

**THE RELEVANCE OF THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP IN TRAINING  
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

The paper to as on the relevance of the theories of leadership in training educational managers in Nigeria, in response to perceived inadequacies in the training process of school administrators for effective school system. Obviously, in many cases, half-baked individuals are made school heads to the detriment of effective management. It is the suggestion of this paper that future educational leaders in Nigeria should be trained in the line with of based on educational leadership theories for more result-oriented performance, while at the same time providing periodic re-training avenues in the form of in-serve education, seminar, conferences and workshops should be provided for serving school heads.

**Introduction**

Job creation is of paramount importance for meaningful national development. Experience has shown that adequate training for economic growth and development is predicated on available practical and theoretical learning experiences.

In the light of the above, educational administrators as school leaders or heads need proper acquaintance with some leadership theories necessary

for efficient discharge of their duties if the Nigeria school system is to be effective. According to Uwazurike (1989), leadership styles remain perhaps, one of the most researched and yet elusive and complex subjects. The importance of leadership styles of the Nigeria educational leader on his effective performance, level of job satisfaction and productivity of subordinate as well as organizational goal achievement needs not be overemphasized. As Nwankwo (1982) stated a bad

administrative leader may render ineffective even the best school programmes, the most adequate resources and the most motivated staff and students.

It is in recognition of the central role of effective educational leadership to optimal achievement of the goals of the Nigerian educational system that the present effort is considered timely. Thus far, most of the Nigerian public schools are not known to be headed by trained educational administrators nor is there evidence that planners of Nigerian educational system are all qualified educational planners. There is also doubt that ill-trained educational administrators in Nigeria public schools have adequate knowledge of the theories of leadership styles that should enhance their performance as educational leaders. It is therefore on the basis of the above rationalization that the major focus of this paper is on the implications of leadership theories for the Nigerian educational leader.

Various authors have variously defined the term leadership. Nonetheless an operational definition here is that adapted from Hersey and Blanchard (1977) leadership is defined as ... the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts towards goals achievement in a given situation. Similarly, "leadership style might be thought of as a particular behaviour emphasized by the leader to motivate his or her group to accomplish some end" (Hanson, 1979). It is axiomatic that effective training and utilization of Educational Administrators and Planners

in Nigeria could ensure an effective Nigeria educational system as well as efficient subordinates.

In this paper, it is hoped that a discussion of major leadership theories and their implications for the Nigerian educational leaders will not only inform but suggest effective strategies for the training and utilization of the Nigerian educational leaders "structurally, the two major approaches to the study of leadership style namely: Two Dimensional Model of Leadership style and Situational Approach, will be examined, highlighting their implications for the Nigerian educational leader.

### **An Overview of Leadership Theories**

Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippit and Ralph White in what has become a classic work on the relationship between various types of leadership styles and group reactions in 1939 reported in the *Journal of Social Psychology*, the results of a study involving the reactions of boys' teams to three different leadership styles namely, Authoritarian, Democratic and Laissez-fair leadership style. These teams were then engaged in hobby activities after school hours. The democratic leader was considered to generate "high degree of initiative, moral, cohesiveness, freedom of action and work quality, showed less creativity was symptomatic of higher productivity, "more dependent, showed less creativity, exhibited lower morale, became more frustrated, often exhibited hostility and aggression, and at times, left the group." Under laissez-faire leadership,

there was evidence of “less ad poorer work done, group members asked for more guidance and frequently showed discontent” (Hanson 1979). Thus, Lewin, Lippit and White the first to ascribe that leader either use democratic, automatic or Laissez-faire leadership styles.

