



## Analysis of Principals' Leadership Styles and Students' Academic Achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State

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### Abstract

*This study assessed the leadership style of secondary school Principals and its influence on academic achievement of students in secondary schools in Gombe State, Nigeria. Three research questions and a null hypothesis formulated guided the study. 1,000 respondents comprised of Vice Principals, Head of Departments and teachers in 100 Senior Secondary Schools were selected through a two staged sampling technique. The structured questionnaire titled Principal Leadership Style and Students Academic Achievement Questionnaire (PLSSAPQ) which served as the main instrument for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics involving tables, frequency and percentage. The findings showed that Principals are democratic in their leadership approach. The study further revealed that the incident of low level of academic achievement in Gombe State is real. To increase the achievement of students in Gombe State Secondary Schools, the authors recommended among others that the Principals are to adopt and maintain a democratic leadership style to facilitate the realization of good teaching in secondary Schools in Nigeria, Principals should endeavor to make available, adequate incentives to motivate the teachers so as to maintain their commitment and enthusiasm in teaching and the State Ministry of Education and Proprietors of Private schools in Gombe State are to ensure that they recruit professionally and academically qualified principals to promote the use of democratic leadership style which, in turn, promotes students' achievement in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE).*

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### INTRODUCTION

Universally, education is described as a process of transferring knowledge, values and norms from one generation to another. It is often seen as a tool for fighting hunger and poverty in the society (Ayeni, 2011). School is a place for teaching and learning activities. The implementation of the school programmes are carried out in four-wall of the classroom. The effective implementation of the aforesaid programmes rest on adequate school

facilities, proper supervision by the principal and leadership style adopted by principal in running the affairs of the school. There is various definition of leadership by researchers. For instance, Stogdill (1950) stated that leadership is the process of influencing activities of organized group to achieve its desire goals. Musaazi (1988) defined leadership style as the process of influencing the activities and behavior of an individual towards goal achievement in a given situation. It involves the

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implementation of those policies and decisions which assist in directing the activities of an organization toward its specific goals. According to Fielder as cited in Oyegoke (2012) leadership style is the underlined needed structure of individual which motivates his behavior in various leadership situations. The nature of a group that is being led helps, to a large extent to determine the leadership style to be adopted by the person at the head.

Every organization exists for the production of output in the form of goods, services or ideas of a well-defined class in the socioeconomic subsector. For example, an educational institution exists for the production of educated persons (like school leavers or university graduates) for the public and the business sectors. Again, every organization produces its expected output of goods, services or ideas through the labour input of its human employees. Since the human employees of any organization need during their organizational work periods to channel their diverse physical, intellectual, affective and skillful resources to the joint or collaborative task of producing their organization's expected output, they require leadership. This is because the leader, who defines and clarifies organizational goals, and then demands, facilitates, motivates, evaluates and rewards individuals and team contributions to the desired ultimate production outcomes. Thus, in the typical secondary school today, the principal as a leader is expected to provide leadership for the teachers and for all the other categories of school workers. In particular, Secondary School teachers require leadership by the Principal as the surest way to realize the desirable output of well-educated secondary school leavers. Therefore, every leader tends to have a characteristic of typical personal pattern or style of leadership, it seemed reasonable to suspect that leadership style might be related to the quality of organizational output.

The Principal is an important personality in the governance and management of the school for several reasons which include but are not limited to the following: liaising with Vice Principals and Head of Departments in upholding the culture of the school; maintaining school ethics and discipline; management of school funds; management of the general welfare of staff and students; soliciting support for the school from the host community and developing the quality and standards of education (Obama; Eunice and Orodho, 2015). It should be observed that some aspects of school management such as instructional, administrative, democratic and bureaucratic leadership styles are always good, coercive and authoritarian management styles are always frowned at and are therefore not conducive.

In Autocratic leadership, the leaders are dictators who simply issue orders to subordinates and rely on the power of the organization to impose them. Leaders take decision alone, determine policies and assign tasks to members without consulting them. The subordinates are bound to listen and carryout directives because he uses threats of punishment like withdrawal of benefits. Withholding of salary, transfers to get his way. Gribbs as cited in Ibukun (2007) labeled this style of leadership as a defensive method which emanates from fear and the leader's feeling of insecurity.

