

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP PRACTICE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, YOBE STATE NIGERIA CAN THE PRINCIPAL OBJECT?

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ABSTRACT

In Yobe state, Nigeria there a demand for development through education, as such schools are becoming more difficult to manage and the leadership of the school principals is also becoming burdensome. There is need to get a collective leadership approach in form of distribution of leadership roles in order to relieve the heavy work on them. The purpose of this study was to find out school principals' understanding on concept of distributed leadership and their leadership practices in school management at public senior secondary schools. So as to measure similarity or dissimilarity of the two variables, to understand whether the principals administer their schools toward distributed leadership approach. The study employed quantitative study by using closed-ended questionnaire in finding the understanding on concept of distributed leadership and qualitative study by using open-ended interview questions in determining the principals' leadership practice toward distributed leadership. Forty school principals were involved in the study and employed descriptive statistics with statistical package for social science version 20 for the data analysis. Frequency, percentage and mean were used to find the principals' understanding concept of distributed leadership. While codes and themes are used for the qualitative finding. The results revealed that most of the principals understood the concept of distributed leadership and in their school management, the leadership of majority are toward distributed leadership practice. However, the study indicates that leadership of some school principals are authoritarian by nature while others are laissez-faire in their leadership practices. Therefore, the finding have consequences for government to set up program toward distributed leadership practice to support the leadership of the school principals.

Keywords: *distributed leadership, leadership practice, leadership role*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

School leadership is very vital in development of education and it continues to play essential role in improving school administration. Distributed leadership is one form of collective leadership that is notable in the present educational discussion (Bolden, 2011; Tashi, 2013). Distributed leadership involves working together as a team, not delegating formal leadership roles in schools. Therefore, leadership in school is more than a work of one person and few selected members, it is a leadership practice in form of strong interactions between school principal and teachers (Spillane, 2005; Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2013). The school principal

should work together in team so that he can be able to coordinate various activities perform by school members to achieve objectives.

1.1 Problem Statement

Yobe state, Nigeria has never conducted a study on distributed leadership practice to measure its school head teachers at various levels of education. This prompted the researcher to investigate the idea of distributed leadership as shared leadership activities and to help understand its present need to changing approach in school leadership practice. That may lead to improve school leadership and performance for positive changes toward development.

1.2 Research Objectives

The research was set to determine:

1. The understanding of distributed leadership by school principals
2. Determine whether they practice it, through questionnaire and interview questions.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Do school principals understand the concept of distributed leadership?
2. Do school principals see the need to share leadership roles with teachers and that the principals coordinates activities in ways that encourage distributing of leadership?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Developments through education have increased the leadership roles and responsibilities of principals in schools. This brought the issue of collective leadership practice in schools. It has been found through research that leadership should be distributed among members of a school irrespective of their position (Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2005; Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, et al (2009); Streck, (2009); Humpreys, (2010); Goksoy, (2015). Therefore, distributed leadership is receiving much attention. So there is the need for school principal to share responsibilities with his teachers in the school.

In their theories, both Spillane, (2005) and Duignan, (2006) agreed that distributed leadership involves all members of the school community not just the principal and few delegated leaders. Spillane viewed distributed leadership as a practice that happens through people interacting together, even if they are holding different leadership roles. There is interdependence among themselves and the environment. Duignan acknowledged that if leaders distributed responsibilities, the leadership quality of their organization will be strong. He supported a development of an `allowed-to-be-a-leader` culture; where each member should participate in leadership role. There are indications that both the theories forecasted that when school principals used distributed leadership approach, their teachers develop positive perceptions and feel more involved in school management activities.

Distributed leadership approach belongs to a view which supports collective leadership. Gronn, (2002); Goksoy, (2015) mentioned that the concept of distributed leadership suggested a school principal can introduce a change, with teachers supporting or changing it in various ways in order to achieve desired goals. Thus, distributed leadership practice examines collective leadership activity rather than formal appointed roles only.

