeholders' support. Invariably, a clearly defined and communicated school vision supports active improvement and accomplishment of the schools goals.

Research question

To what extent does building school goals/vision relate to excellence in managing personnel by secondary school principals?

Research hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between building school vision/goals and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals.

Research Method

This study is a correlation survey design to find out the relationship existing between transformational leadership practice of building school vision/goals and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals in Cross River State. The study was carried out in Cross River State, made up of 18 local government areas, and divided into three senatorial districts, the north, central and south representing three education zones. The education zones therefore are the northern education zone with its zonal education head office located in Ogoja council secretariat; comprising 72 public secondary schools, 72 principals and 1465 teachers. The central education zone has its head office located in Ikom council secretariat, comprising 74 public secondary schools, 74 principals and 1749 teachers. The southern educational zone has 86 public secondary schools, 86 principals and 2168 teachers. This brings to a total of 232 public secondary schools in the three senatorial education zones, with 232 principals and 5382 teachers. Although teachers are not being studied here, but were being used in this study to respond to questionnaire items as they are closer to the principals and will give the required information concerning their principal's leadership practices on personnel management than the principals themselves.

The population of this study comprised all public secondary school principals and teachers in the state under study. There are a total of 232 principals and 5382 teachers in public secondary schools. All principals were used as intact population to respond to questionnaire items, while teachers were randomly selected to respond to questionnaire items on behalf of their school principals. Only public secondary schools were used for the study since the government education policies and regulations are more binding on them than on the private schools.

The entire 232 principals of public secondary schools were used for the study, while 375 teachers were randomly selected out of 5382 to respond to questionnaire items for the study. The entire 232 principals of public secondary schools were used for the study as purposive sample, because they met the criteria for the study. Cluster random sampling technique was used. Here 20% of the schools from 232 schools were selected, where 14 schools were randomly picked from northern education zone, 15 and 17 from the central and southern education zones respectively. Therefore, 46 schools in all were selected and were used to select teachers for the study. Thereafter, 35% of teachers from 5382 were randomly selected to ensure equal representation from each cluster for the study, through balloting. 375 questionnaire were produced, in the process of administering the instruments, three copies of questionnaire were lost, only 372 were retrieved and used. The researcher developed two structured questionnaires titled transformational leadership practices Questionnaire (TLPQ) items 1-4 and Excellence in Personnel Management questionnaire ESPMQ (items 5-9). The two types of structured questionnaires were developed by the researcher and were administered to the same group of respondents for data collection. The TLPQ has one cluster namely; developing school vision/goals.

ESPMQ has a total of four items whose subset includes; communication, caring, creating opportunities, creating school culture and credible leadership. Both instruments had a total of nine items with the following response mode:

Strongly agree (SA) = 4points
 Agree (A) = 3
 Disagree (D) = 2
 Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

. The data of the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer research questions. While multiple regression analysis was used to analyze data and the hypothesis was tested at alpha 0.05 level of significance (see interpretation of result according to criterion measure by Nwana,1982 on Table 1)

Table 1: The Table below was used to interpret the result in accordance with criterion measure by Nwana (1982).

Correlation	Interpretation
0.80 – 10	Very high relationship
0.60 – 0.80	High relationship
0.40 – 0.60	Medium relationship
0.20 – 0.40	Low relationship
0.00 – 0.20	Very low relationship

Results

Table 2: Information on Table two below presents mean scores and standard deviation for principals (N=232) and teachers (N=372) responses on transformational leadership practices on school vision/goals.

S/No	Variable	Principals (N = 232)		Teachers (N = 372)		Overall		Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
	School Vision /Goals							
1	Is a creative leader	3.32	.73	3.35	.69	3.35	.70	A
2	Has great ideas of how our school should be	3.19	.75	3.31	.65	3.26	.69	A
3	Always introduces those beautifully ideas into our school; from time to time	3.16	.77	3.41	.61	3.32	.68	A
4	Is an inspiring leader	3.24	.70	3.27	.66	3.25	.68	A

Cluster Mean	3.23	.51	3.34	.36	3.23	.43	A
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The result presented on Table 2 above shows the mean scores of principals and teachers on each of the items on the indices of transformational leadership practices namely, school vision/goals. The mean scores indicate that respondents agree to the utilization of transformational leadership attributes on school vision/goals. This was shown on their respective mean scores which were above the criterion mean fixed at 2.50 and above. The findings of the study revealed that although principals in Cross River State utilize attributes of transformational leadership of school vision/goals, but they do so to a low extent.

Table 3: Presentation of the results of correlation coefficient(r) and its interpretation according to Nwana (1982) of building school vision and goal

<i>Variables</i>	Correlation Coefficient(r)	Interpretation
. Building school vision and goals (BSVG)	0.23	Low relationship

Information on Table 3 above shows that the correlation coefficient(r) between building school vision/goals and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals in Cross River State is 0.23. This value was interpreted to mean low relationship (Nwana, 1982). The result therefore implies that there is a low relationship between building school goals and vision and attainment of excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals in Cross River State. This also means that though transformational leadership practice of building school vision/goals is being utilized by school principals in Cross River State, but to a low extent. In order to further explore the significance of their low relationship, a corresponding null was tested as shown on Table 4 below

Ho: There is no significant relationship between building school vision and goals and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals.

<i>Variable</i>	Multiple R ²	R ²	Change	B	BETA	Standard Error	% Variance Added	F-value	F-Critical P<0.05
Vision & School	.2269	.0515	0.0515	.309633	.129773	.115012	5.15	32.689	9.85

Goals
(VSG)

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of School Goals and Vision (VSG).

The information on Table 4 above shows that the observed F-value of school vision and goals is 32.689. The critical F-value for vision and school goals for 1 and 603 degree of freedom (df) at 0.05 level of significance is 9.85. Since the observed F-value of 32.689 of the 5.15% of the variance added to the total variance in the attainment of excellence in the management of personnel is higher than the critical F-value of 9.85, then the null hypothesis in respect of school vision and goals is rejected. This therefore means that there is relationship between building school vision and goals and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals.

Discussion

The finding revealed that building school vision/goals and excellence are positively related. In other words, commitment to building school vision and goals of a school by principals will result in a positive impact in personnel management

On this issue of building school vision/goals and excellence, Bass (1985) provided a useful explanation when he argued that, the reason why people with vision and passion achieve great things is because they put passion and energy into everything they do. They care about their subordinates or personnel and want them to succeed. Since they have a focus, a mental picture of what their organization should be and because they share this vision with their subordinates, convince them to translate this vision into objectives and work towards achieving them, success is achieved.

This implies that attention should be given to institutionalization of vision and goals if school leadership is to be successful. On the other hand, any leadership that lacks institutional vision is bound to fail in attaining excellence in personnel management. This could mean that the poor leadership practices observed in Cross River State Public Secondary Schools may be due to principal's lack of or poor skills in building school vision and goals. It may then mean that the principals need to be equipped properly through training to acquire or develop the skills in building school vision and goal.

Conclusion

It was concluded based on the findings of the study that;

There exists a relationship between building school-vision/goals and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals.

Recommendations

(1) Since there exists a relationship between building school-vision/goals and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principal,. Government should mount and encourage capacity-building programmes in leadership training especially in transformational leadership practice of building school vision/goals.

(2) Transformational leadership concepts need to be included in the curriculum for all levels of professional education training.

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