



International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management
Volume 2, Issue 2, pp. 304-313. 2020

ISSN: 2735-9220

www.ijilpm.com.ng



TEAM MANAGEMENT AS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE FOR TEACHER PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Leadership comes with a lot of responsibilities which are too complex for an individual alone to optimally perform. This makes it imperative for team formation and management as a leadership style, which aims at impacting every actor in the system towards improving productivity. This paper on team management as effective leadership style for teacher productivity in Nigerian educational institutions, defined the concepts of leadership, team management and teacher productivity. Principles of leadership such as technical proficiency and training as well as the self-management and project-team management type of team were discussed. The democratic and autocratic leadership styles were also explained. The paper concluded that educational institutions in Nigeria will be productive if team leadership style is adopted. It was recommended among others that the leadership of educational institutions in Nigeria should incorporate the democratic style of team leadership that accommodates the teacher in every administrative process.

Keywords: Team, Management, Effective Leadership, Teachers, Productivity, Educational Institutions

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Iheme, C. P., & Owhondah, S. N. (2020). Team management as effective leadership style for teacher productivity in Nigerian educational institutions. *International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management*, 2(3), 304-313.

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INTRODUCTION

A lot of responsibilities are usually assigned to school heads and it is rare to find a single individual who has a complex skill and can perform all expected duties by winning the support, trust and confidence of the staff without working as a team. Team can be described as a group of people who work together for a common goal and the good of the service users and organizations in order to deliver a good quality of service (Boakye, 2015). Team building, planning events and activities have the potential of giving teachers a strong sense of direction, workable plans and solutions and a sense of belonging which will increase their morale and productivity. It also eases stress on the school leadership which would have occurred due to the cumbersome responsibilities assigned to it as the responsibilities would be shared among the teachers according to their strength.

Teamwork is a fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results. Without teamwork houses take longer to build, government collapse and companies are outshined by their competitors in the market and teachers lose their inspiration thereby making them unproductive (Hartenian, 2003). Even from time of creation, God applied the concept of teamwork when he said, "Let us make man in our own image" (Genesis 1:26, King James Version). This statement means that God created man with the help of other heavenly beings, hence the essence of team in producing man. Also the bible says "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up. But how will it be if one falls and there is no another to raise him up?" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, KJV). This implies that teamwork can accomplish what the individual cannot do on his or her own. The rate of failure and examination malpractice in educational institutions today can be attributed to inadequate teamwork between the school leadership and teachers.

In view of the above, it becomes imperative that human beings that were created through teamwork must adopt teamwork and spirit to achieve expected goals in life endeavours. This statement is true of the school organizations in the education industry with a conglomerate of individuals and diverse goals to achieve at different complex settings. In fact, one of the reasons for the falling standard in education is that teachers are not putting their best in the teaching and learning processes in the school, thereby producing half-baked graduates who cannot fit into the society properly. This can be attributed to the fact that teachers and management do not work as a team which have led to a fall in their commitment to work and productivity. This suggests that the individuals, indeed the entire staff (leaders and subordinates) without exemptions, who work in the school system must be team conscious to be able to attain the goal expectations, and put the educational institutions in the right perspective and the society in the lime light. This paper therefore seeks to identify the impact of team management on teachers' productivity in the Nigerian educational institutions.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Leadership

Leadership is a very important factor in institutional effectiveness; it determines the success or failure of not only institutions but also a nation. It is the process of inspiring others to pursue a vision within set restrictions, thus, making it a shared effort, vision and success (Mulika, 2010; Conti & Kleiner, 2003). It is also a process which involves the use of influence on others

(usually subordinates) for the achievement of goals. Ogunu (2000) perceives leadership as a dynamic process in a group whereby one individual influences the other to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of group goal. It is influencing people by providing purpose, direction and motivation while operating to accomplish and improving the organization.

Deductively, leadership can be described to include the following important aspects:

- It requires followers (people): Leadership is a function of followership, which means there is no leadership without followership.
- It involves influence: Leaders should be able to influence their followers' behaviour towards the accomplishment of institutional task.
- It is a process: It is an ongoing activity that involves planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling followers among others to ensure that institutional goals are achieved.
- It involves goal attainment: It involves the exercise of influence for a purpose.

In all intents and purposes, leadership is an aggregative concept, implying that all hands must be on deck in the productive activity anywhere; it is the leader who coordinates and inspires others towards goal attainment and here under-guards' effective leadership.

However, effective leadership is usually accentuated by certain underlying principles and these include;

Effective leadership is about influence, not level of authority: The influence of the school head should always be above the level of authority. Establishment of one's personal credibility and authority by consistently demonstrating and living a life that is trust worthy.

