

**Developing Structures to Foster Personnel Participation in Schools' Decision-Making and Excellence in the Management of Personnel****Ereh, Cecilia Emuji (PhD) & Nkang, Iniobong Ekong (PhD)**Department of Curriculum Studies,
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Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.**Abstract**

The study investigate the relationship between developing structures to foster participation in schools' decision-making and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals in Cross River State. One research question was raised and a corresponding hypothesis was stated to guide the study. Using purposive sampling, a sample size of 375 was drawn from a population of 5382 teachers to respond to the items on the instrument. This was used to elicit information to rate their principals, from the randomly selected schools in the three senatorial districts of the State. The instrument for the study was titled Site-Based decision making and Teacher participation in decision making Questionnaire (SBDMTPDMQ). The instrument was validated by 3 Experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State. Trial testing was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument on 30 teachers and 20 principals who did not take in the actual study but are within the study area. The data obtained was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method and it yielded an index of .083. Simple linear regression was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The finding of the study revealed a significant relationship between developing structures to foster participation and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals. It was concluded based on the finding that, developing structures to foster participation in schools' decision-making significantly relates to excellence in personnel management by secondary school principals in the area of study. It was therefore recommended that, principals of secondary schools should be sent for training in educational management courses, through seminars, workshops and symposium, to equip them with this important capacity to be able to develop structures to attain excellence in the management of personnel working with them.

Keywords: Site-based decision making, personnel management, participatory management, teacher empowerment, management excellence

Introduction

The personnel of any organization comprise men and women, who engage in the production of goods and provision of services. There are various definitions or conceptions about personnel management by scholars. Ndiomu in Ezeani (2006) averred that personnel are the greatest assets of any organization. Personnel management according to Ezeani (2006:314) is an activity aimed at ensuring efficient use of the personnel of an organization to achieve maximum productivity and at the same time, enable the employee to gain optimum psychological and material benefits from their work. In their own view, Bateman and Snell (2003:31) contended that, personnel management deals with formal systems for managing people at work. Dessler (2008) pointed out that, personnel management is the policies and practices involved in carrying out the human resource aspect of a management position, including recruiting, screening, training, rewarding and appraising the personnel.

Personnel management therefore, is the process of harnessing all the human aspect of any organization and putting it to use in order to achieve the organizational goals.

Personnel aspect of management is one of the most important functions in any organization most especially, the school organization where human beings are used to develop young brains as future human resources. This is why Ezeani (2006:314) says that, the ability of the organization to achieve its goals depends to a large extent on the caliber of the organizational personnel and how the organizations motivate its human resources. It is a known fact that the material resources of any organization cannot of their own produce goods and services without the manipulation of those material resources by the human resources. No wonder Likert in Ezeani (2006) affirmed that, all the activities of any enterprise are initiated and determined by the persons who make up that institution. Plant, offices, computers, automated equipment and all else that a modern firm uses are unproductive, unless when operated or manipulated by the personnel or the human resources of the organization.

It is therefore very pertinent that the personnel of any organization, especially the school organization have to be properly managed for them to make maximum contributions to the success of the organization. This explains why Likert in Ezeani (2006) contended that, of all the task of management, managing the human component is central and the most important task because, all else depends on how well it is done. This therefore seems to explain the necessity of effective leadership factor or practices of human resources management.

It is not an overstatement that in any organization, including schools, the personnel will feel more involved and put in their best when they are carried along or are informed about the workings of the organization. This is because, when the personnel are involved by being carried along, they will have a sense of belonging which will help them develop trust and confidence in the principals or the persons in the leadership position. This is why Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach in Sharrat and Sharrat (2006) contended that, the key to organizational learning is structures that allowed for staff interaction and participatory decision-making. Schools are therefore beginning to introduce a shift from the traditional management model, which is autocratic or authoritarian in nature to a democratic or participatory model for better management of the personnel.

