Original research paper

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN RURAL NIGERIA

UDC 371.112:005(669.1); 316.334.55:37.07(669.1);
159.947:371.213.3(669.1)

Oluwatoyin Ogunmodimu[1], Akeem Tunde Nafiu[2], Emmanuel Makoji Egwu[3], Abubakar Ibrahim Jibo[4]

[1]Faculty of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
[2]Centre for Pre-degree and Diploma Studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria
[3]Faculty of Management Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria, Nigeria
[4]Bursary Department, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

Abstract. *This study focused on teachers' perception and understanding of school leadership in rural Nigeria. Two strategies were used; interaction (exclusion strategy) and interview (inclusion strategy). The interview instrument used was 'open-ended. The rural schools of Kogi State made up the study's universe. For the purpose of the study, inclusive and exclusive criteria adopted. Based on the interview, data were gathered for qualitative analysis. The data were organized on the basis of responses. The data were systematically scrutinized and are organized based on similarity in the responses of participants. Findings revealed that leaders are inspirational and are conscious of the goals of the individual teachers. Finding further showed that teachers have positive perception about their school leaders. The study concluded that leadership of schools in the rural areas of Kogi State is deduced satisfactory, and that majority of principals in the rural schools possess the common qualities of transformational leaders. The study recommended that stakeholders of education in Kogi State including the government should boost the principals' leadership practices towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning in the rural schools, and that principals should adopt 'transformational leadership practice' in the rural schools of Kogi State.*

Key words: *school leadership, school leadership practice, teachers' perception, motivation, transformative learning, rural schools*

1. INTRODUCTION

School leadership play a pivotal role towards the socio-economic development of the rural Nigeria. School leadership cannot be separated from overall educational goal from both the narrow (students' academic achievement) and the broad perspectives (alleviating mass illiteracy and socio-economic development). "Teachers are leaders during teaching-learning processes in their various schools" (Durowoju and Onuka, 2015, p. 109) and transformative learning process is critical to the socio-economic development of rural Nigeria. The fact remains that the perceived leadership position of teachers in the classroom is critical to learning success and achievement of students.

Teachers' perception and understanding of school leadership in the rural Nigeria has overtones of practices in schools. That is teachers exhibit specific practices sequel to the level of effectiveness of leaders in the schools. The perception of teachers may be viewed from two perspectives: perception of self as the classroom leader and perception of the leadership practice of school principal. It is apparently clear that teachers in rural Nigeria get accolade from their professions (such as 'Mr. Teacher' or 'School Master'). This accolade symbolically confers respect or sense of superiority to the teachers in the rural areas of Nigeria. This has provided a platform for some teachers in the rural Nigeria to undermine the goals of education. For instance, some teachers in the rural areas take advantage of their profession to engage in sharp practice, sexual immoralities/abuse of students (female teachers engaging in sexual immorality with male students and male teachers engaging in sexual immorality with the female students) and examination malpractice. Leach (2013) also confirmed the emergence of sexual immoralities in schools. The research report of Whawo (2015) provides evidence that "bribery, aiding and abetting examination malpractice and sexual harassment of female students" are high unethical practices perpetrated by teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria (p. 53). Whawo (2015) expressed that "teachers in secondary schools extorts money from students, promotes examination malpractice and sexually defiled female students" (p. 54). Alabi, Festus Oluwole (2014) supported that examination malpractices in secondary schools in Nigeria is on the increase. On the other hand, the perception of teachers regarding the school leadership practices of principals is believed to have driven individual teachers' practices in the classroom and beyond. For instance, if teachers perceive poor or unethical leadership practices of principals, they may also take cue owing to the fact that they can neither change their principals. Thus, there is likelihood that there is a relationship between teachers' class leadership practices and the school leadership practice of principals in the rural schools in Nigeria.

However, this study explores teachers' perception and understanding of their school leadership in the rural areas of Kogi State, Nigeria. The understanding of school leadership varies among teachers in the rural schools in Kogi State, and may be evaluated based on their perceptions. A principal with unacceptable leadership practice or approach may lose his/her popularity or approval of teachers. For a principal with a transformative leadership approach, the perception of teachers towards him/her may be positive. Nosike and Oguzor noted that "every person within the school system looks forward to the principals to give the appropriate leadership for others to follow" (2011, p. 145). Where a particular principal adopts arbitrary school leadership practice the reverse may be the case. It is in this regard this study is related to rural schools in Kogi State. There are

varying school leadership practices by principals in the rural areas of Kogi State other than transformative leadership approach.

