

Principals' Leadership Function: Most Important Function to Make School Run Effectively. A Qualitative Case Study Research of Government Bilingual High School Mokolo and Government Bilingual High School Mokala, Far North Region of Cameroon

Takang Jaspa David (Ph.D.)

University of Garoua, Cameroon

Abstract:

In all countries of the world the principal is the executive head of a secondary/high school with varying functions enshrined in four main headings: pedagogy, administrative, financial and social functions. The purpose of this research is to investigate to know which of these function is at the top of a scale of preference, if we go by economics balance. The findings will arm school principals with a veritable arm to be able to make our learning places an asset. To get this information, qualitative research method was used. participants were asked the following question “ Dear colleague, could you tell this researcher the most important function needed by a principal to make a school run effectively? The participants of this study include 20 teachers from each of the case study school. The two principals, two vice principals and two discipline masters per school were also participants. This gave a total of 50 participants. The results showed that the most important function is linked with the administrative function. However, it was revealed that, the functions are all important to be pursued by principals. It was recommended that principals pay special attention to administrative duties in all their efforts to make a school run well. It was also recommended that in-service training and private research and studies should take administrative duties at the top of the scale.

Keywords: principals' leadership function, most important function, school run effectively.

INTRODUCTION

Mohamad (2020), in his work titled "the role of the school principal as an educator: a study of a vocational school in Jambi, Indonesia", It was said that a principal has a very important role, the success of a school largely determined by him in leading. Mohamad, likens the existence of a school principal in a school like a captain on a ship, he is the controller and determinant of where the ship will go and dock. Mohamad 2020 quoting Ismayani, et al saying that principal is the driving force, determining the direction of policy towards schools and education at large.

In January 2013, the Wallace foundation's work titled "the school principal as leader: guiding schools to better teaching and learning" Wallace foundation quoted that the foundation has supported numerous research studies on school leadership and published more than 70 reports on the subject. It has also funded projects in some 28 states and numerous districts. Through their works, the complexities of school leadership was understood. A particularly noteworthy finding, reinforced in a major study by researchers at the university of Minnesota and Toronto is the empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement. Indeed, leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school related factors that affect student learning in school. "why is leadership crucial?" the Minnesota and Toronto researchers ask. "one explanation is that leaders have the potential to unleash latent capacities in organizations." The Wallace foundation in their 2013 edition says a university of Washington study employed a musical metaphor to describe three different leadership approaches by principals. school leaders determined to do it all themselves were "one-man hands," those inclined to delegate responsibilities to others operated like the leader of a "jazz combo," and those who believed broadly in sharing leadership throughout the school could be thought of as "orchestral leaders," skilled in helping large teams produce a coherent sound, while encouraging soloists to shine. The point is that although in any school a range of leadership patterns exists –among principals, assistant principals, formal and informal teacher leaders, and parents – the principal remains the central source of leadership influence.

In Aydin et al (2015), they noted that as instructional leaders, principals are in a unique position to influence collaboration that takes place among teachers. In order to create a collaborative environment for teachers, principals should have deep knowledge, skills about professional learning communities and initiation to realize it. In this respect, Aydin et al (2015) quoted Murphy et al (2009), who argue that distributed leadership helps them change instructional practices. Quoting Barth, (1986), he explained that principals are considered omniscient in their understanding of effective teaching and learning practices. in the new of thinking, new roles are defined in many ways. Aydin et al cited Schmoker (2005), who claim that the leader's function is to provide opportunities for teachers to work together in self-managing teams to improve their own instruction, always with the expectations for improved learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Amanda Cisler and Mary Alice Bruce of the university of Wyoming in their work titled "principals: what are their roles and responsibilities?" elucidated that recent research has focused on the need for effective relationships between school counselors and principals to help students succeed academically in safe supportive learning opportunities. With education reform acts continuing across the united states, it is crucial that principals and school counselors form alliances to strengthen curricula, monitor student progress, and reduce the achievement gap. Amanda and Mary quoted Armstrong et al (2010), who stated that "counselors and principals cannot operate separately anymore" however, an increase of numerous collaborative relationships is still needed.

Basha (2015), in his work titled “leadership qualities of effective principals” noted that that effective principals influence a variety of school outcomes, including students achievement, through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers: ability to identify and articulate school vision and goals; effective allocation of resources and development of organizational structure to support instruction and learning. Researchers suggest that success in all these areas of influence entails five key responsibilities (curled from Wallace foundation, 2013):

- shaping a vision of academic success for all students based on high standards.
- creating a climate hospitable to education so that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.
- cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their parts in realizing the school vision.
- improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost.
- managing people, data and processes to foster school improvements.

