

# **PRINCIPAL'S INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

By

**DR. OKERE, JOSEPH EJIMOGU**

Department of Educational Foundations and Administration, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of  
Education, Owerri.

**DR. NWOKO, OBINNA JOSHUA**

Department of Educational Foundations and Administration, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of  
Education, Owerri.

## **Abstract:**

This paper investigated principal's instructional leadership and its implications for student's academic achievement in Nigerian educational system. By means of conceptual analysis of instructional leadership, education system and academic achievement; the paper highlights the relationship between instructional leadership, education and student's academic achievement. The paper identifies instructional leadership as critical to the achievement of quality education and student's academic success. It opines that leadership is a dynamic process where the leader is not only responsible for the group's tasks but also actively seeks the collaboration and commitment of all the group members in achieving group goals. Among the different leadership styles, the paper identifies democratic leadership style as having an important influence in determining how effective the principal could be in driving the human and material resources of the institution toward the achievement of the organizational goals. Key roles of principal's instructional leadership can be identified as: creating, developing and sharing the organization's goals with members of staff and co-ordinating group members towards achieving the goals of the organization among others. The paper is of the view that effective instructional leadership is challenged by violence, inadequate funding, and poor academic performance of students. Based on the challenges, the paper recommends that school principals should identify the peculiarities in their school and how it affects the teaching and the learning environment with a view to choosing the leadership behaviour that will lead to overall improvement of the school system.

**Keywords:** Instructional leadership, implications, academic achievement and Nigerian education system.

## **Introduction**

Educational activities are concerned with human development. The Nigerian educational system is committed to ensuring that education in Nigeria provides the basic knowledge, skills and understanding of the students for their own development and for contribution to the development of the Nigerian society.

In cognizance of the importance of student's academic achievement at every level of the society including the individual, the family, the school organization and the society at large,

the role of instructional leadership becomes very imperative. Oluremi (2012) believes that leadership in educational institutions is a dynamic process that makes an individual not only responsible for the group's task but also actively seeks the collaboration and commitment of all the group members in achieving group goals.

Waweru and Orodho (2014) have opined that the principal's leadership style plays a significant role in educational achievement. First, in the process of influencing other's behaviour and second in the development of goals and achievements.

This paper therefore, seeks to examine the role of school principal in instructional leadership and how it impacts on students' academic achievement.

## **Explication of concepts**

### **Concept of Instructional Leadership and its Domains**

Leadership is a process of social influence where leaders induce followers to apply their energies and resources toward a collective objective (Okafor, 2013).

For Sawamuran and Sifune in (Okere, 2021), leadership in educational institutions is a dynamic process which makes a leader not only responsible for the group's tasks but also actively seeks the collaboration and commitment of all the group members in achieving the group's goals. According to Ogunsanyi (2016), leadership bestows on the leader, dominance and prestige and the ability to direct, motivate and assist others in order to achieve the group's goals.

Instructional leadership is a model of educational leadership in which the instructional leader drives the teaching and learning process in the achievement of the students learning tasks. It involves the personal characteristics, ability, skills, and knowledge of the leader in taking responsibility for leading curriculum and instruction within the school system (Bambling & Andrews, 2016). Shelland (2015) is of the opinion that instructional leadership refers to the knowledge and skills which principals should possess in order to actively support the academic programme. Hallinger and Murphy (2015) are of the opinion that effective instructional leadership should be based on a framework of functions and processes. They identified three major functions of instructional leadership namely; defining the mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting a positive school climate.

### **Concept of Educational System**

According to O'Connor, (2011), education refers to a set of techniques for imparting knowledge, skills and attitude; a set of theories which purport to explain or justify the use of these techniques; a set of values or ideas embodied and expressed in the purpose for which knowledge, skills and attitudes are imparted and so directing the amounts and types of training that is given.

O'Connor (2011:7) refers to educational system of any society as "an elaborate mechanism designed by the society to develop in those submitted to it certain desirable skills and attitudes that are useful for the development of that society". These issues form the bases on which the

educational system of any society is developed. But in doing so, it must have certain aims it hopes to achieve in order for the society to continue to exist. Such aims or goals are set up depending on the nature of the society and the purpose of its members.

