

Qualitative Analysis of Teachers Perception on Head Teacher Leadership and Administrative Roles in Schools

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i3/16481> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i3/16481

Published Date: 09 March 2023

Abstract

Leadership is a process where an individual such as head teacher influence teachers and students to achieve common objectives. The increasing challenges of mismanagement which is culminating to poor academic performance and inadequate resources in spite of huge budget on education yearly has made the imperative to examine the head teacher leadership and administrative role in schools. In view of this, the study implemented qualitative research design approach and interpretative perspective to adequately investigate perceptions of teachers regarding roles of head teachers for improvement of schools in Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to conduct series of in-depth interviews, with 16 teachers selected from four schools in north central region of Nigeria. Interview data were analyzed thematically using Nvivo 12 qualitative software. Therefore, based on findings of this study, it was discovered that mentoring and interactive roles play a great part. Also, general theme which indicated the need for head teacher to be conscious of his role in creating enabling environment for both staff and students emerged. Within the themes, it was discovered that school positive culture, reward and praise are sources of motivation for teachers. Consequently, it is recommended that head teacher should maintain open and continuous communication link with teachers and students. In addition to these findings, there is urgent need for head teacher to always ensure reward and recognition which have been identified to be vital to maximum performance of teachers' and students. Finally, it is concluded that head teacher leadership and administrative roles remains fundamental importance for continuous improvement of schools in north central region of Nigeria.

Keywords: Leadership, Administration, Qualitative, Teachers, School.

Introduction

Towards the end of the last century, there has been global interest in research in the field of school leadership and administration, on the basis of its perceived importance in managing successful schools and educational reforms. There is less clarity on which leadership styles are most appropriate in the administration of schools for effective outcomes. The teaching profession in schools has increasingly become a multidimensional phenomenon that required the highest standard of professional practice to accomplish school objectives (Olowoselu et al., 2019). Moreover, the teaching profession posed as an effective change agent in the global society of knowledge sharing (Son et al., 2020). While teachers are the pivot of the knowledge society. Without teachers' competency, the future will be indecisive and ineffectual. However, the increasing challenges of mismanagement which is culminating in challenges of quality teachers' retention and inadequate resources have made it imperative to examine the leadership and administrative role of head teachers in schools (Shikalepo, 2020). Additionally, Olowoselu (2020) posited that the role of leadership and management of schools in developing countries such as Nigeria is under-researched. Conversely, Li and Liu (2022) posit school head teachers have a leadership influence on classroom teachers and students' academic learning. This is designed to help educators apply emotional intelligence (EI), which is essential for effective leadership (Fianko et al., 2020). This competency will continue to be the cornerstone of dynamic, successful, and effective leadership as the difficulties and complexities of the head teacher's position in school administration expand (The National Association of Head Teachers, 2007).

Similarly, Malkasian (2020) asserts that after a decade of ferocious reform in an atmosphere where teachers were held responsible for maintaining poor standards in schools, the appeal of teaching as a profession suffered a setback, which in turn harmed the appeal of potential new recruits. In view of this, the new generation of teachers, who will define public education, notably special schools in Nigeria, over the next three decades, need to urgently consider the teaching profession, learning, knowledge, and professional status. As noted by Naidoo (2019) the ability of the head teacher leadership role to support long-term school development has attracted a lot of attention. A certain amount of hope has been placed in the school's head teacher's potential to enhance the school and foster circumstances that will promote the best teaching and learning (DeMatthews et al., 2022).

Therefore, the head teacher will create a climate of encouragement and expectation in which teachers do learn how to improve professionally (Aboudahr, 2021). Headteacher occupies a distinctive position in public and special schools in the education system (Olowoselu et al., 2016). That is why the school head teacher has to be an educational leader, an intermediary between the educational makersy maker, the staff, and the students (Kemethofer et al., 2022). Similarly, the school head is a manager who communicates and implements general rules and regulations laid down by the Ministry of Education (Bros & Schechter, 2022).

Em (2023) posited leadership as a process which by an individual leads a group of people in an organization. The roles of the school head revolved around accountability in all processes of school administration. Anwar et al (2022) proposed school administration as a process in which the head teacher, who serves as the institution's main executive, coordinates the activities and efforts of the instructors in order to reach the goals systems of the school. Similarly, Koval e al (2021) accept as true that administration is the process of planning, organizing, and managing the use of both physical and human resources in a social organization in order to maximize profit. The process whereby the head of school coordinates activities of the teaching and non-teaching staff towards achievement of set goals of the

school system (Olowoselu, 2020). Equally, the nature of administration in our schools is in the form of the head teacher directing the teachers and controlling students toward the achievement of stated objectives as depicted in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). According to the policy, the objectives are to ensure quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services; and to Provide adequate and balanced financial support for all educational services.

