Politics of Educational Leadership: Its Implications for Secondary School Improvement in Rivers State

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Abstract
This paper viewed the educational system as a complex whole and a huge endeavour with numerous challenges that have emanated from the dynamic nature of society. The perceived functions of education for a rapidly changing society, has placed enormous pressure on the policy and programmes of education, on the curriculum and the organization and management of education generally. While policy and curriculum are fundamental and the enigma of the educational system, the educational system which involves the deployment of huge resources certainly requires the directional compass of leadership and management. The focus of this paper therefore, is the position of educational leadership in causing improvement in secondary school education in particular taking into consideration the politics involved in decisional resource of allocation and guidance in curriculum execution, professional issues, cooperation matters, students and staff personal issues, community participation, physical and financial issues and sundry matters.
Keywords: Education, Leadership, Educational leadership, Politics.

1.   Introduction

Education is the major fulcrum for national development in many countries of the world today. This is because in all fronts, be it technology, science, law, medicine, teaching, industry, culture, and so on., education is expected to produce the human capital expected to undertake them for the overall development of the society. For Nigeria, education is the instrument "par excellence for national development" (FRN, 2004). Besides, individuals have also relied most on education for social mobility, for escaping poverty and for achieving elite status in society (Enaohwo, 1999).

The role education plays both in the development of individuals and society in general has therefore put enormous pressure on its provision, access and quality. Again, the perceived functions of education in a rapidly changing society put a considerable pressure on policy and programmes, curriculum, organization and management of education. While policy and curriculum are the enigma of the educational system, management and leadership are essential in effective and efficient direction and utilization of the resources for the achievement of results, successes, improvement of the education goals and in turn national development goals.

Thus, much as resources especially in educational system, without optimal mix, deployment, direction, guidance and motivation cannot achieve any goals, leadership becomes inevitable. At all tiers of the educational system, effective leadership is strongly linked to the influential role in inspiring, motivating, affirming and challenging the workforce (teachers and others) in optimizing the curriculum and adjoining resources for the realization of specified goals (http://file.acecga.gov.all Retrieved 26/09/2015). The philosophical foundation of educational leadership in the Nigerian educational system clearly underlies the necessity of:
(a) ensuring adequate and effective planning of all educational services.
(b) provide efficient administrative and management control for the maintenance and improvement of the system.
(c) ensure quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services amongst others (FRN, 2004:56).

The core requirement in achieving the goal of the underlying philosophy is in the exercise of discretional authority in guiding and motivating the talents and energies of school inputs in pursuit of goals and objectives (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wikil educational leadership. Retrieved 26/09/2015) since school resources need optimal utilization and have them to be discretionally allocated according to prevailing circumstances, critical decisions are to be made. In making the decisions, consideration must constantly be given to diverse interests ranging from curriculum matters to societal concerns (Okeke, 1997).

1.1   Educational leadership

At any level of education, leadership remains a critical resource in achieving school success. It is at the centre of working out guidance, motivation, galvanizing the resources, energies and talents towards accomplishing school goals. Educational leadership is also referred to as school leadership. It is a process of influencing significant others towards improving school for better results or achievement. It is the ability in creating situations or circumstances in which goals are achieved with integrity of conviction and cooperation and which reduces to the barest minimum, the need for conflicts and dissipation of group energies and waste of scarce resources in the school.

Educational leadership also known as school leadership (hjttp:www. curriculum.edu.aulleader/school leadership theory and..., retrieved (20/09/2015), Menon (?), Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004); wiki/educational_leadership) has received extensive definition from different authorities and a fundamental challenge has remained to interpret what school leadership effectively represents. This situation here is whether leadership means a role for one person when it is defined as "a process of influencing others to accomplish task". Or, viewed as "a social process that is inherent in a social system and which is experienced by members of the school at different levels of their participation (Holy and Miskel, 2008).

Yukl (2002) in Hoy and Miskel' (2008) defme leadership broadly as "a social process in which a member or members of a group or organization influence the interpretation of internal and external events, the choice of goals or desired outcomes, organization of work activities, individual motivation and abilities, power relations and shared orientations. This definition that sees educational leadership as a term applied to school administrations that strive to create positive change in educational policy and process. Pertinently, inherent in the above definition is the view of educational leadership as a shared task, practice and values. It is evidently too that positive change and improvement takes more than one member of the group.

