Effective School Characteristics as Antecedents of Teacher Empowerment

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Abstract: Previous studies on teacher empowerment argued for strong educational leadership as an antecedent of teacher empowerment in schools. Rarely do studies examine factors such as effective school characteristics as antecedents of teacher empowerment. This study examined the effect of effective school characteristics on teacher empowerment. The research adopted a survey design and a total sample of 358 secondary school teachers in Zamfara State, Nigeria were selected through simple random sampling techniques from a total population of 4996 as a sample for the study, using Cochran’s sample size determination formula. Data were collected through survey method and were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential (Pearson correlation and multiple regression) statistical analyses. The findings of the study indicated the existence of significant and strong relationship between effective school characteristics and teacher empowerment. Furthermore, positive home/school relationship appeared to be the best contributor to teacher empowerment. This implies that efforts should be made to strengthen the effective school characteristics to empower teachers for the overall attainment of effective school system.

Key words: Effective school characteristics • Secondary schools • Teacher empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Teacher empowerment encompasses areas that include autonomy to plan curricula including employing innovative teaching, student evaluation strategies and reading materials for students. Teacher empowerment is inclined to four factors: voices, action, tradition and unity. Teacher empowerment is an indispensable element towards the attainment of the overall goals and objectives of educational system [1]. It involves having trust over teachers regarding their sincerity, honesty and suitable skill in performing their capacity in conducting their duty autonomously, devoid of any form of supervision. It provides ample opportunity for the teachers to be innovative. Empowerment also ensure participation of teachers in the decision making processes [2]. Rising suitable strategies for empowerment of the teacher requires immediate concentration of the stakeholders involved in the quality of school education as no curriculum can be applied successfully without devoted effort of the teachers [3].

However, advocates see an imperative need for school leaders to promote an effective school system in order to facilitate teacher empowerment effectively [4]. School effectiveness is concerned with the structures and culture of an institution and expressing the manners in which plans, policies and practices help in improving the overall objectives of the school and teacher effectiveness at the classroom level [5]. It encompasses the overall achievements of the students in all the three domains of learning [6]. School effectiveness is the level at which school is able to accomplish its pre-determined objectives with a view to solving the obstacles that might hinder the smooth running of the school [7].

In Nigeria, education is considered as a vital tool in the realization of national goals. The National Policy on Education is a document in which the goals and government policies on education are being enshrined. In the realization of the set goals and objectives, the critical role of the school principal in the provision of an efficient and effective leadership is of paramount importance, moreover, leadership is said to be an influencing process that hinges on quality of interaction between the principal and the teachers, through the principal behaviour when he/she interacts with the teachers, this makes it critical for principals to deploy management practice and effective
teacher empowering culture in their schools. It seems however, that many principals are yet to consider teacher empowerment as one of the central role of their leadership practices in the realization of an effective school system. As such, some of them seem to find it challenging to create a school culture to effectively facilitate the activities of their schools [8]. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to determine the relationship between overall effective school characteristics and teacher empowerment and also to determine the contribution of effective school characteristics towards the attainment of teacher empowerment among secondary schools in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

**Teacher Empowerment:** There is a common agreement among majority of researchers and experts that there is no standard definition of empowerment, but it is rather a concept which must be examined by examining other factors related to a given organizational setting. Basically, empowerment is the delegation of authority and/or responsibility by a superior to a subordinate [9]. Empowerment in educational reform emanated from the business sector [10]. Houser and Frymier [11] and Short and Johnson [1] agree that teachers will be more innovative and effective when empowered; this efficiency should increase school effectiveness. The outcome is an improved effective school system [10].

Teacher empowerment is a practice whereby school members grow the capability to take care of their own growth and shoulder their own challenges [1]. They further elucidated that teacher empowerment was reliant on six major features. The dimensions were collective decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. The concept of teacher empowerment has been conceptualized by many researchers as stimulating collegiality, providing an excellent skilled learning and recognizing the role of teachers on student achievement [12]. Teachers are the best trained to take decisions regarding teaching and learning processes; therefore it is vital to study the circumstances which will guarantee that teachers are able to effectively accomplish their jobs [13].

This study adopted definition of empowerment by Spreitzer [14] which they defined as the perception of employees as regards to how they are controlled over activities in their workplace. According to this definition, the sense of control is exhibited in four dimensions that include: meaning, self-determination, competence and impact. These dimensions echo perception of an individual towards his/her job accomplishment [15]. Neglect of any of the above mentioned dimensions will result to poor overall empowerment. Thus, to ensure a high level of empowerment, all the dimensions are required [16].

**Effective School Characteristics:** The effectiveness of a system refers to the degree to which goals are achieved. Therefore, effectiveness is aimed at measuring the level to which goals are attained [17]. Therefore, school effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which objectives and goals set for a school are achieved in relation to quantity, quality and equity of teaching and learning process.