### **Concept of Academic Achievement**

Academic achievement deals with measurable and quantifiable student's educational attainment after being exposed to a course of instruction in the educational system. It refers to both the desirable changes in the learner and in the society as a whole. Ofoego and Okere (2018) write that academic achievement refers to a plethora of student's success such as the ability of a student to support himself or herself in the society after completing the educational process; excellent scores on standardized text; post-graduation achievements; post college employment and enhanced income. It equally encompasses other outcomes of a successful student such as a student's ability to cooperate and collaborate with others in work, social and family life; and in making independent decision based on facts and reasoning.

From the foregoing, academic achievement connotes the whole dimension of student's personal development, national development and other cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of students that cut across intellectual, emotional, social, physical and ethical development. It requires efforts on both the teachers and students for academic achievement to take place.

### **Relationship between Instructional Leadership, Education and Students Academic Achievement**

The principal is at the head of leadership in secondary schools in Nigeria. He administers the school with other teaching and non-teaching staff. The principal manages both human and material resources in order to ensure the achievement of the school goals. Ahumibe in Okere (2016) believes that the goal of the school is to achieve education that is, to ensure that students turn out as good ambassadors of their school and their society in both character and learning. This requires a good educational system.

For Dewey (1999) educational aims must be based upon what is already present in the educational situation; and must not lie outside human activities. He viewed aims of education as consisting of orderly and ordered activity and one in which the order consist in the progressive completion of a process. Dewey believed that educational aims must be flexible, emergent and responsive to the situation at hand. He further stated that educational aims must be capable of translating into a methodology which is activity-oriented arguing that an aim becomes useless unless it is capable of constructing specific procedures for its own test, correction and amplification. Dewey noted that educational aims must satisfy certain criteria. These criteria are: an educational aim must be founded upon the intrinsic activities and needs of the given individual; an educational aim must be capable of being translated into a method; it must suggest the kind of environment needed to liberate and to organize their capacities; and educators must guide against general and ultimate aims of education.

The experience-based education that Dewey (1938) envisioned is a social process where the teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on the position of a democratic

leader of group activities. As a group leader, he is to use his intelligence and experiences to recognize in the concrete what surroundings that may be conducive to having experiences that lead to growth.

This means that teachers generate experiences that have educative quality with particular individual at a particular time. Teachers should use teaching strategies which encourage students to interact with the material and experience a connection to what they are learning. Instructionally, this means presenting experiences that motivate students to explore material and designing activities where students solve problems, consider diverse perspectives and demonstrate deep understanding in multiple ways. He thought that students work in collaboration which enables them to build on each other's talents and skills thus making the teaching and learning process far less lonely, far more engaging and far more effective.

Dewey is optimistic that a paradigm shift from traditional teacher-centered classroom to child-centered classroom will do a lot of wonder in setting the pace for student's academic achievement. The benefits of this new teaching approach according to him are:

- i. Students take charge of their own learning;
- ii. Learning is based on students needs and interests;
- iii. Learning is interactive and learner freedom is developed;
- iv. There is development of social efficiency;
- v. There is growth and continuity in education;
- vi. Education process is democratized to allow for socially engaging learning experiences and learning by doing.

The National educational philosophy is "based on the 'integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system (FRN, 2013).

In this vein, Nigeria's engagement in education is aimed at achieving these goals; the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FRN, 2013).

The ideals of the National Policy on Education are for the citizens to be free, just and to live in a democratic society. The implication of this provision is that the Nigerian education is founded on the principles of freedom, justice and equality. The instructional leader is obligated to coordinate and harness these ideals and values into the making of students for their growth and contribution to national development.

The policy document on Nigerian education equally identified the main goals of education in Nigeria as the building of; a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land of bright opportunities for all citizens. These national goals translate to a strong, dynamic and vibrant

economy that guarantees citizen's rights, democratic education, self-reliance and political participation.

Freedom is necessary in education. Nigerian education recognizes rights of citizens to freedom of movement and residence in any part of Nigeria. A free society is a society where the individuals do not suffer restraints or interference that is; the individuals are not prevented from doing what they want to provided they do not interfere with another person's freedom. Thus, freedom in education means that the individual must be able to exercise self-control on passions, desires, etc.

The school should teach freedom by encouraging learners to air their views on issues especially those that concern them. They should also be encouraged to choose and study subjects of their choice.

The National Policy on Education further stated that life-long education will be the basis of the nation's educational process; educational activity will be centered on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfillment; universal basic education in a variety of forms, depending on needs and possibilities will be provided for all citizens; efforts will be made to relate education to overall community needs; and the education system will be structured to develop the practice of self-learning. However, it did not stipulate how these ideals will be achieved. These conditions create responsibility for the principal as an instructional leader to coordinate human and material resources for ensuring that students manifest these behaviours in their learning.

