

## OBSERVED LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR OF PRIMARY SCHOOL HEAD-TEACHERS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The primary school head-teacher is the most important and influential individual in the school. It is his or her leadership that shapes the school's learning climate, the level of relationship between staff, and the teachers' morale. This investigation was therefore designed to determine and quantify the leadership qualities demonstrated by primary school head-teachers as observed by their class-teachers. Stratified random sampling technique was employed in the selection of 90 respondents from 45 out of the 246 primary schools in Ife Zonal Education Area of Osun State. Means, rankings and  $X^2$  were used to analyze the data gathered. It was found that headmasters as they are commonly called were highly loyal to their school system. They were also rated high in their demonstration of love and interest in teaching. They were averagely rated in tolerance, honesty and originality. The hypothesis, tested at 0.05 significant levels, that, the ratings of male and female teachers are not significantly different is not rejected. The headmasters were recommended for training and re-training in leadership and management.*

**Keywords:** Primary school, Leadership qualities, Head-teachers, Nigeria, Teachers' gender, Local Education Authority, Teachers' perception

### INTRODUCTION

A school is a community of active living people. The school building and other structures provide the physical environment for their work and life altogether. Good organization is needed if the school is to be held successfully together as an efficient and a happy unit. A successful organization requires good leadership. This is supported by Atkinson (2005) that the success of the school for its head to carry out his duties depends so much on his competence as a good administrator. Leadership is about having vision and articulating, ordering priorities, getting others to go with you, constantly reviewing what you are doing and holding on to things you value (Day and Harris 2012)

A good school head, according to Farrant (1975) must possess high qualities of leadership because, like a general, he cannot win the battle by himself alone but by involving those with whom he serves. According to Ibukun (2004) and Northouse (2001), leadership is the art of influencing others to work enthusiastically towards the achievement of organizational goals. The activities of the school are determined by what the head-teacher does (Sergiovanni 1995, Oyetunji 2006 and Johnson 2004). The school-head influences everyone else's behaviour: his/her values are contagious, is/her good sense of ethics instills respect and trust in the system; he/she communicates a powerful message about what is important, how people are to be treated and how the school should operate daily.

Teachers desired school leaders who were positive, supportive and actively engaged in the instruction life of the school. They hoped to work in a school where order was maintained, and where they received support in classroom management. Head-teachers in Johnson (2004)'s study, who received accolades from their teachers, were identified as being visible,

innovative, fair, supportive, effective problem solvers, positive in their interaction with teachers, strong instructional leaders, and clear communicators. Those who moved to other schools or left teaching described their principals as being arbitrary, abusive, or neglectful. Therefore, Bush (2003) and Sheilds (2005) subscribed that apart from carrying out functional duties like organizing, coordinating and evaluating, the school-head is also recommended to practice leadership styles which emphasizes on humanistic values such as building a harmonious relationship with the teachers, being transparent, approachable, motivating and guiding the teachers.

The headmaster of a primary school is described by the Federal Government of Nigeria (1990) as both the administrative and the academic head of the school. The document explains further that: “He shall be a professionally trained teacher..He shall maintain a pleasant personality, be approachable, courteous, firm, fair, consistent, honest and just...He shall give academic leadership by having a teaching subject in any class.”

The school principal is the accounting officer of the school who is either blamed or praised depending on the degree of his effectiveness in influencing the relevant others in and outside the school to enhance teaching and learning (Alimi, Alabi and Ehinola 2011).

The behavioural model of the leader often sets the norm for the team. Members tend to copy largely and unconsciously the style of their leaders. Be it big or small, public or private, it is the school head who usually provides direction towards goals attainment. (Robbins and Judge, 2007).

The researcher observed that headship in the primary school in Osun State is based on qualification, years of experience and vacancy. The public demand for accountability, criticisms from the media, collapse of public confidence, and the need of the head-teacher to recognize the fundamental changes in their roles, are those reasons why Lambert (1984) suggests special training and retraining for them.

Elements of leadership are authority, power, responsibility and expertise. Pugh (1971) and Paisey (1981) cautioned that under- or over-exercise of authority affects organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Power is used only when authority is challenged. Power must not be abused. The learner must live up to his responsibilities. The expertise to perform as a head grows out of specialization and experience. The appointment of the school head is based on the assumption of his understanding of the special needs of the school system on one hand, and its staff members on the other.

Many primary school heads are not aware of how good or bad they are as leaders. In fact, bad head teachers might have rated themselves good. In view of this development, this study is specially designed to determine and quantify the leadership qualities demonstrated by primary head teachers as observed by their teachers. It is hypothesized that the ratings of male and female teachers (who rated the head teachers) are not significantly different. It is hoped that this study would throw more light on the head-teachers’ strengths and weaknesses as leaders.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Population/Sample**

The primary schools in Ife Zonal Education Area of Osun State comprising Ife Central, Ife North and Ife South Local Government Areas were the target population. There were 82, 70 and 94 primary schools in these local government areas respectively. The three local

government areas constituted the former Oranmian Local Government Area of the former Oyo State.

Stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection of fifteen primary schools from each of the three local government areas. Thus, 45 schools were selected from a total of 246 primary schools in the zone. The selection ensured that the head teachers of the selected schools had stayed in the school as the head teachers for a period of not less than two years. The secretariats of the respective Local Government Education Authorities in the local government areas were helpful in this regard.

Two classroom teachers a male and a female who had stayed in the sampled school for a period of not less than a year were randomly selected as respondents from each school. Ninety teachers were altogether involved.

