Influence of School Environment on the Management of Secondary School Education in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of school environment on the management of secondary school education in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The survey design was adopted for the study. Four hundred (400) teachers from 20 grant aided secondary schools in Markurdi Metropolis of Benue state constituted the sample for the study. The study selected its respondents using simple random sampling technique. A structured 10-item four point rating scale questionnaire titled 'Influence of School Environment on Management of Secondary School Questionnaire' (ISEMSSQ) was constructed by the researchers and used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while chi-square (x^2) test of goodness of fit was deployed to test the hypotheses at $p<0.05$ level of significance. The study revealed that there was a significant influence of leadership style and school-community relations on secondary schools in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state. It was recommended that School heads or administrators should adopt the most appropriate leadership style based on school situation for effective management of their environment and that schools host communities be considered in the running of schools, especially in matters concerning students' welfare.

***Key Words:** **S**chool **M**anagement; **S**chool **E**nvironment; **L**eadership-style; **S**chool-community relations, **M**akurdi **M**etropolis;*

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education, Federal Ministry of Education (2004) stated that education is the greatest force that can be used to seek redress and it is also the greatest investment that any nation can make for quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources. This is to say that, qualitative and quantitative education is a sine-qua-non for political, economic, and social changes of any society or nation. Education is usually considered to be the cornerstone and pillar of economic growth and development. The Nigerian government believes that to survive in the competitive world economy, the quality of education and its environment is the key variable. Arising from the foregoing, it is the opinion of this study that the quality of a school environment that entails its prevailing atmosphere, surroundings, etc., is a morale booster and strengthener to the feelings or belongingness, care and goodwill among its members. Harris and Lowery (2002) posited that school environment is a set of properties of the work environment perceived by individuals who work there that serve as a major force in influencing their job behaviour. They further mentioned that these set of properties in the work environment include but limited to leadership, motivation,

discipline, communication, school-community relations, facilities, materials, character, tone of the school, or the internal quality of a school especially as experienced by its members and noticed by visitors to the organization. Shore (1995) highlighted seven important factors that effective school environments must exhibit. These include; leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly environment with high expectation and discipline, frequent monitoring of students' progress, positive home-school relations and opportunity to learn, and student time on task.

The quality of leadership in a school affects to a large extent the success or failure of that school. The function of school leadership as an element of school environment is to influence the group towards the achievement of group goals. No two leaders are the same in the manner they manage their school; therefore the issue of leadership becomes a vital element of the school environment for transformation.

Another element of the school environment is school-community relations. According to Akpakwu (2008), school community relations can be described as the degree of understanding and goodwill achieved between the school and the community. Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State is experiencing problems in the management of secondary schools ranging from ineffective leadership styles, poor school-community relations, undisciplined, lack of motivation for teachers and students, and so on. This has culminated into poor academic performance by students and the inability of teachers to put in their best.

The Problem

The transmission of good values and accumulated knowledge from generation to generation is threatened if the educational sector which serves as the reservoir is not given the desired attention. The absence of good educational institutions will obviously deplete human resources that would have filled the depleted manpower stock. It is the observation of this researcher that the explosion in education in the last years in Nigeria is unprecedented in the history of Nigeria's education. The explosion has called for a rethinking of the quality and influence that the school environment has on school management.

In Makurdi metropolis, educational stakeholders have expressed concern about leadership styles perceived to be lacking and hence affecting management of secondary schools. There are problems of students' unrest, undisciplined among teachers and students arising from bad leadership in schools affecting management of secondary schools. This study is determined to investigate how these school environmental factors influence secondary schools management inMakurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out the influence of school environment on the management of Secondary Schools in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to find out the influence of leadership styles and school-community relations on the management of secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study;
1   How do leadership styles influence the management of secondary schools in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state?
2   How do School-Community relationships influence the management of secondary schools?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study

H_{01}:   Leadership styles do not significantly influence the management of secondary schools in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria
H_{02}:   School-Community relationship does not significantly influence the management of secondary schools.

