

ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR GOAL ACHIEVEMENT IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract: This study discussed assessment of educational leadership practices in early childhood education for goal achievement in Enugu State. The main objective of this study was to find out the extent to which leadership practices in early childhood education are used for goal achievement in Enugu State. The design of the study was descriptive survey research design. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The study was carried out in public primary schools in Enugu State. The population for the study was 464 care givers (teachers in ECE) in Enugu State. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to sample 170 care-givers (teachers in ECE), 10 each from every Local Government Area, of the 17 Local Government Areas of Enugu State. A 20 item questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was validated by three research experts. The reliability coefficient was 75% using Cronbach Alpha method. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses. The result showed that the head teachers use both inspiration and motivation as leadership practices in the administration of early child education in Enugu State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that leadership practices of head teachers be assessed frequently for goal achievement not only in early child education but at all levels of education in Nigeria.

Introduction

Leadership as we all know is a trending area in research. It involves the ability of an individual or organization to lead or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organization. It is ultimately the ability to unlock the potentials that determine the success of both an organization and its people. Leadership, according to Stocklin (2017) is the ability to help people achieve things they do not think possible. In other words, it is not amorphous or convoluted attribute that some were either born with or not. Leadership is therefore, a highly learned skill. The leadership myth that leaders are born not made is very erroneous. This is because, good leaders are made and not born.

According to Jago (2010), good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education,

training and experience. The author further observed that a good leader inspires his workers, and or followers into higher levels of team work and achievement. Such things, one may say, do not come naturally but are acquired through continuous work and study. Leadership however, is a lifelong lesson that is never mastered.

Seedman (2015) opined that, leadership is not essentially aspiring to acquire the endurance of a marathoner, the musculature of a sprinter and the mental fortitude to embrace an unending race, but rather an unending goal of learning, continuous improvement and personal transformation.

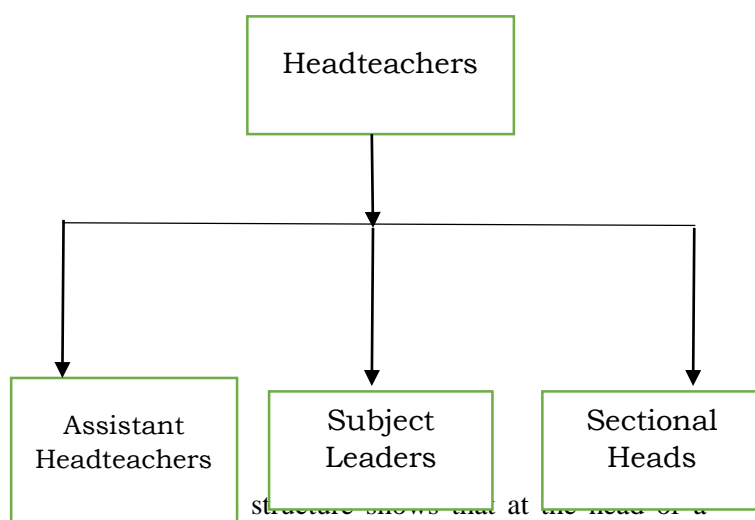
In line with the above, leadership involves the ability to establish a clear vision, sharing the vision, providing information, knowledge and methods to realize the vision, coordinating and balancing the conflicting,

interests' of all members, followers, stakeholders, inspiring sub-ordinates to perform and engage in achieving a goal. These are also pertinent in the educational system.

Educational leadership takes cognizance of educational system. Educational system shapes the leadership in line with the goals of the educational system. An educational leader, therefore, serves as a guide and influences other educators in an administrative setting. Leaders in these executive roles work toward finding ways to improve teaching and learning, and the process of educating students. Such leaders serve in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions as well as early childhood education centres.

According to Cambridge Assessment International Education (2017), educational leadership is usually associated with formal organizational positions in schools as shown in the diagram below.

Formal Leaders



Structure shows that at the head of a school the formal leader is the head teacher depending on the level of education system that is under discussion. Down the structure, we have Assistant H.T, subject leader then sectional head. There may also be other informal leaders such as specialist leaders whose influence stems from their subject knowledge or skills with groups of learners, or individuals who have social influence with their peers and sway views and attitudes.