Developing structures to foster participation of personnel in school decision-making is the type of leadership practice carried out through the involvement of personnel in school decision-making, by seeking their inputs in the school management process. A situation where personnel are not properly managed nor treated with respect and carried along, such a school cannot fully achieve its set goals or meet up with the vision earlier developed. No wonder McGrann, Delano and McCarkle, (2006) noted that, the old command-and-control management style is fading and is being replaced by a participatory management approach that involves everyone in defining objectives, making decisions and being accountable. School principals who want to succeed need to take the responsibility for fostering employee participation rather than simply giving orders and checking to see if the job was done.

The concept of developing structures to foster participatory decision-making in school is an aspect of teacher or personnel empowerment, as described by Duke (2005). These scholars noted that, participative decision-making is conceived of as just one aspect of a shared leadership and the idea of involving teachers' in school level decision-making is known by many names. The issue of empowerment of personnel in schools as in any organization is gaining grounds as a topic of interest in educational management discourse for some time now. This is because, for any organization, especially the school organization to achieve its set objectives the leaders need to empower their employees or subordinates, since they may

not be able to finish up all there is to be done, even when most of the duties are delegated, since delegation of duties is distinct from empowerment.

Empowerment could be seen as structures put in place to enable employees or personnel perform their duties better, not just delegation of duties which could just be assigning of some duties to some subordinates to carry out. Empowerment to Lau, (2010) is a multifaceted motivational construct manifested in meaning, competences, self-determination and impact. To Snowden, (2017), empowerment means to give someone or subordinates a means to achieve something, making the person stronger and more confident, ready to take control of one's life as well as to be able to advocate for oneself. Empowerment of employees or subordinates could therefore, be described as a management practice of sharing information, rewards and power with employees, so that they can take initiative and make decisions to solve problems, improve services and performances. Empowerment can also be described based on the idea that, if employees are given skills, resources, authority, opportunities, motivation as well as holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, it will contribute to their competences and job satisfaction.

Empowerment programmes in an organization therefore, is basically to create work environment in which the people could be productive, happily contributing to the growth of the organization and themselves, as well as the entire society. It is in this regard that Lau (2010) considers employees empowerment as a powerful mechanism for increasing employees involvement which can motivate tasks accomplishment, enhance the values of individuals' work, increase job satisfaction and contribute to job satisfaction as well as the success of the entire organization. Duke (2005) argued that power could be shared by allowing personnel the opportunity to participate in making decisions that affect their work. Empowerment as a construct of developing structures to foster personnel participation in schools decision-making can be facilitated through site-based decision-making process. Site-based decision-making could be described as a process of decentralization of decision-making process, where the schools become the unit of management of educational programmes or system. Through this structure, the educational stakeholders such as teachers, support staff, parents, students, as well as the entire community where the school is located could have a basic knowledge of the relevant challenges and information about the school. This structure could also be described as a form of autonomy granted the schools by the school board or ministry. This is most likely to encourage these stakeholders to participate fully in policy formulation, procedures and establishment of the system to attain the objectives of education. Noel, Brown and Delgado, (2008) maintained that, site-based decision-making may be the most significant reform, being a potential force for empowering educators and communities, if practiced. These scholars also noted that, although there are several reasons for advocating for site-based decision making, but all the reasons are geared towards school improvement and students' achievements. This is so because, as educators and other stakeholders take active part in schools' decision-making, it helps them to manage the schools and thereby take responsibility for the schools' outcomes. No wonder, Noel et al, (2008) noted that, this shared power could encourage stakeholders at all levels to be involved in making decisions without feeling manipulated.

The choice of decision making model, on a continuum from top-down to a totally democratic system is crucial, if the system must achieve its set goals. It is therefore clear why scholars like, Bellon & Beaudry, 1992; Boles & Troen, 1992; Hoy, 1999; Wasley, 1991; Waugh & Punch in Ereh, (2010) all agreed that, in recent educational movement, restructuring and site-based management has promoted increased teacher participation in leadership in the decision-making process of various school administrations. These authors

concluded by saying that, studies about teachers' role in these reform efforts are beginning to emerge.