However, some factors are observed to be associated with the perception of teachers, and this in turn constitutes a challenge for holistic leadership practices in the rural schools of Kogi State, Nigeria. These factors may be termed controllable (such as the work condition, welfare, leadership skill/competence, technology orientation, leadership style, principal's support and facilities availability) and uncontrollable (such as societal perception of teachers, religious, economic and political) factors. These factors affect the perception and understanding of school leadership in the rural areas of Kogi State, Nigeria.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to determine the teachers' perception and understanding of school leadership in the rural Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

   i. Ascertain whether teachers are feeling satisfactory with their principals' leadership practices towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning in the rural schools of Kogi State.

  ii. Assess the perceptions of teachers about the principals who allow them to take complete responsibility of leadership in their school.

 iii. Determine the specific leadership practice that can inspire the teachers to perform better in their schools.

1.2. Research Questions

The research questions below were developed to proffer necessary answers. The questions were that:

   i. Are teachers feeling satisfactory with their principals' leadership practices towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning of students?

  ii. What are the perceptions of teachers about the principals who allow them to take complete responsibility of leadership in their school?

 iii. What specific leadership practice can inspire the teachers to perform better in their schools?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Framework

School leadership takes two forms in Kogi State; those in the senior cadre (principals) with clearly stated managerial or administrative functions and those within the junior cadre (head teachers). School leadership style varies and is adopted based on orientation or mentorship. The choice of leadership style may also be explained by the perception and understanding of principals.

Teachers go through essential cognitive processes in their perceptions. Unveiling the cognitive process that affects the teachers' perception at rural schools in Kogi State is very important. Wang, Treat and Brownell (2008) reported that 'cognitive processing' in

how teachers perceive things needs to be investigated. This is important to understand the perception of leadership in the rural schools.

The fact remains that perception of teachers relates to sensory experience. Perception of teachers is cardinal to their cognitive function. The major 'cognitive processes' that drives the perception of teachers are motivation, emotion and attitude (Wang, 2006). Interesting, motivation is a vital aspect of leadership in schools. The perception of teachers may take a particular shape when the teachers get enough of motivation from the school. For instance, positive principals' motivation (in terms of adequate support and inspiration at work) and government's motivation (in terms of payment of salaries and benefits) are likely to enhance positive teachers' perception. In addition, the attachment of emotion process to the perception of teachers is worth investigating. "Emotion is a cardinal part of teachers, and whether they are positive or negative, schools are full of them" (Hargreaves, 2011, p. 835). Feelings of individuals established through 'the school environment' relates with perceptions' control (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Twenge, 2005). Emotion process cannot be separated from perception process (Fried, 2011). Emotions are also developed by teachers in the 'context of salaries payment' (Zaretsky and Katz, 2018).

It is very much significant for this study to conceptualize perception of teachers with different kinds of school leadership. In this study, attention will be given to only 'transformational and laissez-faire leadership style'. The explanation for this is that principals of schools in the rural areas of Kogi State can only inspire the commitment of teachers or leave the school leadership and administrative process for all staff. The reason for this is that teachers' welfare condition is too poor, government has little respect for education and job insecurity is extremely worrisome in Kogi State. Regardless of these leadership styles, principals should be upright in their tasks and operation of the schools. Generally, there are common tasks that all principals must perform in their various schools. Some of these were outlined by Sergiovanni (1996) as follows:

i. **Purposing:** This has to do with embracing ethics as action-guiding principle for all the school stakeholders in order to transform 'a shared vision'. In a narrow sense, having and following an ethical guide for acceptable conducts of teachers and students, including other members of the school is one way to achieving success.

ii. **Maintaining harmony:** This begins with the respect for others and the understanding of differences. Importantly, teachers have their own individual goals which they believe will be achieved by pursue the goal of the school. A balance must be striken between teachers' goal and the school's goals. The school leaders can also ensure positive environment for work to keep long-lasting harmony. Martin (2016) added that "building accord based on the shared vision and respecting the individual uniqueness of the stakeholders" is the key to maintaining harmony in schools (p. 16).

iii. **Institutionalizing values:** This task is strategic to creating a common view among staff members in schools. Martin (2016) expressed that the idea of institutionalizing values is to translate the "shared vision into practices and standards that guide behavior" (p. 16).