A distributed leadership perspective is a concept involving notions such as school principal and teachers working together collectively. Also, teachers participating in different

responsibilities and executing leadership roles within the school. Kocolowski, (2010); Rani, (2015) advocated that distributed leadership is toward freeing schools from the authoritative and single leadership practices. As such, it enables us to think about collective leadership involving many leaders than hierarchical single school leadership. In this development, school principals should allow teachers to participate in leadership by distributing responsibilities and playing leadership roles.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Quantitative study questionnaire inform of closed-ended questions provided response options for the respondents and qualitative survey interviews inform of open-ended questions without response options are used to determine the opinions of the respondents. Sample of respondents are drawn from the school principals who responded to the questionnaire and interview questions.

Under the first research question, ten questionnaire items were formed and structured toward finding the understanding of the concept of distributed leadership from forty secondary school principals. The forty sampled respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the items on a Likert rating scale. Descriptive statistics were used with statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20 and calculated frequency mean and percentage mean. These are used to determine understanding the concept of distributed leadership from the school principals.

On the qualitative data, under the second research question, there are two interview questions. These are: how do you work together with the teachers as a united group in order to promote collective leadership in the school? Are there particular ways that you might act in order to make teachers to have positive perceptions regarding the usage of distributed leadership in school management? After the interview, the researcher prepared the data for analysis, by reading through the data to obtain direction and meaning of the whole responses, and assigned codes and labelled them according to the interview questions for easier descriptions. The data were analysed freely in form of hand analysis of qualitative data. This was because in this study the analysis involved a small data base and statements are easily located. It was manually sorted, organised and codes the statements for description in the research report.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDING

Understanding the concept of distributed leadership by school principals can be determine in their leadership practices. Also, by developing the teachers' leadership skills by involving them in the school management practices for effective school leadership and efficiency In order to determine the understanding of the concept of distributed leadership according to opinions of the respondents, the results were categorised into three:

- 1 = Respondents do not understand the concept of “distributed leadership”.
- 2 = Respondents are not sure on the understanding of the concept “distributed leadership”.
- 3= Respondents understand the concept “distributed leadership”.

For clear and much understanding of the responses from the school principals, each of the category of the results was summarised into mean frequency and mean percentage. Below is a table and figure showing summary on understanding concept of distributed leadership by school principals according to mean frequency and mean percentage.

Table 1: Mean frequency and mean percentage on understanding the concept of distributed leadership by school principals.

Understanding Concept Of Distributed Leadership	Mean Frequency	Mean Percentage
Did not understand	9	23.0
Not sure	11	27.0
Understand	20	50.0
total	40	100.0

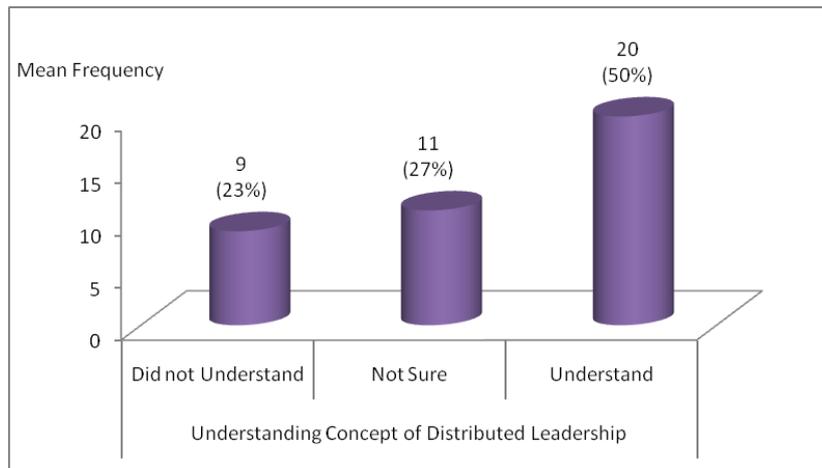


Figure 1: principals understanding concept of distributed leadership

Table 1 and figure 1 above shows each of the 40 sampled respondents had received the questionnaires, filled and returned it. Column one shows that out of the total number of respondents, mean frequencies of 9, representing mean percentage of 23.0% do not understand the concept of distributed leadership. While column two shows mean frequency of 11 respondents, (27.0%) mean percentage are not sure on their understanding on the concept of distributed leadership. And column three shows mean frequency of 20 respondents, representing mean percentage of 50.0% responses, indicated understanding the concept of distributed leadership.

