

Influence of Principals' Leadership Styles on Senior Secondary School Students' Academic Achievement in Gombi Educational Zone, Adamawa State

Dr Dorcas Oluremi FAREO

*Department of Educational Foundations,
Adamawa State University, Nigeria*

Abstract: The study examined teachers' perception on influence of principal's leadership styles on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in Gombi Educational Zone, Adamawa State. Three research questions and three research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study; it was a survey research design. The sample size consisted of 400 teachers from five schools within the study area. The questionnaire titled "Teachers' perception on the influence of principals' leadership styles on students' academic achievement Questionnaire (TPIPLSSAA)" was used to collect data. The face, content and construct validity of the instrument was established by an expert in Guidance and Counselling in the Department of Educational Foundations, Adamawa State University Mubi. The test-retest reliability method was adopted and the reliability co-efficient of 0.84 was obtained. Data were analysed using mean, Standard Deviation, Pearson Moment Correlation and t-test. The study revealed that there was no significant relationship between years of experience and principal leadership styles. Also, no significant relationship was found between teachers' age and principal leadership styles. However, a significant relationship was depicted between principal leadership styles and academic achievement. There was a significant relationship between principal leadership styles and the academic performance of students. The study therefore recommended among other things that non-Governmental organizations should help organize workshops enlightening and upscaling principals' leadership skills at different levels. Also, government should provide a suitable environment for principals to grow their leadership skills by providing the necessary equipment and resources to effectively lead their teachers towards attaining organizational goals.

Keywords: Principals leadership styles; school management; education leadership; students' academic achievement and teachers' perception.

I. INTRODUCTION

Principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools and creating a conducive environment that fully supports teaching and learning. Furthermore, as the impact of principal leadership on student's Achievement became evident, policymakers placed greater pressures on the principals. Rewards and sanctions affecting principals are increasingly common. In view of the above, there is need for new leadership approaches in order to enhance school efficiency and effectiveness.

One major emphasis in the educational arena in the early 21st century has been the continuing demand for greater accountability to increase students' Achievement. These expectations occur against the backdrop of frequent reforms in the education sector. In this case, school leaders are expected to adopt leadership skills that enable them to implement education reforms while at the same time ensuring high student achievement in national examinations. The principals, being the educational leaders are in a good position to supervise, monitor, assess, evaluate and share up to date information on educational issues and current teaching techniques with teachers in order to arouse them so as to achieve higher students' academic achievement. The quality of leadership thus makes a significant difference to student achievement.

School management, which is coordinated by the principal, is expected to run the school effectively and efficiently to produce quality results every year in external examinations (Madumere-Obike, Ukala & Nwabueze, 2015). It is imperative, therefore, that in an effective school where quality academic results are achieved every year at national examinations, the principal plays a crucial role in providing instructional leadership. Since principal's leadership can make a difference in students' learning (Nwabueze, Chukwuji, & Ugwoezuonu, 2017), the principal should play an active role in instructional leadership by offering a strong school management that guarantees effective curriculum implementation. This encompasses everything a principal, as instructional leader, does daily to support the achievement of students and the ability of teachers to teach (Sebring & Bryk, 2010).

Hallinger (2013) observed that instructional leadership focuses predominantly on the role of the school principal in coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school since s/he influences teachers' classroom instruction (Nwabueze & Onyenandu, 2015). Instructional leadership focuses on leadership functions that directly relate to teaching and learning and contribute to student learning (Murphy, 2018). According to Awiti (2019) a school principal, while influencing and redesigning the activities of the school towards setting goal achievements, is expected to manage the

students, teachers and the school community around the common goal of raising the students' achievement.

Educational leadership is mainly indirect because leadership is essentially an influence process where educational leaders are mostly working through or influencing others to accomplish goals (Nwabueze, 2011). They added that the impact of educational leadership on student achievement is demonstrable leadership whose effects are primarily indirect and appear to work through variables related to classroom curriculum and instruction, while quantitative estimates of effects are not always available; though leadership variables are seen to explain an important proportion of school-related variance in student achievement. In instructional matters, the principals' involvement are very limited, virtually non-existent and they influence the culture of teaching and learning in a more formal ways (Obanya, 2011).