iv. **Motivating:** The principal is supposed to play the role of a motivator. Stimulating the interest of teachers and inspiring them may translate into the positive influence of their commitment to quality teaching and the school's success.

v. **Managing:** This involves the principals putting all structure and resources together in accordance with plan to achieve the school success. Probably managing may

procedural or involves taking on the right principles to ensure the effectiveness of the school.

vi. **Enabling:** Resource availability and judicious utilization of it provides an avenue for the effectiveness, efficiency or productivity of the school. It is duty of the principal to provide enabling environment for effective utilization of resources in their scarce nature. Martin (2016) expressed that when resources are provided, the achievement of common goal will be facilitated. Meanwhile, the key among resources is the teachers (human resource). Schools must recruit the right teachers and use 'their resources' to efficiently and effectively achieve success (Kwasi, 2014). It is widely accepted that human resource accounts for ample success and failure of schools today (Uysal and Çağanağa, 2018). The teachers must also be used to coordinate other resources.

vii. **Modelling:** This simply means that it will be thoughtful of principal to 'lead by example'. Only an ethical and principled principal can instill discipline in teachers. Martin (2016) opined that "modelling involves living according to the purposes and values of the community in thought, deed and expression" (p. 16).
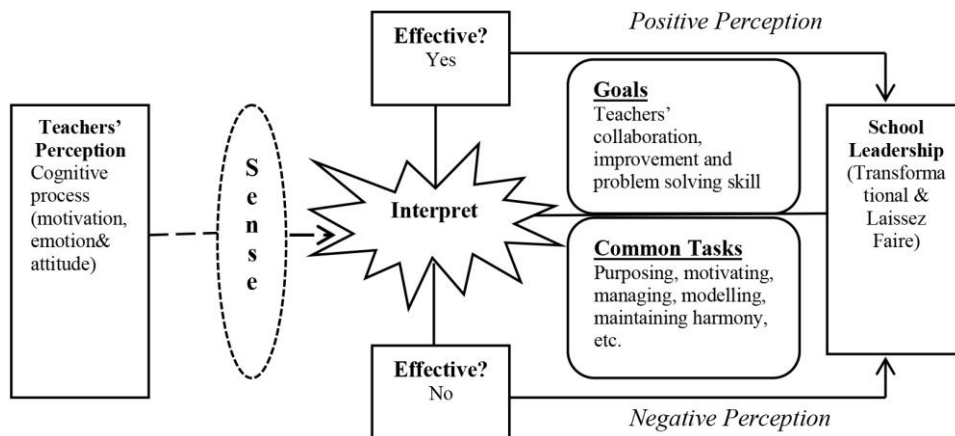

Fig. 1 Teachers Perception and School Leadership Model
Source: Gathered from Jantzi and Leithwood (1996); Sergiovanni (1996); Ringler, O'Neal, Rawls and Cumiskey (2010); Hardman (2011).

Robbins and Coulter (2007) viewed a 'transformational leader' as one who sees the stimulation and motivation of others as keys to achieving 'extraordinary outcomes'. The 'extraordinary outcomes' here may imply goals. Leithwood (1992) insisted that the three main goals of 'transformational leaders' are to:

   i. Help teachers collaborate
  ii. Encourage teachers' improvement
 iii. Help teachers to solve problems in effective manner.

Achieving the three goals will create an understanding that the effort of principals and teaching correlates to facilitate school's success. The practice of transformational leadership gives credence to the fact that principals' leadership vision and teachers' talents are complementary to achieve success in schools (Leithwood, 1992). When the teachers perceive that their principals' leadership style targets the three goals highlighted by Leithwood, their commitment to achieving the best for their schools becomes high. The study conducted

by Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood and Jantzi (2003) reported that transformational leadership influences 'teachers' commitment and additional effort'. The explanation to back up this position is provided by the finding of Demir and Kamile (2008) that 'transformational leadership' leads to the self-efficacy of teachers in their various schools.