The results of research question one revealed that quite a number of the respondents had understood the concept of distributed leadership. The school principals seem they are practicing distributed leadership in school leadership roles.

Qualitative data analysis

This phase attempted to answer research question two that seeks to find out the school principals' leadership practices in order to relate with the results of their understanding on concept of distributed leadership.

Need for converge quantitative data and qualitative data

The analysis in research question one revealed that school principals understood the concept of distributed leadership with high frequency mean of 20 (50%). With this result there is need

for qualitative data to address the issue of leadership practice towards distributed leadership. To investigate whether the findings confirm or disconfirm the quantitative statistical results on understanding the concept of distributed leadership by the school principals. This will help to find out how they viewed distributed leadership in their school leadership practices.

Interview data collection

The interview was conducted with forty school principals who were selected at random. This is because of the need to report detail information on leadership of their school. It was one-to-one interview in which the researcher asked questions and recorded the answers from one individual at a time, thus, an open-ended interview.

In the process of gathering the data, it was staged in such a manner that the participants felt comfortable and responded to the questions. Generally, the data was collected with sensitivity to each individual interviewed.

Organisation and coding of the interview data

After the data was collected, it was prepared for analysis. First, it was done by gathering information and transcribed it from spoken and written words to typed files according to the two interview questions. Each question was given a code number for easier identification-IQA, IQB. Thus, there are two files and each file have forty responses. Meaningful statements made by each participant in each interview question were sorted and arranged according to themes based on the ideas. The researcher grouped similar and redundant codes to more manageable number of themes (Cresswell, 2012). Specifically, the list of the theme codes was reduced to six and five themes respectively that the participants discussed most frequently or are unique in each of the interview question.

A hand analysis of qualitative data was used, where the researcher read the data, sorted it by hand and divided each into parts. This is because the qualitative study has a small database and statements were easily located. Therefore, the data was sorted manually, organised and located words or sentences in the text database.

Principals' interview analysis

Based on the interview data, there are two groups of information built from the interview questions in an attempt to answer the research question. Each group of information presented parts of statements from the verbal responses of the participants on whether they administer their schools toward distributed leadership. The parts helped in sorting out similar ideas and developed themes.

The first principals' interview analysis under interview question `A` (IQA), table 2 below presents themes from the interview data.

Table 2: Number and percentage of principals whose similar themes were put together to form these themes from interview question A.

S/NO	Theme code number	Themes	School principal code number	Number of principals	Percentage
1.	A1.1	Through cooperative effort.	04, 13, 15, 21, 24, 28, 36, 37, 39	9	22.5%
2.	A1.2	We work in committees.	03, 05, 08, 19, 22, 27, 29, 30, 35	9	22.5%
3.	A1.3	By distributing responsibilities to those who are interested.	01, 07, 09, 10, 11, 26, 40	7	17.5%
4.	A1.4	By delegation of power to some teachers.	02, 06, 12, 18, 25, 28, 38	7	17.5%
5.	A1.5	As one community.	14, 16, 17, 23, 32, 34	6	15%
6.	A1.6	By assigning duties to teachers under senior master's advice.	20, 33	2	5%
TOTAL				40	100%

Table 2 above: shows six themes from participants' responses on the interview question. The themes are coded from A1.1 to A1.6. Theme with code number A1.1 is – Through cooperative effort. The number of principals under the theme is 9, representing 22.5% of the responses. This shows that in the principals' leadership practice every teacher is encouraged to work together.

The theme with code number A1.2 is – We work in committees. That leadership in school is collective work done in group according to tasks where each person contributes in his committee. Also, 9 principals mentioned this practice, representing 22.5% of the responses. And the third themes having code number A1.3 is – By distributing responsibilities to those who are interested. 7 principals indicate this practice, representing 17.5% of the responses. Under this theme, the school principals distribute responsibilities to teachers loosely. The theme of the code number A1.4 is – By delegation of power to some teachers. This theme shows authoritative leadership practices in school where few teachers

are selected and given mandate to execute roles as leaders to specific tasks. The principals who practice this is 7, representing 17.5% of the responses.

