

Seeking Common Ground for a Leadership, Culture and Diversity in Changing Times

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Abstract

The paper discusses how, the Principals of school demonstrate good leadership through mutual respect, trust and proper understanding by individual and groups of people who live in school environment. In a culturally diversified situation, people do show tolerance and accommodation for one another instead of total assimilation of minority groups. It also show that effective leadership and good culture do exist within a school environment where common goals can be attained by the students, teachers and parents to avoid friction on issues in changing times. The parameter that was used in the discussion of this paper include; (a) examining leadership in schools as of the past, today and in the future per role, (b) the culture includes; ethos, values and barriers that impede minorities and the privileged and under privileged affecting failure rate in schools and (c) the diversity which the heterogeneous composition entails that encourages the shift based on change. A comprehensive summary of the literature dealing with an accepted theory that ties leadership, culture and diversity among ethnic groups in the area briefly reviewed. This review may have showed either the positive or negative areas of the three variables; leadership, culture and diversity. Questions were fully indicated in the study. The study produced possible results, which enabled conclusions drawn and allowed for necessary recommendations provided.

Keywords: Leadership Principal, Culture/Schools and Diversity.

Introduction

In a school environment, the coming together of students, teachers, principals and the community at large provide room both leadership and acceptance of each other. The leader is considered an enlightened person who has attained a formal training and experience in the teaching profession. It is expected that such leadership assignment which involves the principal and commands respect from teachers is done through instructional and demonstration of managerial expertise.

Definitions of Terms; Concepts of Leadership, Culture and Diversity

The terms, leadership, Culture and diversity are used in this paper with regards to how they affect each other. Leadership is the ability a person has to obtain followers and in this case, either a principal within a school building, the Chief Inspector of Education in charge of school within a local government, (county) or Permanent Secretary who is responsible for schools in three local governments combined. The situation with each of the leaders i.e.

principal, Chief Inspector of Education and a Permanent Secretary involve followers who are teachers and non-academic personnel who answer directly or indirectly to the leaders mentioned. Therefore Maxwell (1998) states that the level one of leadership is tied to position and rights. Hence, if purely indicated that such leaders need to understand the job description, thoroughly, and well informed of the organization's history and how it is related within the organization. Other levels include; level two permission and relationship, level three; production and results, level four; people's development and reproduction and the fifth level; personhood and respect (Maxwell, 1998) considered.

- (a) Culture is a way of life as found in the social setting hence culture is learnt and shared by members of the society. Culture is though seen as complicated since; it involves the idea of achieving perfection, a good or possible aspiration of individual, human achievement. Therefore, culture possessed by individuals who are able to gain learning and achieving certain qualities that are desirable in human being. The harmonization of the definition and implication of culture is that the way of life as practiced by the members, the collections of ideas and habits, which are learnt, shared and eventually transmitted from one generation to another (Haralambos, 2008).

The school community with good leadership needs a culture in place to allow an identity in place. Therefore, culture is seen as a way of life as it is found in the circle of the social environment hence, the term culture is learnt and shared amongst members of the school organization. Culture is though seen as complicated since it involves the idea of achieving perfection, a goal or possible aspiration of individual person's achievement. Hence, culture is possessed by individuals who are able to gain the learning and achieving certain qualities that are desirable in a human being that is cultured. The harmonization of the definitions and implications of culture is considered the way of life as practiced by members, possible collection of ideas and habits which are thus learnt, shared and eventually transmitted from one generation to another.

Furthermore, in totality the culture is split into different types which include (a) High culture (b) Folk culture (c) Mass culture (d) Popular culture (e) Subculture and (f) Global culture (Haramolambos, 2008). Both high and folk culture apply to the variables of leadership culture and diversity since item (a) involves the cultural creation of higher status while item (b) involves the culture of the ordinary people. This project of the preindustrial society affiliating with grass roots that is considered as self-created and autonomous constricting on the lives of the people in the society. Item (c) specify industrial culture that is based on mass media reflecting societal norms while item (d) particularly shows cultural products by the majority of the audience who do not have expertise i .e *Village headmaster and Cook Crow at Dawn* .*Village headmaster* was directed by Ted Mukoro. It focused and treated themes concerning novel issues of the contact Western education and civilization as well as, the culture of the Nigerian people. On the other hands, *Cock Crow at Dawn* was directed and produced by Peter Igbo which focused on the themes of traditional family and the relationship with the exhilarating drama of modern society in Nigeria.