Studies relating to leadership have widely been conducted in many developed countries over a long time and mainly at elementary level (Nwabueze, & Onyenandu, 2015). They stated that leadership especially instructional leadership is easier to implement on the elementary level than the high school level because of certain contextual factors inherent to secondary schools. However, Mwangi (2019) observed that relatively little such work has been done in Nigeria and especially in public secondary schools. A number of researchers in other countries have addressed the relationship between school leadership and student achievement (Ogundele, 2015).

According to Olawolu & Madunmere-Obike, (2011) little has been done to promote understanding about how school leadership impacts students' academic achievement, by instituting effective instructional leadership practices, an emphasis that is ubiquitous in contemporary leadership literature in the developed world.

Statement of the Problem

Leadership in concept and practice has received the attention of researchers across ages. Empirical researches have delved much on leadership styles, functions, types of leadership and theories of leadership among others. Furthermore, literature has focused on leadership in various dimensions however not much attention has been paid to the perception of teachers on the influence of principal's leadership styles on academic achievement of students. Identification of dimensions of strength of leadership capacities in discharging their duties with the purpose of encouraging better achievement, meeting the challenges of the job, getting along with world trend, and subsequently the success of the school organization, desire school organization attention.

School system's accomplishment of its goal seems to be dwindling over the years, based on observations of students' poor achievement, students' poor attitude to learning, and general apathy of teachers to their work. It

appears the roles of school leaders are becoming more cumbersome with the introduction of the new technology, inadequate resources available for the job at hand, and the need for curriculum innovation to meet the global trend. However, the school leadership seems to be saddled with more roles and assignments to meet the challenges ahead.

Education stakeholders in Nigeria (and specifically Gombi Educational Zone in Adamawa State) have very high expectations of public secondary school principals because they believe that the success of a school is measured in terms of good achievement in national examinations and the person responsible for this is the principal. This is because, despite the fact that there are other factors contributing to students' academic achievement, principal's leadership can make a difference in students' learning and that there is a link between high quality leadership and positive school outcomes, including student achievement (Grissom & Loeb, 2019). There is need therefore to interrogate the influence of principals' behaviours in providing leadership to improve teaching and learning thereby enhance academic achievement in secondary schools in Nigeria. It is for this reason that Mwangi (2019) noted that education scholars and practitioners in Nigeria need to pay closer attention to what principals and other school leaders do in their day-to-day enactment of leadership.

Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perception regarding principals' leadership styles commonly used in senior secondary schools within Gombi Educational Zone?
2. What are the dimensions of principal's leadership capacities as identified by teachers?
3. What is the strength of the principals' leadership capacities?

Research Hypotheses

This study sought to test the following hypotheses;

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' experience and their perceptions of principals' leadership styles.
2. Teachers' age has no significant relationship with their perception of principals' leadership styles.
3. There is no significant relationship between perception of principals' leadership styles and the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Gombi Educational Zone, Adamawa State.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design as it deals with people's views which are relevant to the study area. According to Syed (2016), descriptive survey research method is often used to study people's feelings, thinking and attitudes about specific aspects hence is relevant to this study as attitudes could not be directly measured or

observed but rather inferred from certain cues which depicted the implicit nature of principals' characteristics. The population of the study comprised all teachers in all the public senior secondary schools in Gombi Educational Zone, Adamawa State. Gombi Educational Zone consists of Hong, Gombi, Girei and Song Local Government Areas. The population of public senior secondary schools is 77 with 1,234 teachers. The sample size was 400 teachers. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 100 teachers from five schools in each of the local government areas. 20 teachers were selected from each school using gender and class taught as strata.

