

Cross-Cultural Comparison of Effective Leadership in Schools for Children With Blindness or Low Vision in the United States and Nigeria

Paul M. Ajuwon, Ph.D.
Department of Counseling, Leadership, and Special Education
Missouri State University
901 S. National Avenue, Springfield, MO 65897, U.S.A.
Email: paulajuwon@MissouriState.edu

A. Olu Oyinlade, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Nebraska, Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182, U.S.A.
Email: aoyinlade@mail.unomaha.edu

Abstract

In this project, the authors used the Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities (EBLQ) method of measuring leadership effectiveness to assess and compare the effectiveness of principals (leaders) of residential schools for children with blindness or low vision in the United States (U.S.) and Nigeria. A total of 248 teachers (subordinates) in 25 schools in the U.S. and 271 teachers in 22 schools in Nigeria, assessed their principals against the qualities they (teachers) perceived to be essential for effective leadership in their respective countries. Differences found in perceived EBLQ items for leadership effectiveness in both countries demonstrated support for both the trans-cultural and culture-specific perspectives of leadership effectiveness. The outcomes in both countries indicated that the principals could derive a “coaching” effect from

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

the two studies regarding the efforts needed to improve their leadership styles to achieve congruence between essentiality and effectiveness.

Introduction

Background and literature review

As the title suggests, this article focuses on the effectiveness and characteristics of leaders in schools for children with blindness and low vision in Nigeria and the United States (hereafter referred to as the U.S.). In addition to the data in the research reported herein, the authors drew from their personal and professional experiences in the two countries to analyze an area of special education administration that has received little empirical investigation. Attention to cross-cultural analysis of leadership in special education is especially important today as globalization has advanced throughout the world, leading to schools, organizations and communities becoming more global than ever before. Consequently, this trend has created a myriad of challenges, necessitating the need to research the performances of school leaders (principals) and their subordinates (teachers).

According to Goldring, Cravens, Murphy, et al. (2009), assessing principal effectiveness has become an important component of school improvement. Similarly, legal mandates and ever-looming global competition, high academic standards and systemic performance accountability have become critical elements of school leadership in the 21st century. As a result, scholars have advocated that principal leadership assessment should constitute an integral part of a standards-based accountability system and school improvement. This is, perhaps, why the principal's role has become a complex and multi-faceted one.

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

Several writers have identified leadership theories that align with the discourse in this study (see for example, Blair, 2002; Glasman & Heck, 1992; Hart, 1992; Jansen, 1995; Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2015). These scholars suggested four conceptualizations of leadership skills and behaviors deserving of assessment. They can be summarized thus: First, performance on job tasks which typically involve the responsibilities for managing school programs, community interactions, physical facilities, student behavior, and coordinating professional development; second, personal resources such as knowledge and skills that principals should possess. They include good listening skills, good presentation skills, and participative decision-making style; third, processes, which include activities on school improvement - an approach that seeks to illuminate where leadership impacts school-wide academic performance; and lastly, organizational outcome-based assessment which looks at desired school outcomes and the extent to which the school has achieved these outcomes. Portin, Feldman, & Knapp (2006) noted that the broad trend of increasing focus on learning and school improvement has affected how leaders are assessed. This has resulted in novel ways of leadership assessment which the reviewers categorized as: assessing behaviors instead of traits, depending on professional standards, focusing on learning results, emphasizing leadership development, and considering organizational context. However, in our professional opinion, these characteristics are yet to be fully understood in special education administration, especially in a low-income country like Nigeria.

In looking at the preceding conceptualizations, it appears that in both the U.S. and Nigeria, principals are expected to be competent and visionary managers, as well as instructional leaders. There is agreement among researchers today that the maintenance of quality and standards in education hinges largely on the degree to which these leaders effectively carry out

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

their responsibilities, especially at the primary and secondary school levels. Therefore, the intent of this project is to document the effectiveness and characteristics of leaders in specialized schools for children with blindness in Nigeria and the United States, in the hope that lessons learned in both settings will increase our knowledge and understanding of leadership effectiveness and characteristics.

Research objectives

Based on empirical studies that indicate that leadership is both situational and culturally contextual (Dorfman, Hanges, & Brodbeck, 2004; Obasanjo & Mabogunje, 1991; Schlechty, 1990), the objectives of this study are twofold. The first objective is to analytically determine similarities and differences in essential behavioral leadership qualities for successful principalship in schools for children with blindness or low vision in the U.S. and Nigeria. The second is to evaluate leadership effectiveness of the principals in the same schools in the two countries. We believe that knowledge derived from this study will enhance the reader's understanding of the similarities and differences in the essential qualities necessary for effective leadership of principals of these schools. The findings from these studies may also complement knowledge on leadership traits that are common across cultures (trans-cultural leadership traits) as well as those traits that may be culture-specific.

Method

The authors meta-analyzed the findings of two separate studies on leadership characteristics of principals of schools for children with blindness or low vision in the U.S. and Nigeria (Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005; Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2015). These two previous studies were based on the concept of Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities (EBLQ) (Oyinlade,

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

2006), which seeks to enhance the comparative analysis of leadership essentialities and effectiveness of principals in the specialized schools. The methodological procedures involved for each study are described below.

