Managements' Leadership Style and Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teachers' Attitude to Work in Offa Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria

Olabisi ADEDIGBA, Ph.D
Department of Adult and Primary Education
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
bisifaithppp@yahoo.com
+2348033563949

Paul Kobina EFFRIM, Ph.D
Department of Psychology and Education,
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana
Original6532@gmail.com

Monica N. Odinko, Ph.D
Institute of Education,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
moniquengozi@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study investigated managements' leadership style and ECE teachers' attitude to work in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Causal-comparative design of the correlation type was adopted. The population comprised all teachers in preschool and lower primary schools in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 200 teachers from 20 schools selected. Two self-developed instruments used for data collection were "Managements' Leadership Styles Rating Scale" and "Teachers' Attitude to Work Scale" with reliability coefficient of 0.81 and 0.73 respectively. The data collected were analyzed with descriptive statistics, T-test and Analysis of Variance. Leadership style had significant influence on teachers' attitude to work and democratic leadership style produced better attitude to work among teachers. Therefore, it was recommended that school managers should employ appropriate leadership style to encourage better work attitude and excellent performance among their teachers. Also, they should regularly receive more leadership training to update their knowledge on leadership for improved management and relationship with the teachers.

Key words: Early childhood education, Managements' leadership style, Teachers' attitude to work, Democratic leadership, Autocratic leadership, Laizze-faire leadership

Introduction

Early childhood care and development services have been realized to be important focus and strategy for improving the wellbeing of children and achieving sustainable development. Early childhood is believed to be the most critical stage of child development. Affording children opportunity to stimulating learning experiences at this stage enables them develop to the ultimate. Early childhood education helps to promote children's cognition, language, physical, social and emotional development and prepare them for kindergarten. Likewise, it lays a solid foundation for primary education and beyond. Children who attend quality nursery education programmes are more likely to have better test scores and grades, less repetition and dropout rates and better ability to handle demands of formal schooling and be more productive in life (Adara, 2006; Adeboye, 2011; Adedigba & Agarry, 2013).

According to Obanya (2007), teachers generally occupy a very important position in the educational system of any country. Their role becomes so enormous when they are teachers of early childhood education. Teachers play an important role in fostering the intellectual and social development of children during their formative years. The role and responsibilities of teachers of early childhood education is extremely important both to the educational and social development of children because the quality of child care and education provided to children is dependent on them. They have the obligation to achieve the aims and objectives of education of ECE and also fulfil the expectation of the parents as regards the purpose of bringing their children into this programme. The education that teachers impart plays a key role in determining the future prospects of their students. Whether in preschools or high schools or in private or public schools, teachers provide the tools and the environment for their students to develop into responsible adults (Adegbesan, 2007; Sooter, 2013; Bello, 2015; Olasehinde, 2015).

In order to perform the aforementioned roles effectively, teachers need the support of skillful management to discharge their duties as expected of them. Management functions delivered by school managers require the use of various

management and leadership styles. Jong and Hartog (2007) define leadership as a process of influencing people to get the desired outcome. This can be seen in the way the leaders relate with their staff in terms of the quality of the communication, the staff welfare, motivation and discipline to get things done and achieve the goal of education. According to Adegbesan (2008); Olatunji (2014) and Nageri (2016), it is a sequence of coordinated events used in getting work done through people, The nature and quality of leadership of the managers of the school affect the school effectiveness. An effective leadership is a prerequisite of a good school-based management (Adegbesan, 2009; Adeyemi, 2009; Bello, 2015). A high facilitative management style is believed to be important to enhance teachers' morale, attitudes, motivation and job performance. When teachers are comfortable with the leadership style, they have the capacity to help children reach their individual potentials and work with families to promote positive outcomes. Head of a childhood school is expected to demonstrate high leadership ability in the management of the staff, possess the knack to influence people working with him so that they strive willingly and enthusiastically toward the achievement of the school goals (Koontz and Weihrish, 2007; Gorton, 2008).

Three types of leadership styles were identified by Kurt Lewin. These are autocratic, democratic and laissez faire leadership. As noted from the literature reviewed, autocratic style is a leadership that insists on things being done in his own way without his goal being necessarily those of his organization (Gonn, 2000; Sun, 2002; Lok & Crawford, 2004; Jong & Hartog, 2007; Chung, Tsai, Wu, 2009). Here, there is a rigid atmosphere under which teachers work or the group perform the tasks unwillingly and derive no pleasure. This style stresses attainment of the goals of the organization to the neglect of or at the expense of the individuals' needs of the members of the group. Life is virtually regimented under this leadership. Teachers or group members enjoy little sense of freedom to try things out under autocratic leadership. Literature confirms that work in this type of climate is most unproductive (Leithwood, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Jong & Hartog, 2007; Tsig & Rao, 2015).