The two programmes were very popular because they had some of the earliest competent hands in their cast crew; examples in *Village Headmaster* include Elsie Olusola "Sisi Clara" Councilor Balogun and Chief Eloyemi while in *Cock Crow at Dawn*; Zack Amata , Ene Ologa and Dan Emeni. These persons in the cast and crew were well trained professionally in Theater Arts for their roles in the plays.

Both the *Village Headmaster* and *Cock Crew at Dawn* were popular television series that featured on prime time Nigerian network television in the nineteen seventies and eighties. The programmes were so popular that they ran for an unprecedented time. The former running for over a decade. Both programmes were concerned with social issues bothering on the role of traditional communal setting in the emergent post-independence of Nigeria. Also, item (e)

which focuses on commonality that involves people which could be in form of either problem, interest or practicing a culture that may be different from a social group. The subgroup is more linked together because of the strong functional and culture ties within it is also shown that although both items (e) and (f) closely resemble each yet item (f) is gradually the one that is becoming the one that is more acceptable that can affect one part of the world. Even though, in this case, Featherstone did argue that no global culture is in existence (Haralambos, 2008). Instead which states that all people need to accept, respect and tolerate each other as the culture that each person practices is personally compatible with other's identity. Consequently, the diversity that emerges in any school system is seen as strength instead of a weakness.

Diversity as a factor in this paper is how a family within the school system, society and group may be considered. It is seen as a nuclear though can be equally dispersed. It can be fully understood such that experience by people is considered to be unique to the schools modern society. Today, there are types of diversity which include; (a) Organizational (b) Cultural, (c) Middle and working class families (d) Stage in life circle (e) Cohort (Haralambos, 2008).

- a) Organizational diversity is the variation in family structure, household, pattern of kingship network as well as difference that exist within the home. That is, differences in the house of conventional families, single parent, families and dual worker, where both husband and wife are in the job market working, will be contributing to the gross national productivity daily (GNP),
- b) Cultural diversity: This strictly involves lifestyles of families which embrace different ethnic background and also religious beliefs. That is like the different ethnic backgrounds; Yoruba, Edo, Isoko and Urhobo as well as other minority groups with different backgrounds.
- c) Middle and Working Class Families: This type of diversity shows the relationship that exists between adult and the way such children are socialized within themselves.
- d) Stage in Life Circle: It shows the stage to which families have advanced in life i.e. the families who have children and have commitment to the dependents who are different from those who are new couples and those that are not committed to serious family matters. The degree of achievements by the family members can be different from each other.
- e) Cohorts include a period during which the family may be passing from one stage to another which may affect the different experiences in life. The possible examples could be that children who ought to enter the Labour market in the early 1900 may be different, from the other families or the unemployment rate may have increased within the length of time. This can equally show increase in crime rate in the area.

There is the need to harmonize leadership, culture in harmonizing how the leadership, culture and diversity in a school have common ground to make things work properly. This can be done through mutual respect, trust and thorough understanding for each other. The element of respect by the leadership is driven by the good understanding of the culture in the environment since diversity can display element of strength. This encourages the development of a political culture which do lead to political style, norms, ethos, emotional feelings that arise as a result of belief to traditional and environmental attachment. Other elements that can be of importance during cultural association in school environment are developing symbiotic attachment which can make teachers, students and school personnel follow the leadership. Consequently, attitudes and values are expected to be part of what the members of the school system may have imbibed as binding factors.

The functionalist confirms and interactionist theories though may differ yet do fit the social problems that come up in the school environment. The functionalist theory concentrates on the behaviour of the subjects while conflict and interactionist show how people though are diverse yet can accommodate each other. This behaviour of the leadership and the followership does not mind the question of the legitimacy of the relationship to conflict and interactionist to the school system in dealing with social problems. Hence, Sykes, (1971) states that what is satisfactory and unsatisfactory in the school system could be as a result of minute concerns that erupt from school societal needs that relate to the area of social structure.

Students of different ethnic background such as; Urhobos, Isokos, Ezons, Itsekiris, Ukwanis, Yorubas, Edo, Igbos, Hausas, Efiks, Ibibios and a host of others are involved in activities useful in the society. These ethnic groups have differently settled in the area either as a result of natural settlement or migration for economic reason. This could be commercial, social, political and peaceful factors that create room for co-existence. In this process, off-springs of the environment go to school and associate with each other. The process calls for association and assimilation of culture needed for political socialization that do emerge.