STUDY 1: The U.S. Study

Instrument Design: The questionnaire design for data collection for the U.S. study (Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005) began with a random selection of ten judges (four principals, four teachers and two superintendents) from ten states in the U.S. The judges provided benchmark EBLQ characteristics for successful leadership. The judges' responses were then analyzed for frequency. All items with a minimum frequency of five (i.e. cited by at least 50% of the judges) were incorporated into the final questionnaire. This resulted in an 18-item, Likert-type, seven-point scale of essentiality (7 = highest level of essentiality while 1= lowest level) operationalized from the general descriptions provided by the judges (Table 1). The items were then used to construct a scale of leadership effectiveness (7 = highest level of effectiveness while 1= lowest level).

Sampling: Using the 1997 membership list of the Council of Schools for the Blind, Oyinlade and Gellhaus (2005) randomly selected 28 of the participating specialized schools in the United States. Among the 28 schools, 25 schools in 25 states participated in the study. The authors surveyed the administrative and teaching populations of each of the participating schools, resulting in availability sampling due to the lack of information needed for random sampling of faculty in each institution. Consequently, the authors distributed approximately 900 questionnaires, of which 294 were returned and analyzed for a return rate of 32%.

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

In the survey, respondents were first required to score each of the 18 EBLQ items on the scale of essentiality necessary for leadership success. Second, respondents completed the scale of effectiveness needed for their principals on each EBLQ item.

Table1. Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities [EBLQ] for effectiveness in schools for children with blindness or low vision in the US

- a) Good listening skills:** Ability to listen carefully without prejudgment, empathize with the speaker and honestly try to understand the speaker's point of view.
- b) Good presentation skills:** Ability to clearly communicate ideas and intentions to others, without being misunderstood.
- c) Participative decision-making style:** Interest in soliciting and using others' input in decision making; working with subordinates through leadership by example.
- d) Motivator:** Ability to help create a work environment in which subordinates are happy and eager to work and to achieve needed goals.
- e) Honest and Ethical:** Being always truthful and abiding by a high standard of "right" and "wrong".
- f) Organizational knowledge:** Knowledge of how the school system for those with vision loss works; knowledge of the "how" and "why" of instructional curriculum; and well informed on current issues regarding special education.
- g) Good interpersonal skills:** Being friendly, humorous, cordial, polite and treating people with respect and dignity. Relating well to others
- h) Fiscal efficiency:** Ability to prepare good financial budgets and spend wisely.
- i) Knowledge of policies:** Having a good knowledge of local, state and federal laws, and policies regarding special education.
- j) Vision for the future:** Having ideas, goals and objectives for the school; the ability to make long range planning to meet these goals and objectives.
- k) Delegating authority:** Ability to share responsibilities with subordinates to perform tasks.
- l) Providing support:** Ability to readily guide and support the activities of subordinates; helping subordinates grow and succeed in their goals.
- m) Fairness:** Treating people equally and sharing resources evenly among various constituents without bias or favoritism.
- n) Courage and firmness:** Willingness to make tough and unpopular but necessary decisions and sticking to them.
- o) Creativity:** Openness to new ways of doing things; using new ideas to do things differently.

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

p) Hardworking: Commitment to working long hours; persisting through the best possible efforts to accomplish goals efficiently and effectively.

q) Good prioritizing skills: Ability to prioritize tasks; making sure the most essential tasks are performed before the less essential ones.

r) Problem-solving skills: Having interests and capabilities in solving multiple problems, and being able to compromise as well as assist others in solving problems.

Responses from all administrative staff (principals and superintendents) were deleted from the data sets to allow analyses to be based solely on the responses of the teachers in determining EBLQ items for successful leadership in the specialized schools. This process also enabled the assessment of the effectiveness of the principals mainly from the teachers' perspectives. The original data set collected in 1998 and used in the three earlier studies (Oyinlade, Gellhaus & Darboe, 2003; Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005; Oyinlade, 2006) on leadership effectiveness in the U.S. was used for analysis in this current study.

Factor Analysis and Reliability Test: The mean score of essentiality for each item was calculated and used to rank all 18 EBLQ items. Since the focus of the current study is on the comparative analysis of the top 10 EBLQ items in the U.S. and Nigeria, the top 10 EBLQ items (i.e., items with the 10 highest mean scores) were factor-analyzed using principal component method with no rotation for internal consistency. All 10 items strongly factored under one component with factor values ranging from .653 to .807, and with a Cronbach's reliability alpha of .903 (Table 2).

Tests of Essentiality and Effectiveness of U.S. Principals

The following three steps in the EBLQ process were followed to determine the effectiveness of the principals in the U.S. schools:

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

Step 1: The authors determined and ranked the top 10 EBLQ items for leadership success on the basis of the mean scores of essentiality (MEss) and effectiveness (MEff) (Table 3).

Step 2: The authors used the paired t-test to determine significant differences between mean scores of essentiality (MEss) and effectiveness (MEff) of the principals on each of the top 10 EBLQ items and for the aggregate of all ten items (scale comparison).

