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ADMINISTRATORS' LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND EMPLOYEES' JOB ENGAGEMENT IN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN OGUN STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined administrators' leadership skills and employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Four Hundred and Fifteen employees (academic and non-teaching staff) selected from six out of the 12 public tertiary institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria were sampled, using multi-stage sampling technique. A researcher-designed 30 item 4 point modified Likert rating scale instrument entitled "Administrators Leadership Skills and Employees' Job Engagement Questionnaire" (ALSEJEQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to reliability test using the Crombach Alpha method and a value of 0.89 was obtained. Data analysis was statistically done using Multiple Regression Analysis. Findings revealed that, though low, the overall model of the three administrators' leadership skills indicators significantly predicted employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State ($F_{(3, 411)} = 47.195, p < 0.05$); that, though low, the overall model of the administrators' leadership skills indicators significantly predicted

employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State ($F_{(3, 411)} = 47.195$, $p < 0.05$); and that although, administrators' analytical skills significantly contributed to the model, the contribution was negative $\beta = -.284$, $t(411) = -3.028$, $p < 0.05$. The administrators' conceptual skills did not significantly contribute to the model $\beta = -.048$, $t(411) = -.496$, $p = .620$. It was therefore recommended among others that appointment of Administrators of tertiary educational institutions should be hinged on evidence of having undergone training at the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA, Nigeria), and that serving institutional Administrators should as a matter of policy be required to engage in Mandatory Continuing Professional Education.

Keywords

Administrators' Leadership Skills, Employees' Job Engagement, Tertiary Educational Institutions

1. Introduction

Education in all societies, the world over, has been recognized as a very important tool for individual and societal development. It is the backbone of development in any nation, and a vehicle for social, economic, political and cultural development of nations and individuals. It therefore, improves the quality of life of a society through refinement of its potentials. Tertiary education especially, has been found to be an important avenue for the production of human capital required for national development.

In Nigeria, tertiary education is the education subsequent to the senior secondary education provided or received in the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics/ Monotechnics. While universities are set up to produce high-level manpower, the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education train both high and middle levels workforce respectively for the nation's economy. The National Policy on Education provides that tertiary education in Nigeria should among others:

- (a) Provide training for high level workforce who will bring about the development of the nation;
- (b) Instill the appropriate values needed for the continuous existence of individuals and the society;

- (c) Develop the mental capacity of the people so as to comprehend and cherish their immediate and distance environment; and
- (d) Develop in people both tangible and cognitive abilities that make them to be self-sustaining and functional in the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN), 2013).

For the accomplishment of these goals, tertiary educational institutions are to put in place human, material, time and financial resources. Human resources are without doubt the most important in any organisation as they are the ones who manipulate other resources in order to achieve results. In tertiary educational institutions, there are usually three categories of staff, namely: the management staff, the teaching staff and the non-teaching staff. The teaching staff engages in direct teaching, research and primarily engage in the performance of functions directly concerned with the goals of the institutions. The non-teaching staff renders support/ancillary services to the teaching staff, while the management staff are saddled with the responsibility of the routine administration in the institutions, and are expected to provide leadership to the workforce and the students. Institutional administrators and employees are therefore, sine qua non in goal achievement of the school instructional leadership, students' relationship, academic achievement of the students, manipulation of facilities and other areas of teaching tasks.

Leadership has to do with the capability of an individual to pursue a desired result with the co-operation of other members of the organisation. Aderounmu and Aina's diary (as cited in Abdulkareem, 2016) described leadership as an important factor in bringing about work activities in people, overseeing, integrating and sustaining such activities towards the accomplishment of the desired results. Similarly, Szilagyi Jnr's diary (as cited in Adeyemo, Folajin, Sotannde & Adekunle, 2012) explained leadership as a process involving at least two parties, with one party exercising control over the activities of the other party in order to achieve the purpose of setting up an organisation.

