

The leadership role expectations of primary school head-teachers in making the school child friendly

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Abstract

The importance of head teachers' leadership roles in making the school child-friendly cannot be over emphasized. As the head of the institution (school) they should play a leading role in improving the quality of teaching and learning through ensuring that the school becomes child friendly. This paper looked at the leadership role expectations of primary school head teachers in making the school child friendly, leadership styles, the changing roles of school head, the head teacher as a manager of change, and concluded that for primary school head teachers to be effective as leaders and maintain a child friendly school environment, the head teachers leadership role expectations must be exercised effectively.

Keywords: leadership, schools, primary, expectations, child friendly

Introduction

Change is inevitable and in educational system there are lots of changes. These changes have helped to intensify the pressure on the school head teachers and helped to improve the standard of education. In order for schools to be effective and sustained, leadership has to be visionary and have policies that focus on pupils learning. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the school head.

It should be noted that the nature of interaction within the school can go a long way in determining the extent to which the goals of the schools are achieved. This is a very important reason why the primary school heads today need to be knowledgeable about their roles in making the school learning environment child friendly. They have to be leaders of learning who can develop a team delivering effective instruction. Effective school heads urged teachers to work with one another and with the administration on a variety of activities, including "developing and aligning curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments; problem solving; and participating in peer observations.

Child friendly school initiative is a programme mounted by UNICEF in collaboration with Federal Government of Nigeria to better the condition of the child, while ensuring a quality education for the child. Such schools should be community based, family focused and the rights of all the children irrespective of gender religion and ethnic differences, family status, physical and mental ability / disability must be respected and protected ^[1].

The focus of such school is to make the child comfortable, feel loved and respected irrespective of his abilities /disabilities, their interest in school, stimulated and at the same time expected to improve on their achievement. When a school is child friendly the quality of education given to the child must be high-quality, thus bringing out the child's potentials. In such a school, the teachers are motivated and equipped to do their work well. The knowledge of such teachers are up dated

through in-service, workshops and seminars to bring up their knowledge to current demand. For such a school to exist, the head teachers must exercise the leadership roles expected of them. The quality of leadership and management provided by the head teachers have now been recognized as the key factor affecting school effectiveness.

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agenda across the globe. It plays a great role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivation and capacities of teachers, as well as the environment and climate within which they work. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficacy and equity of schooling. School leadership practice has been greatly influenced by changes in educational governance and school context. It is now increasingly defined by demanding set of roles including administrative and managerial tasks, financial and human resources, public relations, quality assurance and leadership for improved teaching and learning.

Before moving on with this write up, it is important to understand the concept of leadership this study supports for there are many different types of leadership definitions. This study concentrates on school leadership. Leadership as a whole involves a process of *influence*. The leader on top influencing the subordinates to bring about the actualization of the organizations objectives. Leadership has many definitions; leadership within an organization is difficult one to define. To some people, a leader may be perceived as a servant of man, to others a person who can initiate action among people, guide activities in a given direction, maintain such activities and unify efforts towards common goals ^[2]. For this write up a leader is defined as one who acts to help a group achieve objectives with the maximum application of its capabilities. Leaders are in front to pull others along.

They lead to show the way. The knowledge of three major leadership styles will help for thorough understanding of an effective leader for child friendly school.

Types of leadership styles

There are different leadership styles that different leaders adopt for the actualization of the organizations goals. The three major ones according to [3] are:

1. Autocratic style: This kind of leadership, takes all initiative and policy decisions without consulting his subordinates. He hardly assigns duties to his staff to carry on. This kind of leadership style encourages other member of the organization to be discouraged and less eager to work. The staffs act only when they are asked to do so. There is a lot of distrust and lack of confidence on the part of the teachers. It is not recommended for child-friendly school.

2. Laissez Faire: This is a French word which means "let go". This kind of leader does not care much about enforcing obedience to rules. The leader relies on people's natural good sense. Leaves the staff to act when and how they are directed in their minds to act. He does not believe in working a person up to do his own duty. This kind of leadership style cannot bring about the kind of changes that child friendly school initiative demands.

3. Democratic style: This kind of a leader runs an open door policy and receives ideas from others. The leader works with the subordinates because he believes that when people are involved in making decisions that concern them, they do better and are happier. The leader ensures that the welfare of the staff and pupils are taken care of while the staff will put in their best to ensure quality teaching and learning. The members are allowed to play their own part without being pushed around to work. This is the kind of leadership style that will bring about child friendly school environment being proposed by UNICEF.