Table 2. Factor analysis and inter-item correlations among EBLQ items for principals in the U.S. and Nigerian schools. All correlations are significant at P = .000

U.S. EBLQ ITEMS	Factor Analysis	Inter-item correlation matrix								
	Comp. 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Good listening skills	.787	1								
2. Honesty and ethics	.674	.536	1							
3. Fairness	.706	.455	.494	1						
4. Motivator	.780	.526	.480	.522	1					
5. Providing support	.807	.585	.432	.647	.605	1				
6. Participative decision-making	.727	.507	.416	.395	.574	.524	1			
7. Good interpersonal skills	.784	.623	.450	.509	.575	.593	.518	1		
8. Problems solving skills	.742	.548	.386	.467	.526	.631	.506	.509	1	
9. Organizational knowledge	.707	.495	.439	.409	.472	.490	.485	.494	.442	1
10. Good presentation skills	.653	.501	.394	.305	.437	.387	.436	.471	.436	.521
<i>Cronbach's reliability value: $\alpha = .903$</i>										

Comp.: Component

Table 3. Top ten EBLQ items and effectiveness rankings for principals in the U.S. schools.

Ess Rank	Essential Behavioral Leadership Quality	Mean Score		MEss-MEeff Significance Test				Effectiveness Measure		Effect Rank
		MEss Score	MEeff Score	MEss-MEeff Diff	DF	Paired t-value	P-value	MEeff-MEess Rate	QED	
1	Good listening skills	6.672	6.238	0.434	238	14.802	.000	.93	E	1
2	Honesty and ethics	6.653	5.508	1.145	237	10.066	.000	.83	P	4
3	Fairness	6.544	4.971	1.583	236	12.210	.000	.76	C	7
4	Motivator	6.506	4.916	1.590	237	13.018	.000	.76	C	7
5	Providing support	6.440	4.761	1.979	236	13.176	.000	.74	C	10

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

6	Participative decision-making style	6.409	4.794	1.615	237	14.159	.000	.75	C	9
7	Good interpersonal skills	6.376	4.958	1.418	236	11.261	.000	.78	C	6
8	Problem solving skills	6.347	5.147	1.200	236	11.068	.000	.81	P	5
9	Organizational knowledge	6.282	5.513	0.769	237	11.036	.000	.88	P	2
10	Good presentation skills	6.270	5.238	1.032	238	11.196	.000	.84	P	3
	Mean of all top ten EBLQ items	64.97	51.03	13.939	236	14.159	.001	.79	P	

Key: **Ess Rank:** Rank of Essentiality, **MEss:** Mean Score of Essentiality, **MEff:** Mean Score of Effectiveness, **Diff:** Difference, **MEff-MEss Rate:** Effectiveness rate based on ratio of effectiveness to essentiality, **Effect Rank:** Effectiveness rank, QED: Qualitative Effectiveness Description (see table 4).

Results showed that a significant difference existed between MEss and MEff scores at $p < .0001$ for each EBLQ item comparison as well as for the aggregate scale comparison (Table 3). The significant difference indicated that the scores of essentialities of each item and the total essentiality scale were truly different from the scores of effectiveness of the principals on each item and the overall effectiveness scale respectively.

Step 3: The authors determined the leadership effectiveness rates (MEff-MEss Rates) of the principals for each EBLQ item and for overall effectiveness based on the formula $MEff/MEss$ to determine effectiveness ratios. The qualitative effectiveness descriptions (QED) used in Oyinlade (2006) were utilized to describe the effectiveness of the principals on each EBLQ item and overall effectiveness (Table 4).

Table 4. Qualitative descriptions and rankings of effectiveness scores

Effectiveness Rate Range	Qualitative Rating Descriptions	
	Qualitative Effectiveness Descriptions (QED)	Leadership Acceptance Level
.95 and above	Distinguished (D)	Good
.90 to .94	Exemplary (E)	Good
.80 to .89	Proficient (P)	Good
.70 to .79	Competent (C)	Average
.69 and below	Ineffective (I)	Unacceptable

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

Findings of Essentiality and Effectiveness in the U.S: The mean scores of essentiality of all EBLQ items from Oyinlade and Gellhaus (2005) indicated that the top 10 most essential qualities for U.S. principals were (from 1-most essential to 10- least essential): 1. Good listening skills (M = 6.672); 2. Honesty and good ethics (M = 6.653); 3. Fairness (M = 6.544); 4. Motivator (M = 6.506); 5. Provision of support (6.440); 6. Participative decision-making style (M = 6.409); 7. Good interpersonal skills (6.376); 8. Problem-solving skills (M = 6.347); 9. Organizational knowledge (M = 6.282); 10. Good communication skills (M = 6.270) (Table 3).

The scores of effectiveness (Table 3), also derived from Oyinlade and Gellhaus (2005), indicated that the U. S. principals were most effective in “good listening skills” (M = 6.238, MEff-MEss Rate = .93, Rank = 1, QED = Exemplary). The order of effectiveness of the U. S. principals on the remaining U. S. EBLQ items were: “organizational knowledge” (M = 5.513, MEff-MEss Rate = .88, Rank = 2, QED = Proficient); “good presentation skills” (M = 5.238, MEff-MEss Rate = .84, Rank = 3, QED = Proficient); “honesty and good ethics” (M = 5.508, MEff-MEss Rate = .83, Rank = 4, QED = Proficient); “problem-solving skills” (M = 5.147, MEff-MEss Rate = .81, Rank = 5, QED = Proficient); “good interpersonal skills” (M = 4.958, MEff-MEss Rate = .78, Rank = 6, QED = Competent); “fairness” (M = 4.971, MEff-MEss Rate = .76, Rank = 7, QED = Competent); “motivator” (M = 4.916, MEff-MEss Rate = .76, Rank = 7, QED = Competent); “participative decision-making” (M = 4.794, MEff-MEss Rate = .75, Rank = 9, QED = Competent); “providing support” (M = .761, MEff-MEss Rate = .74, Rank = 10, QED = Competent)).