Obaro (2004) and George and Wilding (1977) share the view that social theory do not only surround social problems but in recent times have shifted to accommodate each other as theories of society in solving problems and laying policies for societal concerns. In most cases, when people refuse to respect each other's space, there is bound to be acrimony and sometimes, it can lead to a breakdown of law and order when not properly handled. An example of such a situation could be in a school sited in a boundary town and when there is need for arbitration. Girigiri (2004) explained that there are stages in the process of resolving such a conflict that exist between communities which include: mediation, conciliation and finally arbitration.

Girigiri defines arbitration as a quasi-judicial process that the concerned parties to the problem do agree to submit. Therefore Almond and Verba (1963), Adedope (1981), and Babawale (1997) do agree that in political culture there is the individual political orientation which also includes individual roles that specifies the values, skills and political attitudes of the members within the existing community. This is why the citizens are involved to reflect the duties as well as how this follows the political function of the leaders and followers. Consequently, it is stated that such elements include the values, norms and attitude which are patterned to guide the citizens in what people do to the system.

Hence Etemike and Agba (2009) advocate in line with Dawson and Prewett (1985) who saw political socialization as the process whereby, the culture that is transmitted from one generation to another. The elements do contribute to how people behave as well as translate their actions in allegiance to the nation. The coming together of students, teachers and principals in school building has enabled the transmission of beliefs, norms and values through the learning process. Although, the tongues may differ the learning process still take place through the commonality of cultural assimilation that is done through English language which is a means of communication instead of the mother tongue. The drawback in the use of English language instead of the mother is that today, most students can hardly understand and speak their dialects. Therefore this had led to the Federal Government of Nigeria to introduce the teaching of Nigerian Languages into the curricula of schools (National Policy of Education, 2004).

Data generated from the Delta Central Senatorial District have backed this study of leadership and culture. The justification for this is to show how the community and diversity of norms and traditional values i.e. the local government areas reflect other adjoining senatorial districts and states.

Research Question 1

Identify the type of leadership skill principals possess to equip them in managing schools.

Table 1: Distribution of Schools and Leadership (Principals) in Delta Central Senatorial District

S/n	LGA in Delta Central	No of Schools	No of Schools Sampled	No of Principals	No of Teachers	No of Teachers Sampled based on %
1	Ethiophe East	42	4	4	835	84
2	Ethiophe West	22	2	2	341	34
3	Okpe	24	2	2	221	22
4	Sapele	35	4	4	751	75
5	Udu	14	1	1	392	39
6	Ughelli North	64	6	6	1,123	112
7	Ughelli South	16	4	4	323	32
8	Uvwie	26	3	3	998	100
	Total	263	26	26	4,984	498

Source of Data: Post Primary Education Board (PPEB: Asaba 2009)

Data above show the distribution of schools and leadership (principals) in Delta Central Senatorial District. Total number of schools is 263 while only 26 were sampled. However 26 principals were available and teachers are 4,984 while 498 were sampled for use.

The following questions have been structured to lead the study:

i) Identify the type of leadership skill principals possess to lead a school. Principals as leaders are professionally trained teachers who have been through the ranks and have been involved in leadership training with the school system. Leader of this nature, have special leadership skills and knowledge over the years to perform duties at the elementary and secondary school levels in order to demonstrate their expertise. This implies that such principals have grown and transformed over a period of time.

Research Question II

Identify the ethnic origin and state where your great grand-parents come from.

Table II: Ethnic Origin of Parents and Great – Grand Parents

S/N	LGA	Ethnic Root	Dominant Dialect	Prominent Towns
1	Ethiophe East	Urhobo Isoko	Urhobo (Agbon)	Otoroagbon, Kokori, Okpara, Ovu
2	Ethiophe West	Edo / Yoruba	Urhobo / Itsekiri	Jesse, Oghara, Mosogar.
3	Okpe	Isoko / Urhobo	Okpe	Orerokpe, Aghalokpe
4	Sapele	Urhobo / Itsekiri	Urhobo / Itsekiri	Sapele, Amukpe
5	Udu	Urhobo / Itsekiri	Urhobo (Udu)	Orhuwherun, Otor-

				Udu, Aladja
6	Ughelli North	Urhobo	Urhobo / Isoko	Ughelli, Ewreni, Uwherun
7	Ughelli South	Urhobo	Ujevwhen/ Udu	Otugeremi, Oginibo, Agbaroh
8	Uvwie	Isoko/Urhobo/Itsekiri	Olomu/ Uvwie	Effurun

Data on Table II showed the different ethnic groups emerging from the eight local government areas. These ethnic groups include Urhobo, Agbon, Itsekiri, Okpe, Ujevwen, Olomu and Udu. The dominant towns in the local government areas include Otorere Agbon, Oghara, Orerokpe, Sapele, Otor-Udu, Ughelli, Otu-Jeremi and Effurun.

ii) Identify the ethnic origin and state where your great grandparents come from. In tracing the roots of one's grandparents, the tracing goes back to several generations and that means the parents came from the Isoko and Urhobo areas of Delta State. It can also be further traced to the Benin Dynasty where most ethnic roots in this part of the world are affiliated.

