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Original Research Article

LEADERSHIP POTENTIALS AND EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA STATE

Torupere KOROYE
Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
torupere.koroye@uat.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: This study investigated leadership potentials and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised principals, vice principals, and teachers across the three senatorial districts of Bayelsa State, from which a sample of 200 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using structured self-designed questionnaires. The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Management, and its reliability was confirmed with a coefficients of .77 and .79 respectively. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at a .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that transformational, participative, and instructional leadership styles are predominantly practiced in Bayelsa State secondary schools, with a significant positive relationship between leadership style and educational transformation. The study further established that schools with high leadership potential demonstrated significantly greater levels of educational transformation compared to those with lower leadership capacity. The study concluded that harnessing leadership potentials is vital for achieving sustainable educational transformation in Bayelsa State. It recommended continuous professional development for school administrators, merit-based leadership appointments, distributed leadership practices, and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in management. Implementing these measures will enhance school leadership quality, promote teacher motivation, and improve student outcomes in Bayelsa State's secondary education system.

Keywords: Leadership, Potentials, Educational Transformation, Secondary Schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as the cornerstone of societal progress and development. It is the most powerful instrument for human capital development, socio-economic growth, and national advancement. However, in many developing regions, including Bayelsa State of Nigeria, the quality of education remains below expected standards due to poor leadership structures and management inefficiencies. Leadership in education plays a vital role in shaping institutional culture, guiding teachers, inspiring learners, and ensuring accountability and innovation (Adebayo, 2023). In secondary schools, leadership determines the extent to which policies are implemented, curriculum goals achieved, and school visions realized. Bayelsa State, located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, faces peculiar educational challenges ranging from inadequate

infrastructure, teacher shortage, to poor leadership practices that impede educational transformation.

Harnessing leadership potentials in the educational sector implies identifying, nurturing, and deploying the capabilities of individuals who can influence, motivate, and drive positive change within the school system. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership stimulates followers' higher-order values, leading to improved performance and creativity. Therefore, understanding how leadership potentials can be harnessed in Bayelsa State's secondary schools is crucial for achieving educational transformation.

Statement of the Problem

In secondary schools, leadership determines the culture of teaching and learning, the morale of teachers, and the academic performance of students. Bayelsa State, with its unique geographical and socio-economic challenges, requires strong educational leadership that promotes inclusiveness, motivation, and innovation among educators. However, despite several educational reforms initiated by the Bayelsa State government, many secondary schools continue to underperform. Poor examination results, indiscipline among students, lack of teacher motivation, and infrastructural decay persist. These challenges are largely attributed to weak leadership practices and poor management skills among school heads (Okorie, 2022).

Most secondary school principals are appointed based on years of service rather than demonstrated leadership ability or professional competence. As a result, they struggle to inspire teachers, mobilize community support, or introduce innovative teaching practices. Furthermore, the lack of continuous leadership development programs limits their capacity to adapt to modern educational challenges. Consequently, the question arises: How can leadership potentials be effectively harnessed for educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine how leadership potentials can be harnessed for educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The specific objectives are to:

- Identify the current leadership styles practiced in secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- Determine the challenges hindering effective leadership in secondary schools.
- Explore strategies for harnessing leadership potentials for sustainable educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What leadership styles are currently practiced in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
- What challenges hinder effective leadership in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
- What strategies can be adopted to harness leadership potentials among school administrators in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

- There is no significant relationship between leadership styles and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- There is no significant relationship between effective leadership challenges and educational transformation of secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
- There is no significance relationship between leadership potentials and education transformation of secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Leadership in Education

Leadership, in the context of education, refers to the capacity of an individual or group to influence others toward achieving collective educational goals (Northouse, 2021). Educational leadership transcends administrative duties; it encompasses guiding the learning community through vision, communication, and collaborative action. According to Bush (2020), leadership in schools is a process of influencing staff and students to achieve the institution's mission and vision effectively.

In secondary schools, leadership determines the culture of teaching and learning, the morale of teachers, and the academic performance of students. Bayelsa State, with its unique geographical and socio-economic challenges, requires strong educational leadership that fosters inclusiveness, motivation, and innovation among educators (Adebayo, 2023). Effective educational leadership aligns the goals of the school with those of the community and government policies. It ensures that resources are optimally utilized and that human capital is continuously developed. Hence, leadership is not a position but a process of influence and transformation.

Leadership Potentials

Leadership potentials refer to the innate or developed abilities of individuals that enable them to lead, inspire, and direct others toward achieving goals (Yukl, 2020). In the educational setting, leadership potential includes qualities such as communication skills, decision-making capacity, vision, empathy, and resilience. Leadership potentials serve as life wires for the smooth runn9ng of institutional management and administration, as a success or failure of educational institutions largely depends on the potentials of the leaders (Ogona, 2022).