STUDY 2: The Nigerian Study

Similar to the U.S. study, the Nigerian EBLQ study was conducted as outlined below:

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

Instrument Design: The EBLQ method of leadership effectiveness requires that leaders be assessed for effectiveness by their subordinates based on behavioral qualities deemed essential by these subordinates to effectively lead them (Oyinlade, 2006). Thus, a new Nigerian-specific questionnaire was designed to collect data on leadership behaviors in Nigeria. The development of the Nigerian questionnaire employed 16 teachers as judges (Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2015). The authors engaged more judges in Nigeria than in the U.S. due to the complex regional, cultural, religious, socioeconomic and educational characteristics of the country, which could potentially influence perceptions of essential leadership qualities.

The 16 judges provided a diverse range of 160 EBLQs that rendered the use of the 50 percent selection rule in the U.S. study inadequate in selecting the Nigerian EBLQs. This resulted in the use of a 25 percent rule in which the items identified by at least four judges were used for selecting items for the Nigerian study. Based on the 25 percent rule, 20 items that met our selection criterion were selected and used in constructing the study questionnaire. The 20 items were operationalized from the general descriptions given by the Nigerian judges (Table 5), and they (items) were constructed in two Likert-type scales (scale of essentiality and scale of effectiveness) for data collection in the country. The questionnaire required each participant to first score the essentiality of the items on the scale of essentiality before scoring their principals for effectiveness on the same EBLQ items on the scale of effective performance.

Sampling: The sampling frame for the Nigerian study consisted of 22 specialized schools obtained from two national professional associations in the country; the National Association of Exceptional Children, and the Nigerian Association of Special Education Teachers. It is noteworthy that Nigeria is divided into six geopolitical zones, and the 22 schools in the study were geographically dispersed across the six geopolitical zones.

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

Availability sampling technique was used to collect data in Nigeria from all the 22 schools. Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire (100 brailled, and 300 ink print questionnaires) were distributed to teachers and principals in the 22 schools. A total of 293 (73 percent) completed surveys were returned (braille = 91, ink print = 201, unspecified = 1). Also, 92.5 percent ($N = 271$) of the questionnaires were completed by teachers, while the remaining 7.5 percent ($N = 22$) were completed by the principals of the 22 schools.

Table 5. Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities [EBLQ] for effectiveness in schools for children with blindness or low vision in Nigeria

- a) Humility:** Regularly presenting oneself in humble ways
- b) Strong interest in working with children with blindness:** Love to work with children with blindness and handicapped
- c) Accessibility to students, faculty and staff:** Willingness to be readily available to meet with students, faculty and staff.
- d) Good listening skills:** Ability to listen carefully without interruptions, and genuinely try to understand the speaker's point of view.
- e) God-fearing and moral uprightness behavior:** Behaving in ways that show concerns for the wrath of God, and therefore living a morally upright life.
- f) Good presentation skills:** Ability to clearly communicate ideas and intentions to others, without being misunderstood.
- g) Consultative decision-making style:** Consulting with teachers and actively using teachers' input in decision making.
- h) Timely payment of salaries:** Making sure that teachers and staff receive their monthly salaries regularly.
- i) Resource procurement skill:** Effective provision of teaching and learning resources for students and faculty.
- j) People centered leadership style:** Leadership skills that focus on the collective well-being of students, faculty and staff.
- k) Excellent educational qualifications:** Having strong educational training, especially in special education.
- l) Motivator:** Ability to help create a school environment in which teachers are eager to work and achieve set goals and objectives.
- m) Budgeting and financial accountability:** Ability to prepare good financial budgets, spend wisely and with integrity, and adequately account for how money is spent.
- n) Honesty: Being honest** and transparent in all dealings related to school activities.

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

o) Organizational knowledge: Having adequate organizational skills and knowledge of the technical details necessary to run the specialized school in Nigeria.

q) Ensuring reliable transportation: Ability to secure regular and dependable system of transportation for students and staff.

r) Ensuring regular water and electricity: Ability to make sure the school has regular and uninterrupted supplies of water and electricity.

s) Provision for faculty and staff development: Helping to secure and support opportunities for continuing training and development of faculty and staff.

t) Positive relations with the community: Maintaining a relationship with the community that fosters positive perceptions of the specialized school.

u) Good property management skills: Ability to manage school buildings and grounds very well to prevent deterioration.

Factor Analysis and Reliability Test: As with the U. S. study, the mean score of essentiality of each item was computed to rank all 20 EBLQ items. Since the focus of the current study represents a comparative analysis of the top 10 items, the top 10 EBLQ items were subsequently factor-analyzed for internal consistency using principal component method with no rotation. As found in the U.S. study, the ten items strongly factored under one component, with factor values ranging from .579 to .776, and with a Cronbach's reliability alpha of .874 (Table 6).

