Creative Leadership Practices in Managing Rural Secondary Schools in Imo State

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess creative leadership practices in managing rural secondary schools in Imo state. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Imo state. The population of the study comprised school principals in rural secondary schools in Imo state. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 70 respondents which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Creative Leadership Practices in Managing Rural Secondary Schools Questionnaire (CLPMRSSQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study concluded that there is significant extent to which MCRT, and expose colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. With the above conclusion, it was therefore recommended that the secondary school leaders should support teachers to work and think creatively together and reschedule the school time for the teachers working together on their passion.

Keywords: **Creative Leadership Practices, Management, Secondary Schools.**

Introduction

According to Bush, and Glover, (2003) there is a great interest in educational leadership because of the belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes.   It is evident that schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to achieve success and provide a world class education for their learners. Due to the increase in commercialism and an injection of wealth, there is a new demand to meet a western style of education, particularly in Nigeria. Nigeria and other developing countries are seeking to find an answer to successful leadership and management in education. As addressed by The Ministry of Education and Training, (MOET, 2012) 'the system of education and finance management is still weak. There is a shortage of secondary education managers and they lack high qualification...'

According to Everard, Morris, and Wilson (2004), the managerial role – as opposed to the teaching role – is to be the 'glue' in the organization, in the sense of 'gumming up' the works –though those whom you manage will inevitably see it that way at times – but in the sense of holding the organization together. The first post in which a leader has to plan, organize, direct and control the work of other teachers involves a fundamental change in the

criteria for job success. Leadership in schools is the most important factor in achieving improvements in school performance. Leaders make a significant difference in any organization. There is no single way to lead which can guarantee success, leadership in situated and contextual, involving issues such as diversity, inclusion and equity and embracing change to embed social justice.

Statement of the Problem

It is evident that schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to achieve success and provide a world class education for their learners. As addressed by The Ministry of Education and Training, 'the system of education and finance management is still weak. There is a shortage of secondary education managers and they lack high qualification'. This study aims to assess the adoption of creative leadership practices for effective management of rural secondary schools in Imo State.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to assess the adoption of creative leadership practices for effective management of rural secondary schools in Imo State. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Find out the various creative leadership practices adopted by principals in the management of rural secondary schools.
2. Examine the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools.
3. Determine the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the various creative leadership practices adopted by principals in the management of rural secondary schools in Imo state?
2. What is the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools?
3. What is the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools?

Hypotheses

$H0_1$:   There is no significant extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state.

$H0_2$:   There is no significant extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Secondary School Management

Management in its broadest sense is about: (1) setting direction, aims and objectives; (2) planning how progress will be made or a goal achieved; (3) organizing available resources (people, time, materials) so that the goal can be economically achieved in the planned way; (4) controlling the process (i.e. measuring achievement against plan and taking corrective action where appropriate); and (5) setting and improving organizational standards (Certo& Peter 1991).

According to Vaccaro, Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, (2012), more restrictive definitions of management argue that a manager must additionally 'direct' the work of others. Again, in their classroom role, this definition could apply to all teachers and, indeed, almost all principles of management do have very direct application to 'managing' the classroom. However, our prime concern will be with school 'managers' in the more conventional sense, i.e. those teachers who have some responsibility for planning, organizing, directing and controlling the work of other teachers. The 'organization'– be it department, school, college, university, education authority or, indeed, the educational system in total – expects of its 'managers' three things. These are: they will (1) integrate its resources in the effective pursuit of its goals; (2) be the agents of effective change; and (3) maintain and develop its resources.

Concept of Creative Leadership Practices

Wasserberg (2002), states that the primary role of any leader is the unification of people around key values, expressed in *personal values, self-awareness,* and *emotional or moral capability.* Greenfield and Ribbins (1993), adds that leadership begins with character of leaders, expressed in terms of *personal values*, *self-awareness* and *emotional and moral capabilities*. This is clear that the ultimate goal or aim of the leader in question will be reflected by peers and the school as a whole. Nurture, work ethic and work proficiency are prime examples at the institution, of ensuring traditions are kept with a bilingual education. This work of Greenfield and Ribbins (1993) can be linked strongly to leadership characteristics, or more specifically, mannerisms or skills related to leadership that enables a leader to lead effectively**.**

According to Stoll and Temperley (2009), creative leadership is an imaginative and thought through response to opportunities and to challenging issues that inhibit learning at all levels. It's about seeing, thinking and doing things differently in order to improve the life chances of all students. Creative leaders also provide the conditions, environment and opportunities for others to be creative. Creative leadership is not just about problem solving (seeing situations, finding better solutions to problems, looking for solutions that aren't narrowly focused); it also involves 'problem finding' (Louis and Miles, 1990) or identification (Craft, 2001); actively scanning the environment for challenges which, if not addressed now, could derail improvement efforts or prevent schools from engaging in more radical change as they strive to prepare their students for the future. Often, these might be seen as opportunities.