In democratic leadership style, the individual needs of the group are stressed while making few organization demands. Democratic manager or leader seeks relationship with his staff and is very concerned with their inconvenience and general wellbeing. This leadership style is applied in an "open climate". This climate deposited a situation in which members enjoy extremely high and work members of staff work well together without bickering. On the whole, they enjoy friendly relations with each other. There is job satisfaction and they are sufficiently motivated to overcome frustrations (Koontz & Weihrich, 2007; Jong & Hartog, 2007; Altinok, 2011; Tsig & Rao, 2015). On the other hand, laissez-Faire leadership style is characterized by a leader who has no clear-cut goals and does not plan out work schedule. There is no knowing pattern of working environment or initiating actions. Discipline is weak and the leader shows a lack- luster or lack classical attitude. In this working environment, there will be chaos and anarchy reigns supreme. Teachers or members of group obtain little satisfaction either in task achievement or social need satisfaction (Akerele, 2007; Olatunji, 2014; Nageri, 2016).

Among many other variables that can determine teachers' effectiveness, attitude to work and devotion to duty might be the most disastrous factors. This is so because these determine their relationship and operations as well as their interaction in the school environment. Alhassan (2006) noted that attitude is the most commonly employed concept to designate inferred dispositions attributed to an individual according to which has thoughts, feelings and action tendencies are organized. What the teacher does in and out of the classroom will show his/her attitude to work. Catering (2003) observed that the attitude construct has proven indispensable in the understanding of why people think, feel and do things they do.

Bhargara & Pathy (2014) opined that teaching being a dynamic activity requires a favourable attitude and certain specific competencies from its practitioners. Teachers' proficiency sometimes depends on the attitude he/she possesses for the profession. The positive attitude helps teacher to develop a conductive learner friendly environment in the classroom. It is noted that the interest, curiousity and attitude to work of most

teachers in Nigeria are low and that is why the apparent fall in standard of education in the society cannot but be attributed to the teachers' attitude to work (Ijaya, 2002; Mohammed, 2010; Sooter, 2013).

Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swany (2014) equally submitted that effective leadership style is a necessity to achieve organizational goal and reduce attrition rate in this global competitive environment. This assertion has been confirmed from numerous studies. For example, Altonik (2011) identified that leadership style can affect organizational commitment and work satisfaction positively. Doucet, Fredette, Simard & Tremblay (2015) also attributed the success or failure of an organization to the nature of the leadership. Voon, Lo, Ngui & Ayob (2011) in their studies with public sector organizations in Malaysia reported a significant influence of leadership styles on employees' job satisfaction. Machumu & Kaitia (2014) also reported that level of teachers' job satisfaction was reportedly high in best performing schools compared to least performing schools. The findings commended that democratic leadership style is the one which promotes high teachers' job satisfaction among teachers in primary schools.

The context of early childhood education is continually changing and becoming increasingly complex while roles are also changing and expanding. These changes pose serious challenges that suggest an indispensable need for the field to develop new and robust frameworks for leadership that can support people in facing, grappling with, initiating and facilitating change rather than simply reacting. Among a number of issues and challenges confronting early childhood care and education in Nigeria, research studies have identified leadership style of the managers of this level of education as one of the most possible challenge. Available studies have also confirmed strong relationship between leadership style and employees' morale, work attitudes, motivation, job satisfaction, high attrition and work performance. Many of these studies were carried on organizations like banking, nursing and other public workers including few educational institutions like secondary schools and tertiary institutions. There is little evidence of studies showing the relationship between leadership style of managers of ECE and

teachers' attitude to work. However, it will be elusive to generalize these findings to the field of ECE. Therefore, there is need to confirm empirically whether leadership styles of school heads and proprietors can really influence early childhood education teachers' attitudes to work. Also, realizing the fact that teachers' positive attitude to work is critical to creating a productive environment that will support children's learning and development, the teachers' attitude to work needs re-appraisal. Noticeably too, many of these previous studies did not investigate some variables like gender, school type and educational qualification that are likely to show differences between the leadership styles and work attitude of teachers and which this present study did.

