INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The research examined the impact of strategic leadership on educational outcomes in private and public secondary schools in Delta State. The study was guided by three questions and two hypotheses, respectively. The research employed a correlational survey design. The study's population consisted of 21,257 educators from private and public secondary institutions in Delta State. A total of 2,178 teachers, chosen through a stratified random sample method, participated in the study. A questionnaire was employed for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations, Delta State University. The questionnaire had a reliability coefficient of 0.73, established using Cronbach alpha. The data were analysed with mean, coefficient of determination and regression analysis. The results revealed: a significant relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes in both private and public secondary schools in Delta State; and a significant difference in leadership practices between the two sectors, with private schools demonstrating more effective strategic leadership that correlates with higher educational outcomes. The study findings led to the conclusion that strategic leadership not only serves as a catalyst for enhancing educational outcomes but also highlights the nuanced differences in its influence across different school types. The implications of this study are profound, calling for educational policymakers and school administrators to prioritize the development and implementation of strategic leadership practices, particularly in public schools, to bridge the gap in educational outcomes. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the government should implement regular training programmes for public school leaders to enhance their strategic leadership skills.

Introduction

The educational institution is a complex interplay of various factors that influence the quality of learning and teaching. Among these factors, leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes. Strategic leadership, characterized by the ability to envision the future, make informed decisions, and mobilize resources effectively, has been identified as a critical determinant of success in educational institutions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2020). Strategic leadership is the ability to influence others to make decisions that enhance the prospects for the organization's long-term success while maintaining the financial stability of the organization. In the context of education, strategic leadership involves setting a vision for the school, fostering a positive school culture, and ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned with the school's goals. The role of strategic leaders in educational settings is multifaceted, encompassing aspects such as curriculum development, teacher professional development, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2020).

Strategic leaders pay high attention to educational outcomes. Educational outcomes generally refer to the measurable results of the educational process, including academic achievement, student engagement, and overall school performance (Boal & Hooijberg, 2021). However, in this study, it simply means students' academic achievement scores. Educational outcomes are influenced by various factors, including the quality of teaching, the school environment, and leadership practices. In Nigeria, the quality of education has been a subject of concern, with significant disparities between public and private schools (Ogunyemi, 2019). Understanding how strategic leadership influences educational outcomes is crucial for improving educational quality and equity in Delta State.

Delta State, located in the southern region of Nigeria, has a diverse educational institution characterized by a mix of public and private secondary schools. The state has made significant investments in education, yet challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and varying levels of funding persist (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The dichotomy between public and private schools in Delta State presents a unique opportunity to examine how strategic leadership practices differ and how these differences influence educational outcomes.

Public secondary schools in Delta State are primarily funded by the government and are subject to government policies and regulations. These schools often face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and limited access to professional development opportunities for teachers (Ogunyemi, 2019). The leadership in public schools is typically hierarchical, with principals acting as the primary decision-makers. However, the effectiveness of leadership in these schools can be hampered by bureaucratic constraints and a lack of autonomy. In contrast, private secondary schools in Delta State operate independently of government control and often have more flexibility in their leadership and management practices. These schools are funded through tuition fees and private donations, allowing them to invest in better facilities, resources, and teacher training (Adeyemi, 2020). The leadership in private schools tends to be more innovative and responsive to the needs of students and parents, which can lead to improved educational outcomes. However, the high cost of tuition can create barriers to access for some students, raising questions about equity in educational opportunities.

Research indicates that private schools often benefit from greater autonomy and flexibility in decision-making, which can enhance their strategic leadership capabilities (Day et al., 2019). Conversely, public schools, often constrained by bureaucratic regulations and limited resources, may face challenges in implementing effective leadership strategies. This disparity raises important questions about how strategic leadership is enacted in these two types of institutions and its subsequent influence on educational outcomes in the context of Delta State.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of context in understanding the impact of leadership on educational success. For instance, a study by Adeleke (2021) emphasized that leadership practices must be adapted to the specific challenges and opportunities present within different school environments. Furthermore, the role of cultural and socio-economic factors in shaping leadership effectiveness cannot be overlooked, particularly in a diverse state like Delta.

The need for this comparative study is underscored by the increasing emphasis on performance in education, as well as the growing body of literature advocating for evidence-based leadership practices (Robinson, 2021). By examining the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes in both private and public secondary schools in Delta State, this research aimed to contribute to the understanding of effective leadership practices and their implications for policy and practice in the Nigerian educational system.

The research is based on transformational leadership theory. The transformational leadership theory, introduced by Burns (1978) and further elaborated by Bernard Bass (1985), underscores the importance of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to attain extraordinary results and facilitate substantial change. This leadership style comprises four essential components, commonly known as the "Four I's":

Idealised Influence: Leaders serve as exemplars, garnering the trust and esteem of their subordinates. They exhibit ethical conduct and a profound sense of purpose, inspiring others to imitate them.

