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## **Epitome of Transformational School Leadership and School Improvement in Nigeria**

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**BY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Leadership style in this paper is viewed as the leader's characteristic behaviors when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. It is the style leaders use to determine the success or failure of any organizations, nations and other social units. As it may, transformational leadership style has proven to be effective in various aspects, though to different extents. This fact has become universal as it has been unanimously welcome. Transformational leadership is the leadership skills in principals who can pioneer the school to a new level at the hinge of school improvement. School improvement is seen as the process by which schools become more effective both in terms of academic outcomes as well as in developing the social and cultural wellbeing of the children and adults within the school. It is to this extent that transformational leadership exhibited by principals plays a key role in school improvement initiatives and is evident when principals engage in building a shared vision. Hence, this paper concluded that transformational leadership is the key to prompt school improvement. It can help the school solve problems pertinently and obtain various degrees of improvement on different stage. One of the recommendations was that education ministries and boards should therefore establish and implement programs that help to develop transformational leadership skills among school leaders. Such programs may include seminars, workshops and updates on school administration.*

**KEYWORDS: Epitome, Transformational Leadership Style, School Improvement and Nigeria**

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### **Introduction**

Leadership styles plays very important roles in the school system. Leadership styles of school principals are of considerable interest to education researchers. Prior to the 1980s, research on school principals mainly focused on the nature of the position and work. Accompanied by the rise of the educational accountability in the late 1970s, the research trend shifted to the role principals play in school improvement. Research found both direct and indirect effects of principals on a variety of variables, including school processes and outcomes, teacher-related variables, and student achievement. Among the school principal leadership models which have emerged over the past three decades, transformational leadership has been an overwhelmingly popular image of best practices (Hallinger, 2003). According to Berkovich & Eyal, (2017) as a whole, transformational leadership has proven to be effective in various aspects, though to different extents. This fact has become universal

as it has been unanimously welcome. As noted by Nahavandi (2002), an effective leader influences followers in a desired manner to achieve desired goals. Different leadership styles may affect organizational effectiveness or performance. Transformational leadership is a stronger predictor of both job satisfaction and overall satisfaction (Berson, 2003). According to Cherry (2020), transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Kouzes, (2009) noted that transformational leadership is the leadership skills in those principals who can pioneer the school to a new level at the hinge of school improvement. Laying much emphasizes on transformational leadership, it is expected that any school leader are the ones to create conditions to inspire all school members with their higher level of leadership for school improvement, finally make school get out of mess and realize transition in difficulties. Thus transformational leadership is a crucial quality of a leader (Yang, 2013).

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Concept of Leadership Style**

Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organization goals. A leader can be defined as a person who delegates or influencing others to act so as to carry out specified objectives (Mullins, 2004). For any organizations to achieve its goal depends on the type of style the leaders use in understanding the complexities of the rapidly changing global environment. According to Kotter (2001), leadership style is a leader's method of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Cherry (2020) defined leadership style as a leader's characteristic behaviors when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. It is the relatively consistent pattern of behavior that characterizes a leader (DuBrin, 2001). Different leadership styles may affect organizational effectiveness or performance. Goleman (2000) in his article identified six styles of leadership as: autocratic, paternalistic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership styles. According to the Oladipo, Jamilah, Abduldaud, Jeffery and Salami (2013), the success or failure of proper organizations, nations and other social units has been largely credited to the nature of their leadership style. Great leaders can inspire political movements and social change. They can also motivate others to perform, create, and innovate.

### **Concept of Transformational Leadership Style**

Downton cited in Northouse, (2016) first introduced transformational leadership. And was later used as an important approach to leadership by a political sociologist James MacGregor Burns (1978) in his work Leadership. As its name implies, transformational leadership is “a process that changes and transforms people” and “a process that incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership” (Northouse, 2016). Bass, (2002) defined transformational leadership as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) noted that transformational leadership style concentrates on the development of followers as well as their needs. Managers with transformational leadership style concentrate on the growth and development of value system of employees, their inspirational level and moralities with the preamble of their abilities (Ismail, Halim, Munna, Abdullah, Shminan and Muda 2009). As a result of this connection,

the followers' fullest potential can be developed, their values and beliefs can be changed, their levels of motivation and morality can be raised, and their goals can be broadened, which leads to performance levels exceeding normal expectations (Northouse, 2016). The dimensions of transformational leadership are as shown below:

**Shared Decision-Making:** Participation in decision-making has been an area of major concern among educators. It is a joint determination of decisions in general (Wegge, 2000). Stone, Russell and Patterson, (2004) maintained that shared decision-making was an integral part of transformational leadership, and that it was a pointer to the future, aligning personal values and interest to organization's interest. Shared decision-making brings leaders and followers together to agree on a common group goal (Wegge, 2000). In the words of Togia, Koustelios and Tsigilis (2004) noted that employee's participation in decision-making is positively associated with intrinsic values of job satisfaction. Leaders who shared decisions and vision with their employees widened their experiences and hence pooled them together for a common purpose (Northouse, 2004).

**Professional Development:** Development in teaching profession refers to advancement or change in status or position. It is an improvement of teachers' teaching skills. Christie (2006) defined professional development as the ability to demonstrate high level of skill or expertise. Within the context of education, professional development is measured by teachers' ability to effectively impact learning to their students (Christie, 2006). Griffith (2004) maintained that principals with transformational leadership skills created and fostered opportunity for teachers to review and evaluate their traditional methods of instruction with a view to adopting new procedures for better outcome. Today lots of changes have been made in the school systems that require teachers to improve their skills (Kniveton, 2001). Teachers' desire to improve their skills is largely dependent on the type of leadership (Coad & Berry, 2008).