There has also been the other perspective in which educational leadership or school leadership has been perceived simply as the process of influencing, motivating and providing direction towards accomplishing goals (Okorie, 1990). Leadership seen in this perspective has implication for a strong personality who determines the behaviour of others in school towards achieving school goals.

Educational leadership perceived either as influence exercise by one strong official or by everyone in social process of school is designated towards achieving goals of school improvement and students success. The difference in the approach to leadership is what will define school goals are achieved (Hoy and Miskel, 2008). Leihtwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) provide sufficient insight as how leadership approach becomes the groundswell for politics of educational leadership.

1.1.1 Who is involved in educational leadership?

Discerning who is involved in school leadership will require an examination of the varied approaches or models of leadership in the school system. Examination will dichotomize the approaches as traditional and nontraditional for the sake of this paper.

(a) Traditional perspectives

This category subsumes all leadership practices that are characterized by hierarchy, centralized role, and bureaucratically structured communication model centrally controlled by one man the Principal of the school. In this approach educational or school leadership is clearly perceived as consisting of the following, according to Abdurahman Yusuf, (201.3).

(i) Principal
(ii) The two vice principals

This approach will see the principal adhere strictly to bureaucratic or formal

structure of administration in leading the school. The primary responsibility of the
Principal will include to design and assign administrative roles which according to
Abduirabman Yusuf (2013) will include Heads of Departments, form Masters, Subject
Teachers, Hall Warden, Bursar/Account Officer, House Masters and School Prefects.

It is also expected that tasks or responsibilities nor carried out by the principal may e assigned the Vice-Principal by the Principal or through the instruction of a Superintendent (Abdurahman Yusuf, 2013). From what is known as the responsibilities of the Principal, school leadership is the responsibility of the Principal. The expectations in administrative terms would according to Abdurahman (2013) and Association of Independent Schools of Queensland (2003) include;

i)   Pupil/student personal administration
ii)   Community-school relations administration
iii)   Drawing up vision for the school
iv)   Finance/bridge of administration
v)   Monitoring school activities

These perspective to leadership in school comes close to partial transformational leadership in nature, clearly managerial in true form, contingent in character as the emphasis are on teacher task, commitment and job accomplishment (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2008 and Association of Schools of Queensland, 2003).

(b)Non-traditional perspective

This set of approaches to educational or school leadership subsumes all models that explain leadership as not one man oriented but belongs to the general school organization. Such approaches have tended to view leadership as general property of the school social process linking everyone that has a role to play in school improvement, pupil achievement and community success to leadership roles.

Though those perspectives encourage participatory involvement by all, the school principal still retains the responsibility for general accountability. Association of Independent Schools of Queensland (2003) and Hans,

(2002) have argued that the nature of this formal leadership role becomes primarily to hold the view of the organization together in a productive relationship,... [and] to create a common culture of expectations around the use of individual skills and abilities. What it means here is that Principal and others in the school community perform leadership functions collectively. The difference remains that abundant human skills and capacities are massed together where leadership is accepted as collective responsibility as against where it is viewed as a bureaucratic managerial role responding defied tasks duly accredited to one office and one officer (Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, 2003; and Adeyemi, 201 1).

These models to school leadership suit post transformational leadership and fits completely in distributed leadership. The spectrum of attributes in this model will include participation, equity, democratic community, and social justice (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2008), creativity, visioning, communication, school culture and mission (Association of Independent Schools of Queensland 2003).

Functions of educational leadership

The basic function of educational leadership is to ensure the success of school. In achieving this end, students' performance and achievement as well as school improvement are paramount. Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) agree that effective school leadership makes a difference in improving learning and school achievement.

1.1.2   Activities of educational leadership

Educational leadership has been seen as the provision of guidance, motivation and direction in school activities leading to the accomplishment and achievement of educational goals. This position therefore means that educational or school leadership entails enormous responsibilities and role. Though there is no national policy on education leadership, the practice across Nigeria appears to place emphasis on the principal as one charged with:

(a) Education policy analysis at that level. According to Okeke (1997), policies are deemed as part of the means of achieving goals and purposes. Thus educational leadership's role here is to analyze the policies and interpret them for implementation or the achievement of educational goals. This is because, according to Okeke (1997), implementation of educational policies remains the functions of school administration in bureaucratic terms.