Good listening and communicating aptitude: School heads should listen to its teachers' opinion even if it is not in line with that of the leader. It is about respecting them and paying attention to them. People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Communicate with teachers by keeping them informed so as to ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished.

Great leaders use their power to empower others: Effective leaders are a source of strength to their followers. They encourage the heart. The more a leader empowers others, the stronger and more effective the leader and the team becomes.

Being technically proficient: A leader must be well rooted in the job and be familiar with that of the teachers.

Being a good role model for your employee: Effective leaders set good examples. They must not only hear what they are expected to do, but also see you do them.

Knowing your people and looking out for their well-being: Effective leaders know human nature and the importance of sincerely caring for their workers.

Team Management

A team is a group of people or animals interconnected together for a common purpose to accomplish a set goal (Nwokamma, 2015). It is important to note that a group of people does not necessarily constitute a team. Team normally is a composition of individual members who have complementary skills and create synergy through a coordinated effort which allows each member to maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses (Maxwell, 2001). A team therefore enables its member to learn from each other's world of experience and realize their true potentials. Besides, it creates an enabling environment that allows everyone to go beyond his or her expectation.

Nelson and Quick (1997) and Nakpodia (2011) identified some types of teams in the school system which includes:

- Self-managed team: This type of team makes decisions that were originally left for the school head.
- Project team: This type of team is established for the achievement of short term goals.
- Staff team: This team is formed within departments or units in the school system.
- Middle management team: This team comprises of the head of departments and units.
- Senior management team: They are executive members of the school system.

On the other hand, team management is a leadership style that emphasis both task and interpersonal relationships and creates a very productive and good working environment (Northhouse, 2013). Oluyede (2007) perceived team management as the process in which decisions are taken with subordinates of the working environment. It is seen as a style of leadership that ensures that all level of administration in its institution adopts democratic features. Team management basically connotes the ability of an individual or organization to coordinate a group of individuals in performing a task.

Within an educational institution, team management occurs where a group of teachers or non-teaching staff work collectively on certain tasks or perform their teaching or non-teaching functions to accomplish a set goal under the supervision of a team leader. This style of leadership is effective because it allows collaborative effort of all working within the school system and depends on the ability of individual teachers to communicate and coordinate their activities mutually and support each other to accomplish set objectives as a team.

Teacher Productivity

Productivity is to a large extent an economic and management concept and so an elusive term that does not lend itself to easy definition. Productivity is the hall mark of growth and development of a nation all over the world, an effective and efficient way, a ratio of measures of getting things done. In the school, teachers' productivity may be measured in terms of teachers' performance (Schacter & Thum, 2004). However, Shamaki (2015) suggested that teachers' productivity may be evaluated in terms of what the teachers control and actually do in classroom such as teaching effectiveness and classroom performance. Undoubtedly, productivity is a measure of teacher's effectiveness and efficiency in the education industry (Owhondah, 2018). The contribution the teacher in the mobilization of the available school's instructional resources inspires student's learning ability or causes someone else to gain experiences.

TEAM MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP STYLES TO IMPROVE TEACHER PRODUCTIVITY

The school head who is the team leader can adopt different leadership styles which can increase or reduce teacher productivity. The leadership styles include:

Democratic: School heads that are democratic tend to discuss with their subordinates (teachers) before any decision is made, so that teachers can make suggestions and make their opinion known which may differ from that of the school head. The advantage of this leadership style is that it allows the teachers to participate in decision making thereby making the teacher feel more appreciated which can lead to an increase in teacher productivity, quality and morale. The disadvantage of this leadership style is that it takes a longer time for decision to be made especially when the teachers are many. This can slow down the decision making process.

Autocratic: This is a one sided way of leadership pointing out that top – down command are the means of communication in which the team leader makes decisions solely making the initiative and opinions of subordinates (teachers) disregarded and do not encourage criticism, suggestions and motivation is enhanced through fear of punishment. The advantage of this team management leadership style is its fast and prompt decision making which is very important during crises. Its disadvantage is that it leads to over dependence on team leader (school head) for decision making and this can lead to stress, low productivity and low teacher morale since their opinions are not valued.

Laissez-faire: This is the opposite of autocratic team management leadership style of which the team leader trusts the teachers to do the job even if it is at their own pace and time. As such there is very little or no team management technique or authority used by such a team leader. This team management style is applicable to schools that involved in product design and construction such as vocational and technical schools where the flexibility and freedom provided in the school environment stimulates creativity and productivity in teachers and students (Riley, 2012). The advantage of this team leadership style in the above described school setting is that teachers build their potentials and are more creative when not controlled or closely monitored. One of its disadvantages is that teachers tend to be slow in their jobs when not supervised.