Effective school system is concerned with the philosophy and structures of an institute and articulating the conduct in which policies plans and practices as they relate to improving the general objectives of the school and teacher effectiveness at the classroom level [18]. School effectiveness is defined as improving and achieving the school ability to attain its objectives and stimulates the efficiency of teachers [19]. Effectiveness of schools covers the general accomplishment of the students in all the three domains of learning i.e. psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains [6]. A school is said to be effective when it possesses the qualities that includes: strong principal leadership, shared visions and goals, including collegiality and cooperation among teachers, clear and focus mission, effective teaching and learning, effective evaluation and monitoring, positive learning environment, focused professional development and effective parental involvement in school activities [20]. The definition of effective school has turn out to be the area of focus ever since in the late 1960s. This formed the root for the early researches on effective schools [21].

In this research, dimensions of effective schools would be viewed from the seven correlates of effective schools by Lezotte and Snyder [22]. The seven correlates of an effective school comprise: clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, opportunity to learn and time on task, safe and orderly environment, positive home-school relations and frequent monitoring of student progress. However, Sammons et al. [23] argued that definitions on effective schools are being determined by a number of elements that include sample of schools examined and choice of outcome measured [24]. A critical examination of the various definitions of an effective school have shown that almost all the researchers have focused on some specific aspects of school effectiveness depending on their areas of concern,
not minding the holistic approach which encompasses the entire purview of effective schools. To address these shortcomings, the seven correlates of effective schools [22] have basically focused on general factors that might bring about effective school regardless of operational differences.

Effective Schools and Teacher Empowerment: Characteristics of effective schools are indispensable in the attainment of teacher empowerment. They offer ample opportunity and self-confidence to teachers to become innovative. It encompasses having self-confidence on teachers about their trust worthiness, reliability and their capability in executing their responsibilities autonomously, without any type of supervision. It boosts teacher participation in the decision making process [2]. Level of teacher’s empowerment depends on the leadership of the principal and chances availed to them to participate in decision making process of the school [25]. Teacher empowerment is enabled in a school setting that operates a democratic organisational climate. Policies and programmes related to effective schools at different levels have great impact on the level of teacher motivation leading to speedy realization of the objectives of the school effectiveness. Early as well as constant professional development of teachers must provide suitable knowledge and resources to involve in empowering decision making [3].

Therefore, to fill the gap of research regarding effective schools and teacher empowerment; theoretically and empirically, the current research aims to explore the relationship between effective schools characteristics and teacher empowerment as well as to determine the best predictor of teacher empowerment among the characteristics of effective schools.

Research Hypotheses: Based on the outcome of past researches, the hypothesis proposed in this study are:

\[ H_1 \] There is a significant relationship between effective schools characteristics and teacher empowerment.

\[ H_2 \] Effective school characteristics contribute to teacher empowerment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population of the study consisted of all the serving teachers in the government owned secondary schools in Zamfara state, Nigeria. According to the records there are 4996 teachers serving in 191 secondary schools across the state. Cochran’s formula (2007) was used to determine the sample size. Consequently, the total recommended sample size for this study is 357. The choice of the participants was made through a multistage random sampling technique due to the reason that all the teachers possess the same characteristics.

Two instruments were adopted to measure the variables of the research. For effective school characteristics, Lezotte and Snyder [22] was used, the instrument having a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.949 and composite reliability of 0.913. Similarly, psychological empowerment instrument by Spreitzer [26] was used to measure teacher empowerment, the instrument has Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.839 and composite reliability of 0.835. This indicates that all the instruments were reliable and valid.

RESULTS

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to present the demographic characteristics of the respondents and inferential analysis (Pearson moment correlation and standard multiple regression) were used to determine the relationship between variables under study.

Demography of Respondents: The demographic data revealed that out of 358 teachers that participated in the research, 211 (58%) are male while 147 (41.1%) are females. This shows that majority of the respondents are male. In terms of educational qualification, the demographic data shows that 41 (11.15%) of the respondents are of master degree holders, 204 (57%) are holders of bachelors of education (B.Ed.) degree and 113 (31.6%) are having Nigeria certificate in education (NCE). This shows that majority of the respondents are holders of B.Ed degrees.