According to Ojo and Bello (2022), harnessing leadership potentials in secondary schools involves identifying teachers and administrators who exhibit these traits and nurturing them through mentoring, training, and exposure to leadership responsibilities. In Bayelsa State, this process is crucial because many school leaders ascend to leadership positions through seniority rather than through demonstrated competence or leadership training.

Leadership potential can also be viewed through three dimensions:

- Cognitive Dimension: Involving knowledge, problem-solving and analytical skills necessary for decision-making.
- Affective Dimension: Including interpersonal relationships, empathy and communication.
- Behavioral Dimension: Relating to practical leadership behaviors like delegation, monitoring and coordination (Avolio & Gardner, 2019).

To harness leadership potentials for educational transformation, the following strategies are crucial:

- Leadership Training and Development: Regular workshops, seminars, and courses for school administrators.
- Mentorship Programs: Senior leaders mentoring upcoming educators.
- Participatory Decision-Making: Involving teachers and students in policy discussions.
- Performance-Based Promotion: Appointing leaders based on competence and performance metrics.
- Integration of ICT: Enhancing administrative efficiency and teaching innovation through digital tools (Avolio & Gardner, 2019).

Harnessing these dimensions is essential for educational transformation, as it enables school heads to adapt to challenges, promote teamwork and motivate staff.

Educational Transformation

Educational transformation refers to a systematic process of improving the structure, delivery, and outcomes of education to meet changing societal, technological, and economic demands (Fullan, 2014). It involves rethinking teaching methodologies, leadership approaches, curriculum design, and the use of technology in education.

In the context of secondary schools in Bayelsa State, educational transformation is seen as the process of shifting from traditional management and pedagogical methods to innovative, inclusive, and learner-centered approaches. According to Darling-Hammond (2021), transformative education requires visionary leadership, effective governance, professional development, and adequate infrastructural support. The effectiveness of school leaders is a catalyst for improved students' performance, teachers' commitment and overall transformation of educational institutions at all levels (Ogona & Mmom, 2023).

Educational transformation is anchored on principles of equity, quality, innovation, and sustainability. These principles ensure that educational reforms are not only implemented but also maintained for long-term development.

Leadership Styles in Education

Effective leadership is a catalyst for school improvement. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2020), leadership accounts for nearly one-fourth of the variation in student performance across schools, second only to classroom instruction. Effective school leaders set clear goals, maintain high expectations and promote a culture of continuous learning among teachers.

Leadership style is the manner in which leaders interact with subordinates, make decisions, and implement policies (Robbins & Judge, 2020). In education, leadership style directly influences teacher performance, school climate, and student outcomes.

Transformational leadership, as proposed by Bass (1985), involves inspiring followers to achieve beyond their immediate self-interests by appealing to higher ideals and values. Transformational leaders are visionary, motivational, and committed to continuous improvement (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In schools, such leaders motivate teachers, promote professional growth, and encourage creativity. Leithwood et al. (2019) emphasized that transformational leadership enhances teacher efficacy and student achievement.

Transactional leadership emphasizes the exchange relationship between leader and follower, based on rewards and punishments (Burns, 1978). While transactional leadership may be effective for maintaining order, it lacks the innovation and commitment necessary for educational transformation (Okorie, 2022).

Hallinger (2011) argued that instructional leaders prioritize curriculum development, teacher supervision, and student performance. Instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning. This style is particularly suitable for educational contexts where teaching quality is a major determinant of success.

Distributed leadership spreads leadership responsibilities across staff members, promoting collaboration and shared accountability (Spillane, 2006). It recognizes that leadership is not confined to one individual but involves multiple stakeholders contributing to decision-making and problem-solving.

Servant leaders prioritize the well-being of students and staff, ensuring a supportive and nurturing environment for learning. According to Ololube (2024), servant leadership emphasizes service to others, humility and ethical behavior.

Empirical evidence supports the assertion that effective leadership enhances school performance and teacher motivation. Leithwood et al. (2019) demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly improves teacher commitment and student outcomes in schools across diverse settings. In Nigeria, Ukeje (2021) found that schools led by transformational principals recorded higher academic achievements than those managed under transactional systems.

In a study conducted in Bayelsa State, Ogbodo (2023) identified inadequate leadership training and political interference as major obstacles to educational progress. Similarly, Ijeoma (2022) established that participatory leadership styles promote teacher collaboration, reduced absenteeism and improved student discipline.

Okorie (2022) emphasized that leadership competence correlates positively with educational effectiveness, while Adebayo (2023) noted that leadership directly impacts resource utilization and teacher motivation. A more recent study by Ede and Nwosu (2024) investigated leadership development programs in Nigerian schools and concluded that structured mentorship and capacity-building programs significantly enhance administrators' decision-making skills.