(b) Curriculum implementation/Instructional resources.

The core of educational leadership remains the improvement in teaching and learning. The implementation of the right curriculum in the school and innovations in materials — textbooks and others for accomplishment of curriculum tasks demands the attention of educational for school leaders (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom, 2004).

(c) Pupil/student personnel administration. Educational or school leadership is fundamentally responsible for providing learning situations, conducive school climate, rules and regulation for character formation and modification, admission, orientation, placement in loco parents platforms, arrangement of counselling services in school (Ajufo, 2011, Malik, 2013 & Kpee, 2013),

(d) Staff personnel management. Educational or school leadership desires a cooperative, productive and effective and efficient workforce to achieve school goals and improvement. Thus, every school leadership takes into consideration staff issues ranging from welfare to professional growth and development (Lunenburg and Omstein, 2008).

(e) School improvement/change and innovation leadership: Here, school development planning is responsibility of school leadership. Currencies at global stage such as climate change, globalization, sex issues, human rights calls HIV/AIDS and sundry issues are expected to be tackled by educational leadership.

(1) School/community relationship management. Issues relating to school improvement and students accomplishment are pertinent and remain the responsibility of school leadership adroitly fashion (Asodike, 2013).

(g) Financial management. Financial resources are critical in the purchase of goods and services for schools. Educational or school leadership is responsible for financial management ranging from sourcing to prudent expenditure. Often the ability to accomplish school goals have depended not only on availability but judicious application of funds (Ebong, 2013). Supply of usable in the laboratories, books in the library, settlement of bills and tariffs and implementation of contingencies are all functions of funds.

(h) Running the offices. Educational leadership depends on support services in the various technical and non-technical areas to accomplish school goals. A clear. demonstration of essence of the offices in the school will greatly impact on goals achievement.

(i) Facilities/plant management. The policy on school facilities/plant is the responsibility of the school leadership. Halls, courts, pitches, vehicles, water are some facilities usually in regular demand for use by staff, students and even community.

(j) Partnership programmes/collaborations with non-governmental organizations, philanthropists are public spirit individual and organization abound. Education leadership with vision for improvement and sustainable achievement cannot ignore this noble aspect of leadership.

(k) Development of culture of work attitudes, beliefs and value necessary for task accomplishments, students

achievement and school improvement rest squarely on educational or school leadership (Lunenburg and Omstein, 2008).

1.1.3 Elements of education or school leadership

Determining educational or school leadership will depend so much on the leadership disposition, style, behaviour or education of every principal. Following what Lunenburg and Omstein (2008) describe as a boss-centred leadership and subordinate centred leadership, it's possible to indicate that educational leadership in secondary school may include the following:

(1)Principal

(2) Vice principal

(3) Teachers

(4) Students

(5) Parent Teacher Association

(6) Selected Community Representative

(7) Old Students Association

(8) Local education Board or Authority

Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) analysis of educational leadership in terms of activities of leadership, rather than leadership being the "function of an individual ability, skill, charisma and cognition", supports the list above as constituent of educational leadership in school. This assertion that leadership activity involves three essential constituting elements, namely leaders — positional leaders, teacher leaders and others and situation aptly defines the structure of educational leadership (https :/en.m.wikiedia.org/wilci!Educational leadership, 28/9/2015).

Every category of element in educational leadership constitutes a separate entity and represents an interest besides the core of school curriculum (Roy and Miskel, 2008).

Every group involved in the leadership of the school, brings its skills, abilities, experience and expertise (Okorie, 2000). Okeke (1997) observed that reaching decisions in the atmosphere of numerous individuals or groups with diverse interests, abilities, skills and expertise usually proves ambiguous and difficult. Often this sets the stage for adept politics associated with educational leadership adopting broad-based approaches creating wide ranging areas of tension within the school.

2.0   Areas of tension in educational leadership

Areas of tension, politicking and conflict within educational leadership in the secondary school may be identified as follows:

(1) Distribution of resources of school.

(2) Participation in various school activities.

(3) School goal attainments/students performance and achievement.

(4) School development planning and improvement.

(5) School culture and discipline.

(6) Community involvement in school/expectations.