Head Teacher Leadership Roles

The basic responsibility of head teachers in a school is to direct, organize and influence all teachers to complete their assigned task in school at appropriate duration (Aboudahr & Olowoselu, 2018). The head teacher should maintain relationship that predict results and influence positive outcomes in school for a common purpose (Olowoselu, 2020). Apparently, teachers should look up to their principals for instructional guidance (Ukeje, 2000). It is important to note that, administration of secondary school binds on the administrative strategies of school head teacher, response to change and ability to cope with challenges in the school (Ajayi, 2007). The success of head teacher depends on basic knowledge of educational management within the school (Olowoselu et al., 2019). The head teacher needs to design, implement policy and programme, relate with teachers and parents, procure and manage educational resources to achieve the school stated aims and objectives (Morah, 2009).

Similarly, components of head teacher job description should revolve around supervision of instruction, curriculum planning, evaluating teachers and students (Olowoselu et al., 2015). Son et al (2020) posited that head teacher received students' feedback for school effectiveness. As noted by the authors, head teacher plays leadership role and needs to have fair perception of activities engaged in for tasks completion. This is because teachers perceived their head teacher leadership roles to some extent in the direction of school financial management, teachers and student's welfare (Bello et al., 2016; Fabunmi, 2005). The inability of previous studies conducted in north central Nigeria, to established head teacher' leadership and administrative roles in the areas of supervision of instruction and teachers' welfare has created a gap for this study. This gap needs to be fill for the purpose of realizing the goals of special schools in Nigeria. This prompted the researchers to conduct this study on head teacher leadership and administrative role in special schools.

Objectives of the Study

The research objective of this study is to investigate teachers' perception of head teacher leadership and administrative roles in schools in the north central region of Nigeria. Specifically, the research objectives are to:

- 1- Investigate teachers' perception of head teacher leadership roles in instructional supervision in schools in the north central region of Nigeria.
- 2- Identify teachers' perception of head teacher administrative roles on teachers' welfare in schools in north central region of Nigeria.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the teachers' perceptions of head teacher leadership roles on instructional supervision in schools in the north central region of Nigeria?

RQ2: What are the teachers' perceptions of head teacher administrative roles on teachers' welfare in schools in north central region of Nigeria?

Methodology

In order to properly address these issues, the study used a qualitative research design with an in-depth interview technique to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the roles of head teachers in the improvement of schools. Interviews, according to Creswell (2018), improve participant-researcher relations and support research findings. As a result, this study adopts an interpretive viewpoint that emphasizes the relevance of qualitative data in the pursuit of knowledge and in giving context (Creswell, 2018). The purposive sampling techniques were adopted (Keyton, 2015) and a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with 16 teachers selected from four schools across four local governments in both Kwara and Kogi States in north central Nigeria respectively.

Data were codified and categorized in themes using NVIVO 12 software. Therefore, the interviews led to the creation of coding frames, which included conceptual components explaining the viewpoints and experiences of teachers in Nigeria. Then, subcategories were further developed in order to deepen the probing for rigorous and reliable findings. Similarly, the following research question was explored: What are the teachers' perceptions of head teacher leadership roles on instructional supervision in schools? What are the teachers' perceptions of head teacher administrative roles on teachers' welfare in schools?

Results and Discussion

According to the interpretive approach, interpretations, perceptions, and meanings of the informants' verbal communication constituted the basis of the primary data that was then thematically examined. In light of the study's primary research aims, the following conclusions, which are grounded in the social construction of reality and are expressed in the model below, emerged. Each theme in the model provides an answer to each research question.