The above team leadership styles are adopted by the school head to improve the teacher morale, quality and productivity. These team leadership styles can be separately used or combined; for instance autocratic and laissez-faire team leadership style can be blended so also democratic and autocratic team leadership style. This combination can be done to minimize the disadvantages and maximize the advantages of the various styles. Also the leadership style adopted depends on the personality trait of the team leader (school head).

TEAM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TEACHER PRODUCTIVITY

Some of the team management strategies for improving teacher productivity as stated by Nwokamma (2015) include:

Econ 101 strategy: This strategy assumes that team members (teachers) are motivated by incentives or rewards particularly financial rewards. This strategy is substantiated by Taylor's theory of Scientific Management in that the major form of motivation is money. Financial gains are used in the place of intrinsic motivation to drive and motivate teachers to function at high level.

Command and control strategy: This strategy adopts the autocratic style of leadership which is based on military management. By this strategy the school head (team leader) is to command the teachers (team members) to complete a job or incur punishment from the school head. This can make the morale of the teachers low due to constant punishment from the school head at every slightest mistake.

Engage and create strategy: This strategy is an alternative to fill the inadequacies of command and control strategy. It ensures that the teachers (team members) are encouraged to engage in the decision making process. It also ensures that members interact with other team members so as to foster solidarity, teamwork and unity.

Prevent team burn-out: Team leaders (school heads) should set the precedent about when to work, play and relax. This will make teachers feel refreshed and healthier.

Communication: A team leader should master the art of communication not just regular, but shrewd communication because impactful communication is at the heart of everything the team leader does.

Approachability and availability: As an integral part of the team, the team leader needs to be an ever-present member of the team, be presence at the very heart of everything that will be done and nurture a culture of openness and approachability that fosters trust and respect throughout the team.

IMPACTS OF TEAM MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP STYLE ON TEACHER PRODUCTIVITY

Institutions which emphasized more on teams resulted in increased teachers' productivity and better problem solving at work (Cohen & Bailey, 1999). A study by Ingram (2000) concluded that the good manager is the one who assigned responsibilities to his/her employee in a form of group or team in order to take maximum output from employees. According to Ingram (2000) teamwork is a strategy that has a potential to improve the productivity of individuals and organizations, but it needs to be nurtured over time. Some of the effect of team management on teachers includes:

Boost Productivity: It boosts the productivity level of the teachers and enables them handle tough, difficult competitive situations both at school and home. Team members function more efficiently, are less prone to stress, and such individuals make greater effort in their work

Good decision-making and implementation: Teamwork allows teachers to make use of their initiative in making decisions understanding clearly the goal and objectives to be achieved.

Team Trust: It builds up trust among the team members (teachers) as they develop the confidence in each other competence. One research study concluded that trust among the team members (teachers) develop the unique skills and coordination of individuals (Erdem et al., 2003).

In a study by Froebal and Marchington (2005) it should be possible to design a system of team building within every organization for employees in order to promote and distribute best practice and maximize output. The main emphasis for designing and implementing such a system is ultimately to improve teachers' productivity.

Mickan and Rodger (2000) perceived that there is positive relationship between the team performance and trust. Trust generates the behavioral basis of teamwork, which results in organizational synergy and better productivity. Development of trust within the organization is the responsibility of individuals. Creation of conducive and the trustable environment for synergetic teamwork is the responsibility of organization. Trust provides an atmosphere for the team members where members can discuss their mistakes, accept criticism and freely express their feelings so this leads to more synergy (Edmondson, 1999).

Challenges in Team Management

Possible challenges could abound in team management in the light of:

Absence of trust: The absence of vulnerability-based trust; where team members are comfortable being vulnerable with each other, trust each other to help when asking for guidance, and are willing to admit their mistakes within a team is detrimental to a team. Team leaders have to assist each other when they are vulnerable and also allow team members to see their vulnerable side, which is contradictory to the orthodox belief. If a team lacks vulnerability based trust, team members will not be willing to share ideas or acknowledge their faults due to the fear of being exposed as incompetent, leading to a lack of communication and the hindering of the team.

Fear of conflict: Contrary to the general belief, conflict is a positive element in a team as it drives discussion. The fear of conflict is the fear of team members to argue with one another and the fear of disagreeing with the team leader. If team members hold back and are afraid of confronting the leader or their team mates, then the concept of a team is non-existent because there is only one person who contributes and no new ideas are generated from discussions. The fear of conflict in a team stems from an absence of trust, more specifically vulnerability based trust. If team members are afraid to be vulnerable in front of one another, disputes can be manipulative and a means to overthrow and shame the other team member. However, if team members trust each other and are comfortable being vulnerable in front of one another, then debates can be a pursuit of a better and more effective method to achieve a task.