The above description shows that Nigerian education is equipped for academic and vocational success. It also provides for continuous assessment, guidance and counselling as well as science and technology education. It further provides for the diversification of curriculum materials to cater for individual variability. These objectives are in line with the Nigerian philosophy of education and the educational goals.

The inculcation of these values determines individual and national development. They equally outline the standards for measuring student's academic achievement. It is the responsibility of the instructional leader to ensure that these values are inculcated in the learners. The specific roles of the principal as an instructional leader are discussed below:

### **Roles of the Principal in Instructional Leadership**

The principal provides leadership position based on his type of leadership style. Leadership styles can be democratic, autocratic and transformational. In a democratic-idiographic leadership, the views of the majority of staff members are considered in taking important decisions affecting the members and the group members deal with and treat others as equal; affective needs allow for freedom of expression and ensure achievement of goals. The principal provides three distinct realms of leadership interaction as follows:

- Between the principal and the teachers;
- Between the principal, the community, students and parents; and
- Between the principal and the central office.

These views are discussed below:

1. The principal provides adequate and appropriate teaching materials to the teachers. Meeting teacher's professional needs with staff development in specific instructional areas is a management strategy for achieving academic success. Leaders have not only a vision but the skills to communicate the vision to others, to develop a "shared covenant" (Sergiovanni, 1990:216).
2. The principal invites and encourages other members of staff to participate in determining and developing the vision and the ability to translate that vision into reality. The principal gathers both human and material resources to bring the vision to reality. Developing "shared meaning" of the school's vision, mission is a principal act instructional leadership.
3. Principals engage teachers, parents, students and others to share in creating the vision. They support teacher's instructional efforts by guiding the use of data to evaluate the progress of the school. Because their interactions between teachers and students are critical, principals involve in discussion with teachers about instructional issues, their observations of classroom instructions and interactions with teachers when examining student's data.
4. Principals engage in instructional focus, instructional evaluation and monitoring of student progress. Instructional focus involves support of teacher's instructional methods and their modifications or materials and frequent visit to classroom to monitor instructional outcomes.
5. Instructional evaluation actions include frequent visits to classrooms, soliciting and providing feedback on instructional methods and materials; improving curriculum and instructional approaches and to determine staff development activates and strengthen teacher's instructional skills. Instructional evaluation is concerned with assessing the extent to which the teaching and learning process has been able to achieve the desired changes in the learner's cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviour. Its emphasis is on the outcome of instruction (Mezieobi, 2016). Instructional evaluation benefits the teacher, the students and the general public. The teacher uses it to assess his instructional effectiveness with a view to modifying, improving or abandoning his instructional strategies, while the students learning deficiencies can be exposed with a view to improving on their performance; and for motivating the students to strive for higher academic performance.
6. The principal implements the school rules and regulations which guide and regulate the conduct and behaviour of both the staff and students for smooth running of the school and for the achievement of the overall aims and objectives of the organization. In some cases, the principal sanctions erring members of staff and punishes the disobedient students all in a bid to make them adjust their behaviour for the institutions to move forward.

However, the achievement of quality instructional leadership is fraught with a lot of challenges. These challenges are discussed below:

### **School Based Challenges to Instructional Leadership**

According to Nwosu (2013) Instructional leadership is saddled with a lot of challenges which include:

- a. Violence;
- b. Cheating in examinations;
- c. Inadequate funding;
- d. Poor attitude of teachers to teaching; and
- e. Poor academic performance of students;

Violence in schools comes as a result of exposure to drug abuse, access to weapon, inadequate parenting and exposure to violence in the media among others.

There is high level of moral decay and indiscipline among students leading to cheating in examinations. Students prefer to buy grades with money instead of burning the mid-night candle. Poor and inadequate funding of academic programmes and research constitute a big cog in the wheel of progress of academic institutions. Teachers on their own part engage in truancy and do not take their job serious. These behaviours lead to poor academic performance of students. The foregoing has implications for academic achievement in the Nigerian educational system.

### **Implications on the Nigerian educational system**

The roadmap towards student's academic achievement lies on quality educational system through efficient and effective teaching and learning process. In this process, student's involvement in the learning task is of significant contribution. The education of students should go beyond mere acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities to training them for a better living and for socio-economic and political transformation of the nation.

