

REFOCUSING PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR PEACE EDUCATION IN MISSION SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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Efficient and effective administration and management of any organization lies in the leadership abilities to put in place measures that would ensure constant greater productivity and a comfortable working relationship between those at the helms of administration and the subordinates. Leaders in various segments of human society find themselves greatly burdened by social, economic and political problems, interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, grievances, and rivalries that challenge their effort to meet responsibilities of leadership entrusted to them. Furthermore, strategies adopted by organizational leadership differ due to differences in individual personality, understanding and interpretation of subordinates' action and the situation at hand. Leadership strategies in a simple term, are various methods adopted by a manager or an administrator to ensure that his or her subordinates contribute their efforts towards the achievement of organizational and personal goals. These strategies or styles may be employee-centered or organization centered (Nwankwoala, 2016). It is therefore pertinent to note that the leadership strategy adopted by the leadership of any educational institution will directly or indirectly influence the working atmosphere which will in turn determine educational goals achievement. Corroborating this, Ololube (2017) highlighted having the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience and most importantly, the skills to negotiate and work with others to achieve desired goals as the requirements to be a good leader.

One of the numerous challenges facing leadership efforts in the achievement of organizational goals is the absence of genuine peace among employees. Peace is not simply the absence of war; neither is it a term that applies to the relationship between individuals. Ibeanu (2004) described peace as a "process involving activities that are directly and indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflicts , both in a specific organization and the wider international community". The scholar further submitted that to understand peace, one need to note that it:

- relates to existing conditions rather than ideal state or condition
- is a dynamic process and it is possible to identify the facts that drive it.
- is not a finished condition
- increases and decreases depending on objective socio-economic condition
- can be measured as it decreases or increases; and
- is not a linear, unidirectional process , instead it is complex and multifaceted.

Also, Akuh (2014) opined that one of the effective methods of mainstreaming peace and indeed, promoting the process of peace building is through the instrumentality of formal and informal education. The position of Akoh (2016) is that conflicts are generally believed to begin in the minds of human beings; therefore the foundation for ensuring peace must equally be constructed in the minds of the people through peace education. Peace education refer to all efforts through formal and informal processes of education which include media programs, workshops, conferences, adult literacy programs and child socialization aimed at laying appropriate foundation for peace profile to emerge (Akoh, 2016). In view of the foregoing, peace education involves all trainings and learning put in place deliberately, consistently, and proactively to promote peace as well as achieve positive change in attitude, behavior and environment for conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence.

The schooling system throughout the world is perceived as non-homogenous due to the fact that schools owned, ran and managed administratively by different institutions and organizations, and are located in different geographical location. Some schools are owned by

government or local bodies and / or religious organizations otherwise known as mission schools. Mission schools are schools owned and managed administratively by religious bodies such as Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist churches etc. Mission schools in Rivers state are academic communities that comprises of staffs and students with diverse cultural and religious background which is believed, will have direct or indirect influence on both intra and inter personal relationships within the school communities. Due to this fact, it is therefore important to note the high tendencies for conflict that may arise from clash of beliefs and interests among staffs and students that makes up the school community especially when it comes to understanding and interpreting the actions of others. Akudolu (2006) affirm this claim that despite all efforts by the federal government on peaceful coexistence, the idea of interpreting another person's action on the basis of ethnic and religious affiliation still prevail among citizens. In view of this, the leadership of any mission schools that desire and prioritize the achievement of educational goals schools need to adopt leadership strategy that will portray, promote and encourage peace education among entities of the mission school system. Hence, the paper is positioned to refocus various leadership strategies for peace education in mission secondary schools in Rivers State.

Conceptual Clarifications Leadership

Leadership as a concept has defiled a universal accepted definition. This is due to the existence of myriads of definition of the concept. Therefore there is no consensus among scholars about the precise definition of leadership. Despite this, the fact remains that leadership involves a process of influencing people so that they strive willingly towards the achievement of goals. Armstrong (2012), corroborated this view when he asserted that leadership means inspiring people to do their best in order to achieve a desired result or goal. He went further to state that leadership involves developing and communicating a vision for the future, motivating people and securing their engagement. If we are to accept this definition as provided by Armstrong, it will be right therefore

to say that leadership in a school inspires staff and student in the school to put in their best in order to actualize educational goals and objectives.

According to Dixon (1994), leadership involves exercising an influence upon others so that they tend to act towards achieving a goal which they might not have achieved so readily if left on their own. From this definition, it is clear that if people in an organization or an educational system are left on their own, they may not be able to achieve the goals or objectives of the organization or the educational system. They therefore require leaders to motivate them and coordinate their effort in order to achieve set objectives and goals.