The adoption of 'laissez-faire leadership style' seems to be inappropriate today. 'Laissez-faire leadership style' is all about giving freedom unduly to teachers who do not worth it. For instance, a teacher who is naturally lazy may take more leisure compared to work. Also, laissez-faire principals may not take the development of teachers seriously, and this is likely to spring up different perceptions among teachers. Alvoid and Black (2014) supported the position of this study that 'the changing landscape of school leadership' spans from rising expectation around teachers' development. Teachers' perceptions of principals that give total freedom (in terms of curriculum design, teaching and learning) in rural schools seem to be negative. They seem to believe that such principals are weak. In some cases, the incompetent and inexperienced teachers may handle sensitive subjects. Hardman (2011) stated that "teachers who are abandoned to teach independently without knowledge or accountability to the school's mission experience a negative perception of their leader" (p. 25). In their study, Ringler, O'Neal, Rawls and Cumiskey (2010) proposed the active participation of principals in all aspects of the school activities, particularly in teaching and learning. The reason is that teachers perceive themselves being overloaded with works. This may cause stress and negative mind-set about their school leadership. Hardman (2011) reported that "laissez-faire leadership style predictably held the most negative effect on the teachers' perceptions of leadership" (p. 25). In respect of this, Glover (2007) suggested the avoidance of 'laissez-faire attitude' in school leadership.

There is need for change in rural schools in Kogi State. Specifically, change in technology orientation and how leadership is practised. The big challenge in the rural schools of Kogi State are low awareness and adoption of schooling technology and effective leadership practices in relation to ethics, discipline, effective teaching and transformative learning. For principals to institute changes, he/she must possess the ability to be able to do so, and equally possess technology-know-how of schooling. Even Burns (2003) argued it out that "the ability of a leader to lead is influenced by the ability of such leader to initiate change". The challenges seem to be slowing down the pace of growth of rural schools in Kogi State. Jantzi and Leithwood (1996) suggested that "transformational form of leadership is well suited to these challenges because of its potential for building high levels of commitment to the complex and uncertain nature of the restructuring agenda and for fostering growth in the capacities that school staffs must develop to respond productively to this agenda" (p. 514). Sergiovanni (1996) also posited that schools need leaders who are competent and can inspire the stakeholders to pursue the common goals of the school.

2.2. Theoretical Review

Transformational Leadership theory is credited to James MacGregor Burns in 1978. It was later revisited and reviewed by Bass. The theory has been widely used in leadership researches in education and other disciplines. According to Tengi, Mansor and Hashim (2017), the theory seeks to explain transformational leadership as a game changer. Burns (1978) believes that change can be instituted by envisioning, supporting the development and the transformation of teachers. This means conferring to teachers the spirit of leadership

and ethical stewardship. The understanding that principals are in agreement with the goals of transformational leadership may make teachers to pursue transformation in their schools. Also, teachers are likely to portray a positive understanding and perception of the school leadership since transformational leadership incorporates the teachers in the operations of their schools. Kruger, Witziers and Sleegers (2007) also added that transformational leadership seeks not only to motivate teachers, but to encourage professional growth and institute change in schools.

The role of Leithwood and his colleagues towards the application of Transformational Leadership in educational discipline is quite appreciative. Following Leithwood, Tengi *et al.* (2017) stated that "the principals who adopt transformational leadership shows high leadership value through commitment to achieving intent by encouraging the involvement of teachers, develop intellectual and stimulating teacher motivation to give full commitment" (p. 795). These seem to be describing "transformational leadership' in a very limited way. Studies (Leithwood, 1994; Jantzi and Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005) identified that clear vision, acceptance of group goals, individualized support, intellectual stimulation and high expectations' are dimensions that can explain in detail the 'dimensions to transformational school leadership'. These dimensions have attracted the attentions of researches in the field of education. Ergeneli, Gohar and Temirbekova (2007) claimed that the attention given to 'Transformational Leadership theory' in previous studies has led to the understanding of how significant the motivation of behavior is, and how to 'appeal to followers' minds and hearts'.

Among other leadership theories, Transformational Leadership seems to interest this study as it explains the behaviour of principals. It developed an outstanding theoretical framework about principals as transformational leaders who purse desirable success for the school through reformed initiatives (Ross and Gray, 2004). It contributes to 'teacher's professionalism in schools' decision making (Leithwood, 1993).

2.3. Teachers' Perception as Determinant of School Leadership Style

There is a growing need to establish the leadership styles of principals in the rural schools of Kogi State. MacNeill *et al.* (2018) argued that a principal may be appointed to take up the leadership of a particular school, and yet a vacuum still exists. Vacuum in leadership may occur when a newly appointed principal lacks competence and supports from others, leaving him/her to ask several questions in his/her routine tasks. Leadership styles of principals in the rural schools seem to be difficult to identify based on developed literatures. As noted, transformational and laissez faire leadership styles interest this study. According to Devine (2008), "leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people" (p. 2). Regardless of whatever leadership style adopted by principals in the rural schools, the core focus of principals is to manage and influence the school for better outcomes. MacNeill *et al.* (2018) stated that:

> "School leadership literature is filled with the stories of the hero principal riding into town, saving the failing school, riding out of town and the teachers, students and parents returning to their previous practices. Leadership is always about change, otherwise it is simply management aimed at preserving the status quo" (p. 11).