The study therefore determined the most leadership style used by school heads and the proprietors/proprietress of early childhood schools in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State and how it relates to the work attitude of the teachers. Also, determined which leadership style produces better attitude to work and measured the significant influences of some variables like school type, gender and educational qualification on the management styles adopted by the school heads and the proprietor /proprietress of early childhood education schools in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Methodology

The research adopted causal comparative of the correlation type. This design gave the researcher opportunity to obtain data on the teachers' perceived management styles of the owners or head of schools and their work attitudes. All the teachers in preschool and lower primary school formed the population for the study. A sample of 20 primary schools was randomly selected from Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State. A total of 200 teachers, 10 from each selected school were randomly selected to be respondents in the study. Two researchers-developed instruments used for data collection were titled 'Managements' Leadership Styles Rating Scale' (MLSRS) and 'Teachers' Attitude to Work Scale' (TAWRS) with reliability coefficient 0.81 and 0.73 respectively. The data collected were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions were answered using frequency counts, simple percentage

and mean. Formulated research hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of linear regression, independent sample t-test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The hypotheses were all rested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

Letter of introduction explaining the purpose of the research was taken to all schools where data were collected. The researchers solicited for the cooperation of all teachers that were respondents and assured them of the confidentiality of any information given. The involvement was not also enforced but voluntary.

Results

Research Question One: What is the leadership style commonly used by the heads/proprietors of early childhood education schools in Kwara State?

Table 1: Table showing the most management style used by school head/proprietors in early childhood schools in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State.

S/N	Management style		Mean
1	Autocratic		2.6
2	Laizze-faire		2.53
3	Democratic		1.91

Style not used:0.00-2.49   Style used:2-50-4:00

Table 1 showed the most management style used by school head/proprietors in early childhood schools in Kwara State. Democratic (1.91) is not a management style used by majority of the schools. However, the most management style used by School head/proprietors in early childhood schools in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State is autocratic (2.60) followed by Laizze-faire (2.53).

Research Question Two: What is the attitude of early childhood teachers towards work?

Table 2: Table showing the attitude of early childhood teachers towards work

S/N	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Never
1	Have positive interaction with pupils in my classroom	27(13.5)	159 (79.5)	14(7.0)
2	Care and support children in my classroom and school.	88(44.0)	98(49.0)	14(7.0)
3	Provide adequate supervision for children's activities.	74(37.0)	126(63.0)	
4	Have good relationship with the head teachers and proprietors.	28(14.0)	158(79.0)	14(7.0)
5	Maintain healthy relationship with other staff.	42(21.0)	158(79.0)	
6	Demonstrate awareness of individual pupil's learning needs.	28(14.0)	144(72.0)	28(14.0)
7	Plan my lessons before class teaching.	55(27.5)	145 (72.5)	
8	Provide adequate learning materials	33(16.5)	153(76.5)	14(7.0)
9	Enjoy my teaching with pupils.	28(14.0)	172(86.0)	
10	Provide learning activities to engage pupils.	19(9.5)	167(83.5)	14(7.0)
11	Asses my pupils progress.	47(23.5)	153 (76.5)	
12	Come to school early.	14(7.0)	186(93.0)	
13	Come to work regularly.	14(7.0)	186(93.0)	
14	Show interest in school activities.	13(6.5)	173(86.5)	14(7.0)
15	Satisfied working with other staff in school.	41(20.5)	159(79.5)	
16	I strictly adhere to rules guiding staff conduct in school.	88(44.0)	84(42.0)	28(14.0)
17	Willing to work in the school.	89(44.5)	27(13.5)	84(42.5)
18	Interested in the welfare of children under my case.	42(21.0)	74(47.0)	84(42.0)
19	Participate in extra-curricular activities of the school.	74(37.0)	98(49.0)	28(14.0)
20	Connect or relate with the child's family when the need arises.	56(28.0)	125(62.5)	19(9.5)