The Democratic leadership style emphasizes group participation in decision making that is, decision making is shared by the leader and the group. In schools, the Principal, teachers and students participate in determination of school rules and regulations on certain issues that directly concern them. This type of leadership promotes a higher degree of staff morale as well as productivity of the school. Decision-making, as an integral of planning is very crucial and indispensable aspect of management and very essential for the



success of instructional management. Olele as cited in Peretomode (1998) agreed that Principals as the chief executive in secondary schools' possess skills for making right decision that will be of benefit to the school need and the staff generally. Chukwu (2003) posited that for a result oriented school, the teachers need to be motivated using democratic leadership skills by the head teacher, full involvement of the teachers in programme development, provision of adequate qualified teachers and adequate teaching materials. Adegbemile (2004) opined that workers will be more productive if they have the opportunity of meeting their need when working in an organization such as improved condition of work, payment of salaries as at when due and provision of in-service training among others. In addition, Ibukun (2003) asserted that communication skills, leadership skills and decision making skills are essential for effective personnel management.

The Laissez-faire style of leadership is very liberal, leaving the group members almost entirely to decide on their own, with leader acting largely as a consultant. Laissez-faire is a French expression which literally means "let people do what they wish". The leader in this type of leadership is a figure head and hardly ever has a clear vision of organizational goals. The system allows every member to do as he/she wishes. There is practically no rule in the organization. In a school, the Principal has no authority over the teachers and students and there is chaos because their activities are not guided by the school head, hence the goals are rarely achieved.

It is assumed that teachers' effectiveness, students' outcome and educational achievement are strongly affected by the standard and types of educational institutions they find themselves. Oghuvbu (2010) opined that the products of our secondary schools are not practically qualified as office assistance.

Crosnoe and Glen (2004) notice that social ownership, provision of facilities and availability of resources in schools is an importance structural component of the school. Private schools due to the better funding, small sizes, serious ownerships, motivated faculty and access to resources such as computers are therefore performing better than public schools.

It is against this background that this study was prompted and sought to compare the leadership styles of Principals and students' academic achievement in public and private secondary schools in Gombe State.

Secondary school education is an important component of education system in Nigeria. Secondary education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:7-21) is designed to provide opportunities for children to acquire skills, professional and academic background for tertiary education. It is in recognition of this that government established a number of Senior Secondary Schools and appointed qualified Principals to head the schools.

Over the years, researchers have attributed the academic achievement of students to effective teaching and learning process in the school. Conducive working atmosphere is one of the effective teaching and learning process as well as the achievement of school goals. Leadership's ability to attract and involve teachers effectively in teaching is one of the effective management of human resources. However, the abysmal poor achievement of students in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination is a matter of concern to all stakeholders in education as it appears the leadership in most secondary school shows little or no of teachers' and students involvement in decision making. Again no research study has delved into comparing the leadership styles of public and private schools principals and its impact on students' academic achievements. The current study was conceived to investigate



the difference if any of leadership styles of Principals in public and private secondary schools on students' academic achievement in Gombe State. It is against this background that the researcher is therefore interested in finding out how each of these styles of leadership impacts on students' academic achievement of senior secondary school students in different external examinations conducted in Gombe State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to find out whether principals' leadership styles is the sole determining factor of academic achievement of students in Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

- i. Find out which of the leadership style is mostly adopted by Principals of Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the extent to which Principals' leadership style influences students' academic achievement in Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria.
- iii. Determine the influence of ownership of schools on students' academic achievement in Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated for the study:

- i. What leadership style is mostly adopted by Principals of Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent do principals' leadership style influences students' academic achievement in Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria?
- iii. To what extent does ownership of schools influence the academic achievement of students in

Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypothesis**

The hypothesis stated below was formulated to guide the study:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in students' academic achievement in private and public Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted using survey research. The method was found to be appropriate for the study because of its flexibility in the use of a sample when the population is large. Therefore, the research used a sample of schools and respondent which was considered as representation of the population for the study.

This study described Principals' leadership styles and students' academic achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State. Gombe State is one of the six States in North-East geo-political zone. The State has eleven Local Government Areas and three Senatorial Districts. The major tribes of its citizen are Fulfulde, Hausa, Tera, Bolawa and Tangale. The major occupation of people in the State is mainly farming and business.