The research instruments used for this study is a questionnaire titled "Teachers' Perception on Influence of Principals' leadership styles on Students' Academic Achievement (TPIPLSSAA)". It is structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with assigned values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument has four (4) sections where; Section A contains questions pertaining demographic data, section B contains 10 items on Principal's leadership Behaviour; Section C contains 10 items on the dimensions of principal's leadership capacities; Section D contains 10 items on the strength of principal's leadership styles.

The face, content and construct validity of the instruments was determined by an expert in Guidance and Counselling in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Adamawa State University, Mubi. Appropriate corrections and suggestions were made to improve the quality of the questionnaire by deleting the inappropriate question items and by modifying some. The corrected version of the instrument was then used for the study. A pilot test was carried out in two schools to determine the reliability of the instrument (TPPLSISAAQ). The questionnaires were administered to 20 teachers from ADSU staff school and the second questionnaires was administered after two weeks on the same set of teachers. The score obtained from the administration was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis and a reliability coefficient 0.84 was obtained.

The researcher collected a letter of introduction from the Department, which symbolises the school authority's permission to carry out the research. The researcher will present the letter to principals of the sampled schools, and then administer the instrument strictly within the sample population. The data were administered by the researcher and collected back on the spot. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as Standard Deviation, mean, Pearson moment correlation coefficient, and t-test were used to test analysis.

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are teachers' perception regarding principals' leadership styles commonly used in senior secondary schools within Gombi Educational Zone?

Table 1: Teachers' perception regarding principal's leadership styles

S/N	Items	N	Mean	STD	Remark
1	Is a risk taker (new adventurous ideas in dealing with situations)	400	2.69	1.104	Accepted
2	Disapproves to be appraised by staff	400	3.10	1.110	Accepted
3	Less concerned about group performance towards attainment of school goals	400	2.48	1.137	Rejected
4	Unconcerned with the staff's welfare	400	2.12	1.126	Rejected
5	Does not supervise teachers in their teaching / learning assignments	400	1.52	1.152	Rejected
6	Avoids at all costs interfering with group's work	400	2.81	1.099	Accepted
7	Encourages indiscipline owing to non-provision of structure to staff in doing work	400	2.14	1.101	Rejected
8	Suppresses new ideas from members of the group	400	2.19	1.104	Rejected
9	Passes the blame to the others for failure or mistake for low performance in the school	400	2.47	1.090	Rejected
10	Has no belief in the group even in himself/ herself attaining quality performance in terms of school goals	400	2.21	1.155	Rejected
	Grand Mean		2.37		

Acceptance (\bar{x} is 2.5 and above); Rejection (\bar{x} is less than 2.5)

Table 1 above assesses teachers' perception regarding principals' leadership styles commonly used in senior secondary schools within Gombi Educational zone. The table shows that principals in the study area were risk takers ($\bar{x} = 2.69$) who didn't like being appraised by staff ($\bar{x} = 3.10$). The principals were found to be much concerned about group performance towards attainment of school goals ($\bar{x} = 2.48$) and they were very concerned about the staff's welfare ($\bar{x} = 2.12$), while also much involved in the supervision of teachers in their teaching/learning assignments ($\bar{x} = 1.52$). They avoid at all cost interfering with groups work ($\bar{x} = 2.81$) but discourage indiscipline by providing structure to staff in doing their work ($\bar{x} = 2.14$). They also allow and welcome new ideas from members of staff towards achieving school goals ($\bar{x} = 2.19$) and do not pass blame to others for failure or mistake for low performance in the school ($\bar{x} = 2.47$). Finally, it is noted that most principals in the area believe in their staff group as well as themselves in attaining quality performance in terms of school goals ($\bar{x} = 2.21$).

Research Question 2: What are the dimensions of leadership capacities as identified by teachers?