Table 2 showed the attitude of early childhood teachers towards work. The early childhood teachers sometimes/never do the following: have positive interaction with pupils in my classroom (86.5%), provide adequate supervision for children's activities (63%), have good relationship with the head teachers and proprietors (93%), maintain healthy relationship with other staff (79%), Demonstrate awareness of individual pupil's learning needs (86%), plan my lessons before class teaching (72.5%), provide adequate learning materials (83.5%), enjoy my teaching with pupils (86.0%), provide learning activities to engage pupils (90.0%, asses my pupils progress (76.5%), come to school early (93.0%), come to work regularly (93.0%), show interest in school activities (93.5%), satisfied working with other staff in school (79.5%), connect or relate with the child's family when the need arises (82%). The early childhood teachers always do the following: Care and support children in my classroom and school (56.0%), I strictly adhere to rules guiding staff conduct in school (56.0%), willing to work in the school (56.0%), interested in the welfare of children under my care (89%), participate in extra-curricular activities of the school (63%). The percentage of items where teachers show negative attitudes to work outweigh where they have positive attitude. This indicates that early childhood teachers in had lukewarm or negative attitude to work.

Research Question Three: Which leadership style produced better attitude to work among teachers in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Table 3: Table showing the leadership style that produced better attitude to work among early childhood teachers in Offa Local Government Area of **Kwara State**

S/N	Management style	Mean Score on Management Style	Weighted Mean Score on Teachers' Attitude for each Style
1	Autocratic	2.6	1.72
2	Laizze-faire	2.53	1.43
3	Democratic	1.91	3.01

Table 3 showed the mean score of the attitude produced by each of the management style used by school head/proprietors in early childhood schools in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State. The table shows that Democratic style produced better

attitude (mean = 3.01). This is followed by autocratic style (mean = 1.72) while the least is produced by Laizze-faire (mean = 1.43). Based on this result, it can be said that democratic management style produced better teachers' attitude.

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of school head/proprietor's management style on early childhood teachers' work attitude.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Analysis of the influence of school head/proprietor's management style on early childhood teachers' work attitude.

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig
1	200	.341	.117	.112	26.138	.000

Dependent variable: Childhood teachers' work attitude

Table 4 showed the regression analysis of the influence of school head/proprietor's management style on childhood teachers' work attitude. The result indicated that there was positive relationship between management style and early childhood teachers' work attitude (R=.341) while the R-Square is .117 which means that the independent variable (Management style) explained 11.7% variation of the dependent variable (early childhood teachers' work attitude). This indicates a good fit of the regression equation. Thus, this is a reflection that management style significantly influenced childhood teacher's work attitude (F $(1,198)$ = 26.138, $p < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected in the light of the result.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the management style of early childhood teachers based on school type.

Table 5: Summary of t-test showing the difference in the management style of school head/proprietor's based on school type.

School type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	Remark
Private	90	41.57	1.72	.161	198	.161	Not Significant
Public	110	41.92	1.79				

Research Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the management style of early childhood teachers based on gender.

Table 6: Summary of t-test showing the difference in the management style of school head/proprietor
based on gender.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Male	96	41.56	1.68	-1.527	198	.128	Not Significant
Female	104	41.94	1.82				

Table 6 showed the difference in the management style of early childhood teachers based on gender. There was no significant difference in the management style of early childhood teachers based on gender (t= -1.527, df = 198, p > 0.05). The hypothesis is therefore accepted in the light of the result since the significance value is greater than 0.05.

Research Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the management style of early childhood teachers based on qualification.

Table 7: Summary of t-test showing the difference in the management style of school head/proprietor
based on qualification.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	16.516[a]	2	8.258	2.702	.070
Intercept	330250.582	1	330250.582	108078.424	.000
Qualification	16.516	2	8.258	2.702	.070
Error	601.964	197	3.056		
Total	349398.000	200			
Corrected Total	618.480	199			

Table 7 showed the difference in the management style of early childhood teachers based on qualification. There was no significant difference in the management style of early childhood teachers based on qualification (F $_{(2,070)}$ = -1.527, df = 2.702; p > 0.05). The hypothesis is therefore not rejected in the light of the result since the significance value is greater than 0.05.

Discussion of Findings

One of the findings of this study revealed that there was positive relationship between leadership style and early childhood teachers' work attitude. This finding is not unexpected as it shows consistency with the existing literature. For example, Sun (2002) in his study with two different level of management structure of schools and organization found out positive relationship between leadership style and organization performance in both schools and organization. Also, Barchiesi & La Bella (2007) from their study of leadership effectiveness, leadership role and its influence on performance, found out that leadership indexes are associated to higher potentiality of enhanced performance of the organization. The result also corroborated Chung et. al (2009) submission that leadership style affected organizational commitment and work satisfaction. The result was also supported by the finding of Voon et al (2011) in their study with Malaysian executives working in public sector and found that leadership style has a stronger relationship with job satisfaction. This result is not in conformity with Akerele (2007) who found no significant relationship between head teachers' autocratic leadership and job satisfaction as opposed to Gonn (2000) who found that autocratic lead to poor performance.