Seedman (2015) further highlighted 30 leadership practices which he categorized into three namely; inspire, empower and innovate.

Inspire is the ability to infuse into the mind or communicate rather than command action. In other words leaders must appeal to people's hearts more than their mind. Simply put, visionary leaders plan with mind, lead with the heart, and reflect with the soul.

In terms of Empower, Seedman noted that great leaders do not create followers rather, they create other leaders. Such visionary leaders empower those they are leading while simultaneously creating a collaborative culture that promotes the motion that together we can accomplish anything as long as we do not care who gets the credit.

In terms of Innovate, the author opined that visionary leaders embrace change and failure, understanding that the term "good enough" is used by the lazy ones to justify inaction. Consequently, great leaders put others first and always have transformation in mind. It is pertinent to understand that without creating a run way for failure, there is no run way for innovation and success.

The above three concepts associated with the leadership underscores the relevance of effective leadership practices for the realization of the goals of early childhood education in Enugu state. According to the National Policy on Education (2013) the goals include:

- Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school
- Prepare the child for the primary level of education
- Provide adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work
- Inculcate social, moral, norms and values
- Inculcate in the child, the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and use of toys etc.
- Develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit
- Stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits and
- Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, firms etc through play. On that note, these three practices are to be integrated in the administration of early childhood programmes if desired education outcomes are to be achieved. Therefore there is need for the assessment of leadership practices of need teachers for goal achievement.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) refers to educational programmes and strategies geared towards

children from birth to the age of eight. National Association for the Education of young children (2018) described ECE otherwise known as Nursery education as a branch of education theory that relates to the teaching of children (formally and informally) from birth to the age of eight. It emerged as a field of study during the enlightenment, particularly in European countries with high literacy rates (Eddy 2016). This period of learning is widely considered as the most vulnerable and crucial stage of a person's life. It often focuses on guiding children to learn through play.

In addition, Edwards (2020) viewed early childhood education as activities and experiences that are intended to effect development changes in children prior to their entry into primary school. It is commonly referred to as preschool or infant / child care programmes. This learning through play is a common teaching philosophy for young children.

Based on the research and philosophy of Jean Piaget, which posited that play meets the physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social needs of children, children's curiosity and imagination, of these, naturally evoke learning when unfettered. According to Early Childhood News (2016) learning through play will allow a child to develop cognitively. These children learn both academic and social-based lessons. They prepare for school by learning letters, numbers and how to write. They also learn sharing, cooperation, taking turns and operating within a structured environment. The people/teacher that guide these children are called caregivers.

As a result of the tender nature and minds of these children, leadership at this level needs to be creative, active and functional. This is because any mistake at this level of education of children lingers for a long time and may be difficult to correct later. Therefore there is need for the assessment of leadership practices of head teachers for goal achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Assessment is an important exercise in education sector. It is done in order to determine the extent to which a worker performs his duties or the extent to which the aims of a programme are being realized. Early childhood education is an important level in the nations education system. There has been concern over the proliferation of early childhood centers in the state. Education stakeholders have argued that some of these centers do not possess the necessary facilities for operation. Most worrisome is the

quality of leadership in these Early Childhood Centers. It is argued that most of the head teachers do not possess these qualities that can inspire and motivate the teachers to enhance quality education outcomes. It is against this background that the researcher is motivated to carry out a research on the assessment of leadership practices in Early Childhood Education for goal achievement in Enugu state. The problem of this study is, therefore, in a question form "what is the extent to which leadership practices are used for goal achievement in Early Childhood Education centers in Enugu state?"

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which leadership practices in early childhood education were used for goal achievement. Specifically, the study assessed the extent to which;

- a. inspiration is used by head teachers in early childhood education as leadership practice for goal achievement in effecting a smooth transition from home to school, preparing the child for the primary level of education, providing adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work and inculcating social, moral, norms and values.
- b. motivation is used by head teachers in early childhood education as leadership practice for goal achievement in inculcating in the child, the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and use of toys, developing a sense of co-operation and team spirit, stimulating in the child good habits, including good health habits and teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms through play.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice for goal achievement in early childhood education.
2. To what extent do head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice for goal achievement in early childhood education.