Cole (2000), provided a comprehensive perspective of what leadership is all about. He defined it as “a dynamic process at work in a group where one individual, over a period of time and in a particular organizational context, influences the other group members to commit themselves freely to the achievement of group tasks or goals”. From this perspective, leadership involves guiding other members of an organization towards the actualization or realization of overall goal of the organization. Leadership is therefore a very critical element in school administration because it is only through it that direction is given to other stakeholders in the school system.

Leadership Strategies

Leadership strategies are evident in decision-making processes, communication pattern, pattern of motivation, relationship with subordinates, etc. In schools, some principals or headmasters may choose to do things without consultation or reference to their subordinates, some may choose to involve their subordinates, while some may choose to give their subordinates the independence to make and implement decisions in the school. This therefore implies that different leadership strategies exist in different academic environment (Ugochukwu and Adiele 2011). According to Toolkit (n.d) in Ololube (2017) the following are different types of leadership strategies:

Autocratic Leadership Strategy

This is a type of leadership where the focus of power is with the manager and all interactions within the school moves towards him. This suggests that the leader alone exercises decision making power and authority for determining policies, procedure for achieving educational goals, work-task and relationships, control or reward and punishment.

Bureaucratic Leadership Strategy

This strategy of leadership ensures following of rules religiously and all laid protocols must be duly observed. This is an appropriate leadership strategy for work involving serious safety risks (such as working with machinery, with toxic substances, or at dangerous heights) or where large sum of money are involved (Ololube, 2017). Bureaucratic leadership strategy is also useful in organizations where employees do routine tasks (Shaefer, 2005 in Ololube, (2017).

Democratic Leadership Strategy

Democratic leaders in school always consult the teachers on proposed actions and decision to solicit for their inputs. In this strategy of leadership, there is greater participation and interactions between the principal/head teacher and the teachers. Thus, the teachers have greater say in decision making, policy making and implementation (Abba, Anazodo, and Okoye, 2004). Democratic leaders make the final decision, but they always include members of staff in the decision making process. This no doubt, encourages creativity, innovations and inventions from the staff.

Transformational Leadership Strategy

Burns (1978), attempts to conceptualize by describing it as being the leadership that transpires when the leader's primary goal is to motivate the employees to cooperate, as opposed to forcing them to perform tasks and job duties. As stated by him, "Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality". Because the employees are inspired to perform the work that is needed, they are

also more receptive to change. Schein (1992) confirms that “transformational leaders help people accept the need for change without feeling that they are personally responsible for failure. At the same time, these leaders increase followers’ self-confidence and optimism about making a successful transition”

Transactional Leadership Strategy

Burns (1978), views transformational and transactional leadership as being opposite ends of the leadership continuum. Unlike transformational leadership, he affirms that transactional leadership is task-oriented. He states that the transactional leader can only be successful when both the leaders and followers are in agreement with the tasks that are to be performed. It is a bargaining process and is limited to the extent that the purposes in the process are shared by all participants. Bass (1985) concurs that transactional leadership can be distinguished from transformational leadership by making negotiations and forming contractual agreements between the administrator and the employee. According to Barling, Slater, and Kelloway (2000), transactional leaders are able to motivate their followers by choosing rewards and incentives that will be the most desirable to them. Since the relationship is based on a promised transaction, these relationships are easy to form (Burns, 1978).

Laissez-Faire Leadership Strategy

Laissez-faire is a French phrase for “let it be” (Ololube, 2017). Its a leadership strategy that allow people to work on their own. A laissez-faire leader allows staff complete freedom to do their work and set their own deadline. It should be noted that this strategy is more effective when staff are experienced, skilled and self-motivated. A laissez-faire leader depends largely on subordinates to set their goals, means of achieving the goals and they perceive their roles as one of facilitating the operations of followers, by furnishing them with information and acting primarily as a contact with the groups’ external environment (Abba, Anazodo and Okoye, 2004).

Peace

The concept of peace goes beyond a mere absence of war but an issue of life that is characterized by a plethora of dimensions because it has its roots in inter and intra personal, inter group and international relationships. To Lawal (2013), peace is a state of calmness within individuals, society communities and nations.

Akuh (2014) described peace as a condition or situation or period of time in which there is no war or conflict in the society or country. In the same vein, Egwu (2014) explained peace in positive terms as presence of happiness, content, good economy, social justice, and freedom of expression, creativity and support for personal growth at all levels. Specifically to individuals, peace of mind refers to a state of personal calmness and quietness without an atom of anxiety or depression. Miller and Pencak (2002) explained that "peace describes a society or a relationship that is operating harmoniously without violence or conflict. From the above views, peace can be described as a state of harmonious coexistence characterized by genuine understanding of each other, justice, respect and fairness to all.