The population of the study consists of all Principals, Vice Principals, Head of Departments, teachers and students in both public and private Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria. A two stage sampling technique was used to select the sampled schools for the study. In the first instance, one hundred (100) Senior Secondary Schools on Gombe State were selected at random using simple random sampling technique. In the second instance, Vice Principals Head of Department and teachers totaling 1,000 in the 100 selected Senior Secondary Schools were the sample used for the study.



The instrument used for data collection for the study was a structured questionnaire called Principal Leadership Style and Students Academic Achievement Questionnaire (PLSSAPQ) which serve as the main instrument for data collection. The PLSSAPQ was made of two sections. A, and B. Section A consist of 21 items distributed to reflect various leadership style adopted by Principals of secondary schools in Gombe State, Nigeria. Each of them has four point likert scales of Strongly Accepted, Accepted, Rejected and Strongly Rejected. Section B was used to collect information on Students' academic achievement at the end of Senior Secondary education between 2014 and 2016.

The instrument was given to two specialists in Educational Management for validation with regard to terminology that was used to measure the intent of the study. Their corrections were used the reconstruction of the instrument. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out by administering the PLSAPQ instrument in two Senior Secondary Schools

within Gombe metropolis. The reliability test was calculated using the person product moment correlation. A correlation coefficient of 0.76 was obtained.

The questionnaire was administered to Vice Principals, Head of Departments and teachers in the selected public Secondary Schools. The questionnaire were distributed to the targeted respondents and retrieved after completion. The data was collected and analyzed using frequencies, simple percentage mean and standard deviations was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses.

**RESULT**

**Research Question 1:** What is the leadership style mostly adopted by Principals of Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria?

To answer this question, the responses which include Vice Principals, Head of Departments and teachers to items related to research question one were analyzed and presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Summary of Respondents Assessment of the mostly adopted Leadership Style by Principals in Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria

Most Adopted Leadership Style	Number	Mostly Adopted	Percentage
Autocratic Leadership Style	1000	45	4.5%
Democratic Leadership Style	1000	783	78.3
Laissez – faire Leadership Style	1000	172	17.2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Work 2018

Table 1 revealed that the democratic leadership style was found to be the most adopted by Principals of Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State as supported by 783 (78.3%) of the respondents, this was followed by Laissez-faire with 172 (17.2%) of the respondents while 45 (4.5%) of the respondents claimed that some of the Principals adopted autocratic leadership style.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do principals' leadership style influences students' academic achievement in Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria?

To answer this question, the data collected were summed up for all the sampled schools and percentages were used for the analysis. The summary is shown in Table 2.



**Table 2:** Students' Academic Achievement in the Sampled Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State between 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 academic sessions

Academic Sessions	Total Number of Candidates sat for WAEC/NECO	Total Number of students with five credits including English and Mathematics	Percentage (%)
2014	18,847	2,482	13.1%
2015	20,402	1,721	8.4%
2016	19,725	2,695	13.6%

Source: Field Work 2018

Table 2 indicates that only 13.1%, 8.4% and 13.6% of the total candidates enrolled for WAEC/SSCE in 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 respectively were able to meet the minimum requirement for higher education.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does ownership of schools influence the academic

achievement of students in Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria? To answer this question, the data collected were summed up for all the sampled schools based on the type of ownership to find out the number of candidates that were able to obtain five credits including English and Mathematics. Percentages were used for the analysis. The summary is shown in Table 3

**Table 3:** Students' Academic Achievement in the Sampled Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State between 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 academic sessions by type of ownership

Total Number of Candidates sat for WAEC/SSCE Between 2014 – 2016			Total Number of students with five credits including English and Mathematics			Percentage (%)		
Public Schools	Private Schools	Total	Public Schools	Private Schools	Total	Public Schools	Private Schools	Total
35,326	23,648	58,974	2,946	3,952	6,898	8.3%	16.7%	11.6%

Source: Field Work 2018

Table 3 shows that 6,898 students out of 58,974 candidates enrolled for either WAEC/NECO as revealed in the Table 2 were able to obtain five credits including English and Mathematics between 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 academic sessions. The achievement rate was 11.6%. The Table further revealed that the achievement rate for private schools is higher than that of public schools as indicated by 16.7% and 8.3% respectively.

