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Influence of Leadership Styles on Community Development Programmes' Implementation in Rural Communities of Akwa Ibom State Nigeria

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Abstract

Community development is a process whereby the efforts of individuals in the community were combined with efforts of government and non-government bodies to improve and develop the community socially and economically. The study adopted descriptive survey research of the ex post facto type. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the state while stratified random sampling technique was used to select the local governments used for the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to stratify the local government selected into stratum, simple random sampling technique was used to select the 179 respondents. The (CLPS) inventory ($r=0.84$) and Community Members Assessment of Leaders Scale (CMALS) $r= 0.81$ were used. Two hypotheses were answered and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analysed using descriptive and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The result of the influence of Leadership Styles on Community Development

Programmes Implementation in Rural Communities. Democratic Leadership Style ($r = .621$, $N=179$, $P < .01$). Autocratic leadership style ($r = .360$, $N=179$, $P < .01$). There is the need for proper dissemination of information from the rulers to the followers, through documentation and dissemination of information, the followers can share the best practices and learn from each other.

Key words: Leadership styles, laissez faire, community development, communication, participation.

Introduction

The concept of community development has been defined by various scholars in the field of rural and community development. One of the early definitions that is widely accepted was developed by the United States International Cooperation (1956) as cited by Ismail (1999). It emphasized the process where individuals in the community joined forces to plan and take actions regarding community problems. They identify community problems and needs, plan and conduct activities together using available community resources, they also sought outside help from government and private organizations. On the other hand, the United Nations (1975) indicated that community development is a process whereby the efforts of individuals in the community were combined with efforts of government and non-government bodies to improve and developed community socially and economically. These efforts should lead to national development (Jones, 1982). Ismail (1999) provided a more comprehensive definition of community development as a process of community activities that are planned and organized in such a way so as to raise the quality of life in the community in terms of economy, social, culture, spiritual and the environment through initiatives and active participation of the community members and with minimum outside help.

One of the foremost scholars of leadership, Bass (1990) described leadership as an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and

the perception and expectations of the members. Leaders are agents of change – person whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. The concept of leadership was defined by House (2004) as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members.

Sustainable leadership empowers others to improve human and resource capacity and provides opportunity for leaders and stakeholders to network, learn from and support one another in achieving organizational goals for the future. Such leaders seek to promote development and change for the better (Hargreaves, 2007).

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study include the following;

- To find out the extent to which community development programmes could be successfully executed under different leadership traits.
- To examine how the utilization of motivation by leaders could promote effective implementation of community development programmes.
- To find out the extent to which community development programmes could be successfully implemented through in-flow communication between the leaders and followers.

Leadership styles and implication on community development programmes

Traditionally, within psychology, leadership has been defined as a specific trait, competency, or ability that an individual can possess. Still, even though this broad definition has been allowed and leadership continues to be a strong area of development and research, the dimensions and definition of the concept remains unclear (Pfeffer,

1977). Furthermore, it is often difficult to separate leadership from other processes of social influence (Bass, 1990).

Generally, leadership may be defined by the specific theory studied or the conditions under which the leader operates. According to Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2001), leadership is the art of influencing an individual or group, regardless of the rationale. Kouzes and Posner (1995) define leadership as the ability to mobilize people towards a shared vision, while encouraging individual development in the process. Gardner (1990) cites leadership as the process of persuasion used by an individual to encourage an individual or group to pursue objectives held by the leader. Bass's (1990) definition, one of the most comprehensive, states that Leadership has been conceived as the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviours, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, as initiation of structure, and as many combinations of these definitions.

In examining the influence of leadership styles on successful execution of community development programmes, there is the need to examine different types of leadership styles.