Teachers' perceptions can be used as measuring tool for confirming principals' leadership styles in the rural schools of Kogi State. The perceptions of teachers are valid reality that is established through their sensory organization of facts and the interpretation they attach to it. Teachers are close to their principals, and they often sense things around their principals and interpret those things in their minds. A number of studies have proven that teachers' perceptions are viable instrument for determining or measuring the school leadership style of principals. Finding of the study of Leithwood (2005) has shown that 'principal's transformational and transactional styles of leadership' influences high perception of teacher. The study conducted by Williams (2006) also reported that the kinds of leadership style adopted by principals were identified through the perception of teachers. Arikewuyo (2007) expressed that the "competence of principals can only be easily measured from the perceptions of teachers" (p. 4). Hang (2011) also argued that the best method to assess principals' leadership style is by examining the teachers' perceptions of the principals. This is because teachers often have contact with their principal on daily basis. Hardman (2011) also concluded that the perception of teachers about their principals' 'behaviors and school performance' can be helpful to determine the effectiveness of leadership styles in their schools. The positions of these scholars and researchers were theoretically and empirically supported, but this does not mean that 'school leadership style' is only subject of the perceptions of teachers. For instance, Noonan and Walker (2008) noted that the routine function and tasks of leaders; including their decisions can certify or prove the style of 'school leadership' adopted by principals.

The leadership practice of principals is beneficial to schools, particularly when it is effective and supported by 'knowledge, competence and capacity' (KCC). Martin (2016) supported that the place of principals in the leadership of schools is very much paramount to its overall success. The study of Ward (2013) revealed that principals' leadership in school is pivot to the achievement of students' success. Mohammed (2016) added that principals play vital role in schools, and this provides opportunities to all school members to achieve their 'goals and objectives'. There is a noticed exclusion of the school's goals and objectives in the fundamental role of principal in the statement of Mohammed (2016). Maintaining a balance between the goals of the school members and the school itself is quite thoughtful of the role of an effective principal.

According to Mulford (2003), "perceptions of the role of school leaders are a shortage as well as a possible declining candidate quality, except perhaps for those schools in 'non-challenging circumstances' (p. 3). This assertion seems to be erroneous because inexperienced and incompetent principal may decline in leadership quality, and perhaps all schools are expected to achieve success. In the case of rural schools in Kogi State, principals are challenged with a number of issues. Nosike and Oguzor (2011) noted "high rate of failure in school certificate examinations yearly, increasing examination malpractice, cultism, and intolerable fight between the principals and teachers in schools in Nigeria" (p. 147). These alone show that the term 'non-challenging circumstances' of Mulford (2003) is an understatement. Teachers' perceptions of the school leadership roles inspire adjustment in daily decision regarding students in the classroom (Bandura, 2008; Demir, 2008).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Research Design

A qualitative research design was used. Two strategies were used; interaction (exclusion strategy) and interview (inclusion strategy). The interaction was exclusive because few participants were chatted on a limited ground. The interview was inclusive in the sense that it focused on achieving the objectives through research questions. The adoption of these strategies was supported by the zeal to free the study from being bias.

3.2. Role of Researcher

Conducting interviews in the rural schools of Kogi State was stressful and time consuming. The permission of the school authority was first sought, with the lengthy explanation and proofs that the study is conducted for academic purpose. After the school authority's consent, the researcher took time to educate the teachers regarding the subject matter and goals of the study. The researchers interviewed four teachers from four schools. They also engaged in unstructured chat with few other teachers using the interview questions on a random basis. The main interview took one week. It took the researcher an average of 5 hours to interview one participant.

3.3. Selection Criteria

In the study areas, inclusive and exclusive criteria were followed. For inclusive criteria, teachers with 5 years' experience and above, punctual and with higher level on ranking were selected. For exclusive criteria, teachers with less than 5 years' experience, sick or travelled were not selected.

3.4. Interview Guide

Though, the interview instrument contained concise and specific questions, but interviewing the participants took much time. The questions in the interview instrument however did not deviate from the goals of the study.