Types of Creative Leadership Practices

Center for Creative Leadership in the United States, defines creative leadership as "the capacity to think and act beyond the boundaries that limit our effectiveness". Providing time away from the busy daily activity of schools also proved valuable, both in bringing senior leadership teams closer together and in providing the space for them to think more creatively about issues they face (Stoll, and Temperley 2009).

Stoll, and Temperley (2009), suggest that to promote, nurture and manage schools, leaders need to adopt the concept underlying the types of creative leadership practices, which include:

Model Creativity and Risk Taking (MCRT): One of the most powerful ways leaders can lead others' learning and development is through modeling. Other staffs are unlikely to take risks experimenting with new ideas if they constantly see leaders being cautious. They need to know that it's acceptable to act in this way; that this is a norm. Leaders have to be role

models, advocates, so they see them living it out and not compromising it (Stoll, and Temperley, 2009).

Use failure as a learning opportunity: People worry a great deal about what they perceive as serious (the greatest) risks associated with experimenting with their practice. These turn out to be low risks long term, for example, the pupils not learning what they're supposed to learn in one lesson (Earl, and Lee, 2000).   By valuing the things that go wrong, there is an opportunity to neutralize at least the fear of censure that teachers say they imagine would follow such failure, and to challenge their beliefs that such failure constitutes a serious risk.

Stimulate a sense of urgency - if necessary, generate a 'crisis'! Learning occurs as a result of dissonance; when new ideas or situations don't fit with current beliefs or ways of working. When this dissonance becomes uncomfortable, it creates a sense of urgency that something needs to be done; that 'the way we do things' needs to be changed. If this is supported by positive conditions, productive activities can ensue. Problem solving is frequently described as the stimulus for creativity.

Expose colleagues to new thinking and experiences: Creativity is stimulated in an environment full of new ideas and experiences (NACCCE 1999). The more exposed people are to ideas and others who think differently, and the more opportunities they have to think through new ways of approaching work, the more adventurous they tend to become. Bringing in new ideas is essential life blood in schools.

Self-consciously relinquish control: Schools can feel like places of control where staffs think they are being watched, both by senior leaders and external bodies. This can apply to schools in all contexts: "High achieving schools carry the weight of parents' expectations, and in underachieving schools people want your data to look better". Asking what might inhibit teachers who don't experiment and innovate in their work, some responded that their creativity would be inhibited if they felt they were 'being checked on.

Provide time and space and facilitate the practicalities: Creative thinking is facilitated by time and the mental space for ideas to evolve and be fleshed out. Interestingly, some pressure of time seemed to be important for creating the sense of urgency which concentrates energy and effort. This may mean setting deadlines. But this needs to be balanced with allowing enough time and space for creative possibilities to emerge. Having a clear head makes for what you want.

Promote individual and collaborative creative thinking and design: It seems necessary to create opportunities for both individual thought and for collaboration. The stimulation of other colleagues was necessary for a considerable number of teachers: Working with someone closely is really important cause it means you can share ideas you can build on each other's ideas.

Set high expectations about the degree of creativity: Promoting and valuing innovation are critical to unlocking creative practice. We found that, often, starting to think creatively bred a desire for greater creativity. The mind shift often came from the top of the school, where a passionate interest in how learning and teaching could be different helped spawn a culture that expected people to think differently about learning and teaching.

Keep referring back to core values: While the possibilities of creative thinking and the inspiration it seems to provide many people can be exciting, staying close to core values

appears to provide bedrock for development. Being clear and explicit about values and holding them in steady state offered a context and stable point of reference for people.

Challenges of Creative Leadership Practices

According to Zhang, Siribanpitak, and Charoenkul (2018), forming and facilitating dynamic creative teacher teams is the greatest challenge of creative leadership practices. Also, offering time for teacher teams to work on their passion also has the highest. This is probably because there are many teaching tasks and workloads to handle every day for the teachers, especially the teachers in rural schools, who have to teach several subjects due to lack of the teaching staff. In addition, most secondary school teachers are female teachers, who have to go home immediately after work hours to take care of their families because the values and responsibilities of Nigerian family are particularly strong, especially for married women (Zhang & Zhang, 2011). Moreover, the school principals may lack skills in time management. All this has probably been challenging for school principals in order to organize the teachers to communicate and share the experiences of creative teaching together for fostering students' creativity. Glewwe, Hanushek, Humpage, &Ravina (2011); and Zeng (2012), in their studies asserted that, many school principals mentioned that insufficient budget, staff and learning materials are found to be problems for the school management.