Research Question III

Where did your parents migrate from to settle in your present home?

Research Question IV

Describe the possible problems your parents and ancestors faced and were such problems overcome?

Tables III and IV

iii) Where did your parents migrate from to settle in your present home? Based on this, most of our parents migrated from the south – south of today Delta State and moved south west to establish their dynasty.

iv) Describe the possible problems your parents and ancestors faced and how such problems were overcome: Most parents in this era were faced with problems of choice of where to locate. This was because most places at that time were relatively safe, peaceful and comfortable. However, in the present day, parents are migrating from the relatively comfort zone within the cities to the immediate rural sub-urban because of ethnic crises and vandalism of property.

v) How will you describe the process of cultural assimilation in the school system? Pupils and students of the primary and secondary schools are sent to schools by their parents and the process of association starts. These children are taught; they play and mingle with each other. As a result, learning of each other's dialects, culture and behaviour take place at the same time therefore activities are taught in different mother tongues. These functional activities tend to bring the children closer to each other since these children are agents of socialization.

vi) What is cultural assimilation as personally understood? By cultural assimilation, the different cultures such as Hausa have assimilated minority languages in the Northern Nigeria. This shows there is an advancement of one culture by embedding another culture at the expense of one's culture. In citing examples to demonstrate cultural assimilation, most of the present day children hardly understand their mother tongue. Instead, most children undertake to speak colloquial English otherwise known as Pidgin and little of the mother tongue.

vii) What are the causes/effects either positive or negative associated with cultural assimilation and cultural diversity? Colonial masters tend to show their superiority and expected that Africans accept colonial culture over their own. The Africans were initially deprived of their existing culture in attempt to accept the arrogant and corky way of life. This was unlike what Africans were used to such that they were generous and kind to each other while the Europeans refused to practice the African way of life. During this process, Africans became very materialistic while they did not understand that this attitude created a different mentality of lack of caring and sharing. This behaviour encouraged people to become extremely greedy of wealth. It is further understood that such habits of greediness do not allow government to develop instead, it comes with sacrifice. In fact Africans prior to assimilation preferred gerocracy as opposed to democracy. The diversity which involves people's children of the same social class and cohorts may be able to resolve any problem. People are bound to disagree when interactions take place in school organizations. This could be as a result of negative or positive involvement.

viii) As a scholar, discuss what you will do to encourage change in modern times: As a scholar, the African is losing values of the elder, human as a person, there is less contribution to the society and much influence grows from with his own peer as well as lacking sense of personal worth. Human beings have lost their values by dropping in losing their soul there is the necessity of getting closer to God. It is necessary that people become humble before the creator and promote more Christianity such that man is the architect and roots of spiritual values that matter.

Discussion

Seeking common ground in this work involves change with the leadership, culture and diversity. Change as used in this context means improvement and general transformation from past to the present times. The essence of such situation is not only to show how the population, school services can correlate the modernizing of equipment that are required for people's concerns. The change also includes culture of maintenance which has not been properly utilized in most facets required in the system. Therefore, the immediate results have not been too pleasant. (Akiri, 2001)

The leadership is faced with change from the standpoint because leaders in the past have performed the functions of administration with more ethical values and concerns. This means that people who do give proper accountability equally get proper respect and credibility for such leaders, i.e. principals in the community. However, nowadays there is the lack of fear and people take authority into their hands and easily flout the law by showing lackadaisical attitude on financial matters. This has also been demonstrated on how school projects do degenerate into oblivious situation thereby costing much revenue to society in which the schools exists.

As Nigeria has advanced with the rest of the world into the twenty – first century, changes are required by the community people from the leadership for better performance in all projects undertaken. Hence on this note, specific details and requirements are spelt out in improving property and discouraging both duplication as well as wasteful spending.