Hypotheses

Ho1- There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female caregivers (teachers) on the extent to which head teachers use inspiration as a

leadership practices for goal achievement in early childhood education.

Ho2 – There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female caregivers (teachers) on the extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practices for goal achievement in early childhood education.

Method

The design of the study is descriptive survey research design which sought to find out the educational leadership practices in early childhood education and the extent to which these leadership practices have led to goal achievement in early childhood schools in Enugu State. The population for the study was 464 care givers (teachers) in Enugu State. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to sample 170 care givers (teachers) from schools that operate ECE.

A 20 item questionnaire titled “Educational Leadership Practices for Goal Achievement Questionnaire” was developed by the researcher for data collection. The instrument was made up of two sections, A and B. A for personal data of the respondents, while section B is about the items eliciting the response of the respondents. The

response option to the research questions are: Very High Extent (VHE) – 4 points, High Extent (HE) – 3 points, Very Low Extent (VLE) – 2 points and Low Extent (LE) – 1 points.

The questionnaire was face validated by 3 experts, 2 from the Department of Educational Management and 1 from Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability was tested using Cronbach Alpha Method and 75% was got. 170 copies of the questionnaire distributed were returned giving 100% return rate. The data generated were analyzed using mean with standard deviation. Furthermore, the study made use of $n > 2.50$ as region of acceptance and $n < 2.50$ as region for rejection of the research question. The null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and interpretation

170 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and returned, correctly filled and used for data analysis. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation and presented in tables in line with the research questions

Research Question 1:

To what extent do head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education?

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of respondents on the extent to which head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education

S/N	Items: Ways of using inspiration by head teachers	Male Teachers N= 50		Female teachers N= 120		Average N= 170		Decision
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
1	Being dynamic	3.60	0.49	3.49	0.59	3.55	0.54	Very high extent
2	Standing firm in the face of challenging situations in education	3.60	0.49	3.54	0.56	3.57	0.52	Very high extent
3	Showing transparency in his administration	3.52	0.64	3.70	0.57	3.61	0.60	Very high extent
4	Carrying everybody along in school affairs	3.62	0.56	3.70	0.57	3.66	0.56	Very high extent
5	Making himself accessible	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.65	3.60	0.57	Very high extent
6	Conducting classroom observation on regular basis	3.58	0.49	3.50	0.62	3.54	0.55	Very high extent
7	Identifying clearly the expectations of each teacher	3.60	0.49	3.45	0.64	3.53	0.56	Very high extent
8	Emphasizing quality education delivery	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.49	Very high extent
9	Communicating regularly	3.64	0.48	3.75	0.48	3.69	0.48	Very high extent
10	Being a role model in the team	3.72	0.46	3.80	0.40	3.76	0.43	Very high extent
	Grand mean (X) & SD	3.60	0.50	3.61	0.55	3.61	0.53	Very high extent

Table 1 showed the responses of the caregivers (teachers) on extent to which head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education. Results here showed that the teachers agreed that inspiration as a leadership practice is used by head teachers in different ways to a very high extent. These ways range from being a role model in the team with highest mean

rating of 3.76 to identifying clearly the expectations of each teacher rated lowest with a mean score of 3.53.

Research Question 2:

To what extent do head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education?

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of respondents on the extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education

S/N	Items: Ways of using motivation by head teachers	Male Teachers N= 50		Female teachers N=120		Average N=170		Decision
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
1	Providing conducive learning environment	3.16	0.79	3.20	0.75	3.18	0.77	High extent
2	Being compassionate to teachers	3.48	0.67	3.80	0.40	3.64	0.53	Very high extent
3	Being flexible in the application of rules	3.40	0.49	3.40	0.49	3.40	0.49	High extent
4	Delegating duties to subordinates	3.52	0.50	3.50	0.50	3.51	0.50	Very high extent
5	Encouraging staff development practices	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.49	Very high extent
6	Insisting on equity in his administration	2.86	0.94	2.95	0.74	2.90	0.84	High extent
7	Involving teachers in decision making	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.49	Very high extent
8	Rewarding teachers' efforts	3.40	0.80	3.40	0.80	3.40	0.80	High extent
9	Accommodating teachers' views	3.20	0.75	3.23	0.72	3.21	0.73	High extent
10	Working positively towards teachers' welfare	3.50	0.64	3.80	0.40	3.65	0.52	Very high extent
	Grand mean (X) & SD	3.37	0.50	3.44	0.57	3.40	0.53	High extent

