

Levels of Democratic Leadership Practice among ... (Umar & Dahiru (2022))

Levels of Democratic Leadership Practice among Principals of Secondary Schools in Gusau Educational Zone

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Abstract

This study examined levels of democratic leadership practice among principals of secondary schools in Gusau educational zone, Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design in dealing with the study problem. The target population of the study is 132 teachers and principals of public secondary schools in Gusau, out of which 97 respondents were selected using Krejcie and Morgan table of determining sample size from a population of 132. The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaires level of elements of democratic leadership practice among secondary school principals Gusau educational zone, Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria. Content validity was examined qualitatively and quantitatively and restructured by the research supervisor and other lecturers in education department, Federal University, Gusau. The data collected from the field was ascertained in agreement through the supervisor of the research study. The responses were analyzed using Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). However, from the analysis of data, it was discovered that the level of decision making, motivation factor (s) and mediation has a significant effect at high level in allowing and working with others within the school management using the elements of democratic leadership style among principals of secondary schools in Gusau educational zone, Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria. As the school principal is the key figure in the management and administration of school; he/she plays a key role in setting the tone, establishing the conditions and providing stimulation for effective teaching and learning in the school.

Keywords: Principal, leadership, democratic, motivation

Introduction

Studies, has shown that for any organization to be successful the leadership style must have its own leafage. Therefore, the principal's role as the head of the school is very important in order to ascertain the school success which deals with the school based management activity implementation to show that satisfaction of students-teachers output and outcome (Haruni & Mafwimbo, 2014). Commonwealth secretariat (1996) comments that one of the key factors influencing school effectiveness is the nature and quality of leadership style and management provided by each school. Good leadership provides



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necessary guidance, clarity of direction and rewards for effective performance of an organization Okumbe, (2001) opined that in any organization, human resources are the most important resources and as such the success of the organization depends entirely on how effectively its workers are managed. It is therefore important that great efforts be put in place to achieve integration with a sense of actualizing the organizational goals.

A school consists of the principal, teachers, non-teaching staff as well as the students who interact with one another so as to accomplish a common goal. For a school organization to be held together, good leadership and efficient management area must (Farrant, 1997). Leadership is the ability to conduct or guide the subjects. (Achieng, 2000) sees leadership as the ability to assimilate and translate ideas, rules, regulations and procedures to guide subjects in carrying out a mission within a defined mandate. Luthan, (2002) contends that the difference between success and failure, whether in war, business, a protest moment or basketball will be attribute to leadership. Cole (2005) advocates for the leadership of a principal to be democratic leadership style combining, self-confidence, friendliness, firmness and tact and should merely consisting of issuing orders.

Democratic leadership also known as participative leadership or shared leadership, is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision making process. It can be applied to any organization, from private businesses to schools and to government. This leadership style focuses on group equality and the free flow of ideas. The leader of the group is still there to give or offer guidance and control. Researchers have found that the democratic leadership style is one of the most effective type and leads to higher productivity, better contributions from teachers, non-teaching staff or group members as well as increasing staff morale. Cole, (2005). Democratic style of leadership practiced by the principal, proper delegation of duties relieves the school from their many tasks and also in calcite a sense of responsibility, hardworking and commitment among the subordinates which in turn enhances teacher's performance.

Leadership is the basic ingredients for effective service delivery and attainment of any organizational goal. Failure in leadership is a failure to the attainment of the organizational goal no matter how big or small the organization is. Similarly, before this process of influencing others activity, there must be a figure to lead which is called LEADER. In the same vein, there are also fundamental tasks a leader has to perform in ensuring effective organizational management such a planning, organizing, controlling and coordinating. On the other hand, the manner a leader presents him/her in discharging his/her responsibilities matters a lot in successful attainment of the organizational goal. Therefore, leadership style is the manner in which the leader undertakes the process of convincing and recruiting people for specific objectives and guiding them throughout all of the tasks until the objectives are attained (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). Leaders using democratic leadership style build consensus through participation but these leaders also expect a higher level of excellence and self-direction. They have time to listen and share ideas with their followers. They also tend to be more flexible and are responsive to one's needs. They are able to motivate teachers to participate in decision making and are respectful as opined by (Goldman, 2002).