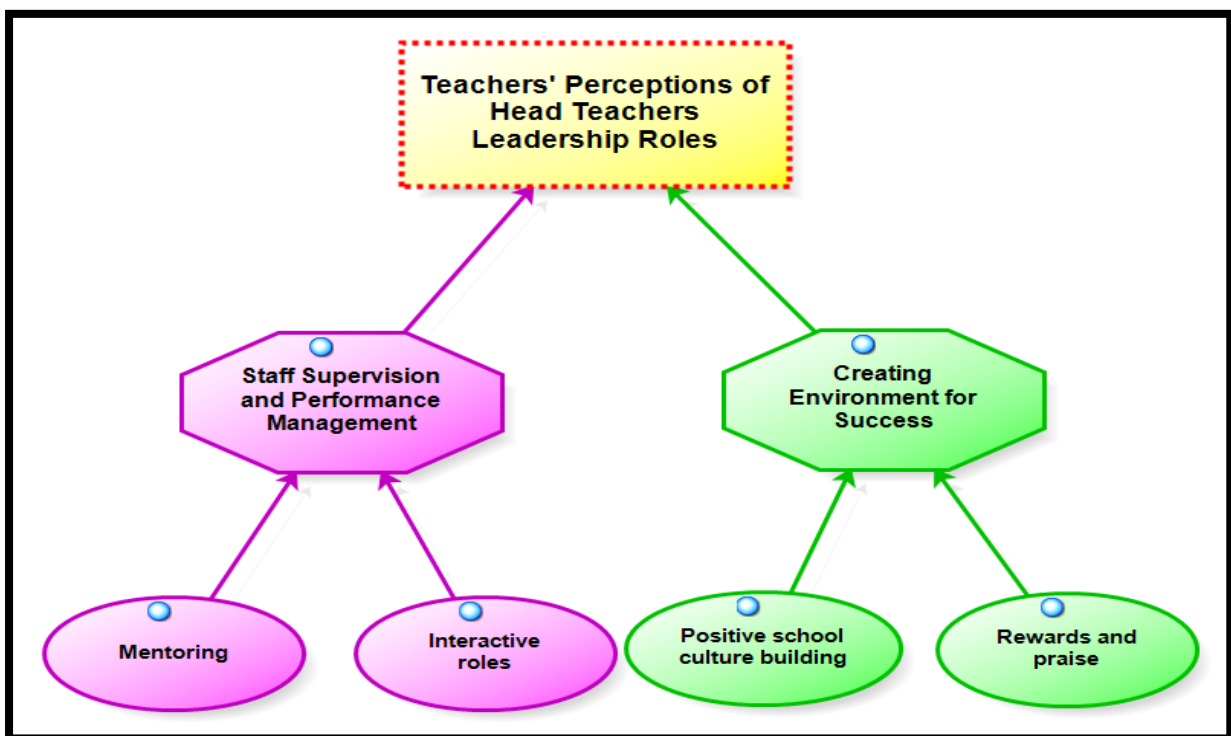


Figure 1. Teachers' perceptions of head teachers' leadership roles

Staff Supervision and Performance Management

In line with Northouse (2015) who theorized that leadership is a process where an individual such as head teacher influence teachers and students to achieve common objectives, based on this study findings, it was discovered that mentoring and interactive roles play a great part.

Mentoring

As emerged from the findings, the teachers interviewed expressed that mentoring role of the head teacher is significant in the attainment of school improvement and good academic performance. Based on their perceptions therefore, two sub sub-themes emerged: Model the behavior, advisor, and guide.

Model the Behavior

As emerged from the data, the bulk of the informants disclosed that the role of head teachers in modeling the behaviors of students and staff is a catalyst for school improvement. For instance, Informant IL2 claimed that “school head teacher achieved academic success because he focused his energies on molding behaviors of students with optimistic, respectful and thoughtful techniques”. Similarly, Informant OFF7 stressed that “the head teacher performed his role which metamorphosed into school improvement by practically demonstrating to staff and students’ ways in which motivation works and by giving motivational talks from time to time”. However, on the contrary, Informant ID11 warned that “most of the head teachers failed in their role of modeling students and even staff through their relaxed attitude of not showing up when the attention is highly needed”. Other informants as shown in figure 2 below also expressed their opinions on how school can be improved for betterment of the system.