Wallace foundation, January 2013 edition with title “ the school principal as leader guiding schools to better teaching and learning “ insinuate that principals play a major role in developing a professional community of teachers who guide one another in improving instruction. In a sub-title “leadership and the transformation of failing schools” it was argued that without effective principals, the national goal we have set of transforming failing schools will be next to impossible to achieve. But with an effective principal in every school comes promise.

Aydin and Bulent (2015), in their work titled “ school principals’ roles in establishing collaborative professional learning communities at schools” noted that in order to create a collaborative environment, school principals must group teachers into effective teams for effective collaboration, believe in the inherent ability of teachers to serve in leadership capacities, provide, encourage and expect participation opportunities for staff involvement in important decisions, empower leadership teams to make decisions and encourage risk-taking. They must also rotate leadership roles among staff. Aydin et al (2015), quoted Marzano et al (2005), saying this rotation of leadership roles refers to the redistribution of power as input, or the extent to which the school leader involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies. They argue that leaders should manifest more specific skills when applying this tenet. They include:

- providing opportunities for staff to be involved in developing school policies.
- providing opportunities for staff input on all important decisions, and
- using leadership teams in decision making.

BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FUNCTIONS

Principals’ administrative functions refers to practices that ensure the smooth running of secondary schools and enhance quality educational goal achievement in secondary schools (John, 2021). The administrative function allies with controlling, directing and planning functions. The controlling function refers to practices that ensure quality goal achievement in secondary schools; the directing function refers to practices that enable the achievement of full support and willingness of stakeholders towards the achievement of educational goals in secondary schools; planning functions refers to practices that aim at setting all the requirements, resources, and targets for the achievements of educational goals in secondary schools.

Principals pedagogic function entails, the principal must know how to teach and how to manage a dialogue with the staff that will result in continuous upgrading of pedagogical –didactic processes.

A dialogue based on knowledge turns the principal into a pedagogical leader of the learning and teaching community. The pedagogical production function is a model that stimulates how, on average, a child at a certain skill level learns over a certain period of time (usually one year) in a certain grade.

Sometimes, it is a principals responsibility to account for the school's finances and how it is spent. The principal plans, control, organize, direct and decide on how finances are spent based on regulations. In a school system, principals are responsible for managing the budget for the entire school. this means they are in charge of dividing funds for all school expenses, from ordering school supplies to mowing the soccer field.

Principals play a crucial role in creating a positive and nurturing school environment. Developing social skills is essential for effective leadership as it enables principals to establish strong relationships with students, teachers, staff, and parents.

PURPOSE

To demonstrate that several functions are performed by school principals. however the function that actually sanction effective running of a school need to be x-rayed. focus on the function shall help policy makers regulate the duties of school principals for efficient performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past years principals functions were administrative, pedagogic, financial and social. Research reports, observation and official guidelines shows these functions have been used to achieve school goals. but despite all efforts put in place by government to enable school principals acquire skills related to the above functions, we still see schools perform poorly qualitatively and quantitatively in end of year promotion and official examinations and even in recent years incidences of school violence due to gaps in acquisition of skills to run schools. This poor performance and rise of violence in schools could be associated with functions that are interwoven and expose principals to multiple psychological encounters each school day. Therefore, the researcher intend to find out which of these functions is very pertinent in enhancing effective leadership role in school setting so as to place more emphasis during seminars and workshops and even during private research as principals aspire to run schools.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH QUESTION

The qualitative research question administered to all participants of the study was as follows: “ Dear colleague, could you tell this researcher the most important function needed by a principal to make a school run effectively “? The procedure was through an interview of the teachers, principals, vice principals and discipline masters and the researcher took down notes as each participants responded to the unique qualitative research question.

METHODOLOGY

Population: the population of this study constituted all the teaching and administrative staff of all the secondary schools in the far north region of Cameroon.

Sample and sampling technique: a case study method of two schools was used. Twenty teachers were conveniently selected per school; the two principals, two vice-principals and two discipline masters giving a total of 50 participants as shown on the table below:

NAME OF SCHOOL	NO. OF TEACHERS	NO. OF PRINCIPAL	NO. OF VICE PRINCIPAL/DISCIPLINE MASTERS	TOTAL
GOVERNMENT BILINGUAL HIGH SCHOOL MOKOLO	20	1	4	25
GOVERNMENT BILINGUAL HIGH SCHOOL MOKALA	20	1	4	25
TOTAL	40	2	8	50

Method used to retrieve data: The researcher was assisted by research assistants; two teachers per school in the Anglophone section; who were drilled on how to interview their colleagues and principals, they were given a specific form to take down notes as respondents provided answers. The form had: 1. Most important function 2. Reason why it is the most important function. Same procedure was followed by the researcher as he executed with other participants. All the responses were classified and discussions made on the themes.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

The researcher was assisted by research assistants drilled on how to conduct the interview. Putting together all the results, Out of the fifty interviews thirty eight said administrative function was the most important function of school principals. Ten indicated the pedagogical function and two talked of the financial function. Non indicated the social function. All of the interviewees gave responses related to the following themes on why administrative function was the most important:

- He/she is the organizer of all the personnel and infrastructures.
- Planner of all school activities.
- Overseer of all school activities.
- Executive head of the school.
- Control all regarding the school.

