

Perceived Impact of Democratic Leadership Style of Principals on Students' Academic Achievement

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Abstract:- This study investigated how principals' democratic leadership style impacted on students' academic achievement. The study was guided by three research questions and one null hypothesis. The design of the study was correlational research design. A total of 6,900 students formed the population for the study. Similarly, a total of 345 SSII students representing 10% of the population was the sample for the study. The students' academic achievement was determined using their third term English Language results as collected from the sample schools while "Democratic Leadership Style Questionnaire" (DLSQ), developed by the researcher was used in collecting data on the principals' democratic leadership style. DLSQ was duly validated by three experts. Its reliability was also established. The Cronbach alpha was used and reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The researcher used on-the-spot approach to collect data for the study. The data were analyzed using range of scores and Pearson's Product Moment. Findings indicate that Principals' democratic leadership style has significant impact on students' achievements scores. Part of the recommendations was that the principals should continue to adopt the democratic style of leadership to enhance good academic achievement of secondary school students in the subjects they offer most especially in English Language.

Keywords:- Influence; Democracy; Leadership; Leadership Style; Academic Achievement; English Language; Achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the school as an organization, leadership style is among the processes available to administrators, supervisors and educators to bring about or preserve changes needed to improve schooling. As administrators, principals have roles to play in order to achieve the goals of education. They set the tone of the school, maintain staff, build and manage effective team work, maintain effective communication channels and determine the extent the school curriculum is achieved. The principals cannot do all these things alone. They need the assistance from teachers and other subordinates. This requires that the principals need to provide the needed leadership and utilize the best leadership style to bring about the best in their schools.

Several authors have defined leadership. According to Adeyemi (2014), leadership style in the school organization is a behavioural pattern adopted by a school leader to influence the behaviours of teachers and other followers in the school. Accordingly, there is no best leadership style. Each leadership style depends on the situation and school context. This implies that the principal has the opportunities of using different leadership styles in the school to bring about the desired outcome, depending on the situation or peculiarity of the school and the context of the work.

As noted by Gronn (2020), the kind of leadership style adopted by the school principal defines the principal's personality or the principal's approach to task performance. Whatever be the case, principals' style of leadership has some impacts on the academic achievement of students in the school. On this note, the principal is expected to study situations and the school environment properly and adopt appropriate leadership style in to impact on the academic performance of the students positively.

Basically, there are three style of leadership which school principals can apply (Adeyemi 2014). They include autocratic leadership style; democratic leadership style and laissez-faire leadership styles. Each of these leadership styles has its merits and demerits when applied in the school system.

Under democratic leadership, the principal is expected to give teachers, students and other people concerned with the activities of the school, the opportunity to participate in running the affairs of the school. Sometimes, it is leadership by consultation. Thus, democratic leader encourages people's participation in policy formulation and implementation in the school. This is not the case with autocratic leadership. An autocratic leader is authoritarian and as such, does not encourage people's participation in running the school. Such a leader centralizes power and directs the people in the organization on things to be done and how they are to be done. This is not the case with the laissez-faire leadership. Such a leader assumes that group members are responsible adults who can take care of themselves and as well things in the organization. Such a leader does not get involved in activities of the group but regards every group member as a responsible adult who can take responsibility (Oyetunyi, 2016). This kind of leadership style can be adopted where the leader is a new entrant and as such, in the process of learning.

The school tone reflects the personality of the school leader. A leader who can use appropriate style of leadership as situations demand can make a better school than those who cannot. Accordingly, where appropriate style is applied, it is most likely that the academic achievement of the students will be high (Adeyemi 2014). According to Ige (2001), the priority of every good school administrator is to improve the academic achievement of the students. However, some school principals are yet to appreciate the fact that school leadership style can impact either positively or negatively on students’ academic activities. That is why some of them find it difficult to administer their schools effectively. According to Karen, Anderson and Wahistrong (2014), effective school leadership makes the difference in terms of improved students’ learning.

In the Nigerian situation, school leadership impacts and contributes significantly to high academic achievement. Where the leadership style is effective, the students perform maximally, all things being equal. Academic achievement refers to scores students get in examinations or class work. It reflects academic accomplishment or task execution in terms of Academic function. According to Yusuf 2018) it refers to the outcome of teaching and learning.

It is not yet established that principals’ style of leadership has any impact on the academic achievement of students particularly in the area this research was carried out. This is a source of worry and major concern to the researcher. In the light of this, this study was motivated by the need to determine how principals’ democratic leadership style impacts on the academic achievement of the students. The focus is on the Nnewi education zone of Anambra State, Nigeria.

➤ *Research Questions*

This study was guided by the following three research questions:

- What is the perceived impact of principals’ democratic leadership style on the academic achievement of students in English language?
- What are the students’ achievement scores in English Language?
- What perceived impact has principals’ democratic leadership style on the English language achievement scores of students?

➤ *Hypothesis*

Ho: The perceived impact of principals’ style of leadership on the academic achievement of student is not significant.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted the correlational research design. All the public secondary schools in Nnewi education zone of Anambra State were studied. A total of 6,900 students formed the population for the study. Similarly, a total of 345 SSII students representing 10% of the population was the sample for the study. The students’ academic achievement was determined using their third term English Language results as collected from the sample schools. Furthermore, “Democratic Leadership Style Questionnaire” (DLSQ), developed by the researcher was used in collecting data on the principals’ democratic leadership style. DLSQ was validated by three experts.