The interview instrument used was 'open-ended'. The instrument provided for expansion of contribution of the participants without restriction. The good thing is that this supports the objectives of the study largely. In fact participants were discovered so free to be objective, and maintain high quality and control of their submissions.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

Based on the interview, data were gathered for qualitative analysis. The data were organized on the basis of responses. However, the data were systematically scrutinized and are organized based on similarity in the responses of participants. For instance the response of participant 'A' was aligned with response of participant 'B'. Discussion of findings was based on the responses of the participants. This is because 'qualitative research' produces subjective data. The researcher based analysis on the recorded tape. The quotations in the analysis were verbatim; as expressed by the interviewees.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

There was issue of confidentiality. The participants were afraid of losing their jobs. Also, they were found making some statements and trying to withdraw them immediately due to security issue and political mayhem. The interviewers were able to protect the participants by ensuring confidentiality. The interviewers conducted the interview with the teachers in their private places and office. The choice of the interview venue was made by the interviewees. The interviewers only had objections on the choice of seriously remote area where it is not motor-able because of security issues (such as kidnapping, robbery and terrorism). The interviewers also discouraged the interviewees from submitting their names during the interview. The researchers promised to allow the respondents to peruse over the result of the study before it is published.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Question one to three elicits the demographic information of the participants, and this helps the research to ensure that the selection criteria are not breached. For example, none of the participants have less than five years teaching experience. Participant 'A' has 8 years of teaching experience with level 8 grade 2 but no professional certification; participant 'B' has 6 years of teaching experience with level 9 grade 2 and also has professional certification from Nigerian Institute of Management; participant 'C' has 9 years of teaching experience with level 10 grade 4, and possess master degree in Banking and Finance from Kogi State University; and participant 'D' has 6 years of teaching experience with level 8 grade 2. Participant 'D' has professional certification in International Strategic Management Institute and currently pursuing his M.Sc in Management in Kogi State University.

All the participants have the teaching experiences which seem to be above the study's chosen baseline of 5 years. This implies that none of the participants has shortfall in the knowledge and historical records of their school leadership.

1. Please, how many principals do you have in your school?

Participant 'A, C & D' expressed that their school has three principals (the chief principal, the vice principal I for administration and vice principal II for academics). The responses to the question seem to be similar, but participant 'B' expressed that his school has three principals; the principal I stands for administrative function. This seems to contradict the answers of participant 'A, C & D'. However, the responses of participant 'A, C & D' will be considered based on the degree of similarity. This may mean that the secondary school's organogram in Kogi State captures principal and two vice-principals at the top echelon. The principal is the chief according to participant 'A', the vice-principal I takes care of administrative issues while vice-principal II takes care academic related issues. Participant 'C' further stated that "the management of my school also consists of exam officer who coordinates both the junior and senior West African Examination Council (WAEC) and also the clerks who are in charge of the collection of students' fees".

2. Have you in any way been supported or inspired by your principals?

Participant 'A' agreed that he is inspired by his principals through their level of commitment. He stated that "they are always encouraging them that they are destiny moulders and that they should be ready at all times". Participant 'B' also agreed that he has been inspired and supported by his principals. Participant 'B' stated that "firstly, I

must commend the effort of my principal. Before I got the job, I have been proud of the school success and the success of the school could not have been possible without the effort of the principal". Participant 'B' expressed that the principal has supported him morally. He claimed that the principals in their school entrusted him with disciplinary measures in the school. This is a sense of responsibility that makes him concerned about the wellbeing of the school. Participant 'C' also agreed that he has been inspired and supported by his principal. He expressed that he has good relationship with the principal and that the principal do delegate responsibilities to him during WAEC. Participant 'C' also expressed that the principal conferred onto him the supervision of other staff and collection of extra-moral fee from the students. He expressed that all these form incentives and motivation to him. On the contrary, Participant 'D' opined that his principals have motivated him to a very low extent. He stated that "the discipline, the way things are done and the structure is not in order". According to participant 'C', his school lacks instructional materials to aid effective teaching. It is on this ground that he felt uninspired.

3. Are you presently undergoing professional leadership programme to advance your job? If yes, state its likely effects on your job.