Table 2: Dimensions of Leadership Capacities

S/N	Items	N	Mean	STD	Remark
1	School vision	400	2.67	1.097	Accepted
2	Capacity building	400	2.61	1.141	Accepted
3	Collaboration	400	2.82	1.156	Accepted

4	Motivation	400	2.26	1.136	Rejected
5	Curriculum leadership	400	2.55	1.107	Accepted
6	School discipline	400	2.37	1.108	Rejected
7	Delegation	400	2.46	1.126	Rejected
8	Executive behaviour	400	2.65	1.125	Accepted
9	Managing time	400	2.52	1.141	Accepted
10	Resourcefulness	400	2.74	1.148	Accepted
Grand Mean			2.55		

Acceptance (\bar{x} is 2.5 and above); Rejection (\bar{x} is less than 2.5)

In deducing the dimensions of leadership capacities available in the study area based on the perceptions of teachers. It is noted that major dimensions exhibited by principals in the area include school vision (\bar{x} = 2.67), capacity building (\bar{x} = 2.61), collaboration (\bar{x} = 2.82), curriculum leadership (\bar{x} = 2.55), executive behaviour (\bar{x} = 2.65), managing time (\bar{x} = 2.52) and resourcefulness (\bar{x} = 2.74). Dimensions such as School discipline (\bar{x} = 2.37), motivation (\bar{x} = 2.26), and delegation were found not to be quite showcased in the study area (\bar{x} = 2.46).

Research Question 3: What is the strength of the principals' leadership capacities?

Table 3: Strength of Principals' Leadership Capacities

S/N	Items	N	Mean	STD	Remark
1	School vision	400	1.60	1.117	Moderate
2	Capacity building	400	2.43	1.122	Strong
3	Collaboration	400	3.52	1.099	Very Strong
4	Motivation	400	1.17	1.074	Moderate
5	Curriculum leadership	400	2.48	1.090	Strong
6	School discipline	400	1.52	1.099	Moderate
7	Delegation	400	1.47	1.128	Moderate
8	Executive behaviour	400	3.46	1.154	Very Strong
9	Managing time	400	2.50	1.110	Strong Capacity
10	Resourcefulness	400	3.53	1.087	Very Strong
Grand Mean			2.55		

(Poor Capacity ≤ 1 , Moderate Capacity ≤ 2 , Strong Capacity ≤ 3 and Very Strong Capacity ≤ 4)

In deducing the strength of the principals' leadership capacities available in the study area, it is noted that Collaboration (\bar{x} = 3.52), Executive behaviour (\bar{x} = 3.46) and Resourcefulness (\bar{x} = 3.53) were very strong, while Capacity building (\bar{x} = 2.43) and Curriculum leadership (\bar{x} = 2.48) were strong. School Vision (\bar{x} = 1.60), Motivation (\bar{x} = 1.17), School discipline (\bar{x} = 1.52), Delegation (\bar{x} = 1.47) and managing time (\bar{x} = 2.50) were at moderate capacities.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between teachers' experience and their perceptions of principals' leadership styles.

Table 4: Relationship between teachers' experience and perceptions of principals' leadership styles.

		Years of Experience	Principal Leadership Styles
Years of Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.902
	N	400	400
Principal Leadership Styles	Pearson Correlation	.006	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.902	
	N	400	400

Not Significant; P > 0.05

In the table above, the relationship between the dependent variable (Principal leadership styles) and independent variable (Years of experience) was investigated using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and their associated 2-tailed p-values (sig). Table 4 shows that there was no significant relationship between years of experience and principal leadership styles (r = .006, p = 0.902) at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Two: Teachers' age has no significant relationship with their perception of principals' leadership styles.

Table 5: Relationship between teachers' age and their perception of principal's leadership styles.

		Teachers' age	Principal Leadership Styles
Teachers' age	Pearson Correlation	1	-.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.356
	N	400	400
Principal Leadership Styles	Pearson Correlation	-.046	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.356	
	N	400	400

Not Significant; P > 0.05

In the table above, the relationship between the dependent variable (Principal leadership styles) and independent variable (Teachers' age) was investigated using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and their associated 2-tailed p-values (sig). Table 5 shows that there was no significant relationship between teachers' age and principal leadership styles (r = -.046, p = 0.356) at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between perception of principals' leadership styles and the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Gombi Educational Zone, Adamawa State.