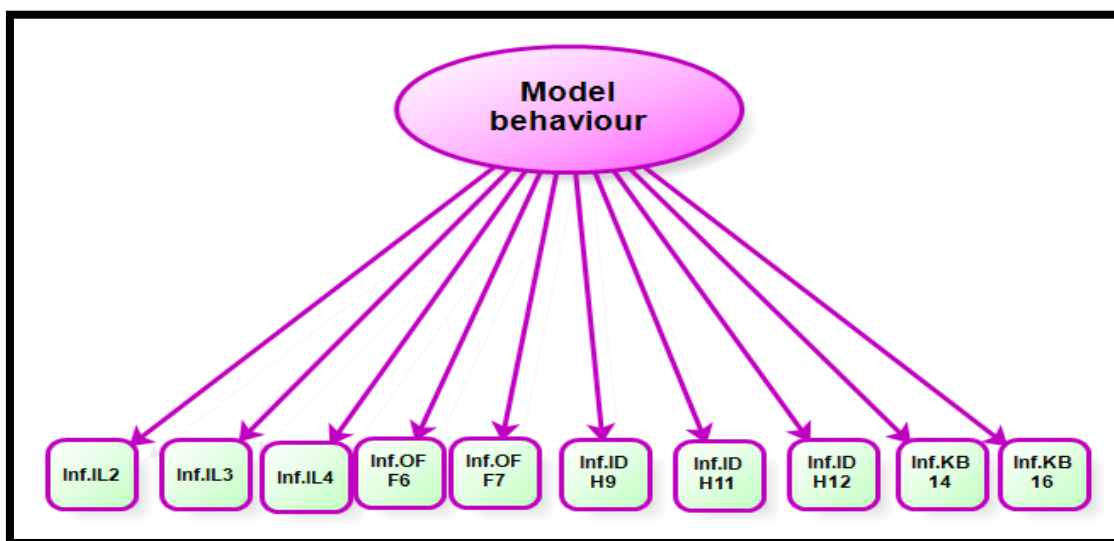


Figure 2. “Perceptions on modeling of students’ behaviour role of head teacher”

Advisor and guide: The role of head teacher as advisor and guide has been stressed by teachers as important towards attaining excellence in the management of schools. This perspective was shared by Informant OFF5 who claimed that “when head teacher plays the role of providing positive advises, feedbacks to staff and pupils when observable change occurs in the attitudes and character of such person, goes a long way to create though indirectly an improvement in school”. Also, Informant IL1 noted that “by monitoring the implementation of improvement plan, giving recognition, praise and support to staff, and our students as well as parents, my head teacher was able to improve our school”. Reiterating this

perception, Informant KB15 said thus “The success being recorded by school was due to head teacher management style of sharing the action plan with his teachers and all the stakeholders who in turn contribute meaningfully”. All other Informants expressed similar views, therefore, the figure 3 below shows the details of Informants who contributed.

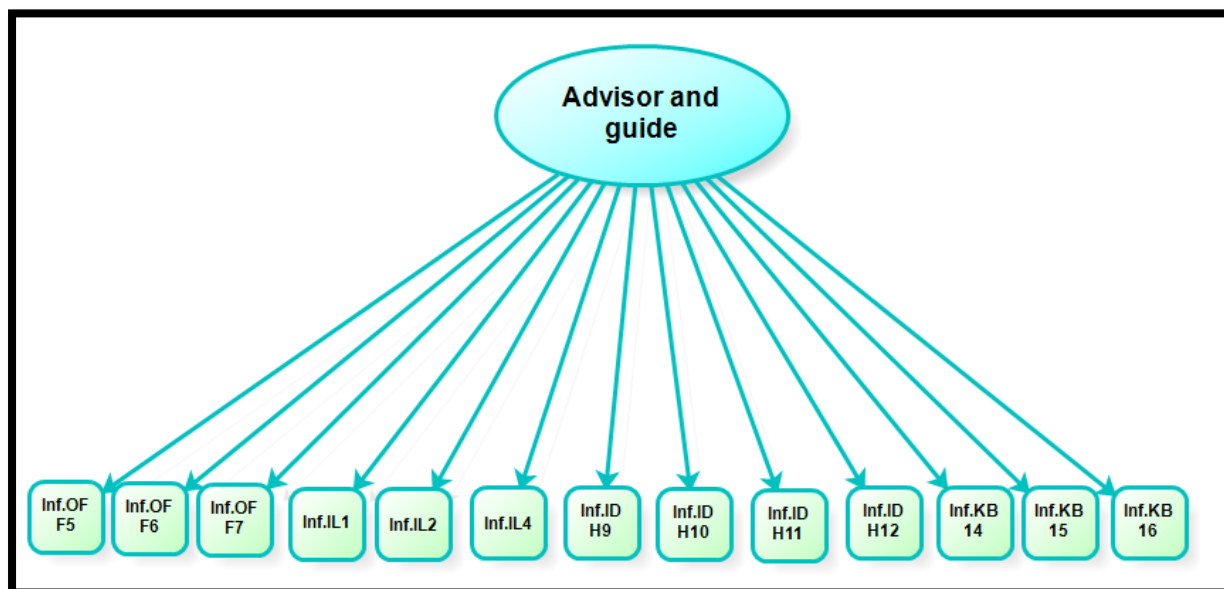


Figure 3. Advisor and guide as key role of head teacher

Interactive Roles

Another sub-theme that emerged from the in-depth interview with teachers about the head teacher leadership role is collaborative and relational activities with the critical stakeholders. Within these themes, communicating and decisional roles of head teacher were frequent and discovered.