Relationship between Effective School Characteristics and Teacher Empowerment: Inferential statistics using Pearson correlation and standard multiple regression were employed. The strength of the relationship was analyzed using Spreitzer [26]. The range of the interpretation of the relationship is explained below:

\[ r = \pm 0.1 \text{ to } \pm 0.29 \text{ (Low Correlation)} \]
\[ r = \pm 0.30 \text{ to } \pm 0.49 \text{ (Moderate Correlation)} \]
\[ r = \pm 0.50 \text{ to } \pm 1.0 \text{ (High correlation)} \]

Preliminary analysis was performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedascity. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1 below.
Table 1: Correlation matrix between effective schools and teacher empowerment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>X1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y (Teacher Empowerment)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1 (Effective Schools Characteristics)</td>
<td>0.582**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis among variables of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.351</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>5.226</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Home School Relations</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>5.226</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of Students Progress</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to Learn on Time/Task</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>2.609</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectation for Success</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.771</td>
<td>0.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and Orderly School Environment</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.462</td>
<td>0.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear and Focused Mission</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>5.211</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>3.229</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² = 0.377; Adjusted R² = 0.364; F (7, 350) = 30.230; p< 0.05

Note: B= Unstandardized Coefficients; S.E= Standard Error; β= Standardized Coefficients.

The Pearson correlation analysis of Table 1 revealed that there is a high and significant relationship between effective school characteristics and teacher empowerment among secondary schools in Zamfara State. (r = 0.582, p< 0.05). This means that the more the school acquires effective school characteristics, the higher the teachers will be empowered.

**Contribution of Effective School Characteristics to Teacher Empowerment:** For the assessment of the contribution of effective school characteristics to overall teacher empowerment, standard multiple regressions were employed. The preliminary assumptions testing for normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity proved non-violation of the basic assumptions. Thus, summary ANOVA results indicated that, regression model is significant (F (7, 350) = 30.230; p = 0.000). Moreover, the analysis showed that about 37% of variance in teacher empowerment was explained by the effective school characteristics entered in to the regression model.

The regression analysis in Table 2 shows a significant relationship between positive home/school relations with teacher empowerment (β= 0.314, t = 5.226, p< 0.01). This confirms that positive home/school relationship is a significant predictor of teacher empowerment. From the findings of the results as shown in Table 2, there occur a non-significant relationship between monitoring of students’ progress and teacher empowerment (β= 0.001, t = 0.021, p= 0.01). This clearly indicates that monitoring of students’ progress is not a significant predictor of teacher empowerment. Accordingly, results also indicated that there is a significant relationship between opportunity to learn on time/task is significantly related to teacher empowerment (β=1.72, t = 2.609, p= 0.002). This shows that opportunity to learn on time/task is a significant predictor of teacher empowerment. Moreover, the results in Table 2 have also shown that there is no significant relationship between high expectation for success and teacher empowerment (β= 0.061, t =.771, p> 0.01). This depicts that high expectation for success does not contribute to teacher empowerment. Furthermore, the results indicated that, there is no significant relationship between safe and orderly school environment and teacher empowerment (β=.037, t = 0.462, p> 0.01). This indicates that safe and orderly school environment does not contribute to teacher empowerment. However, results indicates a significant relationship between clear and focused mission and teacher empowerment (β= 0.311, t = 5.211, p< 0.01). This indicates that clear and focused mission in a school is a significant predictor of teacher empowerment. Lastly, the results have shown that there exist a significant relationship between instructional leadership and teacher empowerment (β= 0.204, t = 3.229, p= 0.001) (Table 2). This is an indication that instructional leadership significantly contributes to teacher empowerment. Therefore, it can be established that among the characteristics of effective schools, positive home school relations contributes more to the empowerment of teachers.

**DISCUSSION**

The empirical findings of this research supported the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between characteristics of effective schools and teacher
empowerment ($r = 0.582, p< 0.05$). In other words, the more the school possess characteristics of effective school the more the teachers will get empowered. This implies that if school give much emphasis on factors such as instructional leadership, clear and focused mission and a positive home/school relations then teachers will be highly empowered by having autonomy to decide on their jobs, have an impact on school decisions and have the opportunity to attend trainings on how to conduct their jobs. The findings of this research are also supported by previous researches. Butts et al., [27] conducted a study to determine if there exists a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of empowerment and principal effectiveness. The results of the study established a relationship between empowerment and effectiveness. The present study contributes significantly towards developing an understanding of the role played by effective school characteristics in empowering teachers for the attainment of the overall goals and objectives of the school system in Zamfara state and Nigeria as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper discussed the contribution of effective school characteristics to teacher empowerment. The results highlighted the indispensable role that effective school play towards the realization of teacher empowerment. Furthermore, positive school/home relationship appeared to be the best contributor to empowerment of teachers which calls for the school principals, policy makers and other critical stake holders to design modalities of improving the relationship between parents and schools through involving parents in the design and implementation of school policies and programs. The implication is that the findings highlight the need for school leaders to internalize and strengthen effective school system for their teachers to be more empowered. However, despite the fact that there exist numerous models of effective schools, this research adopted Lezotte and Snyder [22] model to explain effective schools due to its comprehensive nature. Therefore, there is the need for future researchers to adopt other models of effective schools with a view to ascertaining their applicability or otherwise.

REFERENCES