Participant 'A' expressed that he is not currently undergoing professional leadership programme to advance his job because of the state he finds himself. He stated that "some of the fund necessary for capacity building are not made available, and it has become a limitation. He explained that non-availability of fund has been a constraint to going for professional leadership programme. Participant 'B' expressed that he is not presently undergoing professional leadership programme. Participant 'C' made an emphatic 'yes'. He expressed that he is currently running his master programme in Kogi State University. He said this will upgrading him and his profession. Possessing M.Sc in Banking and Finance will give him the opportunity of being promoted. According to him, "having obtained my master the law is that I should be upgraded". Participant 'D' also acknowledged that he is presently undergoing professional leadership programme. He said he is undertaking a master programme in the field of Management in Kogi State University. He opined that this will have positive effect on both the school and the student. He also buttressed that his master programme in Management is leadership and administratively oriented.

Based on the responses of the participants, there is likelihood that leadership of their schools will improve at the long-run. However, teachers are deduced to have flair and keenness for additional degree or certification. Participant 'C' noted that the possession of additional degree or certification is a panacea for promotion on the job. This thus implies that teachers have no other alternative than to upgrade themselves regularly for promotion.

4. Do you think your principals pursue the shared vision of your school?

Participant 'A' expressed that the principals pursue the shared vision of the school in all fairness. He stated that "in spite of the situation of the State the principals found themselves, they are still at their personal best". He expatiated that:

We deal with children, especially children in their 'teen'. At that age, they are in their formative age. Whatsoever we do at that time is very important to their future. So we are always encouraged by the principals, despite the lack of motivation, to look into the future of young people (students).

Participant 'B' also expressed an emphatic 'yes'. He argued that the school is located in a rural area, and yet the principal is well inspired. According to him:

My principal is a genius. He loves academics, and he wants students to come from far and near to acquire education. So the vision of his kind is not measurable in any way.

On the contrary, Participant 'C' expressed that his principal does not pursued the shared vision of the school. Though his response was observably tentative, but he expressed that his principal is good at encourage the staff to secure and promote the school to a greater height. The principal is also known for his job placement and effectiveness of teachers. The response shows that teachers do not really have clear understanding about the vision of the school. Meanwhile, shared vision is strategic to managing school in the 21st century.

Participant 'D' also gave a contrary response that his principal did not pursue the vision of the school. He added that the situation of the State is contributory to the principals' lack of zeal to doing so. He alarmed that non-payment of salary is in no doubt tied to the principals' attitude towards the pursuit of the school's shared vision. He expressed that salary is a motivating factor that can drive the principal to pursue the goals of the school. He said principals are likely to find alternative when salary is absent. Alternative in this sense, may be engaging in examination malpractices to have money or moonlighting during the school hour to cover for non-payment of salary. Moonlighting means that principals are elsewhere doing another job when they are supposed to be in the school during the working days and time.

5. *Are your principals applaudable for empowering you towards effective teaching and quality learning?*

Participant 'A' acknowledged that the principals are applaudable for their empowering effort. He expressed that his principals shouldered empowerment of staff within the meagre resources that they have. Participant 'B' also acknowledged with emphatic response 'very well'. He said even when the State Government is not helping issues (salaries are not being paid regularly), the principal has ensured conducive environment and fair working condition. Participant 'B' emphasized that:

The principals make moves sometimes to support the teachers financially. The principal sources for fund through the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) or other means. Funds are not forthcoming from the government, and the principal understands our situation. It is in this regard that he source for fund to help teachers out of their financial situation.

Participant 'C' expressed that the empowerment of teachers is a cardinal quality of his principal. He added that one of the principal's primary responsibilities is to put machineries in place to ensure that teachers are at work, and that they are diligently doing their jobs (doing the right thing at the right time). He also noted that his principal often give token to the teachers to motivate the teachers towards effective delivery of their jobs. Regarding the source of fund, Participant 'C' stated that:

The school that I am serving has economic trees, and from the proceeds of the economic trees that is in the school premises the principal will call on the staff and negotiate with the staff on how to go about the sharing of the proceeds from the economic trees. Through this, all teachers are encourage and happy about the leadership of the principal.

Participant 'C' claimed that his school does not necessarily engage in Agribusiness. The economic trees is only being managed and controlled by the principal. The principal only ensures proceeds from the economic trees to provide financial support to empower teachers towards effective delivery of their jobs.

Participant 'D' objected that his principal is not empowering the teachers towards effective teaching and learning. He expressed that the only form of financial empowerment comes from the PTA purse. He posited that to get financial support from the PTA requires a tough procedure, and sometimes access to this finance will be impossible. He said since the state is not paying salaries most of the teachers will often request for finance from the PTA purse.