Among the experts, two were chosen for Educational Management and Policy Department while one was chosen from Measurement and Evaluation Unit of Educational Foundations Department, all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The comments made by the experts were used in the production of the final instrument that was used in the study. In order to establish the reliability of DLSQ, copies of the instrument were administered on 20 senior secondary II students in Awka Education zone. The Cronbach alpha was used to determine reliability index. This yields coefficient of 0.81.

In collecting data on principals’ democratic leadership style, the researcher used on-the-spot approach. Follow up visits were used to retrieve from respondents that could not submit on-the-spot. The research questions were answered using range of scores and Pearson’s Product Moment. The range of scores was used to answer research questions 1 and 2 while the third research question was answered using Pearson’s Product Moment.

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the perceived impact of principals’ democratic leadership style on the academic achievement of students in English language?

Style of Leadership	Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
Democratic style	0-49	103	30	Not adopting
	50-100	242	70	

Table 1:- Students’ Perception on Democratic Style of Leadership of Principals

Results in Table 1 show that 242 (70%) of the respondents with the scores ranging from 50 to 100 perceived their principals to be adopting democratic leadership style, while 103(30%) of them believed the principals are autocratic leaders.

Research Question2: What are the students' achievement scores in English Language?

Score Ranges	N	%	Remarks
0-39	30	2.1	P.A.
40-49	50	13.4	F.A.
50-69	133	47.4	G.A
70-100	132	47.1	V.G.A.

Key: P.A. =Poor Achievement; F.A.= Fair Achievement; G.O.=Good Achievement; V.G.A.= Very Good Achievement.

Table 2:- Students' Achievement Scores in English Language

Results in Table 2 indicated that 132 (47.1%) of the students with the scores ranging from 70 to 100 have very good achievement in English language, while 133(47.4%) who scored between 50 and 69 have good achievement whereas only 50 (13.4%) and 30 (2.1%) of the students respectively have poor achievement in English language.

Research Question 3: What perceived impact has principals' democratic leadership style on the English language achievement scores of students?

Source of variation	N	Perceptions r	Achievement r	Remark
Perceptions	1921	1.00	0.57	Positive Impact
Achievements	1921	0.57	1.00	

Table 3:- Pearson's r on Students' Perception on Principals' Democratic Style and their Achievement Scores in English Language

As indicated in Table 3, the respondents perceived that principals' democratic leadership style impacted positively on the English language achievement scores of students.

Testing Null Hypothesis: The perceived impact of principals' style of leadership on the academic achievement of student is not significant.

N	cal.r	Df	Crit.r	Remark
345	0.57	344	0.19	S

S = Significant

Table 4:- Students' Perception Scores on Principals' Democratic Style and their English Language Achievement Scores in Probability table of r

Results in Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and 344 df, the calculated r 0.57 is greater than the critical r 0.19. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. The kind of influence principals' democratic style has on students' achievements in English language in secondary schools is significant.

➤ *Results*

The major results of the study are as follows:

- Greater number 242 (70%) of the students perceived that their principals adopt democratic leadership style.
- Majority of the students 133(47.4%) have good achievement in English language.
- The democratic leadership style of the principals impacted positively on the students' achievement scores.
- Principals' democratic leadership style has significant impact on students' achievements scores.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study disclosed that secondary school principals in Nnewi education zone of Anambra state adopted the democratic leadership style in their various schools as perceived by the students. The finding of the study was not in line with Kumar (2020) who found that laissez-faire leadership is the most prevalent leadership styles used by secondary schools. However, the study was in tandem with the findings of Canivel (2010) who found out among others that the most prevalent style of leadership adopt by secondary school principal is the democratic style of leadership.

The study further revealed that majority of the students have good achievement in English language. These were represented by a higher percentage of scores recorded by the students. The reason for the good academic achievement of the students in English language as indicated by the findings could be as a result of the leadership style adopted by principals. The study disclosed that there is positive and significant influence of the democratic leadership style of principals on the academic achievement of secondary school students in English language. This finding is in line with Ibrahim and Al-Tanaji (2013) who found out that there is a positive and significant influence of democratic leadership style of principals on good academic achievement of the students.

The study was also in line with Nyagaka and Odongo (2013) who found out that there is a significant relationship between democratic style of initiating structure of the principals and the academic achievement of students. Though the current study focused on influence while the former was a relationship study, the point is that the good academic achievement of the students in English language is attributable to the democratic style of leadership the principals adopt. In democratic leadership style, the leader builds trust, respect and commitment. The democratic leader affords people a say in decisions that affect their goals and how they do their work, it drives up flexibility, responsibility and keeps morale high. Thus the teachers' morale would have been high which might have led to their commitment towards teaching which ultimately led to the good achievement of students in the two core subjects; English language and Mathematics.

V. CONCLUSION

The conclusion in this study is that secondary school principals in public secondary schools in Nnewi education zone adopted democratic leadership styles; the style so adopted has positive and significant influence on the good academic achievements of majority of the students in English language in secondary schools in Nnewi education zone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Principals should adopt the democratic style of leadership especially on teachers of English language which require creativity as a second language.
- Principals are to continue adopting the democratic style of leadership to enhance good academic achievement of secondary school students in the subjects they offer most especially in English Language.
- The principal adopting the democratic style of leadership will ensure the participation of teachers in decision making most especially in matters that concerns them. This will help to boost their morale towards the teaching and learning process, give them sense of belongingness which will invariably increase their effectiveness and ultimately leading to good academic achievement of the students in the subjects they offer.

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