One should realize that there is no best leadership style. Successful leaders tend to use a combination of styles or the one that best fits the situation at hand. The head teacher of a child friendly school will adopt this method. He does not need to be rigid or firm. The leader needs to adapt to changes pending the situation.

The leadership role expectations of primary school heads in making the school child friendly.

The head teachers are essentially organizers and implementers of plans, policies and programmes meant for specific educational reforms. They have to ensure that the responsibilities due to them as leaders are efficiently performed [4]. There is some vital factors that will help to enhance the quality of leadership to make the school child friendly. According to [5], Wallace foundation suggested five key responsibilities of school leadership in making the school child friendly:

● **Re defining school leadership responsibilities**

Redefining school leadership responsibilities is one key policy strategies to improve school leadership. Such child friendly school leaders set goals and high standard for the staff and pupils, focus on excellence and inspire all members of the school community to a shared commitment towards the achievement of education reform initiatives. When the leaders do their work effectively, great things happen. School leaders

can only make a difference if they have autonomy and support to make significant decisions and if their responsibilities are well defined. In other words the school leaders should take part in taking decisions that affect them. This will make the implementation of such decisions easier and functional. Their expected roles in schools should be defined and autonomy given to them to run the school freely.

Shaping a vision of academic success for all learners, one based on high standards. Effective school heads are responsible for establishing a school wide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all learners. Such a leader makes sure that there is learning improvement agenda that focuses on goals for pupils progress [6]. As school head and leader of the school, the leadership is important to the formulation of the schools vision, mission, values and objectives. The leader is to play a leading role in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in ensuring that the school is achieving its goals effectively and efficiently and according to its vision, mission values and objectives. Developing a shared vision around standards and success for all learners is therefore an essential element of school leadership in making the school child friendly.

Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interactions prevail. Child friendly school leaders ensure that their schools allow both adults and children to put learning at the center of their daily activities. Such a healthy school environment is characterized by basics like safety and orderliness, as well as less tangible qualities such as a supportive, responsive attitude towards the children and teachers. Such leadership involves the parents and community in the running of the school.

Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their parts in realizing the school vision. A broad and longstanding consensus in leadership theory holds that leaders in all walks of life and all kinds of organizations, public and private, need to depend on others to accomplish the group's purpose and need to encourage the development of leadership across the organization. Child friendly School heads create a strong climate for instruction in their schools.

Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost. Effective child friendly school heads work relentlessly to improve achievement by focusing on the quality of instruction. Teachers are the pillars of educational development in all countries of the world. Their development rests on the production of sufficient knowledgeable, skillful, competent and committed teachers who are properly oriented and positively motivated in promoting learning. Teachers' development is very vital. Effective school heads also encourage continual professional learning. They emphasize research-based strategies to improve teaching and learning and initiate discussions about instructional approaches, both in teams and with individual teachers [7].

In addition to the five keys, child friendly school initiative manual recommended evaluation: effective child friendly school heads should make it a point of duty to evaluate on regular basis the school mission and vision in order to assess

how appropriate or current they are. This will enable the leader to check whether they are doing well or not. The leaders should try to meet up the needs of the teachers, pupils, community and the nation.

Each of these five tasks according to ^[7] needs to interact with the other four for any part to succeed. It's hard to carry out a vision of pupil's success, for example, if the school climate is characterized by pupil's disengagement, or teachers don't know what instructional methods work best for their pupils to achieve the vision and mission statement. When all the five tasks are well carried out, however, leadership is at work in making the school child friendly.

As leaders, the school heads are required to manage change and make it more effective in the following ways, recognize the need for change starting with yourself, take stock of where you are today and where you will like to be later after the change; mobilize commitment to the change among those who will be affected by the change in your school and draw up plans to attain the desired goals by taking decisions on the following.

- a. What actions to take
- b. How to implement the action
- c. Monitoring and evaluating the action.
- d. Providing feedback to all those directly affected ^[1].

An effective child friendly school leader must plan for the change and must know and understand the school and the roles as a change agent. To do this effectively, the head teacher must listen to them. Talk to subordinate staff to find out how they feel about changes. The leader should collect necessary information. Consider carefully the analyzed information in terms of short term and long term solution and allow himself to be guided by the overall objectives before implementing the ideas.

Conclusion

This paper having looked at the challenging nature of the head teachers leadership roles, the head teacher; as a manager of change leadership expectations of head teachers in line with child friendly school initiative concluded that, for the nations primary school educational objectives to be achieved the head teacher; leadership role expectations must be implemented effectively to meet up with the educational challenges.

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