Leadership has to do with persuading others to jointly seek to attain defined objectives enthusiastically. In other words, leadership has to do with the act of uniting and stimulating followers towards the achievement of particular objectives in particular situations (Ejiogu & Ogonor, 2016). In educational institutions, leadership involves the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of school personnel, students, parents, community members and instructional materials for the purpose of accomplishing the desired results. It also has to do with

the engagement of school personnel (teaching and non-teaching) to get involved in the promotion of academic activities in their institutions (Abama, Oladipo & Gyang, 2016).

Leadership is thus, very sensitive for organisational survival or failure in the educational setting, and the institutional administrator is always commended for the success of the school system and is also held responsible for any form of lapses. The school administrator as a leader therefore, is that individual who exercises more important positive influence than any other member of the institution he is in. In the context of this study, such include: the Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts and other personalities within the institutions saddled with the responsibility of assisting them in managing the affairs of people and activities in the respective institutions.

Leadership in educational institutions is all about co-coordinating the workers' activities and guiding them towards achieving organisational goals. As observed by Northouse (2014) a leader is regarded as efficacious due to his ability to impact on the subordinates towards the attainment of the mission and vision of the organisation. This then implies that institutional administrators are leaders and for them to be successful in their day-to-day running of the affairs of their respective institutions, they need to possess certain skills, herein referred to as leadership skills.

The roles of administrators of tertiary educational institutions have become more challenging and diversified due to globalization and technology. They set the tone of their institutions, organise staff development programmes, ensure smooth running of the institutions and act as instructional supervisors. For them to be able to perform their roles and effectively manage the institutions, some skills are required to be possessed. These skills include: conceptual skills, human relations/ interpersonal skills and technical skills.

According to Onyene, Oladipo and Enueme (2011), educational leaders and professionals are to possess and creatively employ the clusters of skills such as: information/knowledge/critical awareness skills, systematic inquiry skills, analytical skills, technical skills, communication and human relations skills, management and organisational skills. Similarly, Northouse (2007) observed that leadership skills are the ability of a leader to use his/her knowledge and competences to achieve a specific purpose. Three leadership skills were therefore, identified. These are the technical skills, human skills and conceptual skills.

The technical skills have to do with the leaders' familiarity with and mastery of a particular job engaged in. The skill is also known as the analytical skill because it involves the leaders' analytical propensity to adopt the right procedures in achieving results (Katz's diary as cited in Northouse, 2007). To have technical skill is an indicator that the leader possesses requisite competence and knowledge relating to the activities of the organisation. Technical skills are very important for any school administrator as they have to be proficient in the methods, processes, procedures and techniques in pedagogical activities as well as institutional administration.

The human relations skills or interpersonal relation skills have to do with the administrators' ability in building relationship with others. It has to do with the competence about the ability to work with people as well as the school administrators' ability to create harmonious working relationship within the institution that will enhance the job performance of employees towards goal attainment. Human relations skills make it possible for the super-ordinate to impact on work behaviour of the subordinates towards achieving organisational aims. Effectiveness in interpersonal relations is an indication that the leader is familiar with human behaviours in the organisation (Abama, et al, 2016). As noted by Failte Ireland (2015) the prime interpersonal skill of a leader is the ability to communicate effectively. Effective communication therefore, requires the leader to transmit feelings, thoughts, ideas, and beliefs with the organisation using the appropriate medium.

The conceptual skills have to do with the leader's ability to work with ideas and concepts. As noted by Northouse (2007), the conceptual skills show the leaders' familiarity with the complexities in the organisation and designing a way of fashioning out effective operation towards achieving results. The skill is therefore, concerned with the leaders' ability to impart knowledge to his subordinates. According to Adeyemo et al (2012), conceptual skills can be achieved through coaching to develop the administrative potentials of the subordinates, by assigning responsibilities to them.