**Student Performance:** The major goal of the educational system is student performance (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Administrative leadership indirectly affects student performance and is second only in importance to direct classroom instruction (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Bush & Glover, 2014; Dutta & Sahney, 2015; Leithwood & Sun, 2018). Other researchers' findings found that principals' leadership skills directly influence student performance through constant interactions such as a positive working relationship between teachers and administrators that produces an effective school climate and culture (Ross & Cozzens, 2016). In addition, Shatzer et al., (2014) noted that transformational leadership practices have been identified as models of leadership that affect students' academic performance.

**Employee productivity:** Employee productivity is directly influenced by transformational leadership (Childs, 2009). Employee productivity is a challenging area and requires skills, knowledge, diligence, and ingenuity on the part of the employees to a great extent. In enhancing employee productivity, the leaders and the supervisors are required to appropriately guide, instruct and train the individuals so that they are able to render their job duties to the best of their abilities (Savareikiene, 2013). It is clearly understood that individuals within the organization work towards earning their living, achievement of the goals and improve productivity, for this purpose they are required to seek guidance, regulation and direction from the transformational leaders (Childs, 2009).

### **Concept of School Improvement**

Baines (2019) defined School improvement as the process by which schools become more effective both in terms of academic outcomes as well as in developing the social and cultural

wellbeing of the children and adults within the school. It describes conscious efforts to raise school achievements by modifying classroom practices and adapting management arrangements to improve teaching and learning. Hopkins (2001) defines school improvement as a distinct approach to educational change that aims to enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. According to the Duval County Public Schools (2019), school improvement process is the single most important process carried out by the school community. It is an organized process used to ensure the success of all students. These involves leadership, teachers, culture, resources, pedagogy and the broader school community all working in unison to change school practices in ways that lead to better student outcomes (Taylor-Guy, 2019). As it is well known that the ultimate goal of any school improvement process is to enhance and facilitate better learning for students, including levels of achievement and wellbeing. For this reason, direct measures of student outcomes, and the collection and analysis of data, are essential to all school improvement efforts.

### **School Leaders and Transformational Leadership**

Principals are the leadership heads responsible for transforming school culture to meet the increased demands of local, state, and federal stakeholders. Transformational leadership is a style of leadership centered on leaders establishing new norms, changing employee attitudes, creating a new vision of reality, and making fundamental changes to the culture of the organization (Valentine and Prater, 2011). Schools that are able to meet stakeholder demands have educational leaders exhibiting transformational leadership behavior and there is a need to gain an understanding of these practices to better prepare principals to positively transform schools (Anderson, 2013). Transformational leadership exhibited by principals plays a key role in school improvement initiatives and is evident when principals engage in building a shared vision. Changing employee's ways of thinking and doing things is centered in the transformational establishment of a "shared vision" and being the core of the principal's role as transformational leaders. Transformational leadership centered in forming ideas and building a shared vision is a key to school improvement, hence making principal's development of transformational leadership skills paramount (Yang, 2014).

### **Important Steps of Transformational Leadership and School Improvement**

Just like the improving or developing a country, school improvement requires constant transformation. A principal should have strong transformational leadership in enhancing and help the school through the hard time to mature as soon as possible (Yang, 2012).

***Transformational school leadership improvement is based on forming the ideas:*** The leadership idea determines the development direction of the school, which is the school management's awareness or beliefs after the principal's thinking activity of the objective existence. But school idea's formation is based on the reflection of the school management issues. Only if they have the solution ideas, can the principal reflect the transformational leadership. The principal can express the school improvement direction and guide the school members from one stage to another by idea (Yang, 2013).

***Gaining credence is the key of transformational school leaders improvement:*** Gaining credence is the key to enhance principals' transformational leadership and means a lot in the school improvement. School improvement is the principal and school members sincerely cooperate. If the cooperation doesn't have enough trust on their leader, the success of the cooperation is not guaranteed. This means that the members of the school personnel are interrelated subsystems, looking at the relationship between the system and system, it needs

to be built on the basis of mutual trust, mutual support (Tnnies, 2010). The mutual trust between the school members reflects the mutual respect between them; respecting others and being respected by others are both the inner need of the members for a successful school improvement.

***Building shared vision is the core of transformational school leaders improvement:*** Vision is desired intention or blueprint created and shared school members, also can inspire them to make concerted efforts for the improvement of the school (Senge, 2002). A school vision is far from principal's vision. It can't be anything but a future and development strategy planning of the school. A principal's transformational leadership lies in leading school members to build shared vision and attempt it. Vision is directional and oriented, making school members strive with clear goals and communication. School members could gain wisdom and grow together, when they try to understand and achieve their vision.

***Experiencing success is the lifeblood of transformational school leader's improvement:*** School improvement aims at developing the teachers and students. Progress and success should be possible for school gradually improvement. Meanwhile school members can feel the pleasure of success in the process. In return, pleasures gain their trust in themselves and sense of responsibility for school, thus it produces new driving force in school development (Yang, 2012). This circulation is the source of the viability of school.

## **Conclusion**

The paper concludes that transformational leadership is the key to prompt school improvement. It can help the school solve problems pertinently and obtain various degrees of improvement on different stage. The transformational leadership skills in improving schools can be seen in forming the ideas, building shared vision, power sharing, gaining credence and experiencing success. Hence, any leader exhibiting transformational leadership plays a key role in school improvement and engaging in building a shared vision.

## **Recommendations**

1. Education ministries and boards should therefore establish and implement programs that help to develop transformational leadership skills among school leaders. Such programs may include seminars, workshops and updates on school administration.
2. Nigerian school leader should be encouraged to model transformational leadership as an effective medium for ensuring corporation and constructive partnership, characterized by openness and trust. With this, there is bound to be rapid school improvement.

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