Table 2 shows the responses of the teachers on extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education. Results here showed that the teachers indicated that the head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in administration in so many ways. Such ways as working positively towards teacher's welfare with a mean rating of 3.66; being compassionate to teachers with a mean score of 3.64; encouraging staff development practices and involving teachers in decision making both with mean rating of 3.60 and delegating duties to subordinates with a mean score of 3.51 are used by the head teachers to a very high extent. It was further indicated that being flexible in the application of rules with a mean score of 3.40; rewarding teachers' efforts (3.40); accommodating teachers' views (3.21) and insisting on equity in his

administration rated least at 2.90 are all used to a high extent with overall mean score rated at 3.4.

Hypothesis testing

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education.

Table 3: T-test of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education

Gender of head teachers	N	X	SD	df	t Crit.	t Cal.	Decision
Male	50	3.60	0.55	168	1.96	0.134	Not Significant (Not Rejected)
Female	120	3.61	0.50				

Table 3 shows the results of t-test analysis of significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education tested at 0.05 level of significance and at 168 degree of freedom. Since the calculated value of t was 0.134 and less than the table value of t (t-crit.) which is 1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected indicating that there is no significance difference between the mean ratings of the male and female caregivers (teachers) on the extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education

Table 4: T-test of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education

Gender of head teachers	N	X	SD	df	t Crit.	t Cal.	Decision
Male	50	3.37	0.50	168	1.96	0.798	Not Significant (Not Rejected)
Female	120	3.44	0.57				

Table 4 shows the results of t-test analysis of significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female caregivers (teachers) on the extent to which head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education tested at 0.05 level of significance and at 168 degree of freedom. Since

the calculated value of t was 0.798 and less than the table value of t (t-crit.) which is 1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected indicating that there is no significance difference between the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent to which head teachers use inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education.

Discussions

The findings of the study revealed that head teachers apply inspiration as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education through being dynamic, standing firm in the face of challenging situations, showing transparency in their administration, carrying everybody along in school affairs, being accessible, conducting classroom observation regularly, identifying clearly the expectations of each teachers, laying emphasis on quality education delivery, communicating regularly and being a role model. On the extent to which head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education, the respondents caregivers (teachers) revealed that head teachers use motivation as a leadership practice in so many ways such as; providing conducive learning environment, being compassionate to teachers, flexibility in the application of rules, encouraging staff development practices, insisting on equality in his administration, involving teachers in decision making, rewarding teachers efforts, accommodating teachers' views and working positively towards teachers welfare.

However, test of hypothesis showed that the response of male and female teachers did not vary on the extent to which head teachers use inspiration or motivation as leadership practice in the administration of early childhood education in Enugu State. On that note, the findings of this study agreed with Jago (2010) who advocated that good leaders inspire their workers or subordinates into higher levels of team work and achievement. The findings equally supported Stocklin (2017) who opined that leadership is the ability to help people achieve things they do not think possible. From the point of view, head teachers of early childhood education in Enugu State and beyond should to a great extent inspire and motivate their teachers for goal achievement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, Assessment of Educational Leadership Practices cannot be over looked at

all levels of education, particularly primary level which house early childhood education, the area of focus for goal achievement. The findings will enhance goal achievement in Enugu State Education Sector in particularly and Nigeria in general.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

- 1) Leadership practices of head teachers be assessed frequently for goal achievement not only in early childhood education but at all levels of education in Nigeria.
- 2) That head teachers be mandated to inspire their teachers through their leadership practices for educational enhancement.
- 3) That head teachers through their leadership practices should motivate their teachers for quality education.

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