Following the attempt of Lewin (1957) leadership is conceived as “nomothetic”, “idiographic” or “transactional”. They posit that a leader is nomothetic ... to the extent that he is influenced by personal need dispositions (Boles and Davenport 1975). The transactional style according to Moser (1975) is characterized by behavior stressing goal accomplishment as well as individual need fulfillment. He thus balanced nomothetic and idiographic behavior. In a study of the most prevalent leadership style among secondary school heads in the defunct Cross-River State of Nigeria, it was found that transactional leadership style was most popular among them (Adam and Okhikhena, 1974). Similarly Nwankwo (1980) found that among school principals in Imo State. Transactional leadership was most commonly used and considered effective. A high score on this dimension reflects active role in directing group activities through planning, communicating, information, scheduling, and trying out new ideas etc. (Finch 1976) consideration on the other hand, refers to the extent to which an individual has job relationship characterized by mutual trust, respect for subordinates' ideas, and consideration of their feelings”. A high score here is

indicative of a climate of good rapport and two way communication (Finch 1976). The Ohio State leadership studies seem to conclude that a leadership style is theoretical idea while the style low on both dimensions is theoretically worst. (Heresy and Blanchard 1972). The advocates of the two dimensional approaches to the study of leadership styles failed to consider the dynamism of society and the effects of environmental variable.

Leadership theories have either recommended a two dimensional approach to the study of leadership or situational perspective. Those whose leadership style variants range from initiating structure-consideration, democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire among others preceded two dimensional models of leadership styles. A leader's styles here is either high relationship/low task, high task/low relationship or low relationship/low task on a continuum suggestive of rigidity.

Contrasting, the situational theorist such as Fielder (1967), Reddin, (1970), Bake and Mouton (1964), Hersey and Blanchard (1972) see leadership as a contingency of the situational variable. Their summation on the basis of their psychological approach is that effective leadership is dependent on the situation. Leadership style that is effective in one situation may be ineffective in another. Redden (1970) in his Three Dimensional Model of leadership argued that on leadership style is ideal for all situations by asserting that situational variables such as technology, the organization itself, the superior-number relationship, co-workers

and subordinates determines leadership effectiveness.

Overview of leadership style theories above is aimed at creating the background for discussing the role of Nigerian educational leaders towards ensuring a virile and stable educational system. The literature review revealed that most Nigerian educational leaders adopt transactional leadership style as confirmed by studies conducted in Bendel State by Arubayi (1987). It would therefore advocate that situational variables should be assessed in determining what leadership style to adopt in the light of the general concern for the effective leadership of Nigerian schools. Besides, the need for the training of the Nigerian educational leader in specialized and functional areas of study needs not be over emphasized. The need for the appointment of only professionally trained persons into administrative positions in our educational system was highlighted by Okhikhena (1978) who called for the appointment of only professionally qualified people into positions as the chairman of the governing boards, school committees, local school boards and state school boards ... it is common knowledge in Nigeria to find the Nigerian educational leader relegated to only classroom oriented roles while individuals from other professions as well as ill-educated people are appointed to the different education boards and committees. My contention here is that future appointments should ensure that only educational administrators and planners are charged with the administration and planning of Nigeria educational system.

This reasoning is informed on the realization that only those versed in educational theory especially educational leadership and planning will be effective in ensuring effective and efficient educational system.

### **Challenges of Effective Administration of Nigerian Public Schools**

Nwazurike (1989) rightly observed that there are myriad of problems inhibiting effective administration of Nigeria public schools which are too numerous to address fully. Some of these include resources and programme planning and policy formulation, provision and maintenance of funds and facilities, effective school community relationship, instructional leadership, student's personnel serve and procurement of trained personnel.

1. The assumption of educational administrative roles by political appointees most of whom know very little about educational, its objectives and the implications of their limited political and educational vision.
2. The objectives of education cannot be conceptualized in operational terms by the majority of school heads who have no teaching qualification.
3. The inadequate professional preparation and experience of those school heads with teaching qualification and experience (Ocho, 1982).