The ability of institutional administrators to impart knowledge to subordinates is an example of conceptual skill, and this can be achieved through 'coaching' to develop the administrative potentials of subordinates. Another excellent way of demonstrating conceptual skill by school Administrator is through trading jobs and lateral movement of people through different functions. Institutional leadership is an important factor in school effectiveness, and it is

manifested in the leadership skills exhibited by administrators. Corroborating this assertion, Ross and Gray (2006) found that transformative leadership skills are required for school effectiveness.

Relatedly, another finding has also revealed that the institutional administrator who had interpersonal skill; concentrates on the provision of support for his employees, so that they would be able to put in their best in the performance of their jobs (Hoppey & Mcleskey, 2013).

From the foregoing, it is evident that the possession of requisite leadership skills by institutional administrators goes a long way in promoting employees' engagement with their jobs. Employees' engagement is without doubt an important factor in enhancing staff morale and performance. Job engagement, according to Schaufeli, Gonzalez- Roma and Bakker (2002) is a positive psychological experience of employees when carrying out work activities and work tasks. It also refers to feelings of vigour (e.g. energy), dedication (e.g. enthusiasm), and absorption (e.g. feeling immersed). Engagement therefore, has to do with positive, fulfilling and work related state of mind.

Also, Kenexa's diary (as cited in Institute of Employment Studies (IES), 2014) has described engagement as the degree at which workers are provided with incentives which spur them to continuously give their best towards organisational effectiveness, as well as enthusiastically working towards achieving results. Going by the definition provided by the NHS employers (2013), engagement has to do with the employees' optimism in doing their jobs and their attachment to the organisation towards achieving results. Therefore, a person is regarded as being engaged when he thinks and acts in a positive way about the work, the people he works with and the organisation he works for. Job engagement therefore, is a person's attachment to work and the delight with which he/she does the work.

Leaders have significant influences on organisational effectiveness through their subordinates, and leadership has significant impact on employee's engagement (Batista- Taram, Shuck, Guttierrez & Baralt, 2009). The study of Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) revealed that a significant relationship existed between employees' interaction with the super-ordinates and the extent of their job engagement. Specifically, the study showed that the more the staff showed co-operation with their managers, the higher the level of their engagement.

Therefore, this present study explored the institutional administrators' leadership skills viz-a-viz job engagement of employees in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun state, Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Problem

There is no gainsaying the fact that the administration of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria is a complex one, and the success of any administrative process requires effective leadership. However, it has been observed that in Nigeria, appointments into the leadership positions in tertiary educational institutions are based on qualification and seniority with some elements of politicking. It thus, appears that little or no consideration is placed on competence, skills and possession of evidence of training in institutional management.

The Federal Government of Nigeria for the purpose of training school administrators established the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA, Nigeria), with the responsibility of providing National Professional Qualification for Leadership (NPQL) for headship of different levels of educational institutions in Nigeria, but experience has shown that most institutional leaders do not attend the institute, and ironically such qualifications are not even considered in their appointments by the Government. This situation has become worrisome and has been assumed to have implications on leadership effectiveness of the administrators. The need to investigate the effects of leadership skills of institutional administrators (analytical, interpersonal and conceptual) on job engagement of employees in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria has prompted the researcher to embark on the study.

3. Purpose of the Study

The study explored the effects Administrators' leadership skills on employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. In specific term, the study:

- Examined the relationship existing among the predictors (administrators' leadership skills) and between each of the predictors and the criterion (employees' job engagement).
- Investigated the composite effect of the predictors when put together in explaining employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State.
- Examined the predictor variable that best predict employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State and the predictor variable(s) that do not contribute significantly to the prediction model.

4. Research Questions

The study provided answers to the following questions:

- What is the relationship existing among the predictors (administrators' leadership skills) and between each of the predictors and the criterion (employees' job engagement)?
- What is the composite effect of the predictors when put together in explaining employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State?
- Which of the three predictor variables is most influential in predicting employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State? Are there any predictor variables that do not contribute significantly to the prediction model?