Concept of School Environment

There are several definitions of the concept of school environment as there are writers on the subject. School environment is a relatively enduring character of a school that is experienced by its participants, that affects their actions, and that is based on the collective perceptions of behaviour in the school (Edem, 2004). School environment has been defined by Halpin and Croft (2003) in terms of educators' perceptions of leadership behaviour of the principal and interactions among teachers. They posited that there is an open and closed school environment. An open school environment is one in which teacher and principal behaviour is supportive, genuine, and engaged, whereas a closed environment is characterized by lack of authenticity, game playing and disengaged behaviour.

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth and the Alliance Organizing Project (2001) defined school environment as an orderly environment in which the school family feels valued and able to pursue the school's mission free from concerns about disruptions and safety. The project stressed that several aspects of a school's physical and social environment comprise its environment. It identified the following eight areas: Appearance and physical plant, student interactions, faculty relations, leadership/decision making, disciplined environment, learning environment, attitude and culture, and finally, school community relations. According to the report, positive school environment exists when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust. A positive school environment affects everyone associated with the school, students, staff, parents, and the community. It is the belief system or culture that underlies the day to day operation of a school.

Educators and parents have multiple options of possible interventions to improve school environment by Shore (1995). Shore stated that a school can be improved by increased parent and community involvement, implementation of character education or the promotion of fundamental moral values in children, use of violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula, personalization through adopt-a-kid programs, honoring most improved students, and block scheduling, adequate teacher remuneration and other motivational factors and peer mediation. In addition,

The quality of leadership in a school affects to a large extent the success or failure of that school. The success achieved by leaders or heads of schools in achieving organizational goals is more or less a factor of the leadership style adopted by them. Of all the factor variables that influence productivity and effective school management, the leadership factor is seen to be the number one factor (Mgbodile 2004). According to Abenga (1995) many organizational leaders, school administrators inclusive, adopt leadership styles which engender cooperation of staff, motivate their staff, enhance work performance and productivity and stimulate other positive results that generally help move their establishments forward. Others engage in styles which yield negative results, that dampen staff morale and commitment to work; that stifle initiative and creativity; that reduce the level of staff cooperation and involvement; that breed unhappiness, stress and tension among staff or that set the school into opposing camps, the pro and the anti administration camps.

Idoko (2005) said, more than any other public institution, the school derives its existence, stable environment and life blood from the community which supplies the material and human resources used in the school. This dependence on the community makes it difficult for the school or its professional staff to function effectively without the support of the community. Idoko emphasized that for the school environment to be able to influence positive academic performance, unless the community is well informed about the work, needs and problems of the school, it cannot be expected to extend its support for the school programmes.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design with a total population that consisted of 1500 teachers in the 89 secondary schools in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state. A sample of 20 secondary schools representing 22% of the schools and 400 teachers representing 27% of the total number of teachers were randomly selected for the study. The simple random sampling method was used to select sample size. The main instrument adopted for data collection was a 10-item structured questionnaire called 'Influence of School Environment on Management of Secondary School Questionnaire' (ISEMSSQ). The questionnaire was validated by experts in Educational Management and trial tested. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation to answer the research questions while the formulated hypotheses were tested using chi-square goodness of fit at $p<0.05$ level of significance

Results and Findings.

Research Question 1
How do leadership styles influence the management of secondary schools in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Responses of Teachers on the Influence of Leadership Style on School Management.

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	ST.D	Decision
1	The type and quality of leadership style influence the effective management	200	150	20	30	3.74	0.47	Accepted

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	ST.D	Decision
	of a school.							
2	Teachers can put in their best even if the management leadership style is unfriendly and not objective.	230	100	20	50	3.54	0.68	Accepted
3	Does the leadership style in your school help in the effective management and improvement in the academic achievement of the school?	180	120	50	50	3.63	0.56	Accepted
4	The best leadership style for secondary school is democratic style.	235	115	30	20	3.50	0.74	Accepted
5	The principal alone makes a secondary school perform well academically with less contribution from teachers.	25	25	150	150	2.04	0.97	Rejected
	Cluster mean					**3.29**	**0.68**	**Accepted**

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of teachers in secondary schools with regards to how leadership style influences school management. Based on the cut-off point of 2.50, teachers rated 1, 2, 3 and, 4 items acceptable indicating that the type and quality of leadership style of the school influence the management of the school, and that the type of leadership style helps in the management and improvement in academic achievement of the school. It also shows that the democratic style of leadership is the best for school management while item 5 respondents disagreed that the principal alone can make a secondary school perform academically well without the contribution of other teachers. The cluster mean of 3.29 and standard deviation of 0.68 was accepted as rated above 2.50 cut off point

Research Question 2
In what ways do School-Community relations influence the management of secondary schools for national transformation in Makurdi metropolis?
Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Responses of Teachers on the Influence of School Community Relations on School Management in Makurdi.