The practice of politicians or political appointees assuming educational administrative roles is undesirable and counter-productive. Often times, the Nigerian educational leader is compelled to carry out instructions regarding his duties against his professional judgment on the most functional and judicious way of carrying out such duties. It is well known that politicians owe primary loyalty to their political parties and go all out to justify their political party decisions often times at the expense of effective and efficient management of the educational system. When in executive, ill-trained politicians assume the role of state school board chairman, they often times assume the duties that legitimately ought to reside in the school principalship. For instance while Nwankwo (1982) observed that in the school system, the school principal ensures proper employment placement, use, motivation, development, welfare and professional growth of the staff under his administration (Nwankwo, 1982).

It is doubtful that the school principal is allowed much input in formulating policies any implementation of the above processes. Another caveat militating against effect utilization of educational administrators and planners in the Nigerian educational system is that a good number of school principals are not trained educationist. They have no teaching qualification such as Nigerian Certificate in Education, Post graduate Diploma in Education, Bachelors Degree or Master Degree in Education. The consequence of this trend is that these ill-trained school principals demonstrate

blurred vision and inadequate knowledge of the objective of the educational system as well as lack of the leadership concepts necessary for effective and efficient performance.

### **Suggestions for Effective Utilization of the Nigerian Educational Leaders**

The need for effective utilization of the Nigerian Educational administration aims at making the educational leaders more efficient and the school system more effective. The suggestions advanced in this paper are two fold dealing with leader behavior desirable and strategy for effective utilization of the Nigerian educational leader. The Nigerian educational leader should be trained to exhibit the following qualities for effective administration of the school system. Marks (1978) articulated the following leadership behavior for successful administration of the school system by stating that the leader must be: sensitive to the feelings of other while being at one considerate, helpful, responsive ... apparently sincere, straight forward, approachable, easy to talk to, alert to get the best out of people without aggressiveness, encouraging, open to suggestions, enthusiastic, warm, inspiring, relaxed and has a sense of humour.

Further, the Nigerian educational leader should adopt a situation approach to leadership since no one leadership style is effective in all situations. For effective utilization of the Nigerian educational leader, it is suggested that only individuals with teaching qualification and specialized training in educational administration should be appointed school principals,

education board chairman and education committee members. The essence will be to ensure professionalism in the management of the educational system if the nation's education objectives are to be achieved. This suggestion takes to cognizance the dearth of personnel requisite qualification in educational administration and planning. But suffice it to note that with motivation, interested people would avail themselves of the opportunity provided by Nigerian Universities through their faculties of education that offer programmes in educational administration and planning at different levels.

It is further suggested that in-service education, seminars and workshops should be periodically organized for both practicing educational administrators and planners in Nigeria and would be educational leaders. This need was vividly argued by Anwukah (1978) when he state that:

Sometimes the goals of trainers and administrators are too limited, at other times they are unrealistically grandiose. Teacher training is a dialogue between theory and practice, between aspiration and achievement. Without in-service training, the third cycle, it is in danger or being all theory and aspiration and little achievement.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has taken a somewhat in-depth look at the various theories of educational leadership. An attempt was also made within the limits of this paper to survey the implications

of such theories of education leadership for the Nigerian educational leader. It therefore remains to recommend that in all efforts in the training of educational planners and administrators in Nigeria, serious attempts must be made in focusing such training based on current and acceptable theories in educational leadership. The inarticulate and confused approach in the training of educational administrators perhaps is responsible for many inadequacies and shortcoming of Nigerian educational administration.

The extended implication of this is that a corresponding confusion exists in the utilization of educational administrators in Nigeria. Given the fact that those who are supposedly trained are not adequately exposed to pertinent years, made claims to effective management of schools with or without formal training. This has not been healthy for the Nigerian school system. It is the thinking of this paper therefore that there must be a serious re-thinking in our approach and attitude towards the training and utilization of educational administrators and planners in Nigeria. A point to start, as has been stressed in this paper is to base the training of Nigerian educational administrators on tried, tested and true theories of educational leadership. The need is urgent if we must not continue with the blunder of producing educational administrators unmindful of the current state of their art.

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