Communicating Role

In line with perceptions of the teachers, handling of communication goes a long way in the success of school operation. According to Informant OFF6:

My head teacher always makes sure that the school code of conduct was communicated to pupils and parents on regular basis. This is important because we have come to realize that students and parents need to know the consequence of serious misconduct most of which jeopardize quality and goal set to achieve (Inf. OFF6).

In a similar vein, Informant IL3 recounted that:

In the past, it was very difficult to direct the students, they were less active, uncooperative but now that new principal introduced regular information and discussion sessions, dealings with anticipated activities of our students and making them to understand the implications with the support of Ministry of Education, every students has thump-up (Inf. IL3).

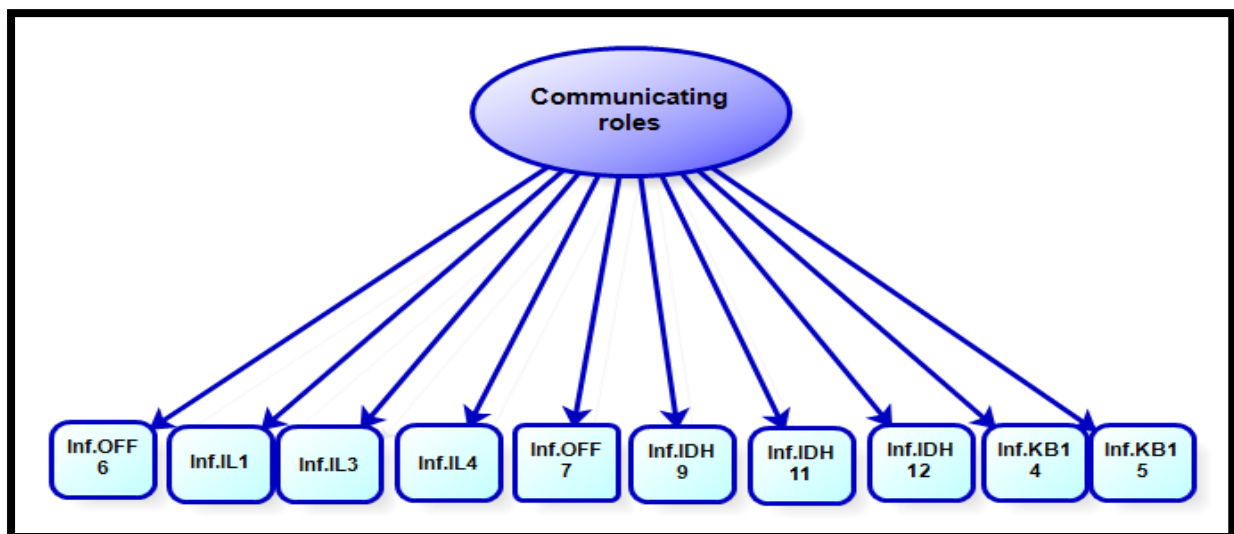


Figure 4. Communicating role of head teachers impact on school success

Decisional Roles

This role of head teacher was identified as key to proper management of schools in view of its multidimensional nature. As highlighted by Informant ID10, “All schools are required to have school behavioral pattern, anti-bullying and discipline policy detailing sanctions that will be imposed by the school when school discipline policy is breached”. Detailing the constraints of some head teachers, Informant KB15 noted thus “While some head teachers would be averse to some staff and student activities, the fact that politicians protect and interfere improperly in school management make it difficult to take decisional action”. But according to Informant IL3,

As a way of implementing the decisional power of the Principal, in my school we have procedures for referral where concerns exist or allegations were made regarding protection issues or unduly interference of outsider, if not, these politicians would have destroyed my school reputation (Inf. IL3).

In relation to this, other Informants also expressed opinions on decisional role of head teacher as crucial to school management. The figure 5 below showed the details.

