

| CHAPTER FOUR |

E. O. NWADIALOR AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Everyone has a distinct administrative style. Whether one is in charge of 100 people, 1,000,000 people, or nobody at all, the way one approaches management is based on one's personality and how one communicates with others. When some leaders falter, it is because of a lack of understanding of the relationship between themselves and their team. Familiarizing oneself with the advantages of the different administrative styles, and knowing which one is best suited to use, will make one a better leader. Administrative style used in a higher institution affects the competence-based performance of the lecturers and the administrative staff. In turn, their performance will affect the institution performance. So, administrative style influences the institution towards strengthening its strategy to sustain itself. Just like personality types, administrative styles do not fit into neat boxes. Instead, they can be broadly categorized based on a set of characteristics, including things like autonomy and flexibility. In the real world, administrative styles include aspects of these different categories and adaptation is needed to suit the business environment.

In an autocratic environment, the leader makes decisions without consultation and this can demoralize employees. However, decisions are made quickly and confidently making them excellent assets in crisis moments. Democratic style leaders value their colleagues' opinion. They open up most decisions for debate, which help employees feel valued and appreciated. In some cases, democratic leaders can seem indecisive, as though they do not trust their own ability to reach conclusions, and these leaders can improve their effectiveness by learning to make quick decisions in critical circumstances. Intentional laissez-faire leaders give their employees autonomy and creative freedom. They let workers set their own schedules and make decisions. Unintentional laissez-faire leaders, on the other hand, lack control over their teams. Leaders who possess the laissez-faire administrative style often work best with employees or team members who can manage and direct themselves. However, some employees need more direction than others and might struggle to keep up with the team under a laissez-faire leader. A managerial leader values order and systems. Managerial leaders set targets for employees and outline the rewards and penalties associated with meeting-or not meeting-those targets. This rigid style of leadership encourages high compliance within teams while suppressing creativity and ingenuity, but the strong emphasis on procedure allows for an extreme degree of control over processes and leads to predictable, reliable outputs. As long as the give-and-take nature of this relationship is fair and well understood by teams, performance and productivity can thrive. However, managerial leaders are less able to empathize or bend the rules to accommodate individual employee needs. Visionary leaders exist to energize teams and sell an organization's vision. Using a mix of empathy, enthusiasm, and praise, they encourage individual workers to achieve their objectives, explore new ideas, and improve their outcomes. Under a visionary leader, employees feel empowered and loyal, though in larger companies this style of soft leadership can sometimes appear distant.

To become an effective leader, one needs to know which qualities to develop as one leads one's team. This leadership qualities list includes several personal and professional traits that can help one communicate more effectively, develop and reach goals, and relate to other team members. Effective leaders need focus and concentration to keep their teams on the path to success. They are able to concentrate on one task for long periods of time, and they do not let themselves get distracted. Of course, leaders who are focused on one project to the exclusion of all else can sometimes get stuck and are unable to move forward. These leadership qualities can prove more effective when balanced with a big-picture viewpoint. Visionary leaders can often refine a thought or idea without losing sight of the end goal. Teams need to hear feedback if they are to learn and grow. Great leaders know how to communicate with staff effectively, whether they are delegating tasks, offering constructive criticism, or explaining a goal. Additionally, they know that positive and negative feedback often sound best when delivered together. Leaders who never or rarely issue praise can foster a competitive and resentful workplace environment. Positive feedback helps employees recognize when they are on the right track. A great leader possesses enough confidence to make decisions and set boundaries, but also has the patience to walk team members through a process. While extreme confidence can easily lead to mistakes, patience helps temper the confidence without neutralizing it. Additionally, a leader who exhibits patience can help struggling workers push through obstacles and learn new skills. In any business, change happens. Revenues rise and drop, brand image improves and falters, and upper management can alter a program's focus or goal. Leaders prove most effective when they can adapt quickly to new situations and consistently respond to employee needs with flexibility. They are willing to work toward the organization's needs instead of just their own. While full transparency can have a negative impact on an organization, good leaders know when to share their feelings openly and honestly. They also know when to share critical information with their team members, even if it might negatively impact them. Some leaders demonstrate honesty

and transparency naturally, while others have to work hard to achieve it. A good leader believes in their organization and wants to see it succeed. Without these qualities, leaders can easily grow disconnected from their position as well as from other team members. Passion helps leaders through rough spots, and drive motivates them to complete undesirable tasks. Both passion and drive can prove contagious, spreading to other people in the office and encouraging them to adopt the same enthusiasm. Praise is not the only thing employees need to reach their full potential. They also need recognition, which only leaders can provide. When an employee meets a goal or achieves greatness, the best leaders recognize those employees publicly. Managers often take credit for their employees' accomplishments, while effective leaders are quick to share the spotlight with hard workers and devoted team members. While good leaders know how to ask for feedback and ideas from employees, they also know when to make executive decisions. They keep working toward a goal as long as it makes sense to do so. Though everyone has a bad day at work now and again, good leaders recognize and prepare for this. They take a positive attitude to work every day and spread it to as many people as possible. Even during difficult times, they are able to find a positive spin to make the situation more tenable. Once one has identified his administrative style, he can better understand how to motivate and communicate with employees. Enhance ability to make good decisions and handle unforeseen challenges. Mobilize teams more effectively and support those who need it. Administrative style can be changed by focusing energy on the precise leadership attributes one's organization needs.