### **The Instrument**

The “Observed Leadership Behaviour of Primary School Head-teachers Questionnaire” was the main instrument used for the investigation. The twenty-item, Likert-type questionnaire was developed by the investigator. The questionnaire items were variables on the leadership behavior of the head-teachers. A respondent was expected to rate his/her head-teacher on a 5-point scale depending on how much of the item was observably demonstrated by the head-teacher.

In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was administered on four school heads, in which four of their teachers rated each of them. After an interval of two weeks the instrument was again employed on the same subjects and their respondents. The two administrations were done without the prior notice of the school heads. The scores of the items were calculated for the two administrations separately. A reliability co-efficient of 0.86 was obtained by using the Spearman Rank Order correlation. The instrument was thus adjudged to be good enough for the research work.

### **Administration of Instrument**

The questionnaires were personally administered on the subjects in their respective schools after obtaining the necessary permission from the respective Local Education Authority Offices. Teachers were given the questionnaires to complete and return the same day their schools were visited. Fewer schools were visited daily because many of these schools are located in the rural areas where transportation is relatively difficult. The administration of the questionnaire took four weeks.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Ninety copies of the questionnaires were administered. All were properly completed, returned and analyzed by the investigator.

The mean score of each item of the questionnaire was calculated by dividing the sum of the scores of that item by 90. A mean of 0.00-1.00 was interpreted as Very Low; 1.01-2.00 as Low; 2.01-3.00 as Average; 3.01-4.00 as High and 4.01-5.00 as Very High. Thereafter, the questionnaire items were ranked in order of magnitude of their mean scores. In order to determine whether respondents’ gender influence their ratings, the  $X^2$  statistics at 0.05 level of significance was used. The procedure invariably involved the frequency counts of respondents’ ratings which were categorized into three - Low, Medium and High. It must be recalled that there were 45 male and female respondents.

**Table 1. Teachers' Observed Leadership Behaviour of Their Head-teachers**

Item	Leadership behavior.	X	Rank	High/Low	Sex	Frequency			X <sup>2</sup>
						VH/H	Medium	VL/L	
ix	Loyalty to the school system.	3.69	1	High	M	7	16	22	0.61
					F	5	19	21	
xiv	Skill as a teacher	3.67	2	High	M	8	16	21	0.83
					F	5	18	22	
v	Love of, and interest in teaching	3.58	3	High	M	8	17	20	0.22
					F	8	15	22	
xvi	Love the pupils	3.56	4	High	M	8	14	23	0.73
					F	9	17	19	
iv	Goodness of character	3.44	5	High	M	10	14	21	0.34
					F	12	12	21	
xv	Loves the teachers	3.42	6	High	M	8	20	17	4.05
					F	12	11	22	
viii	Self control	3.36	7	High	M	11	14	20	0.24
					F	11	16	18	
vii	Ability to persuade others to get the best from them	3.33	8	High	M	8	15	22	3.83
					F	12	20	13	
xi	Great academic knowledge	3.31	9	High	M	10	51	20	2.06
					F	10	21	14	
xii	Good sense of perspective	3.31	9	High	M	9	16	20	1.70
					F	11	20	14	
xviii	Humour, pleasantness and cheerful	3.27	11	High	M	9	17	19	1.75
					F	11	21	13	
iii	Initiative	3.22	12	High	M	10	16	19	1.75
					F	12	20	13	
vi	Orderliness	3.20	13	High	M	11	16	18	0.47
					F	13	17	15	
x	Sound judgement and deep insight	3.16	14	High	M	14	17	14	0.99
					F	10	18	17	
xx	Decisiveness, business like, clear intentions	3.13	15	High	M	13	15	17	0.25
					F	13	17	15	
i	Firmness and ability to get good discipline	3.07	16	High	M	14	17	14	0.22
					F	12	18	15	
xiii	Breath of vision	3.04	17	High	M	13	16	16	0.28
					F	15	16	14	
ii	Originality	2.96	18	Ave.	M	12	18	15	1.44
					F	15	20	10	
xix	Honesty	2.93	19	Ave.	M	13	18	14	0.53
					F	15	19	11	
xvii	Tolerance	2.91	20	Ave.	M	14	18	13	0.27
					F	14	20	11	

As shown in table 1 above, the primary school heads were observed to have performed nowhere less than the average. They were highly rated in all the items of the questionnaire except in originality, honesty and tolerance where they were rated averagely.

The highest mean score was in loyalty. This was followed by: skills as a teacher; love of, and interest in teaching; love of the pupils, goodness of character, love of the teachers; self-control; ability to persuade others to get the best from them; great academic knowledge; and good sense of perspective.

Other behaviours rated with lesser means were humour, initiative, orderliness, sound judgment and deep insight, decisiveness; firmness and ability to get good discipline; breadth of vision; originality and honesty. Tolerance has the least score.

The hypothesis that the ratings of male and female teachers are not significantly different is not rejected. The  $X^2$  calculated for the items is less than  $X^2$  table value of 5.99.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This study agrees with Farrant (1975) and (FGN) (1990) as the observed head-teachers were rated highly in seventeen out of the twenty items. They were nowhere rated less than the average. It can also be inferred that classroom teachers serving under these head-teachers have job satisfaction as the findings of this investigation supports Johnson (2004) that head teachers were not seen as high handed, unkind and arbitrary.

It is also concluded that male and female teachers are not significantly different in their ratings.

The investigator therefore recommends special training and retraining for head teachers as earlier suggested by Lambert (1984). They should be adequately prepared and supported with training in leadership and management. They should be made to understand that their behavioural model often sets the order for the team and more importantly, those members tend to copy largely and unconsciously the style of their leaders.

It is also recommended that a similar study be carried out in order states of the Federation. Such a study may also investigate the patterns of behavior of male and female head-teachers.

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