In the table, the theme with code number A1.5 is – As one community. This shows leadership with good relationship with understanding and cooperation between teachers and the school principal to achieve objectives. There are 6 principals who mentioned this idea of practices, representing 15% of the responses. The last theme with code number A1.6 is – By assigning duties to teachers under senior master’s advice. Only 2 principals demonstrate this practice, representing 5% of the responses. This is a school leadership practice showing that a principal did not trust his staff, but only those closer to him.

From the number of principals under each theme, it is an indication that all the participants have responded to the interview question. The result identified that large number of school principals work with teachers collectively.

The second interview analysis under interview question `B` (IQB), table 3 below presents themes from the interview data.

Table 3: Number and percentage of principals with unique themes put together to form these themes from interview question B.

S/NO	Theme code number	Themes	School principal code number	Number of principals	Percentage
1.	B1.1	By showing trust and respecting the personality of each staff.	01, 10, 13, 14, 15, 21, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31, 36, 37, 38	14	35%
2.	B 1.2	By empowering and coordinating teachers’ activities.	06, 09, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 30, 32, 33, 34, 40	12	30%
3.	B 1.3	Through distributing task and motivating the teachers by considering their suggestions for implementation.	02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 16, 25, 27,35	9	22.5%
4.	B 1.4	Constant supervision.	08, 11, 17	3	7.5%
5.	B 1.5	By using negative and positive rewards.	12, 39	2	5%
TOTAL				40	100%

Table 3 above shows five themes extracted from forty themes. The themes are coded from B1.1 to B1.5. The theme with a code number B1.1 is – By showing trust and respecting the personality of each staff. This shows an act of practice in which the principals are ensuring good school climate that supports teachers to perform task at ease and joy. This practice was revealed by 14 principals, representing 35% of the responses. Relatively, the theme with code number B1.2 is – By empowering and coordinating teachers’ activities. This theme shows that responsibilities were shared among the teachers and each teacher is responsible for the outcome in his leadership. This practice was revealed by 12 principals, representing 30% of the responses.

The third theme having a code number B1.3 is – Through distributing task and motivating by considering teachers suggestions for implementations. It is a practice from 9

principals, representing 22.5% of the responses. This practice shows tasks are executed only according to teachers' interest.

The next theme with a code number B1.4 is – Constant supervision. This theme shows that teachers were not given chances to perform task freely, therefore, work is only done under strict supervision. This practice was from 3 principals, representing 7.5% of the responses. In a like manner, the theme with a code number B1.5 is – By using negative and positive rewards. This shows that leadership is performed under formal authoritative power. This leadership practice was revealed by 2 principals, representing 5% of the responses.

The number of principals that reflected in each theme indicated that all of the participants had responded to the interview question 'B'. The result showed that majority of principals encourages teachers to have positive perceptions in school leadership practices by respecting the personality of each staff, showing competence toward task execution and allow room for dialogue.

Reporting of the findings

Results from the analyses revealed three primary core themes in each of the table presented above. Therefore, the core themes that emerged from the participants' open-ended responses are six, three from each interview question.

The first table is description on interview question 'A'. The first core theme from the table is – By distributing duties and working through cooperative effort as one community. This is from theme with the following code numbers A1.1, A1.2 and A1.5. This practice in school promotes collective works that make teachers to share ideas that will make them feel they are involved in leadership roles. To identify ways to improve effective school leadership and performance. Example of quotes from participants included: "This is done by forming committees to schedule of duties and coordinating the activities"; "we work together as colleagues"; "you know, togetherness is power". The numbers of participants who have this idea of practice in their school leadership are 24 out of the total responses, representing 60%.

The second core theme is – by assigning duties to teachers but under senior master's advice. This was from the themes with code numbers A1.3 and A1.6. The leadership practice seems to be carelessly undertaken. The principals seem to be loose that they cannot be able to co-ordinate activities properly. Example of quotes included: "I consider that teachers are the majority, so work is done through them"; "by allowing teachers to suggest ideas through the senior master who will report and discuss the issue with me". This type of leadership practice is from 9 (22.5%) of the total responses.