Table 6. Factor analysis and inter-item correlations among EBLQ items for principals in the Nigerian schools. All correlations are significant at P = .000

NIGERIAN EBLQ ITEMS	Factor Analysis	Inter-item correlation matrix								
	Comp. 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Timely payment of salary	.646	1.								
2. Honesty	.776	.468	1							
3. Humility	.579	.233	.410	1						
4. Excellent educational qualification	.721	.429	.522	.345	1					
5. Good property management	.654	.298	.487	.319	.365	1				
6. Good listening skills	.709	.398	.440	.371	.412	.441	1			
7. Motivator	.764	.519	.578	.350	.563	.420	.462	1		
8. God fearing and moral uprightness behavior	.624	.196	.463	.330	.398	.409	.405	.428	1	
9. Strong interest in working with bind children	.673	.366	.437	.430	.473	.351	.425	.393	.324	1

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

10. Resource procurement <i>Cronbach's reliability value: $\alpha = .874$</i>	.734	.529	.487	.317	.419	.439	.523	.483	.379	.444
--	-------------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------

Comp.: Component

Test and Findings related to Essentiality and Effectiveness of Nigerian Principals: Similar steps (steps 1, 2 and 3), as previously described in the U.S. study, were followed in determining leadership effectiveness of the Nigerian principals; hence, these steps will not be repeated here.

Findings of Essentiality and Effectiveness in Nigeria: The mean scores of essentiality of all Nigerian EBLQ items from Oyinlade and Ajuwon (2015) indicated that the top 10 most essential qualities for principals were (from 1-top to 10-bottom): 1. Timely payment of salaries (M= 6.251), 2. Honesty (M= 6.218), 3. Humility (M = 6.181), 4. Excellent educational qualifications (M= 6.170), 5. Good property management skills (M= 6.151), 6. Good listening skills (M= 6.144), 7. Motivator (M=6.119), 8. God-fearing and moral uprightness (M= 6.100), 9. Strong interest in working with blind children (M= 6.092), and 10. Resource procurement skills (M= 6.081), (Table 7).

Table 7. Top ten EBLQ items and effectiveness rankings for principals in the Nigerian schools.

Ess Rank	Essential Behavioral Leadership Quality NIGERIA (Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2015)	Mean Score		MEss-MEff Significance Test				Effectiveness Measure		Effect Rank
		MEss Score	MEff Score	MEss-MEff Diff	DF	Paired t-value	P-value	MEff-MEss Rate	QED	
1	Timely payment of salary	6.251	5.413	.838	270	8.067	.000	.87	P	10
2	Honesty	6.218	5.742	.476	270	5.784	.000	.92	E	6
3	Humility	6.181	5.974	.207	270	2.873	.002	.97*	D	1
4	Excellent educational qualification.	6.170	6.007	.163	270	2.400	.009	.97	D	1
5	Good property management skills	6.151	5.546	.605	270	6.679	.000	.90	E	9
6	Good listening skills.	6.144	5.723	.421	270	5.151	.000	.93	E	5
7	Motivator.	6.119	5.605	.500	269	5.627	.000	.92	E	6
8	God fearing and moral uprightness behavior	6.100	5.708	.392	270	4.445	.000	.94	E	4
9	Strong interest in									

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

10	working with blind children	6.092	5.797	.295	270	3.730	.000	.95	D	3
	Resource procurement	6.081	5.524	.557	270	6.149	.000	.91	E	8
	Mean of all top ten EBLQ items	61.50	57.04	4.385	269	7.915	.000	.93	E	

Key: **Ess Rank:** Rank of Essentiality, **MEss:** Mean Score of Essentiality, **MEff:** Mean Score of Effectiveness, **Diff:** Difference, **MEff-MEss Rate:** Effectiveness rate based on ratio of effectiveness to essentiality, **Effect Rank:** Effectiveness rank. *Tied with excellent educational qualifications due to rounding effect, otherwise would rank 2nd for effectiveness. QED: Qualitative Effectiveness Description (see table 4).

Scores of effectiveness of the top 10 most essential EBLQ items indicated that the Nigerian principals were effective in this order (Table 7): “excellent educational qualifications” (M =6.007, MEff-MEss Rate = .97, Rank = 1, QED = Distinguished), “Humility” (M = 5.974, MEff-MEss Rate = .97, Rank = 1 (tied), QED = Distinguished), “strong interest in working with blind children” (M = 5.797, MEff-MEss Rate = .95, Rank = 3, QED = Distinguished), God-fearing and moral uprightness” (M = 5.708, MEff-MEss Rate = .94, Rank = 4, QED = Exemplary), “good listening skills” (M = 5.723, MEff-MEss Rate = .93, Rank = 5, QED = Exemplary), “honesty” (M = 5.742, MEff-MEss Rate = .92, Rank = 6 , QED = Exemplary), “motivator” (M = 5.605, MEff-MEss Rate = .92, Rank = 6, QED = Exemplary), “resource procurement skills” (M = 5.524, MEff-MEss Rate = .91, Rank = 8, QED = Exemplary), “good property management skills” (M = 5.546, MEff-MEss Rate = .90, Rank = 9, QED = Exemplary), “timely payment of salaries” (M = 5.413, MEff-MEss Rate = .87 , Rank = 10, QED = Proficient).