METHODS

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to understand how conversations in administrative leadership teams affect the institution decision making process, and impact the climate, culture, and student achievement. An inquiry of how of diverse leadership styles impact and shape these relationships is embedded in this study. Let us identify research design chosen,

processes used, and reasons for selections. A description of data sources, data collection, and data analysis are discussed. Collaborative administrative team decision making is a relatively new development in institution organizational structure, and the interactions and relationships between administrative team members directly influence how and why decisions are made. A case study design was selected, employing qualitative research approaches including interviews and analysis of supporting documents. Eight participants were invited to participate from each of Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Godfrey Okoye University and Tansian University and seventeen accepted the invitation to participate. Each participant was asked similar questions in an open-ended, semi-structured protocol.

Data Sources: Purposive sampling was chosen as the sampling strategy for this study. Purposive sampling permits the collection of information rich data when studying a particular phenomenon in depth (Patton, 2021). Patton also believed that purposive sampling allows researchers to focus on information that is to the purpose of the research (Patton, 2021). Purposive sampling was the preferred choice given the formative nature of the topic, and the need for pertinent information and understanding. Erlandson et al., explained, “Purposive sampling...increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher's ability to identify emerging themes” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 2020, p. 82). To improve triangulation, eight participants from each institution were invited to participate. The decision to conduct individual interviews with eight participants was made to provide a thick, rich description of how politics affect the actions of administrative leadership teams and how these actions are perceived by lecturers. Interviewing participants holding similar positions enhanced trustworthiness and reliability through integration of sampling adequacy.

The following questions were asked:

1) How do institutional politics between members of the administrative leadership teams affect their ability to function as a

collaborative, decision-making group, and support goals outlined in the institution improvement plan?

2) Do the decisions made by the administrative leadership teams instil in department coordinators the confidence that their actions are made in the best interests of undergraduates?

3) Is there a process for resolving differences of opinion? What happens when differences are not resolved?

4) Do administrative leadership team members uphold or betray the confidential relationship regarding discussions and opinions expressed during closed meetings of the administrative leadership team?

5) What is the perception of the ability of the administrative leadership team to function in the best interest of the undergraduates by reducing the number of disciplinary incidents, lowering the classroom failure rate, and raising student achievement?

The above questions provided the seed for participants to share their individual perceptions of their experiences with interactions that occurred on institution. Follow up questions drilled down exploring the unique experiences that each shared, and were individually crafted for each individual.

Field Notes: Yin (2012) suggests that field notes and reflexive journals be kept during the study. Since each institution was visited multiple times at different times of day, these field notes were taken to record impressions and perceptions that the researcher had of each visit. As a practicing administrator and a member of an administrative leadership team on another institution, a reflexive journal helped to identify similarities and differences of each institution studied with mine.

Reliability and Trustworthiness: Triangulation was accomplished by employing multiple sources of data to enhance the descriptive richness of the phenomenon studied, thereby improving validity (Hays & Singh, 2012, Schwandt, 2007). Triangulation was enhanced by employing multiple sources of

evidence: personal interviews, and institution demographics. Yin (2014) observed that multiple sources of information allow the researcher to establish “converging lines of inquiry” since using multiple sources may suggest similar outcomes (Yin, 2014, p. 120). Lincoln and Gruba (2015) cite four components of trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the degree of accuracy of the participant's perceptions and how they are represented. Transferability is the establishment of the ability of the findings to be generalized to similar situations. The research is dependable if well thought out, can be easily replicated, and is well documented.

Finally, confirmability is the evidence that there are direct links between the data and the way that it is presented. To increase trustworthiness, each participant was asked similar questions during the interview process without prior knowledge of the content in order to eliminate the possibility of false or misleading responses. Individuals holding similar roles in each institution were asked the same questions, and data was analyzed after participants reviewed their responses for accuracy. I made a conscious effort to apply the principles of trustworthiness as identified by Lincoln and Gruba (2015) to improve my ability to reduce, as much as possible, bias, and present accurate findings that lend themselves to generalization. Member checking is another method that helps to increase the accuracy and intent of interview data for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Gruba, 2015). Participants were sent transcriptions of their interview via email, and asked to review their individual transcript for accuracy. Participants were encouraged to make any necessary corrections, and expand their answers in order to clarify responses that could be conceived as ambiguous. Participants were encouraged to address any areas that they believed were not accurately described, and to share their perceptions about the interview process, problems experienced, and how I could improve my research (Hays & Singh, 2012, pp. 260–261)