Lack of commitment: When team members do not provide input on a decision, it shows that they do not agree or approve of the decision, leading to a halt in team activity and progress. Furthermore, when team members do not express their opinions, views and potential ideas are lost, hurting the project and the company.

Avoidance of accountability: The avoidance of accountability in a team is the failure of team members to be accountable for the consequences of their actions. When team members do not commit to a decision, they will be unwilling to take responsibility for the outcomes of the decision. In addition, if a lack of trust exists within the team then there will be an absence of peer to peer accountability; team members will not feel accountable towards their team members and hence will not put effort into their tasks. The team must trust and hold each other responsible so that the intention will always be for the benefit of the team and for the team to succeed.

Team leaders who are afraid of confrontation might avoid holding team members accountable when in fact they have made a mistake. Team leaders must develop the confidence to hold team members accountable so that they will feel the sense of responsibility and entitlement to the team, and learn from their mistakes. If not, then errors will not be corrected and might lead to worse problems, causing a defective team.

Inattention to results: If team leaders and team members do not hold each other accountable then they will not be concerned about the outcome of the team and whether they have achieved their goal, as they do not have a drive to obtain great results. Inattention to results causes a loss of purpose and brings into question the existence of the team.

Possible Solutions to Team Management Challenges in Educational Institutions

In the educational institutions, problems are inevitable, but the important thing is that these problems are resolved through the following processes of:

Building trust: An approach to resolving fundamental trust problems within teams is to build trust amongst team members. A team leader can build trust by persuading team members to ask questions and seek guidance from other team members, so that they are more familiar and comfortable in being vulnerable with one another, questions such as “May you teach me how to do this” or “You are better than me at this”. However, in order to achieve vulnerability based trust within the team the team leader must be vulnerable first, if the team leader is unwilling to be vulnerable, nobody else in the team will be willing to follow.

Appraisals: Appraisals can be a way for team members to provide feedback to one another or for team members to provide advice to the leader. This will allow individual members of the team to reflect on their performance and aim to do better by amending their mistakes; furthermore appraisals create an environment where the chain of command is non-existent and team members can be honest towards one another. This is effective in a way that the team can provide progressive feedback towards other members and can advise the leader on how he or she can improve their leadership. After each member reads their appraisals, they will understand how they can strive to improve, benefitting the team in reaching its objectives. The commonly used forms of appraisals are performance appraisal 360 degree feedback.

Team building activities: Team-building activities are a series of simple exercises involving teamwork and communication. The main objectives of team building activities are to increase the trust amongst team members and allow team members to better understand one another. When choosing or designing team building activities, it is best to determine if your team needs an event or an experience. Generally an event is fun, quick and easily done by non-professionals. Team

building experiences provide richer, more meaningful results. Experiences should be facilitated by a professional on an annual basis for teams that are growing, or changing.

Back to Back Drawing: Back to back drawing is a team building activity where two members of a team sit back to back. One member is given a picture while the other is given a blank piece of paper. The member with the picture has to describe to the other member what the picture includes and the other member has to sketch what is described. At the end of the game, both members compare the picture and the drawing to see how similar they are. This game aims to improve verbal communication between team members.

The Human Knot: The human knot is a team building activity where team members stand in a circle and grab hold of the hands of other participants that are not immediately next to them. The objective is to unravel the circle of entangled hands. This game, through the physical touch between team members, will allow them to feel more comfortable with each other. Furthermore, this game can improve the verbal and physical communication between team members and enable the team to identify which communication process is the most effective within the team.

CONCLUSION

Educational institutions will be efficient and effective if team management leadership style is adopted. This style helps in boosting the productivity of the worker as well as the performance of educational institutions as a whole. It further enhances individuals' creativity in handling and resolving conflict and in making good decisions overtime. For a team to perform effectively there is need for some team members to possess levels of skills such as technical expertise, problem solving and decision making as well as interpersonal skills. There is no team that can achieve its performance potential without developing the appropriate skills. Educational institutions in Nigeria will be productive if team management leadership style is adopted.

Suggestions

- The leadership of educational institutions in Nigeria should incorporate the democratic style of team leadership that accommodates the teacher in every administrative process.
- Team managers should endeavor to ensure that each team acquires and appropriates the technical expertise, problem solving and decision making as well as interpersonal skills that will enable the team to perform effectively.

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