Peace Education

Education is a process of transmitting things that are worthwhile to those who are committed to it, whether children or adult. It is a vital tool in achieving the objectives of social cohesion and living together in a society where peace is held in high esteem. This implies that to achieve the presence of peace, there is need for the transmission of the concept of peace from one individual to another through the process of peace education. Ogundare (2009) explained peace education as a deliberate attempt to educate every individual in the culture of peace, dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peacemaking skills in homes and the society at large using all the channels and instruments of socialization. In same vein, Gamut (2006) opined that peace education involves the concept of human dignity and human right with particular reference to those values as economic equity and political participation.

According to (United Nations Organization, 1998), peace education has been perceived globally as one of the major means of ensuring

effective conflict resolution. Specifically, the aims of peace education as stated by the United Nations Organization includes assisting the child to understand the concept of peace and conflict, identify insight into the nature and origin of violence and its possible effect on both victims and perpetrators with a view of equipping them with necessary knowledge needed to prevent and resolve conflict.

Types of Peace Education

The primary aim of peace education is to impart the knowledge of how to live in harmony with one another. Therefore, education for peace can either be given formally or informally

Formal Peace Education

This type of peace education involves the use of school to educate people on peace in order to drive home the concept of peace. This can be achieved by incorporating the concept of peace into school curriculum. Some subjects like Social Studies, Religious Studies, Civic Education, History, Fine Arts and other Science subjects are viable means of transmitting peace concept to students so that they will further understand their actions and its consequences. Corroborating this, Gamut (2006) is of the view that children and young people should know what peace is and guard themselves against embracing or being used to create violence. It is therefore important to note that when peace education is given at the early stage of life, positive lifelong changes for all citizens of all ages in all the countries of the world is assured.

Informal Peace Education

This is a type of education on peace that is acquired outside the school environment especially where people gather for work or leisure. Gamut (2006) observed that this form of education is a more open and inviting arrangement where people can be encouraged to collectively deliberate on the difficult task of looking at issues that are important to them, reflecting on their own behavioral attitude and generating alternatives for the future. He further noted that communities can use folk language, proverbs and old poems to delineate the concept of peace.

Principals Role in Peace Education

As a leader the school principal is expected to influence and motivate his or her subordinates towards the achievement of the goals of peace education. Egwu (2014) described the principal as an individual leader who have to observe, guides and organize seminars, programs and constitute effective leadership towards peace education. Therefore, the school principal can play important role in inculcating peace education by:

- maintaining firm, fair and consistent discipline
- establishing a positive rapport with students, staff, parent and the host community
- providing effective and positive leadership
- demonstrating effective teaching strategy
- providing a safe environment for student and staff: and

Benefits of Peace Education

According to Ajala (2003), the following benefits can be derived through the teaching of peace education.

- Improved teacher-student, teacher-teacher and student-student human relations
- Help develop good attitudes in students and teachers as well as corporation and mutual respect
- Help healthy emotional development in students
- Facilitates socialization through participation and cooperative learning
- Develop student discipline and moral behavior
- Develop creativity both in students and teachers
- Improve standard and quality of teaching.

Challenges of Peace Education in Secondary Schools

Odejobi and Adesina (2009) acknowledge that the achievement of the goals of peace has been a difficult thing since the existence of mankind. In Nigeria today, this could be partly attributed to various challenges facing the educational system which is expected to play the role of early formal peace education in the country. Ijaiya (2004) is of the

view that the greatest problem of the educational system is mismanagement of funds, inadequate teacher supply, dilapidated facilities and mismanagement of time among others. Other challenges of peace education that could be identified in the paper is the poor teaching methods adopted by secondary school teachers in teaching the concept of peace and the inability of some teachers to professionally drive home their points towards solving the problems of the world's violence and conflict realities.

Possible Solutions to the Challenges facing Peace Education in Secondary Schools

Ijaiya (2004) suggested that the following should be adopted for effective national peace transformation and sustainable peace in our education system:

Need for re-designing the educational system

One of the victims of the corrupt larger society is the education system. Also, despite of several reforms carried out in the education system, the system is still finding it difficult to achieve the goals stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE). There is therefore need to overhaul the system and to organize national curriculum conference that will evaluate the current system and recommend a more effective and manageable system for the country. In doing this, more attention should be given to Information Communication Technology (ICT) to facilitate accessibility to information.