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The democratic style of leadership is a style of leadership that emphasizes on the group and leader participation in the making of policies as well as decisions about organizational matters that are arrived at after consultation and communication with various people in the organization. This style of leadership attempts as much as possible to make each individual feel that he/she is an important member of the organization. Communication is multidirectional while ideas are exchanged between employees and the leader (Heenan & Bennis, 1999). In schools, the style is appropriate when teachers are able to agree or when a small group of teachers are needed for the decision making. Furthermore, democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, as they participate in the group and allow input from other group members. Lewin, (2005) found that participative leadership, also known as democratic leadership, is generally the most effective leadership style. This leadership style, encourage group members to participate, but retain the final say over the decision-making process as the group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative. Any leadership function is as important as the outcome of the decision taken by the leader. Therefore, it is true that every leader takes decisions that are important to achieve the desired objectives of the institution. But the ways of making decisions vary from one leader to another the variation makes a difference in style of leadership. Hence, way of decision making is an important input for identifying the leadership style. The principal and teachers have informed knowledge about everything that affects the institution and work as well as shares decision making and problem solving responsibilities. Here the principal act to be a coach who has the final say, but gathers information from staff members before taking final decision (Jibon & Keshorjit, 2013).

A leader influences subordinates' motivation through participation and empowerment. The leader motivates the team by empowering them to direct themselves, and guide them with a loose reign. Motivating subordinates is more challenging than motivating an individual. Very often, individuals in the team have different beliefs, values and different goals and expectations. It is difficult for a leader to motivate every member of a team based on their unique motivating factor. A single motivation strategy has to be selected for the team so that it can be used effectively Moreover, motivating a team is often challenging as both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation strategies have to be determined according to the values, beliefs and thinking of the entire team (Jibon & Keshorjit, 2013)

A good organization spend considerable amount on solving administrative problems. The style a leader adopts in handling a crisis determines his success or otherwise of his effective management of an organization (Ogunsaju, 1983). Many crises have been managed and contained by the leaders through their different style or approaches towards their staff. Democratic leadership style is believed to be one of such styles that not only contained but protect the crisis from happening. Many other approaches and styles exist beside the democratic leadership style, however it was observed by the researcher that many crises repeatedly engulfed different schools of Gusau Educational zones ranging from students –teacher crisis, teacher-teacher crisis, teacher parent crisis, teacher non teacher crisis, teacher management crisis which could have been forestalled by the principals but escalates and degenerates other crisis which sometime get higher authorities



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involved in solving (Ogunsaju, 1983). Lack of effective leadership style has caused suspicions among members of staff, lukewarm attitude towards discharge of assigned responsibilities, disloyalty between leaders and subordinates, staff and student indiscipline.

Furthermore, the researchers also observed that despite the importance of the area the literature that assesses the level of democratic leadership styles among principals of secondary schools in Gusau Educational zone could not be found to the best of researcher's knowledge and effort to trace such principals are faced with problems of decision making, maintenance of discipline among others, absent of motivation, poor growth and development. Those problems are due to lack of strategic leadership style by principals to effectively pilot the affair of schools in their custody. These aforementioned have created problems in management and administration of secondary schools in Gusau educational zone in Zamfara state. In recent times, the performance of some principals over the years in their leadership style has remained an issue of concern to the teachers, educationists and stakeholders (Ogunsaju, 1983). Researchers have shown that the behavior of principals especially in relation to teachers as subordinates is generally influenced by certain psychological factors within the school system.

Furthermore, the relationship between principals' leadership style and overall job performance has been a subject of controversy by researchers (Adeyemi, 2006). The controversy was centered on whether or not the style of leadership through their various elements and approaches applied by the principals influences the atmosphere for learning and performance in the school environment. Common observation in the school system shows that the style of leadership of a principal could perhaps have serious impact on school performance. Thus, the need for this study- An Assessment of the Level of Elements of Democratic Leadership Style among Principals of Secondary Schools in Gusau Educational Zone.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. To assess the Level of decision making process being practiced by principals of secondary school in Gusau Educational Zone.
2. To examine the level of motivating factor(s) being employed by principals in their practice of democratic leadership in secondary schools in Gusau educational zone?

Research Questions

1. What is the Level of decision making process being practiced by principals of Secondary School in Gusau Educational Zone?
2. What is the level of motivating factor(s) being employed by principals in their practice of democratic leadership in secondary schools in Gusau educational zone?