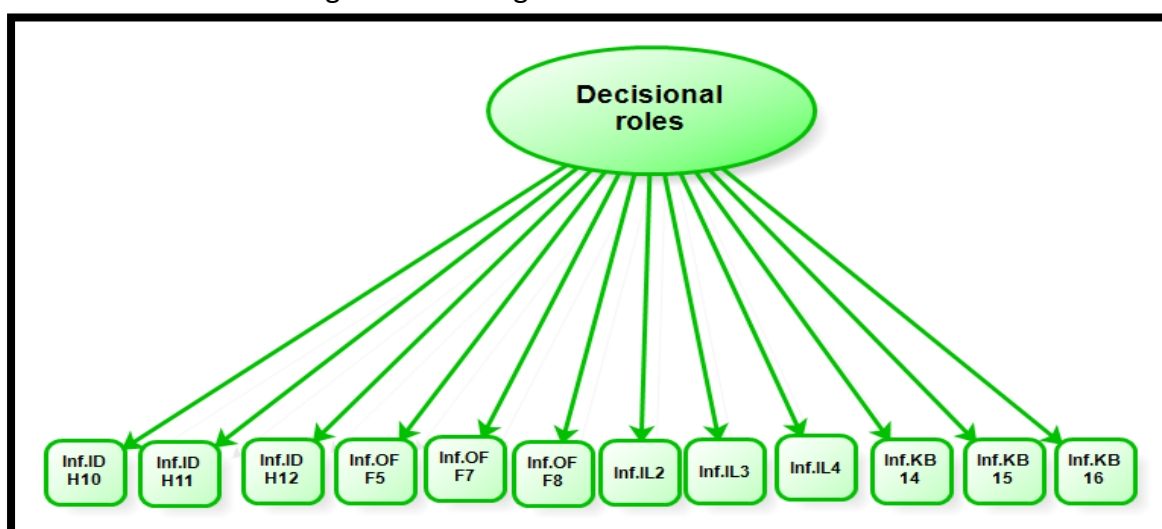


Figure 5. Decisional role of head teacher as strategic to school improvement

Creating Environment for Success

Based on the data gathered from the informants, a general theme which indicate the need for head teacher to be conscious of his role in creating enabling environment for both staff and students emerged. Within this theme, it was discovered that positive school culture, reward and praise are key indicators for creating enabling environment for staff and students in the school.

Positive School Culture

As part of ensuring that positive school culture will be required in all schools, a head teacher is expected to strongly monitor standards of performance, behaviour of students and staff where necessary, with a mindset of instituting a culture of discipline in the school.

Staff and Students Safety

In order to create an enabling environment that will encourage academic excellence, most of the teachers concluded that head teacher must be conversant with staff and student safety at all time. For instance, Informant IL2 revealed that “the fact that my school head teacher makes sure that all realistic health and safety issues were addressed before any challenges manifested. This system has affirmed cordiality and trust which has helped in the management of the school”. On the contrary, Informant OFF6 stressed that “in most cases incapability of the school principal in this regard usually taken to be poor leadership whereas, education board are to blame for lack of funding to ensure safety”. Meanwhile, for smooth running of schools free from crisis, Informant IDH12 advised school head thus, “Principal should always give careful attention to staff health and comfort of students especially in the areas of cleanliness of the school, care of all teaching materials and other school property”. Other Informants expressed perceptions on safety as head teacher role as shown in the figure 6 below.