In examining change, it is important and necessary to discuss the school setting, method utilized, services provided, participation and transformation for improvement. The process entails not only the setting but also the students and pupils needed in such an environment. Hence, the present writer advocates that both learning and practice processes cannot be separated from each other. This is especially so if, significant results are to be realized when change occurs. It should not be unusual for anyone who advocates for change to take into

consideration the basic reasons as to why and how elements learnt in such setting can be of interest in improving the school environment concerned (Akiri, 2001).

To this extent, the variables education, culture and leadership can be considered elaborately in the subsequent sub area and could help pave the way for self and group instructions. The approaches can encourage information to disseminate faster, i.e. from the learning sessions to areas of usage which include workshops, lectures, discussion groups, demonstration and group projects. The possible goals can be achieved. This is done through government policies as well as privatization and inclusion of maintenance of culture that involves public and private schools' property. Finally, school services are done through trained personnel such as teachers, other trained staff and private schools. These can provide quality results, which are consistent with state guidelines. Both the patterns and such participation on change indicate how and why uniformity can be shown in school environments. This consequently shows not only development but also the element of change in societies, variables and change.

In the discussion on the definition and concept of change, the following variables are addressed adequately in this work. These include education, leadership, culture and diversity in school environments. Education is regarded as a powerful tool in any society and it is specifically funded by the state. This is done through taxation on her citizens, thus making it possible for school children (pupils and students) to receive free education as a societal "merit" Therefore, it is recognized that parents who have the children do have the obligation to provide their children with basic education since it is an instrument useful to literacy. It is expected that every good government has a goal of its own continuation and preservation of an enlightened electorate. This awareness of basic fundamental rights to pursue cultural values, understand dialects and attain leadership skills as objectives.

In this study, cognizance has been given to education despite the ethnic identity of the persons concerned. There is the promotion of both the psychosocial adaptation and cultural assimilation (Rumbuat, 1994). Therefore as a factor, it promotes change in society and necessity that exist for children to attend schools whether public and private for learning purpose. The justification for this is to encourage and enable both educational gains and benefits to be provided in the secondary and technical school levels. In an attempt to have a more effective and direct change, curricula need to be properly re-examined as well as fully integrated. The reason for such interaction is to arm all such children with not only literary skills but technological means of coping in today's advanced age that include typing know-how, computer literacy skill, strong quantitative scientific and language skills. The bottom line is to allow and make it easier for the future generation to function well with their counterparts in other societies.

The Nigerian educational system may presently be democratic, yet there is need for proper direction through policy foundation and implementation. This can fulfill her educational aim that can accommodate more of leadership virtues, cultural acceptance of values, ethos and forming groups of integration not ethnic discrimination amongst each other. Since education has been portrayed as a force, its effects can be reflected in leadership demonstrations, social and cultural diversity in school settings of the environment at large. The writer fully understands that the effects of education are felt in different degrees and people can learn from a new environment. Different authorities that have been reviewed by this present writer indicate their views on the issues, but the benefits of the populace were considered as paramount. Although the authorities may disagree among themselves, they agree on issues that can address situations to improve conditions for the "common man" Hourssou-Adin (1995) discussed Afrocentricity as a process not revolutionary but a transformation and a corrective measure to oppose the imperialistic tactics to put Africans and their culture down.

This is why there are common grounds for leadership, culture and diversity in a school environment. Therefore, the utility and application of education by the mass population may

be viewed as a means of encouraging political socialization that can promote both cultural and political developments. Both the promotion of political culture and socialization tend to allow the existence of democracy, since national values and ethos are projected through education, leadership, culture and diversity.

Conclusion

Based on the research, the writer concluded the following:

- (1) Issues that pertain to culture in schools do revolve around an able leadership. This indicates that the principals can direct and co-ordinate human resources i.e. students, pupils, teachers and outreach; parents and community to have obtainable school goals where the schools are sited. The justification is that today, people are concerned with what obtains in their immediate community.
- (2) The different ethnic groups that were met on their land were overpowered. Therefore, the initial approach such as dialogue could not stop the forceful imposition of assimilation and association in road methods were applied by Europeans on the Africans.
- (3) The different communities were now faced with a common need, which was freedom for people irrespective of ethnicity, minorities, majorities, the privileged and the underprivileged. Africans were now faced with stamping out oppression and need equality as well as egalitarianism in the society where people observe to be on common grounds.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on conclusions drawn in the research:

- i) Leadership in school community needs to remain steadfast to values, culture and be positively accountable to the employer.
- ii) Principals, teachers and students need to get along despite diversity in culture, language (dialect) and social status.
- iii) School community teachers, students and parents should learn to adapt to changes in order to allow for school progress.

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