Constraints to Principals’ Leadership Role in the Implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined constraints to principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools. Three research questions guided the study. The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The population consists 222 junior secondary school principals and there was no sampling as the population is small. Instrument for data collected tagged, ‘Constraints to Principals’ Leadership Roles Questionnaire Scale (CPLRQS) containing 20 items were validated by three experts from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Crombach Alpha internal consistency was used to establish the validity of the instrument which yielded 0.81 co-relation co-efficiency on 0.05 level of significance. Data were collected with the help of three research assistance briefed by the research on the modalities of responding to the items of questionnaire by respondents. Data collected in respect to the three research questions were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed among other things that government-related factors are constraints to principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools.

Key words: Constraints • Principals • Leadership • Implementation • Education and Secondary School

INTRODUCTION

Education at any level is designed for the maximum benefit of individuals, government, the society and indeed the general public. The Universal Basic Education programme is designed for these purposes. At the helm of affairs of junior secondary schools is the principals who duty among others is to co-ordinate the efforts of human resources for the achievement of the UBE programme. The school principal is primarily charged with the development of each and every student in the school [1]. The success or failure of the secondary school system depends to a large extent on the leadership role of the principal.

The evolution of the position of principal in Nigeria has witnessed the change of the leadership of public secondary schools from the role of head-teacher to that of the executive head of the secondary education system [2]. Sequal to this or by virtue of his position, the principal is charged with the administration of secondary school in collaboration with government, the school and the community where the school is situated. To do this, the principal has to possess some attributes such as being able to relate with staff, students, government and the community.

The implementation of the UBE programme hingers on the principals’ leadership roles which includes nurturing and sustaining of the culture, providing safe and conducive environment for effective teaching and learning, encouraging staff development, cooperating with the host communities [3]. Equally, Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu, [4] stated that principals are valued more by the society when the are characterized by honesty, justice, reliability and fair play and exhibited capabilities and attitudes for good human relations with staff, pupils and community. It is then imperative that principals should possess these qualities for the achievement of the UBE programme goals through their leadership roles. The principals’ leadership roles spans among other things like maintaining firm, fair and consistent discipline, establish positive rapport with students, staff, parents and the community, provide positive, effective leadership, supervise teachers and support their in their professional growth [5].

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However, the principal is faced a lot of challenges in trying to exercise his leadership roles for the UBE implementation. The challenges could be government related, community or school-related. In most cases, government changes her education policies and programmes, funds to secondary schools are inadequate, provision of resources for implementation of educational programmes are inadequate and principals’ demands are sometimes neglected by government. In terms of community related problems, the members of the community at times beat teachers, petition the principals, tress pass in school rules and regulations, refuse to participate in disciplining their children and lack commitment in the provisions of some important school projects. The school itself in most cases makes rules and regulations that are difficult to implement, engages in co-curricular activities more than the normal class activities; may not provide healthcare services to the students, do not involve students in decision making and do not check truancy among the students. All these variable contribute to ineffectiveness of principals in discharging the leadership roles. Most school principals often do not establish a positive relationships with students, staff, parents, government and the community and as such could not provide positive and effective leadership [6]. All these are not in tandem with the UBE programme implementation in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools.

Therefore, the extent to which government related factors, community related factors and school related factors impinge on the principals’ leadership roles for the implementation of the UBE programme in junior secondary schools of Ebonyi State cannot be clearly ascertained. It is on these bases that this study sets out to examine the constraints to principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi Junior Secondary Schools.

Research Questions: The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

- To what extent does government-related factors hinder principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools?
- To what extent does school-related factors impede principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools?
- To what extent does community-related factors pose problems in the principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools?