Table 6: Relationship between teachers' perception of principals' leadership styles and academic achievement of senior secondary school students.

		Principal Leadership Styles	Academic Achievement
Principal Leadership Styles	Pearson Correlation	1	.105*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
	N	400	400
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.105*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	
	N	400	400

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 above examines the relationship between principals' leadership styles and academic achievement of senior secondary school students using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and their associated 2-tailed p -values (sig). Table 6 shows that there is a significant relationship principal leadership styles and academic achievement ($r = .105$, $p = 0.036$) at 0.05 level of significance. This means that an increase in positive leadership styles would have a corresponding positive increase in senior secondary school students' academic achievement.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that principals in the study area were risk takers who didn't like being appraised by staff. It was also noted that the principals were concerned about group performance towards attainment of school goals and the staff's welfare, while also much involved in the supervision of teachers in their teaching/learning assignments. The teachers were of the opinion that principals avoid at all cost interfering with groups work but discourage indiscipline by providing structure to staff in doing their work. They also allow and welcome new ideas from members of staff towards achieving school goals and do not pass blame to others for failure or mistake for low performance in the school. Finally, it is noted that most principals in the area believe in their staff group as well as themselves in attaining quality performance in terms of school goals. This is in line with the study of Sailesh (2010) which revealed that the teachers' perception of their principals' leadership capacities was positive. This finding therefore established that teachers perceived their principals as leaders that possess high and good vision for their schools and invariably high expectations.

In deducing the dimensions of leadership capacities available in the study area based on the perceptions of teachers. It is noted that major dimensions exhibited by principals in the area include School vision, capacity building, collaboration, curriculum leadership, executive behaviour, managing time and resourcefulness. Dimensions such as school discipline, motivation, and delegation were found not to be portrayed by principals in the area. In deducing the strength of the principals' leadership capacities available in

the study area, it is noted that Collaboration, Executive behaviour and Resourcefulness were exhibited in very strong capacity, while Capacity building and Curriculum leadership were portrayed by principals in strong capacity. However, School Vision, Motivation, School discipline, Delegation and managing time were exhibited by principals at moderate capacities. The findings of this study is similar to that of Akomolafe (2018) who revealed that internal leadership capacities which contained the leadership in the areas of vision, school culture, instruction, school organization and learning resources, received a rating between having moderate to strong leadership capacities. External leadership capacities which included collaborative partnership, moral perspective and larger-context politics, received a rating between having moderate to strong capacity.

The findings of the study also showed that there was no significant relationship between years of experience and principal leadership styles Also, no significant relationship was found between teachers' age and principal leadership styles. However, a significant relationship was depicted between principal leadership styles and academic achievement. This finding corroborates the study of Abiden (2018) who found a significant relationship between principal leadership styles and the academic performance of students.

V. CONCLUSION

The ability and competence of leaders to manifest his skilfulness and managerial strategies, in running the affairs of organization, is desirable and of utmost importance in meeting the challenges of school organizations today. The identified dimensions of leadership capacities are important to build and develop the school system to meet the need and aspiration the society in this age of new technology. The leadership vision, gives direction to the school organization, and furthermore capacity building, motivation, and leaders' behaviour enhance teachers' performance. The principals should develop their leadership capacities generally on school vision, capacity building, collaboration, motivation, curriculum leadership, school discipline, delegation, executive behaviour, managing time, and resourcefulness. Furthermore, the school principals required more strengths of leadership capacities in: school vision, capacity building, curriculum leadership, school discipline, managing time, and resourcefulness, due to moderate strength identified in these leadership variables and dimensions.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the implications of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. School principals need to value and support teachers by working with rather than through them, protect teachers against the excesses of mounting and sometimes contradictory external pressures and focus on sustaining school improvement by building teacher and school capacity

