

**APPLICATION OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS
IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KOGI
STATE**

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Abstract

This study investigated the application of principals' leadership characteristics in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. The population comprised two hundred and twenty-two (222) public secondary schools in Kogi state having 222 principals. A sample size of 100 principals was drawn using simple random sampling technique representing 45% of the population. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire titled 'application of principals' leadership characteristics questionnaire (APLCQ)'. The questionnaire was face-validated and the reliability was done using Cronbach Alpha Statistics, which yielded an index of 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings revealed among others that, the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state include: good decision-making practices, clear vision, good leadership qualities, being an excellent listener, following proper time management practice, exercise tolerance for ambiguity, work cooperatively with staff, be a bridge builder, and possess the characteristics of leading by example. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, secondary school principals should possess and acquire good leadership attributes to sustain the administration of their schools for global competitiveness.

Keywords: Principals, Leadership characteristics, Administration, secondary schools.

Introduction

Principals of secondary schools are administrators that possess some leadership qualities needed for successful administration of the system. They are seen as the leading officer in the school system that strive to win the respect of all his staff and create a professional spirit in them, pride in the nobility of their moral conduct and a sense of identification with others for institutional progress. It is the duty of the principal to delegate authority to the subordinates and make decisions for administrative improvement. According to Wallace Foundation (2013), it is the responsibility of a school principal as a functional leader to shape a vision of academic success for all students based on high standards; create a climate hospitable to education so that safety, cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail; cultivate leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their parts in realizing the school vision; improve instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost; and manage people, data and processes to foster school improvement. Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki and Portin (2010) state that, an effective principal makes sure that academic success becomes the driver of instruction, as the entire system adopts a school-wide learning improvement agenda that focuses on goals for student progress. This implies that a functional principal must possess good leadership characteristics to enhance productivity in the school system.

Hence, leadership is a process by which individuals at the helm of affairs, change the minds of others, with the intention of moving their institutions forward towards accomplishing specified goals and objectives (Nwabueze, Chukwuji & Ugwoezuonu, 2018). In the school system, leadership is an important aspect of school management and administration. Leadership in the education industry could be seen as the systematic process of influencing the attitude, behaviour and work effort of staff and students by administrative heads for the achievement of institutional goals and objectives (Ukala, Nwabueze & Madumere-Obike, 2018). Okeke (2006) defines leadership as an act or practice of guiding, supporting,

facilitating, initiating, giving feedback, suggesting, protecting, commanding, linking, interpreting actions and modelling. Ogonor (2004) sees leadership as the process of mixing reasonably with the group, integrating group members, organising, dominating, communicating, controlling, recognising efforts of group members and prodding members to be productive. According to Oragwu and Nwabueze (2015), leadership is of paramount importance in the functional performance of academic staff, non-academic staff and students for organizational productivity.

Leadership characteristics entail leadership ability, competency, proficiency and effective communication between the super-ordinates and subordinates in an organization. This is why Nakpodia (2012) states that, institutional leaders must possess the characteristics of making right decision that would benefit the institution, staff and students for global competitiveness. Adegbemile (2011) states that, the best leadership characteristics needed for effective management of educational institution is the possession of communication, decision making and motivating skills, as well as recognizing the efforts of staff, and involving the staff in decision making process.

Leadership characteristics could be described as the attribute of people to contribute in making something happen extraordinarily for administrative effectiveness and institutional development. Effective leadership ensures the ability to successfully integrate and maximize available resources, within the internal and external environments for the attainment of institutional goals and objectives (Ukaigwe, Nwabueze & Nwokedi, 2019). It is the ability and manifestation of competence among leaders in discharging of their duties and performing skillful functions for the effective administrative function. According to Lambert (2000), leadership characteristics are the broad-based and skillful participation in the work of leadership that leads to lasting school improvement. It has to do with the ability of the leader to motivate, inspire, stimulate and influence the actions, reactions, behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of followers to achieve

organizational set goals. Mullins (2012) defines leadership as a relationship through which one person influences the behaviour or actions of others. Ogunsaju (2006) defines leadership as a position of dominance and prestige accompanied by the ability to direct, motivate and assist others in achieving a specified purpose. However, leadership is a symbiotic relationship which involves interactions between the super-ordinates and subordinates characterized by influence and actions towards goal achievement. Leadership therefore, is a dynamic process that normally brings growth, development and productivity in any given organization.