Inspirational Motivation: Transformational leaders convey a persuasive picture of the future, inspiring followers to dedicate themselves to common objectives. They convey elevated expectations and offer support, cultivating an atmosphere of energy and hope.

Intellectual Stimulation: These leaders promote creativity and innovation by questioning established beliefs and practices. They foster critical thinking and problem-solving, enabling adherents to investigate novel concepts and methodologies.

Individualised Consideration: Transformational leaders attend to the unique needs and growth of their followers. They offer assistance, guidance, and opportunity for personal development, cultivating a sense of belonging and worth within the team.

In the context of a study, transformational leadership theory is particularly relevant. Transformational leaders in educational settings can articulate a clear vision for academic excellence and student achievement. This vision is crucial for both private and public schools, as it aligns the efforts of teachers, students, and the community towards common educational goals (Bernard Bass, 1985). In addition, the ability of transformational leaders to inspire and motivate staff can lead to higher levels of engagement among teachers and students. In schools where leaders foster a positive and motivating environment, educational outcomes are likely to improve, as teachers are more committed to their roles and students are more engaged in their learning. By promoting intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders encourage teachers to adopt innovative teaching methods and curricula. This is particularly important in a comparative study, as private and public schools may have different resources and constraints. Leaders who embrace change can help bridge gaps in educational quality. Individualized consideration is vital in educational settings, where teachers and students have diverse needs. Transformational leaders who prioritize

professional development and support for their staff can enhance teaching effectiveness, which directly impacts student learning outcomes.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes in private and public secondary schools. Some of these studies are highlighted as follows: Leithwood and Jantzi (2020) reported that strategic leadership significantly impacts school performance by fostering a shared vision and aligning resources towards common goals. Schools led by strategic leaders often show improved academic outcomes due to enhanced teacher motivation and student engagement. A study by Balyer and Ozdemir (2021) found that transformational leadership styles in secondary schools correlate positively with student achievement. Leaders who engage in strategic planning and foster collaborative environments tend to create conditions that enhance student learning. Cohen et al. (2020) showed that strategic leaders who articulate a clear vision contribute to a positive school climate, which is essential for student success. A positive climate fosters better relationships among students and staff, leading to improved educational outcomes. Effective strategic planning and resource allocation by school leaders have been shown by Harris and Jones (2021) to enhance educational outcomes. Schools that prioritize strategic initiatives often see improvements in student performance and resource utilization.

A comparative study by Balyer and Gunduz (2016) reported that transformational leadership styles in private schools correlate with higher student achievement compared to transactional leadership styles prevalent in many public schools. This suggests that the approach to leadership can significantly influence educational outcomes. Similarly, Baker and LeTendre (2015) reported that private schools often have more autonomy in resource allocation, allowing for strategic planning that directly addresses student needs. In contrast, public schools face budgetary constraints that limit their ability to implement strategic initiatives effectively. Another study by Epstein (2021) revealed that strategic leadership in private schools often involves greater stakeholder engagement, including parents and community members, which positively influences educational outcomes. Public schools may have less flexibility in engaging stakeholders due to regulatory frameworks.

Statement of the Research Problem

In the contemporary educational institution, the role of strategic leadership has emerged as a critical factor influencing the effectiveness and quality of educational

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outcomes. This is particularly pertinent in the context of secondary education, where leadership practices could shape the learning environment, resource allocation, and overall student performance. Despite the growing body of literature on educational leadership, there remains a notable gap in understanding how strategic leadership specifically influences educational outcomes in different school contexts, particularly when comparing private and public secondary schools.

In Delta State, Nigeria, the dichotomy between private and public secondary schools presents a unique opportunity to explore the nuances of strategic leadership and its implications for educational success. Private schools often operate with greater autonomy and flexibility, potentially allowing for innovative leadership practices that may enhance educational outcomes. Conversely, public schools, which are typically bound by bureaucratic regulations and resource constraints, may face distinct challenges that influence their leadership effectiveness and, consequently, student performance.

By conducting a comparative analysis of strategic leadership in both private and public secondary schools, this research aims to illuminate the complexities of educational leadership and its direct and indirect effects on student outcomes. The findings will not only contribute to the theoretical understanding of strategic leadership in education but also provide practical insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educational stakeholders seeking to enhance the quality of education in Delta State and similar contexts. Ultimately, this study aspires to bridge the existing gap in the literature and inform effective leadership practices that could lead to improved educational outcomes across diverse school settings.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to compare the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes of private and public secondary schools in Delta State. The study was specifically designed to:

1. determine the strategic leadership practices in private and public secondary schools in Delta State;
2. determine the relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes in private and public secondary schools in Delta State;
3. compare the difference in the influence ofstrategic leadership on educational outcomesbetween private and public secondary schools in Delta State;

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the strategic leadership practices in private and public secondary schools in Delta State?
2. Is there significant relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes in private and public secondary schools in Delta State?
3. Is there significant difference in the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes between private and public secondary schools in Delta State?

Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses guided this study:

Ho^1: There is no significant relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes in private and public secondary schools in Delta State.

Ho^2: There is no significant difference in the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes between private and public secondary schools in Delta State.

Methodology

The research employed a correlational survey design. Simon and Goes (2013) advocated that correlational survey design is ideal for investigating cause-and-effect correlations via hypothesis testing, especially when a true experimental design is impractical. Efforts were made to clarify the outcome by examining prior conditions, determine the effect of one variable on another, and confirm a hypothesis using statistical testing. The study's population consisted of 21,257 educators, including 11,777 from public schools and 9,480 from private institutions in Delta State. The study's sample consisted of 2,186 teachers, chosen through a stratified random selection method. This sample size constitutes 10% of the overall population.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Influence of Strategic Leadership on Educational Outcome Questionnaire (ISLEOQ). ISLEOQ contained 20 items framed on a four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. ISLEOQ was validated by three experts, consisting of three academicians from the Department of Educational Management and Foundations at Delta State University, Abraka. The reliability of ISLEOQ was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This was accomplished by administering ISLEOQ to 30 teachers in schools located in Bayelsa State, who were outside the designated research area. The teachers' answer was evaluated using Cronbach Alpha analysis in

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SPSS. A reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained. As for the actual study, the ISLEOQ was administered to the 2,186teachers sampled for the study by the researcher with help of four research assistants. The instrument was promptly collected from the respondents at the location along with the mean scores of the students taught by each respondent to enhance high return rate. For respondents who were not present, the instrument was left behind and retrieved the following day. 2178 copies of the questionnaires were retrieved that resulted to a return rate of 99.63%. Subsequently, the responses provided by the respondents were gathered and used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses that guided the study.

The research questions were answered using mean and coefficient of determination. A correlation coefficient between 0.1 to 0.3, 0.4 to 0.6, and 0.7 to 1.0, was rated low, moderate and strong, respectively. The hypotheses were tested using regression analysis and t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, a hypothesis is rejected when P-value is less than or equal to 0.05, and not rejected when p-value is greater than 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the strategic leadership practices in private and public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 1: Strategic Leadership Practices in Private and Public Secondary Schools

S/N	Strategic leadership practices	Private Mean	Remark	Public Mean	Remark
1	Vision and mission clarity	3.80	SA	3.00	A
2	Data-driven decision making	3.88	SA	3.12	A
3	Collaborative culture	3.79	SA	2.94	A
4	Professional development	3.08	A	3.12	A
5	Stakeholders' engagement	3.30	A	3.22	A
6	Resource allocation	3.92	SA	3.04	A
7	Accountability and performance monitoring.	3.33	A	2.95	A
8	Inclusive practices	3.10	A	3.20	A
9	Sustainability of initiatives	3.95	SA	2.87	A
10	Innovation and change management	3.75	SA	2.88	A
	Grand Mean	**3.59**	**SA**	**3.03**	**A**

Criterion Mean = 2.50, N = 2,178 (Private = 997, Public = 1,181)

From the results in Table 1, the mean score of items 1-10 for both private and public schools exceed the cut-off point of 2.50. Therefore, respondents in private and public secondary schools agreed that vision and mission clarity, data-driven decision making, collaborative culture, professional development, stakeholder's engagement, resource allocation, accountability and performance monitoring, inclusive practices, sustainability of initiatives and innovation and change management are the strategic leadership practices in private and public secondary schools in Delta State.

Ho[1]: There is no significant relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes inprivate and public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 2: Coefficient of Determination of the Relationship Between Strategic Leadership and Educational Outcomes in Private and Public Secondary Schools in Delta State

School	Variable	N	R	R^2	R^2%	Decision
Private	Strategic Leadership Educational outcome	300	0.495	0.245	24.5	Positive
Public	Strategic Leadership Educational outcome	300	0.365	0.133	13.3	Positive

Significance $P \leq 0.05$; R^2 = coefficient of determination

Table 2 shows a correlation coefficient (r-value) of 0.495, indicating positive moderate positive relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes in private schools. The analysis also showed that, the coefficient of determination (R^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.495 was 0.245. This implies that strategic leadership accounts for up to 24.5% of educational outcomes in private schools. Table 2 also shows a correlation coefficient (r-value) of 0.365, indicating positive low positive relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes in public schools. The analysis also showed that, the coefficient of determination (R^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.365 was 0.133. This implies that strategic leadership accounts for up to 13.3% of educational outcomes in public schools.