Methodology

The study employed descriptive research design of the survey type. The population comprised 132 teachers from public secondary schools in Gusau Educational Zone, Gusau of Zamfara State. The sample was made up of (97) ninety seven public secondary school teachers using simple random sampling technique. (22) twenty two secondary schools were selected for this study from Gusau Educational Zone



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of Zamfara State. The samples for this study were randomly selected from each of the sampled schools. A questionnaire titled “An Assessment of the Level of Elements of Democratic Leadership Style among Principals of Secondary School in Gusau Educational Zone, Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria was developed by the researcher to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A consist of the bio and demographic data of the respondents, while section B consist of questions based on what level of decision making process applied by the principals, what level of motivating factor(s) are applied by the principals. The validity of the questionnaire was done by the research supervisor and other lecturers in education department, Federal University, Gusau. The scale’s reliability coefficient estimated via Cronbach’s Alphas was 0.76. The instrument was personally administered by the researchers and some research assistants. Means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the Level of Decision Making Process in Secondary School in Gusau Educational Zone?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of principals’ level of decision making

SN	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Leaders allow others in decision making	3.37	5.71
	Staff are Involve in management activities	3.47	5.93
2	Subordinates contributes Ideas and inputs school Management	3.53	6.30
3	Participation and skill sharing to school management is allowed.	3.61	7.17
4	Leaders engage in school work with employees to provide better management	3.64	6.59
	Average mean score of decision making in democratic leadership style	3.52	6.34 High

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 1 present the analysis of data on the level of decision making process in secondary school in Gusau educational zone, Gusau. The analysis reveals that all items had mean scores above 3.52 except items 1 and 2 with mean of 3.37 and 3.47. This result indicated that the level of decision making is at high level in allowing others within the school management rank to participate in decision making in the school management.

Research Question 2: What level of motivating factor(s) does the principal use in democratic leadership in secondary schools in Gusau educational zone?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of principals’ level of motivation in school management

SN	In my school...	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
1.	The principal encourage further studies to improve Productivity	3.64	6.82	
2.	Teachers are listed for seminars and workshops	3.55	6.28	
3.	Teachers welfare are priority to the principal	3.79	7.52	
4.	Principal is open minded to teachers to air burning issues	3.48	6.24	
5.	The principal does not support high morale among teachers as motivation factor	3.61	6.99	
	Average mean score of motivation factor approach applied in democratic leadership style	3.61	6.77	High

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 2 above shows the analysis of data on the level of motivating factor(s) the principal uses in approach of democratic leadership styles in secondary schools in Gusau educational zone.



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The table shows that items 6 and 8 are above the mean of 3.61, while items 7 and 9 have a mean of 3.55 and 3.48 respectively and item 10 with a mean of 3.61 is at high level. The result indicated that the level of motivation factors approach applied by the school heads in the management of the school affair using the democratic leadership style is at high level.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study also reveal that the level of motivation factors approach applied by the school heads in the management of the school affair using the democratic leadership style is at high level of ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 6.77$) which is in agreement with the fact that the leader motivates the team by empowering them to direct themselves, and guide them with a loose reign. Motivating subordinates is more challenging than motivating an individual. Very often, individuals in the team have different beliefs, values and different goals and expectations. It is difficult for a leader to motivate every member of a team based on their unique motivating factor. A single motivation strategy has to be selected for the team so that it can be used effectively. Moreover, motivating a team is often challenging as both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation strategies have to be determined according to the values, beliefs and thinking of the entire team (Jibon & Keshorjit, 2013).

Another object of the research study is to assess the level of mediation approach applied as one of the element of democratic leadership style in Gusau Educational zone in Zamfara state, where the result showed that the teacher's perception that the mediation approach applied by the school heads have a significant effect at high level of ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 6.70$) on the democratic leadership style in school management which means that a democratic leader is sometimes referred to as a coach according to Jibon & Keshorjit (2013) which is in line with leader develops team spirit and high moral among the employees. A leader of this style mediates for others and provides clear feedbacks. Mediation has been recognized as a productive means of resolving conflict and not only to resolve conflicts but can be applied in all aspects of human life's. Collaborative leaders who inspire, encourage, empower, facilitate, critique, support and share responsibility and are there to serve given that it aligns interests, we can refer to it as "meditative" leadership.

In comparing the study findings, it showed that decision making approach in a democratic leadership style is at high level which is in agreement with (Adeyemi, 2011) school heads who are the leaders of schools are responsible for ensuring conducive working and learning environment in schools by allowing other members to participate in decision making. On the other hand, the school head is the key figure in the management and administration of school, he or she plays a key role in setting the tone, establishing the conditions and providing stimulation for effective teaching and learning in the school whereby encouraging other members to contribute their idea in decision making, while the head takes the final decision.

In a research study conducted by Cheng, (2008) showed that the rationale for the decision making at high level is due to the fact that the teachers' participation in school decision making is to facilitate better decisions, because teacher's are the closest to the students and they know best how to improve their performance. Teachers are motivated when they are given sense of belonging in decision making and they perform their instructional tasks with enthusiasm, without being compelled, with less monitoring, and they are highly innovative, creative and imaginative in the



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application of teaching methods to achieve quality learning outcome for the overall environment of the school.