In a school setting, leadership characteristics is the responsibility of the principals and other heads as well as teachers that are responsible in transferring knowledge and skills to the learners for institutional growth. Sharma (2011) identifies leadership characteristics as principals having good communication skills, comfort, empathy, decision making skill, influence, self-management, time management skills and commitment in organization framework. The absence of these characteristics negatively affects teachers' performance, academic progress of students, and school productivity (Piaw, Hee, Ismail & Ying, 2014).

The primary responsibility of the principal as a school head is to facilitate effective teaching and learning with the overall mission of enhancing students' academic progress. The principals' leadership characteristics in secondary schools involve the application of management principles towards achieving educational goals. To achieve the above stated objectives, school principals must apply appropriate managerial skills and leadership characteristics such as involvement of teachers in decision making, delegation of responsibilities to teachers, good communication network and adopting the best fitted style of leadership. According to Adeyemi (2010), leadership is a process through which persons or group influence others for the attainment of group goals and productivity. If the principals' characteristics cannot influence teachers' practical functions, then effectiveness is not achievable.

Statement of the Problem

The principals are the heads of secondary schools with series of responsibilities/duties to enhance the performance of staff and students for quality output. It seems however that, many principals may abandon some of their duties for the younger teachers who may lack the experience to control the activities happening in the schools. Also, some principals may find it difficult to effectively administer their responsibilities in schools, which in turn affect teachers' job performance and academic performance of the learners. Schools are usually managed differently because of the principals' characteristics, bearing in mind that there are individual differences among people.

However, some school principals and teachers show little or no commitments to their duties due to poor leadership experiences. Some even come to school late, which has become a normal activity among them; and this makes it very difficult to exercise their leadership qualities and characteristics in the school system for optimum administrative effectiveness. Poor leadership characteristics experienced among principals may include little or no supervision of teachers, poor record keeping, non-involvement of teachers in decision making, poor communication, lack of appropriate delegation of duties/responsibilities, poor school-community relations and above all, lack of maintenance culture which has affected school administration and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Kogi State.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the Application of principals' leadership characteristics in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. determine the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state; and
2. ascertain how these leadership characteristics of principals can be applied in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this research.

1. What are the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state?
2. How can these leadership characteristics of principals be applied to enhance the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on how these leadership characteristics of principals can be applied in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. The population of this study comprised two hundred and twenty-two (222) public secondary schools in Kogi state having 222 principals, which consisted of 140 male and 82 female principals. A sample of 100 schools was drawn from the 222 schools from which a sample size of 100 principals was drawn using simple random sampling technique representing 45% of the population. This included 60 male and 40 female principals.

The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire titled: Application of Principals' Leadership Characteristics Questionnaire (APLCQ), developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was face-validated by two experts in Educational Management, and one from Measurement and Evaluation. The validators' comments were incorporated in the final draft of the instrument for data collection. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were trial

tested on selected 20 secondary school principals that are not part of the sample in Kogi State. The results were correlated using Cronbach Alpha Statistics, which yielded an index of 0.86, indicating that the instrument is reliable enough for this study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. In doing so, a criterion mean of 2.50 was established as the cut-off point. This implies that, item with mean score of 2.50 and above was categorize as meeting the acceptance mean and accordingly, agreed upon; those below criterion mean score of 2.50 were rated as not meeting the acceptance mean and accordingly, disagreed upon. The t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. In doing so, a t-critical value of ± 2.00 , which is constant, was used to accept or reject any null hypothesis. Any calculated t-value above the critical value of ± 2.00 was rejected otherwise, accepted.

Results

Research Question One: What are the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state?

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviation of principals on the leadership characteristics of school principals needed in the administration of secondary schools

S/N leadership characteristics include: Male (60) Female (40) Decision

		Mean	St.D	Mean	St.D	
1	Good decision-making practices	3.01	0.57	3.22	0.42	Agreed
2	Must have a clear vision	3.18	0.55	3.09	0.44	Agreed
3	Exhibit good leadership qualities	3.12	0.56	3.15	0.43	Agreed
4	be an excellent listener	3.22	0.54	3.25	0.42	Agreed
5	Possess positive attitude towards the delegation of duties	3.25	0.54	3.00	0.45	Agreed
6	Must possess effective communication ability	3.27	0.53	3.11	0.44	Agreed
7	Follow proper time management practice	3.20	0.54	3.01	0.45	Agreed
8	Must be fair and consistent in judgment	3.19	0.55	3.03	0.45	Agreed
9	Exercise tolerance for ambiguity	3.15	0.55	3.14	0.43	Agreed
10	Be creative	3.10	0.56	3.18	0.43	Agreed
11	Work cooperatively with staff	3.07	0.56	3.21	0.42	Agreed
12	Be a bridge builder	3.08	0.56	3.02	0.45	Agreed
13	Must possess the characteristics of leading by example	3.05	0.57	3.08	0.44	Agreed
Aggregate Mean		3.15	0.54	3.12	0.44	Agreed

Data on Table 1 present the mean scores and standard deviation of male and female principals on the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state. The respondents agreed on all

the items with high mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5. Based on the analysis, it clear that the higher the mean score, the lower the standard deviation; and lower the mean score, the higher the standard deviation. The aggregate mean score of 3.15 for male principals and 3.12 for female principals showed that, the respondents agreed on the items in the table.