Teachers should therefore use good teaching methods that involve students in their own learning. Furthermore, teachers should construct an environment in which the activities of the child would include problematic situations so that the learners can use their knowledge and skills of science, history and arts to solve these problems. Teachers should also, show good examples to their students and should live as role models to them.

Students should imbibe good moral standards and should eschew examination malpractice, cultism and other forms of immoral behaviour in school. They should show interest in their learning through constant re-organization and re-construction of experiences by broadening, deepening and improving these experiences to make future experiences more meaningful and worthwhile. Curriculum planners should plan learning experiences based on interest and activities of the learner. In planning the curriculum, they should adopt the principles of integration, utility and flexibility in order to adapt learning experiences to present day problems.

Guidance-Counsellors are needed in our educational system. Teacher counsellors should provide the needed vocational and academic counselling services. Counselling services in Nigerian education system should identify the various talents of students and guide them towards making good use of their special abilities and talents for their own good and for the

development of the Nigerian society. Policy makers should formulate policies based on science and technology for social re-engineering and problem solving. Educational planning should also identify environmental education, skills of the learner and functional literacy programmes to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for self-reliance.

There is also need for provision of science laboratories, qualified science teachers and other necessary equipment for effective teaching and learning of science and mathematics. At the upper basic education level, the teaching of business studies and introductory technology courses should be taken seriously. Parents should guide their children especially during their formative years to ensure that they grow up as responsible members of society. Governments at all levels of the educational system should ensure that education is provided to all Nigerian children irrespective of ethnic, religious and social background as this is the only way of ensuring individual freedom, equal access to educational opportunities and democratic citizenship.

### **Conclusion**

The teaching and learning process posits a series of interactions within the principal and the teachers, and between the principal, the teachers and the students. This network of interaction and interrelationship is a device through which the objectives of the teaching and learning process are achieved and the educational process assessed. The principal therefore is imbued with this onerous task as an instructional leader.

For the principal to succeed as an instructional leader, much depends on his relationship with the other members of staff especially the teachers. The principal should show enough capacity to maintain cordial relationship with his teaching staff whose physical, emotional and psychological needs should be put into consideration and their opinions sought in carrying out major decisions affecting the welfare and progress of the school. By so doing, the principal would have created a school environment where there will be “shared vision” that leads to goal achievements. This requires focusing on academic and moral achievement of both teachers and students, developing links to the community and helping students to develop positive relationships with staff and with one another. The principal should also, device strategies to contain negative behaviours among teachers and students by focusing on academic and moral achievement of both teachers and students.

### **References**

- Bambling, A.A, and Andrews, K.C (2016). *Leaders: Strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Dewey, J (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillian.
- Dewey, J (1999). *The Essential Dewey* (two volumes edited by Hickman, L. and Alexander, T), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC press.
- Hallinger, P. and Murphy, J. (2015). Assessing the instructional management behaviour of principals. *The elementary journal*, 86 (2), 217-218.



- Mezieobi, K.A (2016). *Social studies teachers' self-evaluation*. Owerri: Priscilla Omamma Publishers.
- Nwosu, O. (2013). *The dynamics of Nigerian educational philosophy: Critical analysis and synthesis*. Onitsha: Osyora Nigeria Limited.
- O'Connor, J.J (2011). *Introduction to philosophy of education*. London: Routledge and Keganpaul.
- Ogunsayin, W.R (2016). Increasing productivity through performance approach. Mendo park, CA: 56 (1), 22-23.
- Okafor, F.C (2013). *Philosophy of education and the third World perspective*. London: Lawrence Ville.
- Okere, J.E & Ofoego, C.O (2018) Defining Student Success: A Key Step In National Development In Nigeria. *Alvan School of Education*. XI 26-32.
- Okere, J.E, (2016) An Attempt In Redefining The Theory Of Justice In Contemporary Times. *The National Association of Social Educators* 1 (1) 137-140.
- Okere, J.E, (2021). The Philosophical Basis of Educational Administration and Emerging Health Issues. *African Journal of Innovations and Reforms in Educational Management (AJIREM)*. 2 (1) 194-196.
- Oluremi, O.F (2012) Creating a friendly school learning environment for Nigerian students. *European scientific journal, ESJ*, (98) <https://dor.org/10.19044/esj>.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1990). Why we should substitute for leadership. *Educational leadership*, 49 (5), 41-42.
- Shelland, E. (2015). Defining the principalship. *Principal*, 82 (4), 55-56.
- Waweri and Orodho, K. (2014) The skills of exemplary principals. *NASSP Bulletin*, 74 (524), 48-55.