Comparative Analysis

Throughout the world, the modern school principal has become an institutional leader entrusted with immense responsibilities. These responsibilities make it imperative for school leaders to be competent and visionary managers, and also instructional leaders (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, et al., 2010). However, these leaders are perceived in different ways by their teachers, based on prevailing cultural, social, political and economic factors. In line with the increased literature indicating cross-cultural differences in essential school leadership

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

effectiveness and characteristics, the findings of earlier EBLQ study in the U.S. (Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005) showed both similarities and remarkable differences from the findings of the Nigerian study (Oyinlade & Ajuwon, 2015). For ease of discussion, we have identified four comparative categories for analyzing the EBLQ items in both countries (Table 8). These comparative classifications include: “specialist qualifications”, “morality”, “administrative/behavioral skills”, and “resource procurement/maintenance skills”.

Our analysis showed that all the top 10 EBLQ items in the U.S. fell under only two comparative categories, namely: “morality” and “administrative/behavioral skills” (Table 8). One item, “honesty and good ethics”, fell in the morality category, while the remaining nine items (90 percent) fell under the administrative/behavioral skills category. Unlike the U.S., the Nigerian top 10 EBLQ items had a much wider spread, and distributed across all four comparative categories (Table 8). The Nigerian items distribution included one item under the specialist qualifications category, three items (30 percent) under the morality category, and the administrative/behavioral skills category contained three items (30 percent). The fourth descriptive category, resource procurement/maintenance skills, contained the remaining three items (30 percent).

Table 8. Comparative categorizations of top ten EBLQ items between U.S. and Nigeria

EBLQ CATEGORIES	U.S.	NIGERIA
Technical Qualifications		Excellent educational qualifications
Morality	<i>Honesty and good ethics</i>	<i>Honesty</i> <i>Humility</i> <i>God-fearing and moral uprightness</i>

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

Behavioral Administrative Skills	<i>Good listening skills</i> <i>Motivator</i> Fairness Providing support Participative decision-making Good presentation skills Problem solving skills Organizational Knowledge Good Interpersonal skills	<i>Good listening skills</i> <i>Motivator</i> Strong interest in working with blind children
Resource Procurement and Maintenance Skills		Timely payment of salaries Good property management skills Resource procurement skills

Note: Similar items for both countries are in italics

The distribution of EBLQ items across the four analytical categories evidenced certain cross-cultural similarities as well as important differences in leadership qualities considered important in both countries. For similarities, teachers in both countries deemed honesty, a morality comparative category item, as an essential leadership quality. But, while only one morality item (honesty and good ethics) was identified by the U.S. teachers in that category, the Nigerian teachers mentioned three (“honesty”, “humility”, and “God-fearing and moral uprightness”).

The difference between the two countries on the morality comparative index may point to the differences in the degree of religiosity and in endemic corruption in Nigeria vis-à-vis the U.S. In fact, the twin issues of corruption and religion may be dominant in daily discourse and thinking of most Nigerians. This appears evident in the results of a survey that indicated that 93 percent of Nigerians, compared to only 60 percent of Americans, claimed to be religious (WIN-Gallup International, 2012). The same survey ranked Nigeria 2nd, and the U.S. 34th, among 57 countries surveyed for religiosity. Similarly, according to an earlier study, it was revealed that 96 percent of Nigerians, and only 65 percent of Americans, reported that religion was an important

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

part of their daily lives. This study ranked Nigeria 20th, and the U. S. 85th, on religiosity among 114 countries sampled (Gallup, 2009).

In spite of its high degree of religiosity, widespread corruption continues to be a common phenomenon in the Nigerian social milieu (Fagbadebo, 2007; Marquette, 2011; Osoba, 1996). Using the index score of corruption report published by Transparency International, Nigeria which tied with Cameroon, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon and Russia, ranked as the 36th most corrupt (or 136th least corrupt) nation on the perception level of public sector corruption index among 175 countries surveyed. The U. S. ranked as the 17th least corrupt nation (tied with Barbados, Hong Kong and Ireland) in the same report. While it is not directly discernable from data from the current study, evidence from the aforementioned international studies may suggest a major explanation for the differences between the U. S. and Nigeria on the morality issue (which includes the fear of God and moral uprightness).

Aside from “*honesty*”, the EBLQ items for the two countries also overlapped on two dimensions; “*good listening skills*” and “*motivator*” in the administrative/behavioral skills domain. This demonstrates the need for school leaders to develop good listening and motivational skills for leadership effectiveness in both countries.

Other essential factors of leadership success in the behavioral administrative comparative category, however, revealed major differences between Nigeria and the U. S. In addition to listening and motivating skills, seven other EBLQ items for the U. S. schools were behavioral administrative skills, compared to only one such item (strong interest in working with blind children) for Nigeria.

The two comparative categories in which leadership factors for the two countries were found to be most different were the “*specialist qualifications*” and the “*resource*”

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

procurement/maintenance skills” categories. While the U. S. teachers did not identify any EBLQ items in either comparative category, their Nigerian counterparts indicated “*excellent educational qualifications*” (specialist qualifications comparative category) and skills in procuring timely salaries, skills in resource procurement and property management (resource procurement/management skills comparative category) as important leadership success characteristics for their principals. The importance of these skills for leadership success in the Nigerian schools vis-à-vis similar schools in the U. S., strongly affirms country-specific leadership qualities between the two countries.

As indicated in Oyinlade and Ajuwon (2015), EBLQ items such as “*timely payment of salaries*”, “*excellent educational qualifications*”, “*good property management skills*” and “*resource procurement skills*” reflect local Nigerian situational contexts which were not necessary in the U. S., perhaps, because such administrative issues are routinely handled by U. S. educational authorities, and are not necessary for leadership effectiveness in the American context.