The third core theme is – by delegation of duties and power. This emerged from the themes with code number A1.4, in the table. This practice seems to pay little attention to distributed perspective, it is power over the members of the school community and teachers do not work with full freedom. Example quotes of this theme included: "some teachers cannot work properly without supervision"; "the overseers are leaders that help to control the activities". From the table, those who practice this type of leadership are 7 from the total number of participants, representing 17.5% of the total responses.

Another three core themes are from the themes from the data of interview question 'B'. The first core theme is – by respecting the personality of each staff, empowering and motivating them. This theme evolved from the themes with code numbers B1.1 and B1.2. The terms that described the core theme are; showing trust to each and coordination. Specifically, the participants noted that building a friendly environment and having confidence in teachers' ability to perform task create happiness, trust and make teachers feel free so that they can contribute effectively to leadership activities. For example, two participants said; "the only way is to build good human relations to make teachers feel we are linked together like chain.

If any teacher fails to do his duty the chain may break”; “just to be open minded and show concern on welfare”. The number of participants who revealed this practice are 26, representing 65% from the total responses.

The second core theme is-by considering teachers suggestions for implementation. This is a theme with a code number B1.3, which identified that the leadership practice is without control and co-ordination of activities. The leader in this situation is not sure of the type of leadership style to take. For example, a participant mentioned that: “as you know this is an old school, so most of my staff are experienced, anybody can take up a responsibility and execute it well.” There are 9 (22.5%) participants from the total responses, who indicated this leadership practice.

While the third core theme is – constant supervision and by using positive and negative rewards. This is from the themes with code numbers B1.4 and B1.5. This practice depicts elements of authoritative leadership practice, where leadership is confine to only those delegated in leadership roles. For example, a participant stated that: “I always ask the teachers to bring the report of their duties”. The total number of participants who are in view of this practice are 5, representing 12.5% of the total responses.

5.0 DISCUSSION

Based on the results on understanding the concept of distributed leadership and on the findings on leadership practices toward distributed leadership by school principals. This section discussed the findings by converging the two data and used the results to understand the way the school principals understood the concept and related it to their leadership practices. Thus, the researcher relate the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses and determined the similarity or dissimilarity of the two databases.

There are several ways of relating such databases. In this study the researcher described the quantitative and qualitative results side by side in this section (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009; Creswell, 2012). For example, the researcher first presented the quantitative statistical results and then provided qualitative quotes.

The first research question raised issues that formed ten items in the questionnaire which included formal roles, activities teachers might be involve and encourage to be involve toward distributed leadership in school management.

The responses on understanding the concept of distributed leadership by school principals are grouped into three: do not understand, not sure and understand by obtaining frequency mean and percentage mean of each. The results showed frequency mean of 9 (23%) respondents who do not understand the concept of distributed leadership. On the second research question, regarding the findings on their school leadership practices, the first interview question was on how the school principals work together with teachers as a united group in order to promote collective leadership. The findings revealed that 7 (17.5%) of the responses stated by delegation of responsibilities and power to some teachers. Example of quotes included: “some teachers cannot work properly without supervision”; “the overseers are leaders who can help to control the school activities”. The second interview question is on particular ways that the principal might act to make teachers have positive perception toward distributed leadership in school management. The findings identified that 5 (12.5%) of the responses mentioned through constant supervision and using positive and negative rewards. Example of a participant stated that “I always ask the teachers to bring the report of their duties”.

There is similarity from the results above. Because those who did not understand the concept distributed leadership might have perceived it is as giving out responsibilities to

teachers who are delegated only, (Streck, 2009; Kocolowski; 2010). The first interview finding showed that principals selects some teachers and give them responsibilities to act as leaders to specific tasks. The second interview finding signified that chances are not given to teachers to perform tasks freely. To these type of principals, distributed leadership is delegation, meant teachers were given leadership roles or responsibilities according to the school principals' opinion or wish. They might think school principals became heir to certain qualities and attributes that make them better in position to lead (Scott and Hines, 2014). With this, it can be pointed out that these principals' understanding and approach to distributed leadership is power over the members of the school community. Which may hinder cooperative effort in the affairs of the school.