In order for these challenges to be averted, the opportunity of the creative leadership of school principals to promote secondary school management is the political and government policy aspect. It implies that the Nigerian government and Educational Departments value the development of principals' leadership in promoting teachers' creativity to foster students' creativity (Zhang, Siribanpitak, &Charoenkul 2018). Robinson (2011) has stated that, "Creating a culture of innovation will only work if the initiative is led from the top of the organization. The endorsement and involvement of leaders means everything, if the environment is to change." The policy of developing principals' creative leadership from the Ministry of Education will provide supportive conditions for the school principals to promote teachers' creativity in fostering students' creativity and guide the school principals to achieve the school goals.

The Roles of Creative Leadership Practices

Basadur, 2004, Levesque, 2011 and Robinson (2011) suggested that there are several roles creative leaders can take to maximize their colleagues' creative contributions to the organization such as:

- recognize and develop different creative individuals;
- engage and motivate them in creative work;
- build their teams to include diverse talents;
- give them time to express their thoughts and feeling;
- provide the personal space they need to be most creative; and
- Nurture the culture and environment that brings out their creative strengths.

The researchers synthesized the roles of creative leadership based on the theories of the above scholars and researchers, which involve three areas of focus: personal, group and culture.

According to Zhang, Siribanpitak, and Charoenkul (2018), the roles of creative leadership include (1) facilitating the creative abilities of every teacher of the school (2) forming and facilitating dynamic creative teacher teams and (3) promoting a school culture of innovation.

Chen (2008) stated that only creative school principals can bring out the creative abilities of teachers to become more skilled for all students' independent innovation capability development in basic education. In addition, Robinson (2011) stated the role of a creative school principal is to facilitate creativity and innovation in any school context. Therefore, secondary school principals need creative leadership to be able to unlock creativity in teachers for enhancing students' creative learning

Effects of Creative Leadership Practices in Effective Secondary School Management

Crum, Sherman, & Myran (2009) averred that, as the key intermediary between the classroom, the individual school and the education system as a whole, effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. Within each individual school, leadership can contribute to improve student learning by shaping the conditions and climate in which teaching and learning occur. Beyond the school borders, school leaders can connect and adapt schools to changing external environments. And at the school-systems interface, school leadership provides a bridge between internal school improvement processes and externally initiated reform.

Creative leadership practices by school principals facilitate creative ability of every teacher of school with three subcomponents which are found to be strengths that are interrelated. When the school principal involves every teacher in creative teaching, to foster students' creativity, they energize every teacher's imagination for teaching because innovation is a child of imagination (Robinson, 2011). Additionally, being creative requires skills and techniques, thus the school principals give teachers opportunities to learn creativity skills for ensuring every teacher in the school is playing to their creative strengths (Desailly, 2015).

Method

Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Imo state. The population of the study comprised school principals in rural secondary schools in Imo state. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 70 respondents which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Creative Leadership Practices in Managing Rural Secondary Schools Questionnaire (CLPMRSSQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results and Discussion

Results

Research Questions One

The research question sought to find out what are the various creative leadership practices adopted by principals in the management of rural secondary schools in Imo state.

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the various creative leadership practices adopted by principals in the management of rural secondary schools in Imo state

Practices (%)	Freq.	Percentage
Model Creativity and Risk Taking (MCRT)	3	4.29*
Use failure as a learning opportunity	5	7.14
Stimulate a sense of urgency	10	14.29**
Expose colleagues to new thinking and experiences	9	12.86
Self-consciously relinquish control	7	10
Provide time and space and facilitate the practicalities	8	11.43
Promote individual and collaborative creative thinking and design	9	12.86
Set high expectations about the degree of creativity	9	12.86
Keep referring back to core values	10	14.29**
Total	**70**	**100%**

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the various creative leadership practices adopted by principals in the management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. From the result, it was observed that the tie of two practices such as "stimulating a sense of urgency and keeping referring back to core values" 10(14.29%) rated the highest percentage while the "model creativity and risk taking" 3(4.29%) rated the least percentage of various creative leadership practices adopted by principals in the management of rural secondary schools in Imo state.