Principals as organizer mean principals shall be responsible for 1. The detailed organization of the school 2. The development of instructional program 3. The assignment of duties to and the supervision of members of his staff and 4. the general operation of the school facility. Alinsky, (1969) says In an organizing framework, principals who cultivate relationships between and among both teachers and parents are beginning to ‘think like an organizer’. School principals arrange for learning opportunities for teachers, such as professional development, training and conference attendance. They also arrange opportunities for students, such as inviting guest speakers, and arranging assemblies and pep rallies

Principal as planner means all strategic planning activities at a school are led and approved by the principal. This includes planning the academic calender for the following year, and approving new programs and curricular resources. Principals also lead human resources processes, such as teacher hiring. Rebecca (2021), in her research titled ‘the principal’s role in planning essential supports for school-based professional learning communities portrays that while research from the past two decades highlights principals’ influence on teaching and learning, the call for principals to shift from roles as strong school managers to roles as instructional leaders who foster effective

professional learning communities is challenging for districts to support and achieve at school. Fayol in his management principles see planning as a veritable tool for any leader of an organization.

Regarding control, is an important administrative duty of school principals. Murphy, Peterson and Hallinger (1986), report in their article titled “ the administrative control of principals in effective school districts: the supervision and evaluation functions “ they put forth the point that supervision and evaluation of site level administrators were rational and meaningful processes in these effective school districts. They reported further that the supervision and evaluation functions appeared to form important linkage mechanisms between schools and districts.

We could synthesis all these by saying the school principal is the chief executive officer in a school. All centre around the principal and takes lots of skills related to school administration to succeed. Skills in motivation, human relation and communication are necessary to accompany any principal achieve his schools’ objectives.

CONCLUSION

Schools need principals who understand what principalship entails and must take all the necessary dispositions to make a school attain its objectives. From the findings we see that a school principal can achieve much if the administrative role is highly pursued. Other function nonetheless, are important but roles related to control, planning and organizing are paramount.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Seminars organized to improve principals efficacy should focus more on administrative function, that is how to plan, organize and controlling school activities.
2. Government schools specialized in training school leaders, particularly principals should pay special attention to administrative function.
3. All school principals in their private studies should focus on administrative duties if they ever want to achieve school goals. Research using the internet can provide useful information in this regard.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

Far north region of Cameroon is far from where the researcher resides and therefore could not personally administered the interview schedule. The researcher had to rely on vice-principals as research assistants. Also some of the interviewees were Francophone and therefore researcher and assistants had to engage in translating the views to English language.

REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Aydin, B., Hakan, K., Bulent,A., (2015), School principals’ roles in establishing collaborative professional learning communities at schools; science directdirect, available online at www.sciencedirect.com
2. Amanda Cisler and Mary Alice Bruce: principals: what are their roles and responsibilities?; university of Wyoming.
3. Alinsky, S., (1969) reveille for radicals. New York. NY: Vintage Books.
4. Basha, K., (2015), Leadership qualities of effective principals; northwest comprehensive centre. Research brief.
5. James, W., (1989), Clashing views on controversial educational issues; taking sides 5th edition, the Dushkin publishing group, inc. 1989.

6. John, J., (2021), School principals' administrative functions and their influence on students' learning outcomes in secondary schools in Rangwe sub county – Kenya: a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for award of the degree of master of education in educational administration and planning of the University of Embu
7. Joseph, M., Kent, D. & Philip, H. (1986) The administrative control of principals in effective school districts: the supervision and evaluation functions. Published September 1986 the Urban Review; vol.18, pages 149-175, (1986).
8. Rebecca (2021), the principal's role in planning essential supports for school-based professional learning communities. The George Washington University. Educational planning winter 2021.
9. Mohamad, M., (2020), The role of the school principal as an educator: a study of a vocational school in Jambi, Indonesia. Advance in engineering research, volume 205; proceedings of the 3rd green development international conference GDIC 2020. Atlantis press.
10. Theresia, M., Leke, I. (2000), Educational development in Cameroon, 1961-1999 issues and perspectives; Nkemaji Global Tech., 2000.
11. The Wallace foundation (2013), the school principal as leader: guiding schools to better teaching and learning, expanded edition
12. Sectorwide approach/ education Cameroon 2005.