- ii. School principals should also appreciate teachers' perception of principals' leadership behaviour as a significant factor in school and academic performance of students.
- iii. The principals should set attainable school targets and ensure that schools have adequate required instructional materials and equipment so as to improve performance. This should include teaching aids for specific subjects, text books and other reference material.
- iv. Principals should ensure that the school environment is conducive for learning. There should be continuous motivational schemes for both students and teachers.
- v. Non-Governmental organizations should help organize workshops enlightening and upscaling principals' leadership skills at different levels.
- vi. Government should provide a suitable environment for principals to grow their leadership skills by providing the necessary equipment and resources to effectively lead their teachers towards attaining organizational goals.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abiden, V. M. (2018). From instructional leadership to leadership capabilities: Empirical findings and methodological challenges. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9(1), 1-26.
- [2] Akomolafe O. C. (2018). Principals' Leadership capacities as perceived by teachers in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*. 8(22).
- [3] Awiti, O. J. (2019). *The Head teacher and the Mechanics of Management. A Resourceful Manual for Schools and College Managers*. Nairobi: Shred Publishers Ltd.
- [4] Grissom, J. A. & Loeb, S. (2019). Triangulating principal effectiveness: How perspectives of parents, teachers, and assistant principals. Identify the central importance of managerial skills (School Leadership Research Report). Stanford, C. A: Stanford University, Institute for Research on Education Policy & Practice.
- [5] Hallinger, P. (2013). *Leading Educational Change. Reflections on the Practice of instructional and Transformational Leadership*. Cambridge Journal of Education, 33(3), 329-351.
- [6] Madumere-Obike, C. U., Ukala, C. C. & Nwabueze, A. I. (2015). Institutions and development: Mixture of political and economic mechanism for the actualization of educational goals in universities in South-East, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning (NJEAP)*, 15(2); 397-417.
- [7] Murphy, J. (2018). Methodological, measurement, and conceptual problems in the study of instructional leadership. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 10(2), 117-139.
- [8] Nwabueze, A. I. & Onyenandu, N. A. (2015). The influence of staff professional development programmes on university delivery system in Abia State. *Journal of Education in Developing Area (JEDA)*, 23(1), 289-302.
- [9] Mwangi (2019). *The Role of School Leadership in Student Achievement in Kenya*. Unpublished PhD Degree Thesis. Case Western Reserve University.
- [10] Nwabueze, A. I. (2011). *School facilities utilization and maintenance: Enhancing the quality of education delivery*. Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- [11] Nwabueze, A. I. & Onyenandu, N. A. (2015). The influence of staff professional development programmes on university delivery system in Abia State. *Journal of Education in Developing Area (JEDA)*, 23(1), 289-302.
- [12] Nwabueze, A. I., Chukwuji, C. E. & Ugwoezuonu, A. U. (2017). Perceived impact of principals' leadership skills on teachers' functional performance and students' study habits in secondary schools in Enugu State. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning (NJEAP)*, 17(1); 48-66.
- [13] Obanya, P. A. I. (2011). *Education and sustainable governance*. Fafunwa Foundation First Memorial Lecture Delivered in University of Lagos. Lagos.
- [14] Ogundele, M. D. (2015). Principals' administrative skills for secondary schools in Plateau State. *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and science*, 2(1), 25-26.
- [15] Olawolu, O. E. & Madumere-Obike C. U. (2011). *Introduction to educational management practices*. Port Harcourt: Info media Graphics.
- [16] Sailesh S.. (2010). Direction-setting school leadership practices: a meta-analytical review of evidence about their influence. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, (ahead-of-print), 1-25.
- [17] Sebring, P. B., & Bryk, A. S. (2010). School leadership and the bottom line in Chicago. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(6), 440-443.
- [18] Syed B. (2016). *White Paper: Turning around low-performing schools stand for children*. Leadership Center. All rights reserved