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	ST.D	Decision
6	The type and quality of school community relationship influence the effective management of a school	140	160	50	50	3.68	0.51	Accepted
7	Without the support of the school community the school will be unable to achieve	170	130	25	75	3.56	0.51	Accepted

	its objectives.							
8	The school community should be allowed to use school facilities for a cordial relationship and serene environment.	150	130	70	50	3.61	0.55	Accepted
9	The school derives its existence, stable environment and life blood from the community which supplies the material and human resources.	120	180	40	60	3.56	0.56	Accepted
10	Parent-Teachers Association plays considerate roles in school administration and promotion of academic performance of students and teachers.	200	150	25	25	3.45	0.71	Accepted
	Cluster mean					**3.57**	**0.57**	**Accepted**

Table 2 shows that, teachers rated all the items from 6 to 10 in the cluster well above the mean cut off point of 2.50. Based on the data, the respondents agree with the view that, the type and quality of school community relationships influence the effective management of a school. According to them, without the support of the school community the school will be unable to achieve its objectives. They posited that the school community should be allowed to use school facilities for a cordial relationship and serene environment. More so, the school derives its existence, stable environment and life blood from the community which supplies the material and human resources. The cluster mean of 3.57 and standard deviation 0.57 indicated that School-Community relationships influence secondary school management.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Leadership does not have significant influence on the management of secondary schools in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

Table 1: Chi-square Test of the Influence of Leadership Style on School Management.

Opinions	Observed frequency	Expected Frequency	df	X^{2-cal}	X^{2-tab}	Sig	Decision
No influence	100 (25%)	200 (50%)	1	61.54	3.84	0.000	Significant
Influence	300 (75%)	200 (50%)					

Table 1, shows the influence of leadership styles on the management of secondary school education in Makurdi Metropolis. The result obtained from the analysis showed that the value of X^2 calculated 61.54 was greater than X^2 table 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. That is, there is a significant influence of leadership styles on the management of secondary education.

Hypothesis 2

School-Community relations donot significantly influence the management of secondary schools in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state..

Table 1: Chi-square Test of the Influence of School-community Relations on the Management of Secondary Schools in Makurdi.

Opinions	Observed frequency	Expected Frequency	df	$X^{2\text{-cal}}$	X^{2_tab}	Sig	Decision
No influence	50 (12.5%)	200 (50%)	1	35.92	3.84	0.000	Significant
Influence	350 (87.5%)	200 (50%)					

Table 2, shows the influence of school-community relations on the management secondary school education.. The result obtained from the analysis showed that the value of X^2 calculated 35.92 was greater than X^2 table 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. That is, there is a significant influence of school-community relations on the management of secondary education.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study revealed that leadership style influences the management of secondary school education for national transformation. This finding agree with Abenga (1995) who stated that many organizational leaders, school administrators inclusive, adopt leadership styles which engender cooperation of staff, motivate their staff, enhance work performance and productivity and stimulate other positive results that generally help move their schools or organizations forward.

The second finding of this study revealed that school-community relations significantly influence secondary school management for national transformation. This finding agrees with the views of Idoko (2005) who said school-community relations is more important than any other public institutions' stakeholders, the school derives its existence, stable environment and life blood from the community which supplies the materials and human resources used in the school.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it is clearly established that, leadership styles and school-community relationship significantly influence the management of secondary schools education in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. School administrators should adopt the most appropriate leadership style based on the school situation for effective management of their schools environment.
2. The school host community should be considered in the running of the school, especially in matters concerning students' welfare for effective management ofsecondary school education.

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