In the process of managing the schools using site-based-decision making, teachers' empowerment could be a powerful factor, because distributing leadership to the entire faculty or departmental teachers and other personnel has a potential to create a stronger school system. In this regard Davis, (2018) maintained that, distributive leadership is one way to empower teachers, but care should be taken not to confuse empowerment with delegation of duties, as leaders of organizations often confuse delegation of duties with empowerment. In clearing this confusion, Davis differentiated the two words by saying that; delegation of duties does not invest in the power or ownership of ideas for teachers. Rather, Davis highlighted empowerment of teachers to include the following characteristics; developing greater confidence, innovation and job satisfaction in teachers, which will certainly lead to a positive school culture. To achieve teachers' empowerment in schools therefore, Watson, (2003) suggested the following steps;

The first is ask for teachers' input around purchasing power: when teachers or any staff have a say in selecting and purchasing new tools for the Department, they would have increased ownership over those tools and would feel empowered to use them well. So it is advisable to find out what teachers need the most for use in the classroom for their job performance, then allocating money for devices and programmes for full utilization.

The second is give teachers opportunities to share what is working for them in their classrooms: Many teachers do not feel empowered to share the great work they are doing with students but only hear feedback about their shortcoming. Rather, teachers who doubt their own abilities, worry about criticism or do not have venue or time to talk about their ideas should be supported to do so. Faculties should be encouraged to provide informal opportunities where teachers can talk about their practices, take notes and photos of their successes during the observations. This would go a long way to boost their morale.

The third is celebrated teachers' innovations and successes publicly: teachers' innovations and successes should be celebrated publicly in staff meetings, schools' websites and social accounts, so that the communities can also see the amazing things that are happening in teachers' classrooms.

The fourth is removing or reducing extra workloads from teachers, so as to make time for personal growth and innovation: Critical tasks such as lesson planning, exploring of new researches, collaboration as well as self-reflection are some of the tasks often squeezed into teachers schedule alongside teaching tasks. If these tasks can be reduced it would give them some breathing space to be creative, innovate and even more productive.

The fifth is Model vulnerability, reward risk-taking, and embrace the possibility of failure: This means that, no teacher would be willing to innovate, when failure or students' poor performance would lead to teachers' poor evaluation or even punishment. When teachers are given ample opportunities to experiment, take risks where both successes and failures are considered, discussed freely and considered as strategies for resilience and growth, where failures are seen as mistakes to be reframed as learning opportunities necessary for future success. A situation where the organization demonstrates the same infallible belief in teachers' ability to teach as the teachers have in their own students' ability to learn, they would be better off feeling valued, creative and innovative. This could be described as the road to innovation, because it is a journey which takes a long process to get there. However, developed structures for personnel participation in schools' decision-making in the area of study leaves much to be desired, as there seem to be no site-based decision-making opportunities, decisions are taken at the state level and passed down to principals to just implement, without their involvement, hard-work seem not to be noticed,

not to talk of such workers being celebrated, these has been a challenge for some time now. This has attracted interest of scholars' who have made several attempts to find solutions to this anomaly.

Statement of the Problem

Participative decision-making as a way to empower personnel in schools is gaining acceptance and practice globally. However, in the Nigerian system of educational management, especially in Cross River State, it has been observed over time that, decisions are only taken by those in the ministry based on the State Education Policies, for school principals to simply pass the instructions to personnel to strictly comply. The principals do not seem to know that, it is their leadership role to participate in the decision-making process as they will be in a better position to implement whatever decision that has been taken when they actively participate in the decision-making process. There seem to be no permissive structures for wider participation in decision-making by teachers and other school personnel, even when it affects their job and welfare. This is a serious leadership lapse that has been observed for some time now. These situations have resulted in various leadership inadequacies, such as poor management of interpersonal relationship, poor supervision of activities by principals, teachers and other personnel in the secondary school system. These challenging situations were traced to principals' inadequacies in poor or lack of empowerment skills, lack of site based-decision-making as well as inadequate teachers' and even other schools' staff's participation in decision making at the secondary school levels.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was therefore to ascertain how developed structures could foster participation of personnel in school decision-making through empowerment that could predict positive relationship in the management of personnel by the schools principals.