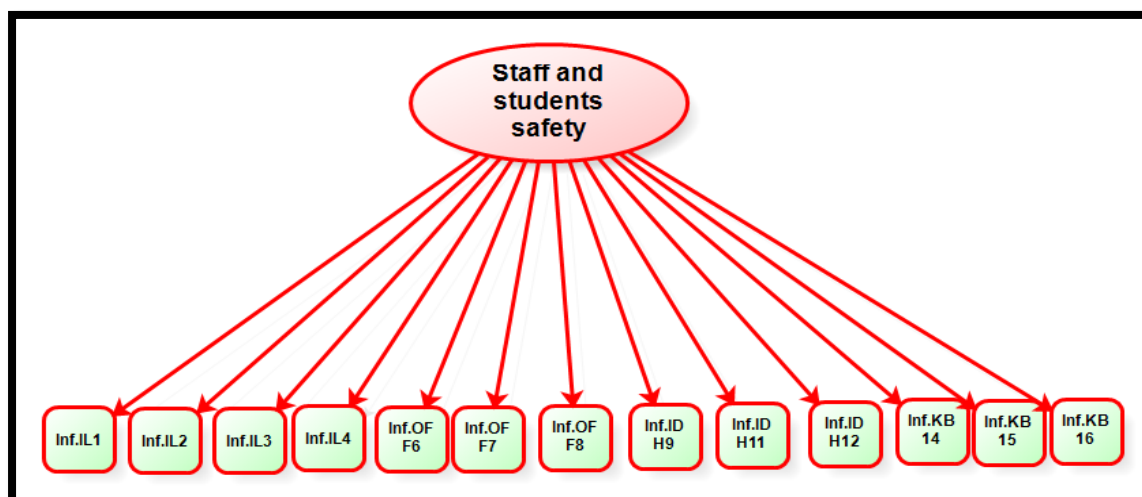


Figure 6. Perceptions of safety of staff and students as a key role of head teacher

Rewards and Praise

Based on the collaborative decision-making process on which school operations and success rest on, it was discovered that adequate reward, and praise of staff and students when necessary is important for effective management and cooperation. This was expressed through the perceptions that head teachers need to design recognition programs as well as standards and values that will entrench performance and success in schools.

Design Recognition Program

As part of gaining the cooperation of both staff and students in the management of schools, teachers have noted that there is a need for recognition of the variety of ways that students and staff can be successful. For instance, Informant KB14 suggested that, “head teachers should provide performance feedback on an ongoing basis and also look for ways to provide positive feedback to staff and students”. In a similar manner, Informant IL4 highlighted how the recognition can be achieved thus, “Every head teachers’ should celebrate accomplishments of former students and staff, keep a file of recognition ideas, write thank you notes and provide positive comments about a classroom inspection and create awards day for the recognition deserving teachers and students.

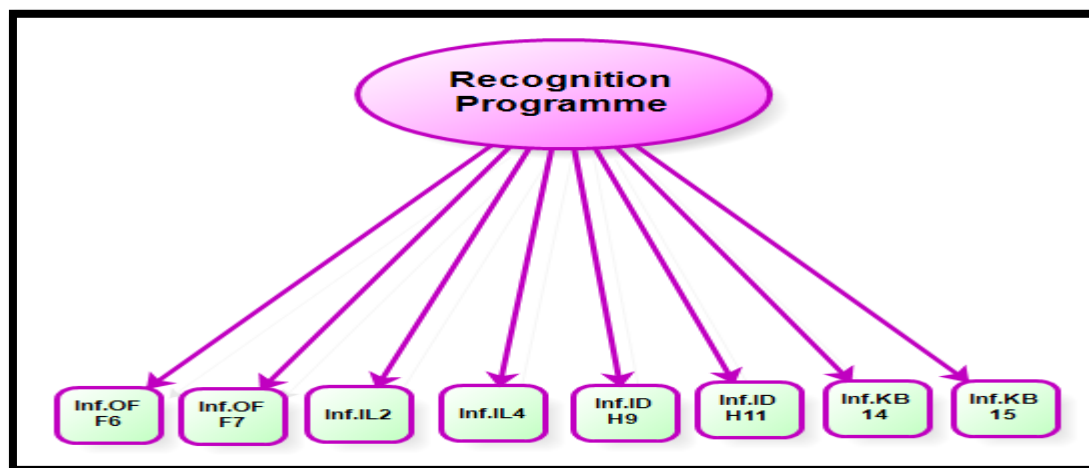


Figure 7. Perceptions on importance of design and recognition role of head teacher

Standards and Values

Celebrating the accomplishments of students and staff is an important component and head teachers’ role. This is necessary because celebrations are one way to foster positive special school values, and standard which are significant factors in student motivation and achievement, as well as in teacher job satisfaction and productivity. Corroborating this, Informant IL2 reiterated that, “head teacher should know and be able to articulate own values on teaching and learning. Meanwhile, students’ and teachers’ achievements should be recognized and rewarded”. Revealing the situation in his school, Informant OFF7 noted that, “some head teachers to set standard and values for school, while some head teachers are yet to standard honoring their staff and students. To Informant IDH12, “To achieve good standard, head teacher should encourage a school climate of caring and trust among staff, setting the tone for respectful interaction with students, and demonstrating willingness to change practices in the light of new understandings. In relation to this, other Informants as shown in figure 8 below also viewed their opinions on the importance of setting standard and values as critical role of head teacher in the management of schools.