The finding also reported autocratic leadership as the most management style used by school head/proprietors in early childhood schools in Kwara State. The finding is not in support of Akorede (2007) who emphasized that the leader/manager should foster effective interpersonal relationship, cooperation and team work and good communication process towards the attainment of the organizational goals. This is also not in agreement with the assertion of Adegbesan (2008) that school heads are supposed to possess ability of influencing their staff to make sure the school successfully attain its pre-intended objectives. The use of autocratic leadership in by the head of ECE schools might account for the reason why the teachers' attitude to work was measured negative. The unfavourable behaviour exhibited in autocratic leaders can kill teachers drive to work and depress organizational performance. There is a proof therefore that the type of leadership style of the head of school conveys the variation between the

attitudes of the teachers to work. Okorie (2002) made it very clear in his statement that the school head should be able to handle both external operations as well as the school environment effectively so as to make the educational goals achievable.

Also, the result showed that democratic style produced better attitude among ECE teachers in Kwara State. This is in line with Ijaya (2000) who submitted that the more head teachers practiced democratic style the more they were likely to report job satisfaction in primary schools. The finding corroborated Griffith (2005) observation that head teachers' democratic leadership significantly related to highly teachers' job satisfaction. Kouzes & Postner (2007) who earlier assumed that autocratic style yielded more good result as compared to participative leadership later reviewed that productivity in democratic leadership was generally higher. When teachers are comfortable with the leadership style, they have the capacity to help children reach their individual potentials and work with families to promote positive outcomes. The likelihood is that facilitative management styles in communication and staff welfare will lead to high teacher morale and positive attitude to work.

The finding also showed that early childhood teachers' work attitude is negative. This agrees with the observation of Ijaya (2002) that the interest, curiousity and attitude to work of most teachers in Nigerian are low and negative. This finding is not in line with that of Bhargara and Pathy (2014) who found that teachers' attitudes were favourable and this positive attitude helped teachers to develop a conducive learner-friendly environment in the classroom.

Another findings of the study reported that there was no significant difference in the leadership style of the head of early childhood schools teachers based on school type, gender and educational qualification. This eliminates the assumption people do have that the type of school, gender can determine the tone and disposition of the leader. Also, it disapproves the claim that teachers with high academic and professional qualification will be difficult to handle for positive work attitudes because, they will be on the lookout for better jobs elsewhere.

Conclusion

Leadership style is a critical factor to the achievement of any organizational goals and objectives. In ECE, the issue of leadership and management is not different from leadership in any educational organization or in other organizations. Findings from previous studies indicated a significant relationship between leadership styles and job performance, job satisfaction, work motivation, and employees' productivity. The finding of this study also confirms that leadership style adopted by school heads and proprietor/proprietress of ECE is significantly related to the teachers' attitude to work in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State. The result of the study showed that the most frequently used leadership style by leaders of ECE is autocratic leadership followed by permissive leadership style while democratic leadership is the least often used. However, it is evident from the study that democratic leadership style has a positive influence of the teachers' attitude to work. Therefore, the leaders/managers of early childhood education should have the ability to motivate teachers to develop positive attitude and work effectively toward achieving the education goals. This ability is revealed in their being able to recognize individual teachers in formal and informal position to take responsibility, increase their confidence, support them as they try new approaches and develop innovative and proactive ways of dealing with issues in the school. Also, the leader should be able to maintain high level of integrity and communication honestly and openly as well as foster cooperation and collaboration in decision-making. Effective leadership style is very much required in the delivery of quality early childhood care and education services, in so doing, making the attainment of educational goals for this level of education possible.

Recommendations

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

i. School heads and proprietor/proprietress should employ appropriate leadership style to attain excellent performance from their teachers.

ii. School head should avoid autocratic and laizze-faire but then use more of democratic leadership style to encourage early childhood education teachers' positive attitude to work.

iii.	The quality of management styles of school heads and proprietor/proprietress should be improved through training and workshop.

iv.	A sincere monitoring and supervision of the school heads and proprietor/proprietress by the ministry officials will also put a check on the management and leadership style of the school heads and proprietor/proprietress.

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