Furthermore, Oviwigbo (2004) in his study pointed out that the success of any organization such as the educational institution depends largely on the ability of the educational manager to make effective decisions of high level and this is why principals need to give considerable attention to key elements of managerial process: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting in making decisions (POSDCORB). He was quick however, to show that decision making approach that is effectively implemented in school management which results in achievement of the set goals with assurance. It is not uncommon that some school principals often dominate school affairs and give little or no regard to teachers' involvement in decision making process. The common slogan is "wait for your time", which has partly caused teachers' disenchantment in instructional tasks and resulted in low academic performance of students in public secondary schools.

Therefore, the importance of the head's leadership in enhancing decision making in the school cannot be overlooked. It is important to note that the finding through the study showed that decision making is effective in school management which is also view as one of the most important ingredients for effective administrative process. The finding on the other hand, is in agreement with the statement by Cole (2005) that democratic leadership also known as participative leadership or shared leadership is where members of the school take a more participative role in the decision making process and focuses on group equality and the free flow of ideas. The heads of the schools are still there to give or offer guidance and control.

The finding of the study showed that the level of motivation factors approach applied by the school heads in the management of the school affair using the democratic leadership style is at high. This means that the leaders applied different motivation factors approach to enhance the smooth management of the school administration. According to Ejiogu (1990) in a research conducted showed that application of motivational approach result to quality performance at high level of productivity which enhances quality assurance in the educational environment. The motivational approaches are essential for schools' administration when it comes to coordinating and controlling activities within the school environment. With this notion, Ejiogu (1990) opined that "teachers' motivation provides the essential means for control and coordination of activities within a given institution which makes the motivation level at all times to be at high level. For instance, staff training and development is one of the most important elements in efficient administration which is said to make staffs realize better what they have to do to acquire skills required for proficient performance in order to enhance quality assurance. The motivational factors also influence teachers' job satisfaction either positively or negatively. When applied negatively in the school system causes dissatisfaction which result into withdrawal, neglect of duty and negative outcomes but when applied positively causes satisfaction resulting to increase in commitment, productivity and quality performance. Furthermore, Okonkwo (1997).In his research also pointed out that another important thing in applying motivational factors involving the motivators and hygiene factors as well influence teachers' job retention, their level of participation in decision making and quality contributions in the school and commitment to duty. When they feel dissatisfied with their job rewards, they will become frustrated, regularly absent from duty and may eventually quit.



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This is in agreement with Jibon & Keshorjit, (2013) where a democratic leader influences employees' motivation through participation and empowerment. He or she motivates the team by empowering them to direct themselves, and guide them with a loose reign. Furthermore, motivating staffs is also an approach that encourages participating in the development of processes of the school management. Therefore, willingness to work as school head will bring success in school management to create conducive environment for both teachers and students. Motivation factors applied by heads of schools for staffs are important. Inasmuch as one of the functions of a head is to make leadership express reconciliation between personal needs and organizational goals by recruiting, removing, motivating and supporting staff. At this point it is right to say that personal rights, peace among staffs and being interested in school management are the most positive motivators for school heads to apply, but rumor, uneasiness among staffs and responsibility beyond authority are de-motivation factors. The findings of the study and Jibon & Keshorjit, (2013) agrees that the task of ensuring a high level of staff motivation requires from head of schools include effective communication with staff, the encouragement of good workplace relationships, the involvement of staff in the decision making process, helping staff to come to terms with change, promoting job rotation, recognizing and rewarding initiative and providing relevant training for staff.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that that all items had mean scores above 3.52 except items 1 and 2 with mean of 3.37 and 3.47 which shows that the level of decision making is at high level where other teachers within the school management rank are allowed to participate in decision making in the school management. Similarly, the level of motivation factors applied by the school heads in the management of the school affair using the democratic leadership style is at high level which indicate that democratic leadership is concerned with meaningful participation and decision making, and motivating factor(s) to establish conditions for respectful relationships, collaborative associations, active cooperation, and enable the formation of social, learning and culturally responsive educational organizations, in part by employing strategies for achievement, enabling particular conversations and struggling to determine what is needed, when, and how to get there in specific situations by developing a politically informed commitment to justice for all. Therefore, the importance of the principal's leadership in enhancing the effectiveness of the school cannot be overlooked among principals of secondary schools in Gusau educational zone, Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusion drawn from this research, the following recommendations were made

1. Principals should always use democratic leadership styles in the administration of their schools.
2. The government should organize seminars and conference for all principals based on leadership style of administration.

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