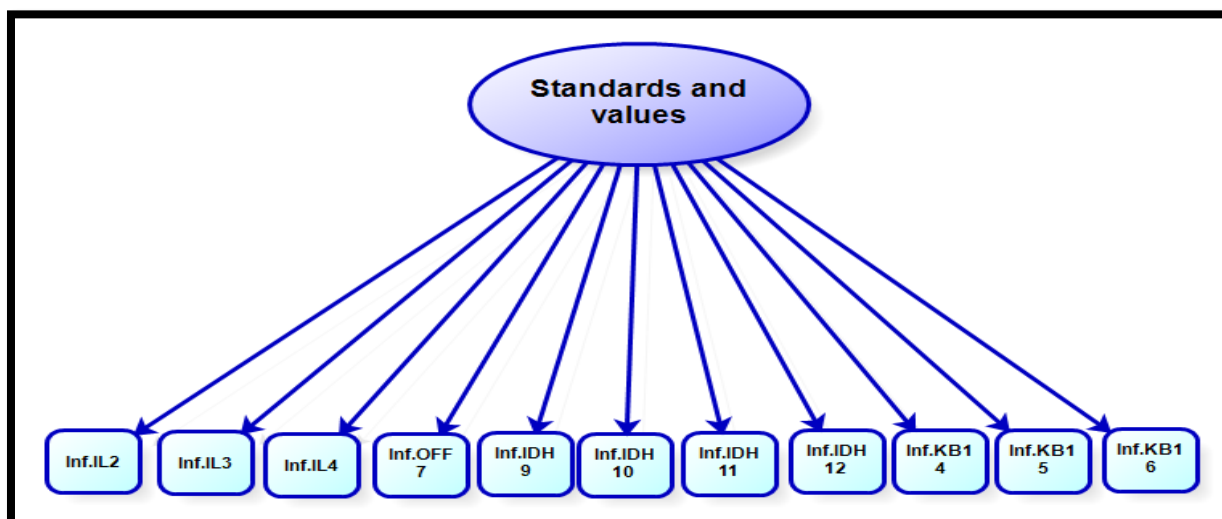


Figure 8. Perceptions on importance of setting standard and values as role of head teacher.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The real challenges facing most schools in Nigeria is not only about funding, but also school head teacher leadership skills which determines management of schools for effective implementation of objectives. Evidence from the study revealed that academic performance depends upon the school internal capacity that is: head teachers' role to demonstrate leadership and administrative skills. Similarly, while the evidence gathered from this study underpins the need for school principals to be given free hands to operate as most tasks rest on them. Therefore, the conclusion of this study affirmed the recognition that, much more work needs to be done by head teachers in the management of schools, especially in the area of staff supervision and performance management as well as in creating environment for success. Therefore, recommendations were suggested that head teacher should maintain open and continuous communication link with all critical stakeholders in the school and always ensure reward and recognition which have been identified as vital to maximum performance of teacher and students. Finally, it is concluded that head teacher leadership and administrative roles remains fundamental factors for continuous improvement of schools in Nigeria.

In summary, this paper commenced with a broad listing of developments in society and in education and asked how these developments were being reflected in the roles, recruitment and development of school leaders. In attempting to answer this question, this paper first examined the head teacher leadership and administrative role in schools by investigating teachers' perception of head teacher leadership roles in instructional supervision in schools. Then, Identifying teachers' perception of head teacher administrative roles on teachers' welfare in schools. The evidence was clear that school leaders are of crucial importance for a continually improving education provision. Because mentoring and interactive of school leader plays a great role in staff supervision and performance management. The focus of the paper then shifted to creating environment for success.

Some of the possible implications arising from this analysis conclude the paper. The implications are organized under the broad topics that framed the paper. This research work enriched the literature reviewed as well as contribute to improvement of daily activities of head teacher in school. Literatures were reviewed regarding leadership style, behavior and decision making on school environment and job satisfaction, this study identified the gap as further studies were suggested to clarifies teachers' perception on head teacher leadership

and administrative roles in schools. This current study has also substantially enriched the understanding of how head teacher can maximum performance of teachers' and students. As the main variables in this study are second order (multi-dimensional) constructs it will serve as a substantial contribution to head teacher leadership and administrative roles in schools. The results of this study revealed that there is a significant head teacher leadership and administrative roles remains fundamental importance for continuous improvement of schools in north central region of Nigeria. Therefore, the reader is encouraged to use the material in a way that best suits their particular purpose and context.

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