Constructs in Leadership Style's Choice based on Workplace Experience in Ugandan Secondary Schools

Olive Kimbowa Nansubuga

North-East Normal University, China

Charles Muweesi

Zhejiang Normal University, China and Busitema University, Uganda

Lan Zhao

North-East Normal University, China

Abubaker Mutebi

Kyambogo University, Uganda and Trinity College Nabbingo, Uganda

Abstract: This qualitative study was done on the head teacher's choice of leadership styles and their implication for better performance using one selected Private school in Mukono District (Uganda). It established that, head teacher's choice of leadership styles did not cause any hindrances amongst his staff so they worked harmoniously to achieve the set targets and goals, motivational-skills and team playing-role in all that happens in the school fosters active participation of all stake holders which eventually leads to attainment of results as targeted, thus recommending for effective delivery of quality education services and improved students' academic performance is to be attained.

Keywords: *Education in Mukono, MBWA Style of Management, Leadership Styles in Schools, Secondary Education in Uganda, Teachers Leadership*

Introduction

A properly skilled human resource is noted to be an asset to effective management and utilization of resources for increased productivity (Samier, 2008). Effective management and enhanced productivity require a well-trained and healthy human resource. Education is viewed as a fundamental strategy for human resource development. Major resources have been invested over the years by the Government and other stakeholders to expand and improve education at all levels. These stakeholders include private investors who own private schools in this context (Ssekamwa, 1999).

There is an issue of poor leadership in schools that has existed for over the years, although some interventions such as recruitment of new managers/head teachers and deputies, new teachers, motivation of teachers, refresher courses, workshops, and seminars, have been done to amend the situation but seem to be ineffective. According to (Day, C., & Sammons, P., 2013), School leaders are under considerable pressure to demonstrate the contribution of their work to school improvement, which has resulted in the creation of a wide range of literature which addresses leadership in the context of school improvement (Namukasa & Buye, 2007).

This analysis pays particular attention to the leadership and management styles of head teachers which include; Management by Objective (MBO), Management by Walking Around (MBWA), transformational leadership, laissez- fare leadership, transactional leadership, autocratic/ authoritative leadership, instructional/pedagogical leadership and participative/distributed/democratic leadership. School leaders, particularly principals, have a key role to play in setting direction and creating a positive school culture including the proactive school mindset, supporting and enhancing staff motivation and commitment needed to foster improvement and promote success for schools in challenging circumstances (Ebong, Ogwel, Eton, Mutesigensi, & Mwosi, 2018).

A lot of research has been carried out in the area of how the head teacher is expected to effectively utilize leadership skills while carrying out primary school administration functions (Midlock. 2010). In the educational set-up, the key traits that an educational administrator needs to possess include capacity for intelligence and judgment; responsibility to exercise dependability and self-confidence; achievement in scholarship; participation to allow sociability and adaptability; and, status to reflect socioeconomic position and popularity (Mbiti, 1976).

(Okumbe, 1998) further pointed out that the educational administrator needs to show competence in his/her personal attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills. The personal attributes of the head teacher include abilities for physical energy to withstand strain; mental attributes that require him/her to display above average intelligence by being well-read (Teferra, 2017); social attributes that make him/her to be adaptable to a variety of situations with ease; and an excellent character Gichu, D. N., Kibaara, T., & Njagi, Z. (2017). This emphasizes the need for the head teacher to attain further education, pre-service training and in-service refresher courses as modes for acquiring relevant knowledge for use in management.

However, little has been conducted in Uganda especially in private secondary schools. Nevertheless, (Nsubuga, 2008) analyzed the leadership styles and school performance of secondary schools which was conducted in government aided schools, findings revealed that, the head teachers used a range of leadership styles to attain improved academic performances though democratic style scored higher. His study confirms that the mission and vision of this school clearly states to "offer quality education and produce all round, self-reliant students for international development". But this has not been achieved over the years which could be due to the effect of leadership in the schools (World Bank, 2012). This study sought to understand the problematic underpinnings in the head teacher's choice of leadership styles and their implication for better performance in a selected Private school (herein the study referred to as school Z) in Mukono District (Uganda).