5. Methodology

The design of the study is descriptive survey in nature. The use of this design is premised on the fact that questionnaire was designed to obtain information that provided answers to research questions from the sampled subjects, and that samples were chosen from the population with a view to ascertaining the comparative events, issues and correlations among variables. Four Hundred and Fifteen employees (academic and non-teaching) selected from six out of the 12 public tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria were sampled, using multi-stage sampling technique. This is because of the different stages involved in the sampling. The first stage was the stratification of the institutions based on levels of tertiary education (universities, polytechnics/Monotechnics and colleges of education. The second stage was the stratification of the institutions based on ownership (federal or state), the third stage involved choosing six out of the 12 institutions using systematic sampling technique, while the last stage involved choosing participants (20% of the population) for the study from each of the sampled institutions, using purposive and stratified sampling techniques. A researcher–designed 30 items 4 point modified Likert rating scale instrument, entitled, “Administrators’ Leadership Skills and Employees’ Job Engagement Questionnaire” (ALSEJEQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to reliability test using the Crombach Alpha method, and a value of 0.89 was got. Multiple Regression Analysis was used to answer all the research questions.

6. Results

6.1 Research Question One

What types of relationship exist among the predictors (administrators' leadership skills) and between each of the predictors and the criterion (employees' job engagement)?

Table 1: Relationships among the Predictors and Criterion Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1 Job Engagement	1.00	.264	.878	.470
2 Analytical Skills	.264*	1.00	.300	.802
3 Conceptual Skills.	.300*	.878*	1.00	.811
4 Interpersonal Relations Skills	.470*	.802*	.811*	1.00
Mean	19.2602	10.2819	10.0747	10.0361
SD	3.3420	2.6384	2.3461	1.8795

Review of the correlation coefficients in table 1 shows that there were significant correlations between the 3 indicators of administrators' leadership skills (analytical, conceptual and interpersonal relations) and employees' job engagement. Also, the 3 indicators of administrators' leadership skills significantly correlated one another.

6.2 Research Question Two

What is the composite effect of the predictors when put together in explaining employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State?

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Administrators' Leadership Skills and Employees' Job Engagement

R = .506					
R ² = .256					
Adj. R ² = .251					
Std. Error = 2.8927					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1184.747	3	394.916	47.195	.000
Residual	3439.147	411	8.368		
Total	4623.894	414			

Table 2 presents the model summary and regression Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). From the table, the multiple correlation $R = 0.506$ shows that the relation between the three administrators' leadership skills indicators and employees' job engagement is just about the average. The adjusted R Square, $Adj. R^2 = 0.251$ indicates that the model accounts for only 25.1% of variance in employees' job engagement. The results show that, though low, the overall model of the three administrators' leadership skills indicators significantly predicted employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State ($F_{(3, 411)} = 47.195, p < 0.05$).

6.3 Research Question Three

Which of the predictor variable(s) is/are most influential in predicting employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State? Are there any predictor variable(s) that do not contribute significantly to the prediction model?

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis showing the Contributions of each of the Predictor Variables to Employees' Job Engagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta(β)		
1	(Constant)	10.508	.781		13.460	.000
	Administrators' Analytical Skills	-.360	.119	-.284	-3.028	.003
	Administrators' Conceptual Skills	-.068	.137	-.048	-.496	.620
	Administrators' Interpersonal Skills	1.309	.137	.736	9.583	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Job Engagement						

Table 3 presents the Regression Coefficients of the Multiple Regression Analysis. Review of the beta weights (β) in table 3 shows that only one variable (administrators' interpersonal skills) had significant positive contribution to employees' job engagement $\beta = .736, t(411) = 9.583, p < 0.05$. Although, administrators' analytical skills significantly contributed to the model, the contribution was negative $\beta = -.284, t(411) = -3.028, p < 0.05$. The third variable, administrators' conceptual skills did not significantly contribute to the model $\beta = -.048, t(411) = -.496, p = .620$.