A stark difference was also observed in the rankings of each EBLQ item and the rankings of effectiveness of the principals in both countries. The arithmetic mean of essentiality of each top 10 EBLQ item in the U. S. (a range of 6.270 to 6.672) was much higher than the essentiality mean score for the top 10 items in Nigeria (mean of 6.081 to 6.251). In fact, the scores showed that the least essential top 10 item in the U. S. (good presentation skills) had a higher mean score than the mean score of the most essential item (timely payment of salaries) in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the combined averages of essentiality scores of all top 10 EBLQ items was higher in the U. S. (64.97) than in Nigeria (61.50). The higher scores of essentiality of the EBLQ items in the U. S. over Nigeria may mean a relative difference in the importance of each item in the

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

U. S. vis-à-vis the importance of the Nigerian items for leadership effectiveness. While the mean scores of essentiality (MEss) of EBLQ leadership items were higher in the U. S. than in Nigeria, the mean scores of effectiveness (MEff) of the principals were higher in Nigeria than in the U. S. The MEff scores of the top 10 EBLQ items in Nigeria ranged from .87 to .97, while the U. S. scores ranged from .74 to .93. Also, the overall MEss/MEff ratio in Nigeria was .93 compared to .79 in the U.S. In addition, the mode for QED at 60% of all the top 10 items in Nigeria was “*exemplary*”, while the mode for QED at 50% of all the top 10 items in the U. S. was “*competence*” ranking.

Overall, the rankings of effectiveness suggest that the Nigerian principals were ranked by their teachers to be more effective leaders than their American counterparts.

A final area of comparison relates to the pattern of incongruence between essentiality and effectiveness rankings of the top 10 items between the two countries. Except for only one congruent ranking on “*good listening skills*” (ranked first for essentiality and first for effectiveness of the principals) in the U. S., no other congruence between the rankings of items of essentiality and effectiveness of the principals was found in either country. For example, in the U. S., the 2nd and 3rd highest areas of leadership effectiveness were the 9th and 10th ranked essential items, respectively. Similarly, in the context of Nigeria, the principals were least effective (ranked 10th) in the item ranked most essential (ranked 1st) for their effectiveness, and they were most effective (ranked 1st for effectiveness) in the 3rd (humility) and 4th (excellent educational qualifications) ranked essential leadership items.

Conclusion

Evidence emanating from this study supports both the culture-specific and the trans-cultural perspectives of effective leadership traits. Compared to earlier findings on the American

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

studies (Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005), items such as “*timely payment of salaries*”, “*humility*”, “*excellent educational qualifications*”, “*ensuring regular water and electricity*”, “*God-fearing*” and “*ensuring reliable transportation*” highlighted the unique cultural requirements of the Nigerian schools. The importance of these items, indicated by their essentiality rankings, demonstrated the unique differences in expected school leadership behaviors in Nigeria compared to the U. S. where such items did not feature as EBLQ items.

Findings from this study, therefore, support the situational, culture-specific, characteristics of leadership essentials advocated in earlier studies (Brown & Conrad, 2007; Blasé, 1987) that leadership is culture-specific. The findings of this study may also equally be understood within the school (culture) context perspective advocated in some earlier studies (Becker, 1980; Cusick, 1983; Wolcott, 1973) which indicated that effective school leadership characteristics are best understood within the contextual existence of each school.

Given the importance of cultural context for leadership analysis, the findings of this study point to differences in essential skills for leadership success for the principals between the two countries. Compared to earlier findings in the U. S. studies (Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005), the findings of situational characteristics in this study signified the special cultural leadership needs of the Nigerian schools for children with blindness or low vision. The importance of the situational characteristics underscores the role of cultural characteristics in shaping leadership requirements and effectiveness, and suggests that any study of leadership be explained relative to specific cultural contexts.

One other important take-away from this study is that while essential leadership qualities might be culture-specific, certain leadership qualities may equally be transcultural. For example, based on evidence from this study, EBLQ items such as honesty, good listening skills, and being

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

a motivator appear to be essential leadership qualities in both Nigeria and the U. S. While the findings from the U. S. and Nigeria may not be sufficient in claiming universality of the essentiality of these three common leadership items for both countries, they do add to the body of knowledge on common effective school leadership qualities as well as suggest potential universality of these qualities for further cross-cultural analyses.

Lastly, based on the qualitative rating descriptions of leadership effectiveness suggested in Oyinlade (2006), and adapted for this study (Table 4), the overall scores of effectiveness of the principals in the U. S. (MEff-MEss rate = .79) and Nigeria (MEff-MEss rate = .93) indicated that the level of leadership acceptance of the U. S. principals was “*average*”, while that of the Nigerian principals was “*good*” as perceived by their respective teachers. One possible interpretation of these effectiveness rankings is that the Nigerian principals were, indeed, superior leaders within their school contexts than the U. S. principals in their contexts. Another interpretation may also be that the Nigerian teachers were more generous than their U. S. counterparts in ranking their principals for effectiveness. Should this potential outcome be true (a fact impossible to ascertain from our data), the difference in leadership effectiveness between the two sets of principals may reflect the artifact of the rating differences between the principals in the two countries than the outcome of the difference in actual leadership behaviors between the two sets of principals.