Methodology

This study adopted a case study research design where qualitative data was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the head teachers' challenges in choice of leadership styles in the selected secondary high school in Mukono district, Uganda. The population sample size comprised of 10 respondents which included 1 head teacher, 1 deputy, 1 head of

department, and 1director of studies, 2 student leaders and 4 teachers found in school Z in Mukono District in Uganda. The data in this study was acquired from three sources these were; documentary review and interviews; Data was organized, transcribed and summarized to bring out a clear picture of the study topic.

Glitches Tackled by The Head Teacher as He Adopted These Leadership Styles.

In this study, the head teacher highlighted some of the challenges he faced in his administration which included; interpersonal tension between stakeholders, managerial burdens, difficulty in implementing management plans and dawdling of school progress plans.

Interpersonal Tension between Stakeholders

When requested to throw more light on the identified challenges, the head teacher went on to say that in management, some members tended to misunderstand the given information yet they were mandated to pass it on so there was need to do more sensitization or convince them further to ensure that they got the gist of the content before they dispatched it to others especially the students in the school context who would further convey it to their parents yet it was wrongly interpreted. He asserted,

> *"In Administration there are challenges such as sometimes you may conceive an issue but when it's not accepted by all, it becomes too difficult in implementing it. Also, about communication, there are times the staff will misunderstand you however much you try to explain".*

Such scenarios left the head teacher always wondering why and how fellow administrators could not stand by the agreed decision to be able to manage the institution as it was desired. Still to note, the parents too could not come on board as expected apart from the few who had the school at heart which prompted the school to create an award so as to woo more into the system of developing the school to heights through their contributions in any sense. On the side of the students, it was obvious that their perception of ideas depended on their interest so they had little to support or negate unless it was directly requiring their effort.

Managerial Burdens

It was revealed by the head teacher that in his administration, there are some instances that he cannot forego or under look as they may hamper the smooth teaching/ learning process which may result into unsatisfactory teaching/ learning style. For example, pedagogical issues may be in form of a student/ some students lacking some essential items in class/ school that may deter their performance so it was his responsibility or any of his subordinates to communicate to the parents of these students to provide the items for the smooth running of the teaching/ learning process. He exclaimed,

> *"With regards to pedagogical issues, students may lack some school materials for example a biology student lacking the necessary apparatus to carry out an experiment tends to be tedious hence affecting the smooth learning; again, a fine art student who lacks colors in a painting lesson will impede the learning process too".*

Difficulty in Implementing Management Plans

When queried about how the rules and regulations were a challenge in his administration, he gave an ordeal of the modern trends as far as technology is concerned. He said that, lots of new technology has come into place and basing on the nature of the school and its original rules and regulations, those materials or gadgets may be termed as illegal.

He continued to explain that before or when the school was being commissioned, most of the improved or advanced gadgets were not expected or considered to be in students' possession but today it seizes to be because times have changed so there was a need to be flexible as a leader and move with the global trends but with caution as far as the school setting and standards were. The head teacher exclaimed that,

> *"The sophisticated nature of the world with technology also affects our school governance. For example, no phones are allowed in school/class but some students may sneak in these phones in a pen-like form so you will observe that it's a pen that the student is holding but technologically it's a phone and this hinders proper management".*

Dawdling of School Progress Plans

As far as division of labor was, the head teacher asserted it that much as he believed in everyone as far as leadership and management is concerned, some teachers or members of staff tended to act contrary which puzzled him*;*

"some teachers stubbornly fail to deliver during their week on duty yet he/ she has the opportunity to seek for help or guidance from others as well as observing those who perform to their best when allocated duty".

He continued to express his dissatisfaction in those members who only thought of teaching as the designated job so the other responsibilities delegated to perform were not in their line and so they failed to deliver even when mentored and talked to or guided on how to fulfill the given assignment which dawdled down the development plans of the school. He explained as follows;

"*With division of labor, I always believe that everyone can be a leader but sometimes you will give a duty to someone and he/she mismanages it or neglects it even when motivated and monitored*".

Liethwood and Jantzi (2000) gives six major dimensions of effective school leadership which included: building school vision and goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; symbolizing professional practices and values; demonstrating high-performance expectations; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. These had been exercised by the head teacher as described by the respondents hence being in line with Leithwood ideas.