On the part of those who are not sure on understanding concept of distributed leadership, the result showed frequency mean of 11 (27%) of the responses. The findings of the first interview question showed 9 (22.5%) of participants responded by assigning duties to teachers but under senior master's advice. Example of quotes included; "By allowing teachers to suggest ideas through the senior master who will report and discuss the issue with me"; "I consider that teachers are the majority, so work is done through them". The findings of the second interview question also revealed 9 (22.5%) of the responses. Who stated that by considering teachers suggestions for implementation. Example, a participant mentioned that: "As you know this is an old school, so most of my staff are experienced, anybody can take up a responsibility and execute it well".

The results above conformed to each other and in this situation, the school principals seem to be passive in running the affairs of their schools. That they do not organise and coordinate the activities of the schools very well. In fact they are not sure in understanding the idea and practice of distributed leadership as another way of leadership practice that can allow dialogue and distribute responsibilities to all members of staff toward school improvement. Also, the practice of distributed leadership will help relief the burden of the principals and the teachers will build confidence on them.

The high frequency means of 20 (50%) respondents on understanding the concept of distributed leadership is identification that these principals clearly understood the idea and concern of distributed leadership in school. In a related manner, findings of the first interview question, showed that 24 (60%) of the respondents signified principals work together with teachers through cooperative effort as one community. For example, two participants stated that "We work together as colleagues"; "You know, togetherness is power". The findings of the second interview question identified 26 (65%) of the participants revealed principals work together with teachers. By showing trust, respecting the personality of each staff, distribute responsibilities and coordinate teachers' activities. Example of quote from a participant mentioned that: "the only way is to build good human relations to make teachers feel we are linked together like chain, if any teacher fails to do his duty the chain may break".

The results above identified that the qualitative findings confirmed the quantitative statistical results. As in her studies, Rani, (2015) stated that all principals in Kelantan possessed high degree of distributed leadership characteristics. Therefore, the overall result revealed how the understanding of the principals on concept of distributed had positive impact on the outcome. Also, how the result of the interview data confirmed or complement the quantitative statistical data.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Researches on distributed leadership has brought about interest from scholars in understanding effective school leadership practices. This led to the identification of distributed leadership as a key in dealing with school administration. The concept of

distributed leadership is a recent issue in Yobe state, Nigeria. This prompted the researcher to investigate whether school leaders, more especially public senior secondary school principals understand the idea and concern of distributed leadership. Also, they were interviewed to find out how they administer the schools.

It is certain based on my own experiences as one-time vice principal administration, that many principals are still not enrolled in school leadership programme. However, the research found that most of the school principals understood the concept of distributed leadership and majority of them revealed their leadership practices towards such idea. That few among the principals object the idea of distributed leadership practices in schools in Yobe state Nigeria.

This is encouraging, but it is essential to improve the quality of school principal leadership and should be collective leadership roles among teachers. Since distributed leadership can help improve leadership of teachers, both inside and outside classroom, it requires inclusive and freedom in leadership to involve all teachers to contribute to leadership roles which could promote school success. Lastly, may all the principals become a leadership role model by practicing distributed leadership in the schools in this study and thus adopt this present issue of collective leadership for the betterment in performance.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study acknowledged its limitations that should be noted. First, the results were obtained from cross-sectional study. There is need for longitudinal study to make a wider scope of coverage. Second, the study involved only public secondary schools, future research should involve private schools. Another limitation of the study is that, the research did not employ test to find the difference among gender principals.

While acknowledging the limitations of this research, there are recommendations for future research of similar topic and related issue. First, future research should explore a longitudinal study to obtain more comprehensive outcome on distributed leadership through observation. Second, there is need to include private secondary schools in order to obtain wider and comprehensive conclusions. Future research should examine the difference of opinions between male and female principals. This will help to ascertain the depth in understanding and practice of distributed leadership in such schools.

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