(a) Laissez-faire leadership style

The two words *laissez-faire* and leadership are absolute direct opposites. The French term *laissez-faire* was originally used relative to mercantilism, and is defined in economics and politics as an economic system that functions best when there is no interference by government, and is considered a “natural” economic order that procures the maximum well-being for the individual and extends to the community. Leadership is defined as an interactive process that provides needed guidance and direction, leadership involves three interacting dynamic elements: a leader, a follower and a situation. The leader's role is to influence and provide direction to his/her followers

and provide them needed support for theirs and the organization's success (Ronald, 2004).

(b) Autocratic leadership style

The autocratic leadership style thrives in highly structured, hierarchical chain-of-command environments such as the military or very bureaucratic organizations. This type of leader exercises almost absolute power and commands strict compliance and conformity. The autocratic leader generally has a well defined and controlled disciplinary process with an emphasis on punishments for noncompliance. This leader determines prescribed policies, procedures, rules, and goals. He or she is the decision maker and such self-directed decisions are final. In this environment, little interaction or communication is expected among associates. Out-flowing information is highly restricted while in-flowing communication is well filtered and defensive (Ronald, 2004).

Autocratic leaders are usually rigid in their thinking and perceptions. They believe that followers have minimal abilities and capabilities and need close supervision and direction, and that controls are needed to assure their compliant behaviour in the execution of community development programmes. Autocratic leaders believe their style is highly efficient. Unfortunately, this style of leadership results in minimal or no innovation, and virtually no personal or corporate improvement in the community where they rule. Most individuals are familiar with the autocratic leader s because such leaders are prevalent even today.

(c) Democratic leadership style

Democratic leadership is sometimes referred to as enlightened leadership. An individual manifesting this type of leadership recognizes each person's self worth and esteem. The leader's actions are based upon trust, integrity, honesty, equality, openness and mutual respect. Democratic leaders show consideration and concern for others by empathetic listening and understanding. They foster open

communication among all employees at all levels. Reasons and circumstances pertaining to decisions that affect the employees, department, or organization are shared in a timely fashion.

Under such leadership, a highly positive, motivation-oriented environment is established to help satisfy the higher-level self-esteem and self-actualization needs as defined by Abraham Maslow (1998) in his hierarchy of needs. Ultimately, the democratic, enlightened leader strives to empower the followers to their maximum capability and desire. At the same time, the democratic leader places a strong emphasis on teamwork, while functioning as a facilitator to develop a natural synergy among the group. The democratic leader practices employee involvement in considering important issues and exercises influence in reaching consensual decisions. The ultimate goal is to democratically attain commitment to and ownership of decisions. He has high performance and quality expectations and recognizes that the only way to attain them is through a committed workforce. The followers participate in establishing goals for community transformation especially goals for the good of the community and goals for their own personal self-growth, learning and development.

The democratic leader places a high emphasis upon rewards rather than punishment. When discipline or correction is needed, it is administered justly. This leader recognizes that mistakes will happen in the execution of community development programmes and considers them learning opportunities. In this way, everyone benefits and the mistakes may not reoccur.

Objectives of community development projects in rural communities

Various definitions of community development are available in literature. They vary from one community to another, yet there are identifiable characteristics which all community development has in common. Based on those definitions it can be said that community development efforts should be focused on the following:

- To achieve social, economic, spiritual and cultural development
- To develop functioning community groups and organizations
- To develop community leaders
- To improve relationship and cooperation among community members
- To maximize utilization of community resources
- To increase capacity of the community to face challenges
- To encourage planning and conduct of programs at the community level

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research of the *ex-post facto* type. This research design was adopted because the variables of the study cannot be manipulated

Population of the Study

The population in the study was in two categories. The first were the leaders involved in various communities development projects used for the study in Akwa Ibom state, while the second category was made up of the community members who were involved in various community development programmes in various communities used for the study.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample for the study comprised of 179 respondents who were selected from two local government areas of Akwa Ibom State and these are Ibeno and Eket Local Government. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the state while stratified random sampling technique was used to select the local governments used for the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to

stratified the local government selected into stratum, simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from the following communities; Iwuochang, Usung – Inyang, Ebana and Esit Urua. The respondents comprised the village chiefs and community members.