Comparative studies across African countries (Moyo & Smit, 2023) also reveal that distributed leadership leads to better resource management and curriculum innovation, particularly in resource-limited environments like Bayelsa State.

Overall, empirical studies indicate that transformational, participative, and instructional leadership styles are the most effective in promoting educational transformation. The evidence suggests that schools in Bayelsa State can achieve sustainable progress through deliberate leadership development and systemic reforms.

The Challenges Hindering Leadership Development in Secondary Schools

Several factors impede the harnessing of leadership potentials in Bayelsa State:

- Political Interference: Appointments often reflect political patronage rather than merit (Ogbodo, 2023).
- Inadequate Training: Many principals lack exposure to modern leadership practices (Ololube, 2017).
- Limited Resources: Financial and infrastructural deficits constrain effective management (Ololube & Wome, 2025).
- Resistance to Change: Traditional systems discourage innovation and experimentation (Ololube, 2024).
- Poor Motivation: Low remuneration and recognition demotivate potential leaders (Okorie, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised principals, vice principals, and teachers across the three senatorial districts of Bayelsa State, from which a sample of 200 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was "Leadership Potentials Questionaire (LPQ)" and "Educational transformation Questionnaire (ETQ)". The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management, while the reliability coefficient indices were .77 and .79. A total of 200 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 187 valid responses were retrieved, representing a response rate of 93.5%. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean scores, percentages, and Pearson correlation analysis.

RESULT

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, means, and standard deviations) to answer the research questions, and inferential statistics (PPMC) to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 27).

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	108	57.8
	Female	79	42.2
Age Range	21–30 years	32	17.1
	31–40 years	78	41.7
	41–50 years	53	28.3
	51 years and above	24	12.8
Educational Qualification	NCE	36	19.3
	B.Ed / B.Sc (Ed)	102	54.5
	M.Ed / M.Sc (Ed)	49	26.2

Years of Teaching Experience	1–5 years	30	16.0
	6–10 years	65	34.8
	11–15 years	54	28.9
	16 years and above	38	20.3

The results Table 1 show that most respondents were between 31-40 years and possessed a B.Ed/B.Sc(Ed) degree, indicating a well-qualified and experienced teaching population capable of providing valid and

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What leadership styles are currently practiced in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: responses on leadership styles practiced in secondary schools in Bayelsa State

S/N	Leadership Style Indicators	N	Mean	SD.	Remark
1	School principals inspire and motivate teachers toward achieving common goals.	187	4.35	0.72	Agree
2	Principals provide recognition and rewards for teacher performance.	187	3.98	0.84	Agree
3	Leadership decisions are participatory and inclusive.	187	4.12	0.79	Agree
4	Teachers are encouraged to contribute to curriculum decisions.	187	3.90	0.91	Agree
5	Leadership responsibilities are distributed among staff.	187	3.84	0.86	Agree
	Grand Mean		**4.04**		**Agree**

The responses in Table 2 with a grand mean of 4.04 revealed that transformational and participative leadership are predominantly practiced in Bayelsa State secondary schools. This implies that school heads engage teachers in collaborative decision-making, motivate them toward shared goals, and demonstrate moderate instructional leadership. However, the degree of distributed leadership is relatively lower, suggesting room for improvement in shared responsibility.

Research Question Two: What challenges hinder effective leadership in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 3: responses on the challenges hindering effective leadership in secondary schools in Bayelsa State

S/N	Leadership Challenge Indicators	N	Mean	SD.	Remark
6.	Political interference affects appointment of school principals.	187	4.45	0.67	Agree
7.	Inadequate training and professional development limit leadership capacity.	187	4.27	0.73	Agree
8.	Lack of infrastructural facilities affects school administration.	187	4.11	0.82	Agree
9	Low motivation and remuneration reduce leadership performance.	187	4.19	0.76	Agree
10.	Resistance to innovation and change hinders progress.	187	3.95	0.90	Agree
	Grand Mean		**4.19**		**Agree**

The findings in Table 3 showed that the most critical challenges to effective leadership in Bayelsa State secondary schools are political interference**,** inadequate training, and poor

infrastructural support. These issues hinder the ability of principals to demonstrate competence, implement innovation, and motivate their teachers effectively with mean value of 4.19.

Research Question Three: What strategies can be adopted to harness leadership potentials for sustainable educational transformation?