Therefore, the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state include: good decision making practices, clear vision, good leadership qualities, being an excellent listener, possessing positive attitude towards the delegation of duties, possessing effective communication ability, following proper time management practice, be fair and consistent in judgment, exercise tolerance for ambiguity, be creative, work cooperatively with staff, be a bridge builder, and possess the characteristics of leading by example.

Research Question Two: How can these leadership characteristics of principals be applied to enhance the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State?

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviation of principals on the ways leadership characteristics of principals can be applied to enhance the administration of secondary schools

S/N	Ways leadership characteristics of principals can be applied to enhance the administration of secondary schools include:	Male (60)	Female (40)	Mean	St.D	Decision
14	Involving the staff in decision making processes	3.00	0.57	3.05	0.43	Agreed
15	Having clear vision for school development	3.07	0.56	3.19	0.42	Agreed
16	Exhibiting good leadership qualities to improve the administrative and academic activities	3.04	0.56	3.02	0.44	Agreed
17	Becoming an excellent listener to ensure that school objectives are achieved	3.18	0.55	3.12	0.42	Agreed
18	Possessing positive attitude towards the delegation of duties to enhance administrative excellence in the school	3.20	0.54	3.14	0.42	Agreed
19	Possessing effective communication ability to create positive instructional performance among staff for students' productivity	3.31	0.52	3.26	0.41	Agreed
20	Following proper time management practices to promote interactive academic growth for improved productivity	3.29	0.53	3.22	0.41	Agreed
21	Becoming fair and consistent in judgment to promote justice in the school system	3.15	0.55	3.09	0.43	Agreed
22	Exercising tolerance for ambiguity to accommodate staff and students in knowledge building	3.03	0.56	3.01	0.44	Agreed
23	Being creative to support staff development for institutional growth	3.21	0.54	3.11	0.42	Agreed
24	Working cooperatively with staff to enhance their job effectiveness	3.11	0.55	3.07	0.43	Agreed
25	Being a bridge builder for academic progress and	3.19	0.55	3.13	0.42	Agreed

26	institutional growth Possessing the characteristics of leading by example for administrative effectiveness	3.24	0.54	3.16	0.42	Agreed
Aggregate Mean		3.16	0.53	3.13	0.44	Agreed

Data on Table 2 present the mean scores and standard deviation of male and female principals on the ways leadership characteristics of principals can be applied to enhance the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state. The respondents agreed on all the items with high mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5. Based on the analysis, it clear that the higher the mean score, the lower the standard deviation; and lower the mean score, the higher the standard deviation. The aggregate mean score of 3.16 for male principals and 3.13 for female principals showed that, the respondents agreed on the items in the table.

Therefore, the ways leadership characteristics of principals can be applied to enhance the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state include: involving the staff in decision making processes, having clear vision for school development, exhibiting good leadership qualities to improve the administrative and academic activities, becoming an excellent listener to ensure that school objectives are achieved, possessing positive attitude towards the delegation of duties to enhance administrative excellence in the school, possessing effective communication ability to create positive instructional performance among staff for students' productivity, and following proper time management practices to promote interactive academic growth for improved productivity. Others include becoming fair and consistent in judgment to promote justice in the school system, exercising tolerance for ambiguity to accommodate staff and students in knowledge building, being creative to support staff development for institutional growth, working cooperatively with staff to enhance their job effectiveness, being a bridge builder for academic progress and institutional growth, and possessing the characteristics of leading by example for administrative effectiveness.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state.