Research Questions

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does empowerment through site-based decision making influence personnel participation in school decision-making by secondary school principals?
2. To what extent does empowerment through site-based decision making influence excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance,

H₀₁: Empowerment through site-based decision making does not significantly influence personnel participation in school decision-making by secondary school principals.

H₀₂: Empowerment through site-based decision making does not significantly influence excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals.

Significance of the Study

This skill may result from intelligence, knowledge and expertise, self-confidence, high energy as well as integrity and honesty, but the understanding of this concept and its working in the Nigerian setting, especially in relation to excellence in the management of personnel in the secondary schools will go a long way to emphasize the high degree of

competencies needed by the school principals in order to remain the key persons that should act as instructional leaders, initiators of change as well as administrators and problem solvers. In other words, the seemingly endless problems faced by public schools for some times now needs such skill to be able to empower personnel, in addition to a responsible, strong, and innovative leadership skills to solve or reverse the problems of personnel management in public schools.

The situational leadership theorists maintain that, whether or not a manager or leader is an effective leader, it depends on the interplay of what the leader is, what the leader does and the situation in which leadership takes place. This means that, when the right selection of school leaders or administrators are made and the provision of necessary resources in terms of finance and materials, as well as management strategy so highlighted is put in place, it may impact positively on the school leadership in relation to management of personnel, leading to improvement of public secondary schools, especially in the area of this study. The behavioral approach to leadership maintains that, caring about the well-being and professional growth of employees is an ethical imperative and a good business sense.

With regard to practical relevance, the findings of this study will be of help to educational administrators and planners in the Ministry of Education, school principals, and teachers, students of educational administration, curriculum planners as well as the general administrators in business, sport, as well as social and political organizations. First of all the result of this study is considered relevant to the educational administrators and planners in the ministry of education as it will expose them to this leadership practice needed by school principals to employ in their various schools. The government will therefore plan training programmes for principals' in-service training or organize workshops and seminars towards inculcating this skills in them. It will expose them to the need to set minimum qualification for employment of school principals. These benefits would be realized when this piece of work is exposed to the public, especially those in the area of study, through publication.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to find out the predictive relationship existing between site based decision making and personnel participation in schools decision-making and excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals. The study was carried out in Cross River State, Nigeria. Cross River State is made up of 18 local government areas, and is divided into three senatorial districts, the north, central and southern senatorial districts, representing three education zones. The population of this study comprised all public secondary school principals and teachers in the area being studied. There are a total of 232 principals and 5382 teachers in public secondary schools. All principals of the selected schools were used purposively sampled, while teachers were proportionately but randomly selected using pick and drop method to respond to questionnaire items on behalf of their school principals. The choice of the teachers to respond to items on the questionnaire on behalf of the principals was based on the fact that, teachers are close to their principals, therefore will give the required information without bias on the leadership practices of their principals. The instrument was validated by 3 Experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State. Trial testing was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument on 30 teachers and 20 principals who did not take in the actual study but are within the study area. The data obtained was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method and it yielded an index of .083, indicating that the instrument was able to measure what it was meant to measure. The research question was answered using regression analysis.

Presentation of Findings

Ho₁: empowerment through site-based decision making does not significantly influence personnel participation in school decision-making by secondary school principals.

Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis for how empowerment through site-based decision making influence on personnel participation in school decision-making

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | 2.811 | .369 | | 7.624 | .000 |
| personnel participation in school decision-making | .343 | .094 | .443 | 3.662 | .001 |

r=0.643, R²=0.413

Table 1 gives the summary of influence of site-based decision making on personnel participation in school decision-making. The result shows that every unit rise in empowerment through site-based decision making, personnel participation in school decision-making increases by 0.343. This shows a linear relationship and positive influence of empowerment through site-based decision making on personnel participation in school decision-making. The result also shows that coefficient of relationship (r) is 0.643, indicating a high positive relationship between empowerment through site-based decision making and personnel participation in school decision-making. The result also shows that the coefficient of determination (R²) is 0.413, indicating that 44.3% changes in and personnel participation in school decision-making is as a result of empowerment through site-based decision making practiced by principals. The result further shows that the probability value (p-value) is less than .05 (p<.05). Since the p value of 0.001 is less than the alpha value of .05 (p<.05 =.02), the result is statistically significant, thus, empowerment through site-based decision making significantly influence personnel participation in school decision-making by secondary school principals.

Ho₂: empowerment through site-based decision making does not significantly influence excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis for how empowerment through site-based decision making influence on excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | 1.496 | .468 | | 3.197 | .002 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|
| excellence in the management of personnel | .629 | .110 | .609 | 5.696 | .000 |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|

$r=0.609, R^2=0.371$

Table 2 gives the summary of influence of site-based decision making excellence in the management of personnel. The result shows that every unit rise in site-based decision making, excellence in the management of personnel increases by 0.629. This shows a linear relationship and positive influence of site-based decision making on excellence in the management of personnel. The result also shows that coefficient of relationship (r) is 0.609, indicating a high positive relationship between site-based decision making and excellence in the management of personnel. The result also shows that the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.371, indicating that 37.1% changes in excellence in the management of personnel is as a result of site-based decision making practiced by principals. The result further shows that the probability value (p-value) is less than .05 ($p < .05$). Since the p value of 0.000 is less than the alpha value of .05 ($p < .05 = .02$), the result is statistically significant, thus, site-based decision making significantly influence excellence in the management of personnel by secondary school principals.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that empowerment through site-based decision making influences positively the personnel participation in schools' decision-making and excellence in the management of personnel. The result shows a significant influence of empowerment through site-based decision making on personnel participation in schools' decision-making and excellence in the management of personnel. With a correlation index of 0.643, site-based decision-making has a high positive relationship to personnel participation in decision making.

This shows that a commitment to developing structures to foster personnel participation in school decision-making is an empowerment process and could certainly predict positive relationship to excellence in the management of personnel. This result may be attributed to the fact that, principals of secondary schools in the area of study may have been involving personnel in decision-making in various ways, without knowing it is structure of an empowerment programme, but not a properly developed structure for personnel participation in the schools decision-making. This result could also be attributed to the fact that, principals of public schools in the area of study have been delegating duties to personnel and sometimes communicating some decisions taken to them through staff meetings. This result is in line with the view of Lawler in Duke (2005), who claimed that, the choice of decision-making on a continuum, from top-down system to a democratic system is crucial, and more so by developing leadership skill in the personnel by empowering them with shared responsibilities, as well as autonomy to carry out their responsibilities with less supervision, if the system must achieve its set goals.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that empowerment through site-based decision making influences positively the personnel participation in schools' decision-making and excellence in the management of personnel by principals of secondary schools in Alwa Ibom State.

Recommendations



Based on the findings of the study, the implication is that,

1. Based on the strength of structures to foster personnel participation in schools' decision-making, principals in Cross River State and Nigeria as a whole should be equipped through capacity-building programmes to be able to empower personnel.
2. Positive training of the Principals by the Federal and State ministry of education to ensure excellence in personnel management.
3. The principals should be able to develop structures that would involve the school personnel in decision-making.
4. The principals should take into considerations all contributions from the personnel, even when they seem off points.

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