Regardless of the difference in the levels of their leadership effectiveness, this study indicated that the principals in both countries could derive a coaching effect from this study regarding the efforts needed to improve their leadership styles to achieve congruence between essentiality and effectiveness in their school contexts. As indicated in Oyinlade and Ajuwon (2015), congruence in leadership item essentiality and effectiveness rankings was important

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

because the achievement of congruence meant the principals were effective relative to the perceived importance of each leadership item. This would imply that the principals were effective in the most essential item deemed for their effectiveness, and they would be consistently effective in all other items, relative to the ranking of each item for essentiality. Such success would also imply a prioritization of leadership effort by the principals to lead consistently with the importance of each leadership activity as perceived by their teachers in their respective countries.

Limitations

One limitation of this study relates to the generalizability of the findings, and the conclusions that may be drawn because of the time differences concerned with data collection. As previously noted, data were gathered for the American study in 1998 (Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005), while data gathering for the current research occurred in 2013. While it is unclear how the difference in time gap related to data collection in both studies might have impacted the findings of the current research, it is possible that any difference in sociopolitical, economic and cultural situations between the two time-periods might have influenced the perceptions of leadership by study participants. It is also feasible that the time difference might have influenced the perceptions of the effectiveness of the principals in both countries. Based on the possible impact of this time difference, we recommend caution in generalizing the findings of this research.

References

Becker, H. (1980). *Role and Career Problems of the Chicago Public School Teacher*. NY: Arno

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

- Blair, M. (2002). Effective school leadership: The multi-ethnic context. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23, (2). 179-191.
- Blasé, J. (1987). Dimensions of effective school leadership: The teacher's perspective. *American Educational Research Journal*, 24. (Winter), 589-610.
- Brown, L. & Conrad, D. A. (2007). School leadership in Trinidad and Tobago: The challenge of context. *Comparative Education Review*, 51(2), 181-201.
- Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton. J. Q. (2010). Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cusick, P. A. (1983). *The Equalitarian Ideal and the American High School: Studies of Three Schools*. New York: Longman.
- Dorfman, P. W., Hanges, P. J., & Brodbeck, F. C. (2004). Leadership and cultural variation: The identification of culturally endorsed leadership profiles. In: R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. W. Dorfman, V. Gupta, & Associates (Eds.): *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 669-722.
- Fagbadebo, O. (2007). Corruption, Governance and Political Instability in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 1(2). 28-37.
- Gallup. (2009). *Religiosity Highest in World's Poorest Nations*. Washington, DC: Gallup
- Retrieved from:
[http://www.gallup.com/poll/142727/Religiosity-Highest-World-Poorest Nations.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/poll/142727/Religiosity-Highest-World-Poorest-Nations.aspx)
- Glasman, N. S., & Heck, R. H. (1992). The Change in Leadership Role of the Principal: Implications for Principal Assessment. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 68 (1), 5-24.
- Goldring, E., Cravens, C. C., Murphy, J., Porter, A. C., Elliott, S. N., & Carson, B. The

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

- Evaluation of Principals: What and How Do States and Urban Districts Assess Leadership? *The Elementary School Journal*, 110(1), 19-39.
- Hart, A. W. (1992). The social and organizational influence of principals: Evaluating principals in context. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 68(1), 37-57.
- Jansen, J. D. (1995). Effective schools? *Comparative Education*, 31(2). 181-2000.
- Marquette, H. (2012). "Finding God" or "Moral Disengagement" in the Fight against Corruption in Developing Countries? Evidence from India and Nigeria. *Public Administration and Development*, 32(1), 11-26.
- Obasanjo, O., & Mabogunje, A. (Eds.): (1991). *Elements of Development*. Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria: ALF Publications.
- Osoba, S. O. (1996). Corruption in Nigeria: historical perspectives. *Review of African Political Economy*, 23(69), 371-386.
- Oyinlade, A. O. & Ajuwon, P. M. (2015). Perceptions of leadership effectiveness in schools for children who are blind or have low vision in Nigeria. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*. March: 1-20.
- Oyinlade, A. O. (2006). A Method of Assessing Leadership Effectiveness: Introducing the Essential Behavioral Leadership Qualities Approach. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 19(1), 25-40.
- Oyinlade, A. O. and Gellhaus, M. (2005). Perceptions of Effective Leadership in Schools for Students with Visual Impairment: A National Study. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, 99(5), 261-275.
- Oyinlade, A. O., Gellhaus, M., & Darboe, K. (2003). Essential leadership qualities for effective leadership in schools for students who are visually impaired: A national study. *Journal of*

CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND USA

Visual impairment and Blindness, 97(7), 389-402.

Portin, B. S., Feldman, S., & Knapp, M. S. (2006). Purposes, Uses, and Practices of Leadership

Assessment in Education. Retrieved from:

<https://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/LAssess-Oct25.pdf>

Schlechty, P. C. (1990). *Schools for the Twenty-First Century: Leadership Imperatives for Educational Reform*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Transparency International. (Dec. 2014). *Corruption Perception Index 2014: Results*. Berlin,

Germany: Transparency International. Retrieved from:

<http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results>

WIN-Gallup International. (2012). *Global Index of Religion and Atheism - 2012*. Zurich,

Switzerland: Gallup International. Retrieved from:

<http://www.wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf>

Wolcott, H. F. (1973). *The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.