Ho[2]: There is no significant difference in the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes between private and public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test Analysis of Mean Reponses on the difference in the influence of Strategic Leadership on Private and Public Secondary Schools in Delta State

School	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t_{cal}	Sig. (2-tailed)
Private	997	3.5900	0.34708	2,176	4.758	0.000
Public	1,181	3.0340	0.12677			

Source: Field Work, 2024

The results in Table 3 indicates a significant difference in the mean response scores of respondents on the influence of strategic leadership on private and public secondary schools in Delta State, (t = 4.758, P(0.000) < 0.05. Therefore, HO$_2$ is rejected. Hence, there is asignificant difference in the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes between private and public secondary schools in Delta State, favouring private schools. This implies that,strategic leadership influence the educational outcomes of private schools than public schools.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that vision and mission clarity, data-driven decision making, collaborative culture, professional development, stakeholder's engagement, resource allocation, accountability and performance monitoring, inclusive practices, sustainability of initiatives and innovation and change management, are the strategic leadership practices in private and public secondary schools in Delta State. This finding supports that of Leithwood and Jantzi (2020) who reported that shared vision, aligning resources towards common goals and motivation as strategic leadership practices. This finding also supports that of Balyer and Ozdemir (2021) who reported that strategic planning and collaborative environment as some of the strategic leadership practices being adopted in schools.

The study again revealed that there is a significant relationship between strategic leadership and educational outcomes in both private and public secondary schools in Delta State. This is predicated on the fact that strategic leaders provide a clear vision and direction for educational institutions. This vision helps align the goals of educators, students, and stakeholders, fostering a shared commitment to achieving educational outcomes. Effective strategic leadership ensures that resources-such as funding, personnel, and materials—are allocated efficiently and effectively. This optimal allocation directly impacts the quality of education and the ability to meet diverse student needs. Strategic leaders shape the organizational culture of

educational institutions. A positive culture that promotes collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement can enhance motivation and engagement among staff and students, leading to better educational outcomes. This finding corroborates that of Cohen et al. (2020) who found that strategic leaders who articulate a clear vision contribute to a positive school climate, which is essential for students success. A positive climate fosters better relationship among students and staff, leading to improved educational outcomes. This finding further lends credence to that of Harris and Jones (2021) that showed that effective strategic planning and resource allocation by school leaders enhance educational outcomes. Schools that prioritize strategic initiatives often see improvements in students performance and resource utilization.

The study further revealed that there is a significant difference in the influence of strategic leadership on educational outcomes between private and public secondary schools in Delta State, favouring private schools. This may be predicated on the fact that private schools typically have more autonomy in decision-making compared to public schools, which are often bound by district policies and regulations. This flexibility allows private school leaders to implement innovative strategies more quickly and effectively. Again, private schools may have a more engaged and involved stakeholder base, including parents and alumni, who can influence leadership decisions and support initiatives. This can lead to a more cohesive strategic vision and better educational outcomes. In addition, the leadership styles in private schools may be more entrepreneurial and adaptive, focusing on innovation and responsiveness to student needs. In contrast, public schools may adhere to more bureaucratic structures, which can limit the effectiveness of strategic leadership. This finding is in agreement with that of Baker and LeTendre (2015) who reported that private schools often have more autonomy in resource allocation, allowing for strategic planning that directly addresses students' needs. In contrast, public schools face budgetary constraints that limit their ability to implement strategic initiatives effectively. Another study by Epstein (2021) revealed that strategic leadership in private schools often involves greater stakeholder engagement, including parents and community members, which positively influence educational outcomes. Public schools may have less flexibility in engaging stakeholders due to regulatory frameworks.

Conclusion

The study has illuminated the critical role of strategic leadership in shaping educational outcomes within secondary schools in Delta, revealing a significant relationship that underscores the importance of effective leadership practices in fostering educational outcomes (academic achievement). It can be concluded that strategic leadership not only serves as a catalyst for enhancing educational outcomes but also highlights the nuanced differences in its influence across different school types. Specifically, the comparative analysis between private and public secondary schools demonstrates a pronounced advantage in educational outcomes associated with strategic leadership in private schools. This disparity furtherled to the conclusion that private schools benefit from more agile decision-making processes, resource allocation, and innovative practices that are often characteristic of strategic leadership frameworks. Conversely, public schools face systemic challenges that hinder the full realization of strategic leadership's potential, necessitating a reevaluation of leadership structures and support mechanisms within these institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following were recommended:
1. The government should implement regular training programmes for public school leaders to enhance their strategic leadership skills.
2. Educational administrators should encourage public schools to actively involve parents and the community in decision-making processes.
3. Educational administrators should advocate for policies that provide public schools with greater autonomy and resources to implement strategic initiatives.

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