SUMMARY

The intent was to determine if the quality of institutional politics

between the members of the administrative leadership team have an effect on the culture, climate, and student achievement. The assumption was made that positive institutional politics, characterized by collaborative decision making, successful resolution of conflict, effective communication, and the reduction of the perception of favoritism, would improve the confidence that lecturers have in the administrative leadership team to make critical decisions, making a positive impact on the culture and climate of the institution that would result in improved student achievement as measured. Political exchanges are conversations where power and influence are used by individuals to achieve desired goals (Blasé, 2021 p.11). Administrators engage in discussions with one another with the intent to present their thoughts and ideas to convince others that their solutions are better than those of their colleagues. Lecturers lobby for resources, favors, preferred schedules, and undergraduates that they believe to be better than others while trying to convince administration to place undesirable undergraduates with another lecturer. Undergraduates negotiate with lecturers for better grades, argue disciplinary actions with administrators, and struggle with the difficulties that they encounter as they learn socializing skills. Parents question the decisions of lecturers, administrators, and their children as they try to make sense of the events that happen at institution.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION: NWADIALOR'S ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP WITH A DIFFERENCE

Since institution politics are significantly impacted by the administrative style (Ball, 2017), to alleviate any potential misunderstandings that could fragment the team, it is extremely important that we have a thorough understanding of their preferred administrative style as well as the preferred styles of their junior administrators. Regardless of the organizational structure established by the leader, the scope, and responsibility placed on institution leadership has far exceeded the capability of a single

individual to perform these duties, and so the utilization of an administrative leadership team is essential for the day-to-day operation of the institution. It is important that the members of the institution administrative leadership team should share a common philosophical and functional understanding of their roles and responsibilities as members of the administrative leadership team, and the leader needs to be clear in their expectations of the administrative leadership team. Are they to be a working group, assigned specific duties with limited responsibility to the whole organization, or a leadership team that works together holistically, assuming duties and responsibilities as they see necessary? Are they to be a group at all? Relationships can be strained when there is not a clear understanding of expectations. Part of the frustration experienced by the members of the administrative leadership team at Tansian University was caused by the mixed messages the leader sent to the administrative leadership team and lecturers about the collaborative philosophy of the institution. When members of the administrative leadership team attempted to engage in what they believed were collaborative activities and conversations, they were either told that they had limited input or that their opinions didn't matter, resulting in disappointment, frustration, and resentment. While the institution is extremely successful, there is a possibility that their success could be improved upon if the administrative leadership team functioned at a higher level of efficiency with reduced frustration and resentment if they knew the "rules of the game".

E. O Nwadiakor who understands administrative styles of the other members of their administrative leadership teams and uses this knowledge to his advantage, tapping into the strength of others to compensate for their own weaknesses. Done correctly, this not only strengthens the overall effectiveness of the administrative leadership team, it also creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust because each member sees themselves as a valuable asset to the organization. When decisions are finalized, each member can use their own unique style to reach out to individual staff members that identify with their administrative style.

Effective communication is essential to the quality of institution politics, and influenced by E. O Nwadiakor. Is the purpose of conversation to share thoughts and ideas in an attempt to find new and more efficient solutions for problems, or is the purpose of conversation to convince others, using power or influence, to see things our way? Even in the most collaborative settings, there is an undercurrent of desire by members of the administrative leadership team to convince others to see their way. Administrators need to know how to engage in political conversations to achieve their intended goal without relying on overt power but rather influence and negotiation. They must be ready to compromise, willing to give in some areas to gain in others. Traditional, authoritative, and managerial leaders tend to control politics to reduce or eliminate the potential risk of loss of power or influence, while being collaborative, E. O Nwadiakor encourages open political conversations so that there is an atmosphere of sharing and transparency.

Nwadiakor knows and operates a mixed mode in his administrative leadership. His style more or less is situational. He understands administrative leadership as about orchestrating tasks and often includes mobilizing people to develop and sustain an early childhood organization. Successful administrative leaders are able to establish systems that protect and sustain essential operational functions to meet the needs of children and families. There are important aspects of administrative leadership—operational leadership and strategic leadership. Operational leadership is accomplished through activities like hiring and supporting staff, overseeing budgets, and maintaining a positive workplace climate. Strategic leadership involves guiding the direction of an early childhood organization with the future in mind. Strategic leaders clarify purpose, inspire individuals to pursue a shared vision, and ensure that goals and outcomes are attained. Administrative leadership and instructional leadership are both important in different ways for a successful education organization. It is important to know when and how to

use each type of leader to get the most out of your staff and undergraduates. E. Nwadiakor brought a decade-plus experience of working with businesses and startups, as well as his knowledge in technology, marketing, strategy, and innovation into his administrative style. E. O Nwadiakor is a man who has made bones rise with the right administrative mix for productive, innovative institutions.

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