Table 3: Summary of t-test result on the difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools

Gender	N	Mean	St. D	t-calculated value	t-critical value	df	Sig.	P-Value	Decision
Male	60	3.15	0.54	1.03	±2.00	98	0.05	0.12	Not Significant
Female	40	3.12	0.44						

Data on Table 3 present the summary of t-test result on the difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state. The t-calculated value of 1.03 is less than the t-critical value of ± 2.00 , and the p-value of 0.12 is greater than the alpha significant level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on how these leadership characteristics of principals can be applied in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test result on the difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on how these leadership characteristics of principals can be applied in the administration of secondary schools

Gender	N	Mean	St. D	t-calculated value	t-critical value	df	Sig.	P-Value	Decision
Male	60	3.16	0.53	0.96	±2.00	98	0.05	0.08	Not Significant
Female	40	3.13	0.44						

Data on Table 4 present the summary of t-test result on the difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on how these leadership characteristics of principals can be applied in the administration of secondary

schools in Kogi State. The t-calculated value of 0.96 is less than the t-critical value of ± 2.00 , and the p-value of 0.08 is greater than the alpha significant level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on how these leadership characteristics of principals can be applied in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed that, the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state include: good decision making practices, clear vision, good leadership qualities, being an excellent listener, possessing positive attitude towards the delegation of duties, possessing effective communication ability, following proper time management practice, be fair and consistent in judgment, exercise tolerance for ambiguity, be creative, work cooperatively with staff, be a bridge builder, and possess the characteristics of leading by example. The test of hypothesis one showed that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals' on the leadership characteristics of principals needed in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state. Educational leaders such as the principals of secondary schools play pivotal role in enhancing teaching effectiveness, attitude and reputations of their schools, because they are the cornerstone on which teaching and learning communities' function and grow. In line with the findings, Oragwu and Nwabueze (2015) were of the opinion that, leadership is of paramount importance in the functional performance of academic staff, nonacademic staff and students for organizational productivity. This is why Nakpodia (2012) stated that, institutional leaders must possess the characteristics of making right decision that would benefit the institution, staff and students for global competitiveness. Adegbemile (2011) states that, the best leadership characteristics needed for effective management of educational institution is the possession of

communication, decision making and motivating skills, as well as recognizing the efforts of staff, and involving the staff in decision making process.

The findings of research question two revealed that, the ways leadership characteristics of principals can be applied to enhance the administration of secondary schools in Kogi state include: involving the staff in decision making processes, having clear vision for school development, exhibiting good leadership qualities to improve the administrative and academic activities, becoming an excellent listener to ensure that school objectives are achieved, possessing positive attitude towards the delegation of duties to enhance administrative excellence in the school, possessing effective communication ability to create positive instructional performance among staff for students' productivity, and following proper time management practices to promote interactive academic growth for improved productivity. Others include becoming fair and consistent in judgment to promote justice in the school system, exercising tolerance for ambiguity to accommodate staff and students in knowledge building, being creative to support staff development for institutional growth, working cooperatively with staff to enhance their job effectiveness, being a bridge builder for academic progress and institutional growth, and possessing the characteristics of leading by example for administrative effectiveness. The test of hypothesis two showed that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals' on how these leadership characteristics of principals can be applied in the administration of secondary schools in Kogi State. The primary responsibility of the principal as a school head is to facilitate effective teaching and learning with the overall mission of enhancing students' academic progress. The principals' leadership characteristics in secondary schools involve the application of management principles towards achieving educational goals. In line with the findings, Sharma (2011) was of the opinion that, school principals most apply appropriate managerial skills and leadership characteristics such as involvement of teachers in decision making, delegation of responsibilities to teachers, good communication network and

adopting the best fitted style of leadership to enhance proper administration of secondary schools for sustainable development.

Conclusion

The study had shown that secondary school principals need to acquire good leadership attributes to sustain the administration of their schools for global competitiveness. Such leadership characteristic needed by school principals are good decision-making practices, clear vision, good leadership qualities, excellent listener, positive attitude towards the delegation of duties, effective communication abilities, proper time management practices, fair and consistent in judgment, tolerance for ambiguity, creativity, bridge builder, and the characteristics of leading by example.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that:

1. Secondary school principals should possess and acquire good leadership attributes to sustain the administration of their schools for global competitiveness.
2. They should be involving the staff in decision making processes to enhance knowledge sharing for institutional building.
3. They should have clear vision for school development and exhibiting good leadership qualities to improve the administrative and academic activities.
4. They should serve as excellent listeners to ensure that school objectives are achieved.
5. They should possess positive attitude towards the delegation of duties to enhance administrative excellence in the school.
6. They should possess effective communication skills to create positive instructional performance among staff for students' productivity
7. They should adopt proper time management practices to promote interactive academic growth for improved productivity.

8. They should be fair and consistent in judgment to promote justice in the school system, and as well exercise tolerance for ambiguity to accommodate staff and students in knowledge building practices.
9. They should be creative to support staff development for institutional growth, and as well work cooperatively with staff to enhance their job effectiveness.
10. They should be bridging builders to promote academic progress and institutional growth, as well as possess the characteristics of leading by example for administrative effectiveness.

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