Research instrument

Two instruments were used for the study, these were Community Leadership Performance Scale (CLPS) and Community Members Assessment of Leaders Scale (CMALS) The questionnaire was in two sections. Section A comprised of demographic information of the respondents. Section B with twenty (20) items which measured the influence of leadership styles on community development programmes.

The questionnaires were pre tested in Mkanak community in Ibeno Local Government in Akwa Ibom State. Twenty copies of questionnaire were administered to twenty respondents during the pre test, the relevance of this was to ensure that the items raised under the instruments conformed to what is expected to address. The questionnaire was administered on the respondents and after two weeks, the same instrument was re-administered on the same set of respondents. Thus, the result were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the tests yielded coefficients of $r = 0.84$ for CLPS while $r = 0.81$ for CMALS respectively. This signified that the test items were consistent in their measuring values and this confirmed the high reliability of the instrument.

Data analysis

The demographic data of the respondents were analysed using simple percentages and frequency count. Correlation Co-efficient was used to analyze the hypotheses raised for the study at 0.05 level of significant.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant relationship between democratic leadership styles and successful implementation of community development programmes.*

Variable		Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Rmk
Implementati on of Community Development Programmes	9.2793	1.6422	179	.621**	.000	Sig.
Democratic Leadership Style	12.6927	1.6320				

It is shown in the above table that there was significant relationship between successful implementation of community development programmes and Democratic Leadership Style ($r = .621$, $N=179$, $P < .01$). Null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation and discussion

The findings revealed that community leaders who adopted democratic styles usually foster open communication among the followers in community development programmes execution, this correlates with the study conducted by Blanchard (2004) who asserted that an individual manifesting this type of leadership recognizes each person’s self worth and esteem. The study revealed further that followers enjoy freedom of operation under a democratic leader. This agrees with Peele (2005) who asserted that leaders who exhibit democratic traits, a highly positive environment is established to help satisfy the higher level self esteem and self actualization needs.

It was revealed in the study that leaders who exhibit democratic styles usually encourage team work, this correlates with the finding of Goodnight (2011) who asserted that democratic leaders practice followers involvement in considering important issues and exercises

influence in reaching consensual decisions. The finding revealed further that democratic leaders place more emphasis on rewards of the followers in community development implementation, this tally with Burns (2003) who asserted that the democratic leaders places a high emphasis upon rewards rather than punishment. When discipline or correction is needed, it is administered justly. Burns (2003) opined further that this leader recognizes that mistakes will happen and considers them learning opportunities. In this way, everyone benefits and the mistakes may not reoccur.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant relationship between autocratic leadership styles and successful implementation of community development programmes.*

Variable		Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Implementation of Community Development Programmes	9.2793	1.6422	179	.360**	.000	Sig.
Autocratic leadership style	14.4469	2.2137				

It is shown in the above table that there was significant relationship between Implementation of Community Development Programmes and Autocratic leadership style ($r = .360, N=179, P < .01$). Null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation and discussion

The finding revealed that there was no effective communication between autocratic leaders and the followers, this tally with World Bank (2005) who opined that out-flowing information is highly restricted between the autocratic leaders and the followers and in-flowing communication is filtered and defensive. The study revealed

further that autocratic leaders were too rigid in their thinking and perceptions in the implementation of community development programmes, this correlates with the opinion of Peele (2005) who asserted that autocratic leaders believe that followers have minimal abilities and need close supervision and direction.

Conclusions and recommendations

Community development can be effectively executed in rural communities if the leaders adhere strictly to the following recommendations;

- (1) There is the need for proper dissemination of information from the rulers to the followers, through documentation and dissemination of information, the followers can share the “best practices” and learn from each other.
- (2) Leaders should place more emphasis on rewards of the followers in community development programmes implementation; leaders should also place a high emphasis upon rewards rather than punishment. When discipline or correction is needed, it is administered justly through this everyone benefits and the mistakes may not reoccur.

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