7. Discussion of Findings

The first result showed that there were significant correlations between the indicators of administrators' leadership skills (analytical, conceptual and interpersonal relations) and employees' job engagement, which indicates that the three indicators of administrators' leadership skills studied significantly correlate one another. This means that the leadership skills of institutional administrators had great impacts on employees' engagement towards their jobs, and that when the skills are effectively displayed, it brings about a change in the way employees see themselves. This finding supports the earlier ones such as Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) who found a significant relationship between employees' interaction with the super-ordinates and the extent of their job engagement, and that the more the staff showed co-operation with their managers, the higher the level of their engagement.

The second result showed that though low, the administrators' leadership skills indicators significantly predicted employees' job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Ogun State ($F_{(3, 411)} = 47.195, p < 0.05$). This is an indication that the leadership skills of institutional administrators as determined by technical, conceptual and interpersonal relations skills to a low extent predicted the job engagement of employees. This result is a clear indication that most of the institutional administrators became appointed by virtue of their years of teaching experience and has little or no formal training in educational management, leadership and administration. The low level of prediction of job engagement by the leadership skills could be as a result of the experience gained over the years but not necessarily as a result of training in institutional administration. This study is in line with Northouse (2007) that leadership skills are the ability of a leader to use his/her knowledge and competences to achieve specific purpose.

The third result showed that only administrators' interpersonal relations skills had significant positive contribution to employees' job engagement $\beta = .736, t(411) = 9.583, p < 0.05$. Although, administrators' technical skills significantly contributed to employees' job engagement, the contribution was negative $\beta = -.284, t(411) = -3.028, p < 0.05$, while administrators' conceptual skills did not significantly contribute to job engagement $\beta = -.048, t(411) = -.496, p = .620$. This means that the institutional administrators' ability to work with and through people as well as effective communication with them positively contributed to employees' job engagement, while the conceptual skills as evident in the administrators' proficiency in working with abstract ideas and solving problems and fixing institutional goals did

not contribute to employees' job engagement. The technical skills as determined by the administrators' competence and knowledge with respect to activities specific to their jobs had contributed negatively to employees' job engagement. The finding negates Ross and Gray (2006) who found that transformative leadership skills are required for school effectiveness..

8. Implications of the Study for Practice

Institutional Policy makers and higher education regulatory agencies should put in place policies which make appointment as administrators of tertiary educational institutions to be hinged on evidence of having undergone training at the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA, Nigeria), and that serving institutional Administrators should be required to engage in Mandatory Continuing Professional Education which serves as a refresher course from time to time, so as to be kept abreast of contemporary theories and practice of educational management.

There is no doubt that the development of job engagement in employees is a complex process, therefore, institutional administrators should make use of all available means to improve on the engagement level of their employees.

Capacity building programmes for institution administrators should focus attention on the acquisition of appropriate administrative competence required for their effectiveness as administrators, rather than viewing it as a mere administrative routines of the Human resources management.

There is the need for the higher education policy makers to put in place policies that provides enabling environment for promotion of cordial relationship between institutional administrators and employees, as this goes a long way in the realisation of mission and vision of the institutions.

9. Conclusion

Effective leadership is indispensable for the success of the Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. Therefore, the findings of the study, have led to the conclusion that the leadership skills of administrators of tertiary educational institutions had direct relationship with the level of job engagement of employees. The findings have further shown that most of the institutional administrators became appointed by virtue of their years of teaching experience and has little or

no formal training in educational management, leadership and administration which resulted into low level of prediction of employees' job engagement by the leadership skills.

The findings further showed that administrator' interpersonal relations skills significantly contributed positively to employees' job engagement, while the conceptual skills did not significantly contribute to job engagement. Therefore, professional training in educational leadership is expedient on all institutional administrators for the development of appropriate leadership skills that motivate employees to get engaged with the job, thereby, bringing about the achievement of goals of tertiary education in Nigeria.

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