Research Question 2

The research question sought to find out the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools

Variable	N	Arithmetic mean	Expected mean	R	Remarks
Management		14.24	12.5		
MCRT	70	11.42	12.5	0.88*	*Strong to Perfect Relationship

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 presents the result of the descriptive analysis of the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools. The two variables were observed to have strong to perfect relationship at 88%. The arithmetic mean for Management (14.24) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards MCRT (11.42) was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 12.5. The result therefore means that there is remarkable extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools.

Research Question 3

The research question sought to find out the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools

Variable	N	Arithmetic mean	Expected mean	R	Remarks
Management		14.24	12.5		
	70			0.55*	*moderately strong
Exposure colleagues		20.31	12.5		

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 presents the result of the descriptive analysis of the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools. The two variables were observed to have moderately strong at 55%. The arithmetic mean for Management (14.24) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards Exposure colleagues (20.31) was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 12.5. The result therefore means that there is remarkable of extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. In order to test the hypothesis simple regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 4).

TABLE 4: Simple Regression Analysis of the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.88a	0.78	0.78	0.97	0.78

*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 68; N= 70; critical R-value = 0.254

The above table 4 shows that the calculated R-value (0.88) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.254 at 0.5 alpha levels with 68 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.78 predicts 78% of the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is

significant extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. It was also deemed necessary to find out the influence of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 5).

TABLE 5: Analysis of variance of the extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	227.33	1	227.33		
Residual	63.54	68	0.93	243.27	.000b
Total	290.87	69			

a. Dependent Variable: Management
b. Predictors: (Constant), MCRT

The above table 5 presents the calculated F-value as (243.27) and the P-value as (.000b). Being that the P-value (.000b) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant influence exerted by the independent variables MCRT on the dependent variable which is management.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. In order to test the hypothesis simple regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 6).

TABLE 6: Simple Regression Analysis of the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.55a	0.30	0.29	1.73	0.30

*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 68; N= 70; critical R-value = 0.254

The above table 4 shows that the calculated R-value (0.55) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.254 at 0.5 alpha levels with 68 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.30 predicts 30% of the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. It was also deemed necessary to find out the influence of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 7).

TABLE 5: Analysis of variance of the extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression .000b	87.45	1	87.45	29.24	
Residual	203.42	68	2.99		
Total	290.87	69			

a. Dependent Variable: management
b. Predictors: (Constant), exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences

The above table 7 presents the calculated F-value as (29.24) and the P-value as (.000b). Being that the P-value (.000b) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant influence exerted by the independent variables exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences on the dependent variable which is management.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the data analysis in table 4 and 5 was significant due to the fact that the calculated R-value 0.88 and F- 243.27 were greater than the critical R-value of 0.254 at 0.05 alpha levels with 68 degree of freedom. The result implies that there is significant extent to which MCRT affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of Stoll and Temperley, (2009), who affirmed that one of the most powerful ways leaders can lead others' learning and development is through modeling. Other staffs are unlikely to take risks experimenting with new ideas if they constantly see leaders being cautious. Leaders have to be role models, advocates, so they see them living it out and not compromising it. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

The result of the data analysis in table 6 and 7 was significant due to the fact that the calculated R-value 0.55 and F- 29.24 were greater than the critical R-value of 0.254 at 0.05 alpha levels with 68 degree of freedom. The result implies that there is significant extent to which exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of NACCCE (1999), who asserted that the more exposed people are to id0eas and others who think differently, and the more opportunities they have to think through new ways of approaching work, the more adventurous they tend to become. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

Conclusion

Creative leaders provide the conditions, environment and opportunities for others to be creative. It is not just about problem solving, it also involves problem finding or identification. Often these might be seen as opportunities. MCRT, using failure as learning opportunity, and Exposing colleagues to new thinking and experiences are some examples of the types of creative leadership principles. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is significant extent to which MCRT, and exposure of colleagues to new thinking and experiences affects management of rural secondary schools in Imo state.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education should establish and accelerate the detailed policy of developing secondary school principals' creative leadership in promoting teachers' creativity to foster students' creativity and guide, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the educational department in Guangxi.

2. Government and Education Departments should immediately allocate adequate budgets and teaching staff to secondary schools. Additionally, they should supervise the implementation of the Prefectural Government and Education Bureaus and encourage them to seek support of funding and resources from local businesses.

3. The secondary school leaders should support teachers to work and think creatively together and reschedule the school time for the teachers working together on their passion.

4. The secondary school principals should improve working environment where teachers' creative potential can be unleashed and promote an inquiring and flexible school culture that encourages the individual and team creativity of teachers to foster students' creative learning.

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