(7) Methods/Approaches of evaluating school success

(8) Curriculum executionlinstructional materials

(9) Curriculum impact on the community.

(10) Accountability

(http://en.m.wikipedia.org/miki/educational leadership ,28/9/201 5;

http://www.curriculum.edu.au/leader/schoolleadership _theory_and.. 28/09/2015'). School leadership constantly are challenged by questions raised on the issues mentioned (http.//www.wallace-fouclation.org/knowledge-center/school4eadership...

15/09/2015).

2.1 Dynamics of politics in educational or school leadership

The need to have hold a clear idea of what educational leadership is, and various approaches to it, activities of educational leadership, elements of educational leadership and areas around which most tension and conflict surround educational leadership become necessary in understanding the employment of power by principals, and the struggle by others to make impact in the decision making process of the school. School leadership regularly find themselves "balancing, directly controlling, manipulating, managing and surviving their edgy environment (Lindle and Mawhiney, 2003).

Though micro as it seems, politics of.. educational leadership involves the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in the school (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/politics_in_education1/10/2015). It. involves the examination of overt and covert issues relating to decisions concerning school resources in terms of provision, allocation, utilization and resulting

Journal of Education and Practice
www.iiste.org
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper)   ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.7, No.21, 2016

impact on students achievement, school improvement, community satisfaction, education goal attainment, staff welfare and professional as well as societal certification. Since educational leadership does not situate in the vacuum, leadership styles, approaches and models, • because the basis for an emerging power play in educational leadership. The emerging manipulations, maneuvers, balancing and predominance then defines the arrangements and the judicious employments of human, material financial, curriculum and programmers resources of the school (Spillane. Halverson and Diamond, 2004).

Irrespective of the leadership approach adopted in school, each of the elements in school leadership generates certain amount of tension in the process of influencing the practice of leadership in resources distribution and decisioning.

Elements of educational leadership and the tension they generate

Tension in this paper represents conflict resulting from the process of resource distribution. Thus conflict arising from leadership engagements relating to each group is what this section sets out to identify.

Community hosting the school: Community hosting school almost always provide the school with nearly half of the population of the students. They therefore are critical stakeholders rightly centered and are bound to regularly engage school leadership over a number of issues as follows: (Landers and Myers, 1977, Asodike, 2013)

•   Students' performance and achievement both in internal and external examinations.
•   Fees paid in terms of being high or affordable.
•   Admission requirements/criteria.
•   School examination policy.
•   Availability of school facilities for use by community.
•   Preferential treatments
•   Curriculum implementation
•   Judicious use of community assisted projects/platforms.

School leadership determined to achieve goals needs to understand the community and effectively incorporate it to partner in school improvement. Landers and Myers (1977) identify that local community has drives, forces, emotion, goals and philosophy that are affected by the factors of urbanization, population mobility, cultural interchanges and mass media and these need be taken into consideration as they could constantly change community engagement with the school in pursuing their goals for better school results and community development.

2.1.1 Tension from staff

Staff of a secondary school consists of teaching and non-teaching staff Teaching staff are closer both in professional standing and responsibilities to educational leadership of a school than non teaching staff. This means teaching staff possess characteristics similar to positional educational leaders in terms of education, qualification skills, exposure experience and perhaps training. While the situation may make it easier for shared leadership, values and school vision, staff still have a number of areas which could lead to contradictions and conflicts with educational leadership of school. These include the following;

(a) Choice of content and nature of curriculum materials.
(b) Students assessment methods.
(c) Classification and class allocation to teachers.
(d) Merit system/preferential treatments for appointments
(e) Curriculum implementation procedures.
(1) Attendance/commitment to school duties.
(g) Promotion/transfer issues affecting staff
(h)   Professional development/availability of opportunities.
(i)   Welfare issues — housing, office space, medicals, transportation, unionism, work ethics, and discipline.
(j)   Relationship with the community
(k) Mentoring

According to Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) and Asodike and Ejigu (2013), these issues are directly linked to teacher productivity, commitment and shared responsibilities in the school. School leadership not navigating the issues with teachers by directly negotiating, bargaining and reaching compromises, runs the risk of uncooperative attitudes, conflicts and confrontations with teaching staff The situation will not only affect school leadership but will have effect for curriculum and sundry responsibilities (Roy & Miskel, 2008).