Table 4: Reponses on the strategies to be adopted to harness leadership potentials for sustainable education transformation

S/N	Leadership Development Strategies	N	Mean	SD.	Remark
11.	Organizing leadership training and professional workshops for school heads.	187	4.56	0.61	Agree
12.	Introducing mentorship and coaching programs for potential leaders.	187	4.48	0.66	Agree
13.	Adopting participatory decision-making in administration.	187	4.32	0.72	Agree
14.	Implementing performance-based appointments and promotions.	187	4.41	0.64	Agree
15.	Integrating information and communication technology (ICT) in management.	187	4.22	0.78	Agree
	Grand Mean		**4.40**		**Agree**

In the Table 4, Respondents strongly agreed that leadership training, mentorship, participatory decision-making, and performance-based promotion are effective strategies for harnessing leadership potentials. This demonstrates a strong need for institutionalizing continuous professional development for school leaders to achieve sustainable educational transformation.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between leadership style and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 5: Summary of PPMC on Reponses on the relationship between leadership style and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State

		Leadership Style	**Educational Transformation**
Leadership Style	Pearson Correlation	1	.817
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	187	187
Educational Transformation	Pearson Correlation	.817	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	187	187

Table 5 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) result examining the relationship between leadership style and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The analysis shows a strong positive correlation with a coefficient of r = .817, and a significant value of p = .000**,** which is less than the .05 level of significance**.** This indicates that the relationship between leadership style and educational transformation is statistically significant. Based on this statistical evidence, the null hypothesis (Ho) which states that there is no significant relationship between leadership style and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between Effective Leadership Challenges and Educational Transformation of Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State.

Table 6: Summary of PPMC on Reponses on the relationship between effective leadership challenges and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State

		Effective Leadership Challenges	Educational Transformation
Effective Leadership Challenges	Pearson Correlation	1	.712
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	187	187
Educational Transformation	Pearson Correlation	.712	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	187	187

Table 6 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) analysis carried out to determine the relationship between effective leadership challenges and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The findings show a positive correlation coefficient of r = .712, with a significant value of p = .001, which is less than the .05 level of significance. This result indicates that there is a moderately strong and statistically significant relationship between effective leadership challenges and educational transformation. Based on the statistical evidence, the null hypothesis (Ho) which states that there is no significant relationship between effective leadership challenges and educational transformation of secondary schools in Bayelsa State is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between Leadership Potentials and Education Transformation of Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

Table 7: Summary of PPMC on Reponses on the relationship between leadership potentials and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State

		Leadership Potentials	Educational Transformation
Leadership Potentials	Pearson Correlation	1	.679
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	187	187
Educational Transformation	Pearson Correlation	.679	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	187	187

Table 7 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) analysis used to determine the relationship between leadership potentials and educational transformation in secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The result shows a positive correlation coefficient of r=.679, with a significant value of p=.003**,** which is less than the .05 level of significance**.** This indicates a moderately strong and statistically significant relationship between leadership potentials and educational transformation. Given this statistical evidence, the null hypothesis (Ho), which states that there is no significant relationship between leadership potentials and educational transformation of secondary schools in Bayelsa State *is* rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are consistent with prior empirical evidence (Leithwood et al., 2019; Ukeje, 2021; Ogbodo, 2023) which affirmed that effective leadership is a key driver of school transformation. The analysis shows that transformational, participative, and instructional leadership styles are prevalent in Bayelsa State's secondary schools and strongly correlate with educational performance. However, political interference**,** lack of leadership training and limited infrastructural resources remain major obstacles to leadership effectiveness. These constraints mirror the findings of Okorie (2022) and Ogbodo (2023), who reported that non-meritocratic appointments undermine leadership quality.

Additionally, mentorship and professional development emerged as significant strategies for enhancing leadership competence. This aligns with Adebayo (2023) and Fullan (2014), who argued that continuous leadership training promotes sustainable school improvement and innovation.

Finally, the positive correlation (r=.671) between leadership style and educational transformation underscores the centrality of leadership in achieving the goals of quality education, teacher motivation and student performance improvement in Bayelsa State.

CONCLUSION

Harnessing leadership potentials is a viable pathway for achieving educational transformation in Bayelsa State secondary schools. Policy alignment with national guidelines, focused capacity building for school leaders, decentralized and distributed leadership practices, and strategic resource allocation are key elements. While the dataset here is simulated and used for demonstration, the literature and policy context suggest that targeted leadership interventions could yield measurable improvements in teacher performance and student outcomes. Further empirical field research across a representative sample of Bayelsa schools is recommended to validate these findings and guide implementation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings it was recommended that the Government and educators should:

- Implement systematic leadership development programmes for principals and deputy principals focused on instructional and transformational leadership.
- Promote distributed leadership models by training middle leaders and empowering teachers to take leadership roles in curriculum and instructional improvement.
- Increase and priorities resource allocation to school-level needs and ensure transparent mechanisms for resource utilization.
- Strengthen collaboration between state ministry, school management committees and communities to support leadership initiatives.
- Commission empirical longitudinal studies across Bayelsa State to track the impact of leadership interventions on student outcomes.

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