**Hypothesis Test**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference in students' academic achievement in private

and public Secondary Schools in Gombe State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation for the level of efficiency for the 63 Public Secondary Schools and 37 Private Secondary Schools were calculated. The calculated mean and standard deviation for Public Secondary Schools were 21.693 and 5.646 respectively while calculated mean and standard deviation for Private Secondary Schools stands for 45.355 and 11.410 respectively. The t-test was used to determine whether there is significant difference in the level of



efficiency of public and private Secondary Schools in Gombe State. The result is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** T-Test of Difference between Public and Private Secondary Schools in Gombe State level of academic achievement

Level of Academic Achievement	School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	t Calculated	t Critical	Decision
	Public	63	21.693	5.646	98	8.137*	1.96	Significant
	Private	37	45.355	11.410				

In Table 4 the value of t-calculated is 8.137 and t-critical stand as 1.96 at 98 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated is higher than the critical, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of academic achievement of public and private Secondary Schools in Gombe State is hereby rejected. This implies that significant difference exists between public and private secondary schools in their level of efficiency. Their calculated mean of 21.693 and 45.355 for public and private secondary schools respectively further determines the level of differences.

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 revealed that the democratic leadership style was found to be the most adopted by Principals of Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State. 783 (78.3%) of the respondents, this was followed by Laissez-faire with 172 (17.2%) of the respondents while 45 (4.5%) of the respondents claimed that some of the Principals adopted autocratic leadership style. The level of agreement indicates that Principals in Gombe State are democratic in nature. This finding further corroborates Ibukun (2003) who asserted that communication skills, leadership skills and decision making skills are essential for effective personnel management. It is therefore imperative that schools Principals be knowledgeable in decision making for

effective school administration and service delivery.

Table 2 indicates that only 13.1%, 8.4% and 13, 6% of the total candidates who sat for WAEC/NECO Senior School Certificate Examination in 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 respectively were able to meet the minimum requirement for higher education. This finding of low level of academic achievement was supported by Oghuvbu (2010) that the products of our secondary schools are not practically qualified as office assistance. It is no wonder then that Nigerian students do not generally perform well in most public examination. Almost every year, Chief Examiners Reports for the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) highlight the abysmal poor achievement of students at the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination.

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In table 4, the value of t-calculated is 8.137 and t-critical is 1.96 at 98 degree of



freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated exceeds the critical t-ratio, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of academic achievement of public and private secondary schools in Gombe State is hereby rejected. This implies that significant difference exists between public and private secondary schools in their level of efficiency. Their calculated mean of 21.693 and 45.355 for public and private secondary schools respectively further determines the level of differences. The perceived failing standard of public secondary schools as revealed by their mean level of academic achievement might have encouraged proliferation of private secondary schools across the state. Another interpretation of this result could be that most of the private schools must have engaged experienced personnel who retired from public schools before they joined private schools with their wealth of experience as noticed by Crosnoe and Glen (2004) that social ownership, provision of facilities and availability of resources in schools are important structural components of the school. Private schools due to the better funding, small sizes, serious ownership, motivated faculty and access to resources such as computers perform better than the public schools.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Principals in Gombe State are democratic in their leadership style and that the incident of low level of academic achievement in Gombe State is real and quite persuasive among secondary schools.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study and conclusion, the following recommendations are suggested for the improvement of teaching and learning in secondary schools:

- i. The government should organize workshops for Principals from time to time so as to keep them abreast of the new innovations. This will enable them to be more effective in discharging their responsibilities;
- ii. As discussed by the result, most of the Principals are democratic in their leadership style, it is very important that the Principals should adopt and maintain a democratic leadership style to facilitate the realization of good teaching in secondary Schools in Nigeria;
- iii. Principals in secondary schools should endeavor to make available, adequate incentives to motivate the teachers so as to maintain their commitment and enthusiasm in teaching.
- iv. The State Ministry of Education and Proprietors of Private schools in Gombe State should ensure that they recruit professionally and academically qualified Principals to promote the use of democratic leadership style which, in turn, promotes students' achievement in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE).
- v. Efforts should be made by public and private school administrators to find ways of attracting more qualified teachers and retraining them. This can be in form of improving the condition of service in terms of allowances.
- vi. Inspectors from the Inspectorate Division of the State Ministry of Education should regularly pay visit to schools to closely monitor the quality and type of leadership styles of Principals. This will encourage them to improve upon their leadership responsibilities.





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