2.1.2 Political Tension between school and ministry

School leadership has a role to play in sustaining the presence of the Ministry of Education or its agencies. The ministry has responsibilities for policy, programmes and plan, whereas the school is where they are realized through various operations and platforms (FRN, 2004). The ministry or its agencies have expectations of school in the following areas:

(a) executing of curriculum
(b) achievement of educational goals
(c) implementation of educational policies
(d) judicious use of available resources/maintenance of existing facilities.
(e) school leadership/accountability
(I) advice on staff welfare/promotion
(g) initiating school improvement plans
(h) internal supervision.

The ministry of education or its agencies holds school leadership responsible or accountable for those issues as they are all linked to school goal achievement (Hoy and Miskel, 2008). How school leadership deploy its formal and official power, authority and influence to meet the targets of the ministry and challenges of coordinative and compliance will indicate how much can be accomplished. What is required is adroit leadership using all balancing acts to attract compliance, cooperation and commitment.

Political tension between school and students

Tension arising between students and school leadership are related to students'
(a) welfare - feeding, conditions in the dormitory
(b) security of lives while at school
(c) disciplinary issues/measures
(d) preservation of human rights of students
(e) provision of conducive learning conditions
(f) provision and availability of sporting facilities
(g) performance and academic achievement
(h) school climate

School leadership will observe that most of the needs of students remain welfare and academic. The availability and provision and the lack of it, would underline students' contribution or input to effective school leadership. The school leadership then requires, according to I1oy and Miskel (2008), negotiation, political games and strategies to win over student leadership to operate while solutions are being sought.

2.1.3 Political tension between school leadership and others-PTA, unions and philanthropists
For Parents-Teachers Association and philanthropists, point of conflict will be on utilization of denoted monies and platforms as well as on accomplishing goals. The unions' interest remains the welfare of their membership.

2.1.4 Resolution of conflict interests
Resolving the conflicts generated by the expression of different interested individuals and diverse groups is imperative for school leadership if, school goals and improvement are to be achieved. The process of determining how school resources are to be distributed, policies implemented and curriculum implementation achieved, educational leadership of any design or model needs employ conflicts management as administrative tool.

Whether leadership at school employs transactional, or transformational and even distributed models, fundamental to conflict politics is leadership ability to:
(a) clearly understand issues leading to agitation
(b) identify participants, identify the situation
(c) identify participants strength and weaknesses
(d) develop paradigm for engagement
(e) engage participants
(f) develop zones of congruence
(g) develop zones for official reservation
(h) identify participants satisfaction scales
(i) liberalize discussions and publicize agreed outcome
(j) develop an inclusive leadership program.

Mercer, barker and Bird (2010) in analyzing leadership development opined that following the points above will enable educational leaders to develop relationship building and team-working necessary in minimizing conflict and focusing on curriculum and school improvement.

3.0 Conclusion
Educational leadership received tremendous focus in modem school administration. This is fundamentally so because besides, curriculum responsibilities in school, school leadership is what needs to be authentic. This is not just because of the management of organizational resources but to give direction, guidance and provide platform from all the energies, skills, capacities and experiences staff bring which are germane to students success and school improvement.

Expectedly, leadership approaches of individual principals will vary depending on how they perceive

the resources of power, authority and influence attached to leadership. The individual interpretation and application of leadership resources now determines the politics involved when organizational resources are up for determination. Thus, each group or individual within the school organization embarks on struggle for school resources which has significant impact on overall school goal achievement and students' performance.

3.1   Suggestions

The following suggestions are put forward to help educational leadership in schools, namely:
(1)   Academic qualification in educational leadership from a university is essential.
(2)   Leadership mentoring be accepted.
(3)   Educational leadership must design leadership paradigm for their schools.
(4)   Educational leadership practices must reflect current leadership practices in society.
(5)   Leadership processes must be a regular discourse in school.
(6)   Participatory leadership practices must be encouraged.
(7)   School vision must include role of each elements in educational leadership in bringing about change, innovation and improvement.
(8)   School leadership forum must be encouraged.
(9)   Groups and individuals be encouraged to draw up their expectations and goals.
(10)   Groups and individuals be allowed to do self evaluation of their input.

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