Coherent Findings

According to this study, it was established that, the head teacher's choice of leadership styles did not find any hindrances amongst his staff so they worked harmoniously to achieve the set targets and goals. It was further revealed that his motivational skills and team playing role in all that happens in the school fosters active participation of all stake holders which eventually leads to attainment of results as targeted. Further to note, the challenges are always encountered in a joint manner since all stake holders are part of the

working team so what hinders progress is never let to rest.

On the contrary, there were a few indirect challenges experienced in his administration such as; miscommunication of some information, failure of some teachers to deliver when delegated, sophisticated nature of students in today's era that may break the rules and regulations deliberately in the guise of improved technology as well as students lacking some scholastic materials which may hamper their academic performance. This is in line with (Adeyemi, T. O., & Bolarinwa, R, 2013) and (Akib, Haryanto, Iskandar, & Patak, 2018) who identified different factors that seemed to be most pressing to the head teachers than what the other researchers had flanked. These factors included; social cultural, stereotypes and socio-economic backgrounds of the students.

Basing on the conceptual frame work used in this study, the researcher found out that some of the influencing / limiting factors to the head teacher leadership style would include; degree of profession of leaders, the treatment of leaders, oversight mechanism (supervision/monitoring system), and level of participation of the parties (including teachers, students and parents).

The reviewed literature outlines some limiting factors such as; school based factors like established school tradition, modes of punishment, historical backgrounds, nature, size and status of the schools, staff turnover, teacher- student ratio, quality of facilities, class size, instructional resources, resource endowment, prefects selection, staff turnover, age, level of education, training and experience of head teachers to mention but a few. Also, teacher related

factors have an influence on the styles of leadership of the head teacher namely; work load, commitment, qualification and experience as well as the parent related factors like; expectations, parent/ teacher interaction, parent/ child interaction, and hence all these coupled together stage a toll on the management of the head of school.

Arising study Conclusion

The study concluded that the head teacher combined democratic, instructional and transformational leadership styles which brought about a healthy working competition amongst the staff and all aimed at excellence so as to be recognized at the end of the year by the head teacher and board of directors of this school. These leadership styles helped him to develop valuable employee interaction, effective supervision and healthy fitness to him.

However, these styles brought about some administrative challenges such as interpersonal tension between stakeholders, dawdling of school progress plans, managerial burdens and difficulty in implementing management plans. These were resolved tactfully through placing reporters within and outside the school, having ears on the ground and being flexible in case of any policy defeat. On the side of the student leaders, the styles of leadership and management prompted them to strike a balance between academics and leadership even when weak so as not to lose the honour, trust and confidence the head teacher had in them which would result into losing the leadership position as well.

Scholarly Recommendations

All head teachers should apply the MBWA theory/ style of management as they employ the different styles of leadership because it calls for many other styles such as participatory/ democratic, instructional and transformational styles too which when blended, there will be effective delivery of quality education services and improved students' academic performance.

The existing challenges in the leadership of the head teacher should be looked into carefully as they seem minor but can spark off failure if not checked so a need to create proper channels of communication in the institution, evenly distribute responsibilities putting into consideration the capabilities of the individual and lobbying for provision of scholastic materials by the stakeholders in due time.

Basing on the findings of the study, the head teacher adopted some approaches to curb the challenges experienced in his administration which included; having ears on the ground to be reliably informed about the happenings in the school, identifying reliable reporters who could feed him with the required information, reviewing archaic and non-pragmatic policies and appreciating his employees for whatever

impactful adventures they endeavor to produce. These ideas are quite crucial and applicable in maintaining smooth administration in contemporary times. It's therefore recommended that various school heads should emulate and implement them where appropriate.

It's again recommended that future studies should conduct a more holistic study by including a couple of private schools in the district so as to get a generalized and distinct view of various leadership styles in the respective private schools.

More comparative studies should also be carried out between private and public schools to ascertain and come out with leadership gaps which may path way for policy formulations and perhaps gives a new perspective of administering and governance in the schools effectively. This may bring healthy competitions amongst the schools and promotes the overall academic performance of students nationwide.

Acknowledgements

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Corresponding Author Contact Information:

Author name: Muweesi Charles – cmuweesi@sci.busitema.ac.ug /cmuweesi@zjnu.edu.cn

Faculty: Science and Education

University, Country: Busitema University, Uganda.