Method: The study adopted descriptive survey as the design while the population of the study is 222 junior secondary school teachers in the 222 junior secondary schools in Ebonyi State. There was no sampling as the population of principals is small. Therefore the 222 junior
secondary school principals formed the sample size. The instrument for data collection was as self-structured questionnaire entitled, “Constraints to Principals’ Leadership Roles Questionnaire Scale (CPLRQS). The instrument contained 20 items in respect to three research questions. It was validated by three experts (two from Educational Administration and Planning) while one is from Test and Measurement in Science Education, all from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Test re-test method was used to establish the reliability of the study. 100 copies of the questionnaire were tested on 100 principals at the interval of two weeks, outside the area of the study. Thereafter, the two weeks were co-related using Crombach Alpha and it yielded 0.81 co-relation co-efficient at 0.05 level of significant. This indicates that the instrument was reliable for the study. The instrument (222 copies) were administered to respondents with the help of three research assistants that were briefed by the researcher on the modalities for responding to the items by the respondents. Data collected in respect to the three research questions were analysed using mean score and standard deviation of to a great extent, great extent, less extent and very less extent weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Any mean score from 2.5 and above is regarded as very great extent and great extent while any mean score from 2.5 and below is regarded as less extent and very less extent.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does government-related factors hinder principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools?

Result on Table 1 shows that all the items, except item 7 were responded to a very great extent by the respondents that they all factors hindering principal leadership roles.

However, with a grand mean of 3.08 is an indication that government factors to a very great extent hampers principals’ leadership roles in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Juniot Secondary Schools.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does school-related factors impede principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools?

Result on Table 2 reveals that the respondents agree to all the item to a very great extent that all the variables are constraints to principals’ leadership role in the implementation to the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools. The grand mean of 3.47 proved the authenticity of the claim.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does community-related factors pose problems to principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools?

Result on Table 3 shows that all the variables in all the items were factors that impede principals’ leadership role the respondents. The grand mean scores of 3.32 is an indication that the respondents agreed to a very great extent that actions of the community impede on the principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools.

**Discussion of Findings:** The findings from the analysis of research question one showed that all the principals who were equally the respondents to a very great extent agreed that government actions are responsible for their inefficiency in performing their civil leadership roles as principals, current researchers on principals’ leadership role discovered that inability of the government to meet principals demand and poor funding of junior secondary education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Government does not provide enough funds</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>VGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Government does not allow principals to exercise his own power</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>VGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Government do not allow principals take part in decisions on matters that boarders in the schools</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>VGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Government does not play principals run-cost</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>VGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Government plays deaf ear to principals family problems</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>GE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Government changes her policies without due process</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>VGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Government is not always be the side of the principals in times of molestation by external bodies</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>VLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Government officials do not punish teachers for insulting the principals</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>GE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Mean 3.08

Key: VGE = Very Great Extent, GE = Great Extent, VLE = Very Less Extent
schools poses a great problem in discharging their duties in the management of the affairs of the junior secondary schools. This was why sometimes the principals do not establish a positive rapport with stakeholders in education including the government. This accounts for the reason why positive and efficient leadership are not exhibited by principals. This is in line with Deightor [6] who observed that most school principals often do not establish a positive relationship with the government and as such could not provide positive and effective leadership. This hinders the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools.

Result on Table 2 revealed that school related factors hinder principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools for instance, when the school authorities do not involve the students in decision-making especially in the matters that boards on their welfare, principals may not discharge their leadership roles effectively. There are some other issues relating school factors such as inability of the school to check the excesses of students’ truancy and lack of health care services to the students that combine to pose problems to principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme.

Result on 3 showed that some members of the community perform actions that do not allow the principal carry out his leadership role. Such actions like non-participation of the members of the community in the provision of school projects, encroaching into the school land and refusal to pay an approved levies by government to run the school affairs by the principals. This is an agreement with Nwune, Nwogbo and Nwankwo [7] who lamented the non-school interaction with the members of the community on issues like land and security. The non-challant attitude of the members of the community in providing basic needs of the schools hampers the principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools.

**CONCLUSION**

This study investigated constraint to principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools. Some of the areas examined are the government, school and community-related factors that hinder principals leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme. The study revealed that these three variables among other hamper to a very great extent principals’ leadership role in the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools.

**Recommendations:** The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study. They are:

- Government officials and other stakeholders in education should provide and protect the principal in his bid to discharge his leadership role.
Members of the staff and the entire school authority should guide the principal in his day-to-day administration of the school.

Members of the community should not be a threat to the school principal, rather they should play a positive part in helping and supporting the principal in his effort in providing conducive environment teaching and learning.

REFERENCES