Need for re-positioning the educational system

There is need to re-position the education system in the area of finance and quality assurance. Policies such as national minimum percentage of annual budgets for proper funding of education, bidding on the federal, state and local Governments will be useful to financially re-positon the educational system. In addition, there is need for policies on national minimum academic standard in schools for quality assurance at all levels.

Need for re-focusing the educational system

Currently in Nigeria, the educational system is focused on science and technology due to the importance attached. The teaching of subjects that emphasize on citizenship is weak in the school system thereby, making students not to be serious in subjects like Social Studies, History, and Civic Education etc. Therefore it is important to make the study of Nigeria's history which is part of citizenship education compulsory in the schools.

Need for re-focusing leadership strategies in the educational system.

There is need for principals to re-focus the democratic, transformational and transactional leadership strategies in particular for peace education to strive in mission secondary schools. By doing so, subordinates will be motivated to hold the tenets of peace education in high esteem.

Implications of Leadership Strategies on Peace Education

The role of leadership to effectively carry out peace education cannot be overemphasized. This is due to the fact that the strategy adopted by the leadership of a school system will directly or indirectly have effect on the productivity and efficiency of its subordinates. In a school setting where the strategy adopted by the leadership is autocratic, it is certain that in the formulation and implementation of policies for peace education will be carried out solely by the principal. This will, to a great extent, affect the process of peace education. This is due to the fact that the teachers who are supposed to carry out the process of peace education may find it difficult to understand and eventually be unable to drive home points when teaching on peace because they have little or no input in the development of peace education curriculum.

Also, the bureaucratic leadership strategy which entails the compliance of all laid down protocols in an organization will directly or indirectly promote and encourage peace education. In a situation whereby all staff sincerely follow laid down protocols in carrying out tasks, the issue of prejudice will be removed from the minds of individuals which will ultimately, create a peaceful atmosphere within the school system

Moreover, the democratic strategy of leadership seems to be the best among all leadership strategies in facilitating peace education. This strategy creates opportunity for subordinates to make inputs in the formulation of policies and development of curriculum for peace education within the school. This will enable the teachers to carefully choose teaching methods suitable for the teaching of peace concept and to effectively drive home what peace is all about. Therefore, the implementation of these policies will be easy due to the prior understanding of the curricular content of peace education.

The transformational leadership strategy is also a vital tool in the achievement of the goals and aims of peace education. The sole aim of a leader adopting this strategy is to motivate the employees to cooperate in performing tasks and duties. This implies that a transformational leader must have already identified what motivates each subordinate; therefore the process of peace education will run smoothly when the subordinates are motivated towards teaching the concept of peace by a transformational leader in the school system.

Furthermore, the transactional leadership strategy can only yield positive result in peace education if the leadership and the subordinates are in mutual agreement, because the strategy is a bargaining type. The implication is that the success of peace education is guaranteed when an agreement is reached, but a situation where there is failure to reach an agreement, the success of peace education is in jeopardy. In addition, the rewards and punishment attached to performing tasks and duties by a transactional leadership is a viable tool to influence the extent of success in peace education

Finally, the laissez-faire leadership strategy leaves the process of peace education at the mercy of subordinates. The strategy allows subordinates to freely work. The implication is that the strategy will yield a positive result in the area of peace education if the subordinates are experienced and require little or no supervision, but when the subordinates are not experienced and informed enough on the concept of peace education, they may find it difficult to drive home their point in describing what peace is because there is no concrete leadership on ground to evaluate the process of peace education.

Conclusion

Peace and its teaching through peace education is of paramount importance for harmonious coexistence among entities of mission secondary schools whose religious belief and cultural background differs. In view of this, peace education must be given a place in mission secondary schools through the school curriculum. Therefore it is the responsibility of the leadership of mission secondary school to ensure its implementation by adopting suitable leadership strategy that will promote and sustain the process of peace education.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion made above, it is therefore recommended that the leadership of mission secondary schools in Rivers state should:

1. be sensitized on how to refocus various leadership strategies especially the democratic, transformational and transactional leadership strategy for peace education to strive;
2. take cognizance of the implications of all the leadership strategies presented in the paper on the transmission of peace concept through peace education;
3. carefully choose and adopt a leadership strategy that will transform into and focus on educating subordinates on peace building to create a peaceful atmosphere so as to efficiently and effectively achieve secondary education goals in mission secondary schools and national security;
4. renovate all dilapidated facilities within the school premises in order to motivate subordinates for peace education to strive;
5. adequately fund education so that activities and policies formulated towards sustaining peace education will not be hampered, and,
6. employ qualified and well trained teachers who will effectively teach peace value and capacity building in the schools;

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