Based on the responses of the participants, it is discovered that teachers get both financial and non-financial empowerment either through the effort of the principals or the PTA. It is also found that financial empowerment of teachers is very much crucial at this present time that salary payment is irregular. Effective teaching and quality learning are likely to take place in schools where salary payment is non-issue at all.

6. *In what ways have your school leaders empowered you towards upgrading your profession?*

Participant 'A' responded that any training outside the school is always difficult due to lack of fund. He expressed that his principal does not deny teachers opportunity to have training on the job particularly if it is within the school premises. This implies that the principal is aware of the need for teachers' training to pursue the success of the school.

Participant 'B' made emphatic 'yes'. He expressed that the school leaders are conscious of the essence of the upgrade. They make provisions for teachers in order to pursue their professional careers. He stated that:

> *They give us time off-service to pursue advance education. Sometimes they give us financial support especially when salaries are not paid. They understand our situation because it is not easy to pursue a professional career or to upgrade your profession without finance.*

Participant 'C' opined that his school leaders, most especially the principal, have so much empowered the staff towards upgrading their profession. He said the leaders do grant the teachers 'study leaves with pay'. Based on the grant a 'grace time' will be given that when school is not in section such teacher benefitting the grant will return to his/her own school where he/she works to do the normal routine activities.

Participant 'D' expressed that the kind of empowerment he gets is through discussion and advice. He further explained that the 'advice' from the school leaders is based on the fact that teachers will not be promoted until they get themselves upgraded. He stated that:

> *The laydown rule is 'acquire your certificate and get promoted'. If not, you will remain where you are.*

It is discovered from the responses of the participants that teachers get motivated to proceed on further learning through study leaves and advice. This is based on the understanding that promotion of teachers on the job requires the possession of higher certificate. The irony of this is that the educational system of Kogi State attaches more value to paper than knowledge. The Kogi State educational system does not give attention to absorptive capacity of schools. Absorptive capacity involves that ability of the school to possess staff with 'distinctive knowledge, ability and skills'.

7. *Are you feeling satisfactory with your school leaders' practices towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning of students?*

Participant 'A' responded that he is satisfactory with his school leaders' practices towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning of students to a very reasonable extent. He explained that despite the odds in the state the school leaders still try to put in their best. In respect of this, teachers are directly motivated via the school leaders' efforts.

Participant 'B' also responded that he is satisfied, but the school's operation is affect by the political environment. He explained that:

The school circle is like a functionalist system where one part works with the other part to maintain solidarity and stability. When one part is cut off, the school will not be efficient and there won't be consistent result.

Participant 'B' expressed that his school leaders have put in place mechanism to ensure effective teaching and quality learning in the school. He opined that non-payment of salaries is only the constraint of his principal's idea, and derail the transfer of knowledge to the students. Yet his school leaders have been trying their best towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning of students.

Participant 'C' responded that he vehemently likes the leadership practice of his principal because the principal often encourages the teachers to upgrade their certificate as at when due. This is a form of motivation without money. Equally, the principal encourage the teachers to further their studies through financial package from the proceeds of the economic trees. This implies that his leaders are inspirational and are conscious of the goals of the individual teachers.

Participant 'D' responded that he is not satisfactory with his school leaders' practices towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning of students. He explained that:

    i. On the part of the educational board of Kogi State, there is total abandonment of the school. The teachers and leaders of the school are left alone. There is no reasonable form of motivation in the school.

    ii. On the part of the school leaders, the teachers are left alone to do anything they like. Teaching and learning is not being monitored.

Participant 'D' gave an example that his school does not have Mathematics Teachers for a very long period of time. The school gets help by outsource the service of teachers from other schools on a contractual agreement. He added that the school make use of N-power beneficiaries (beneficiaries of Social Investment Programme of the Federal Government) to teach the Mathematics subject. He alarmed that these beneficiaries are not always punctual at the school. These affect quality learning in the school since there are no tenure staffs.

8. *What is your perception about your school leaders?*

Participant 'A' expressed that he has the right perception about them. Participant 'B' expressed that his school leaders are worthy of emulation. He reiterated that even when salaries are not forthcoming, they are still concerned about the success of the student and the school. Participant 'C' expressed good perception about his leaders due to the motivation he get from them in most cases. Participant 'D' expressed that he does not feel good about the practices of his school leaders.

9. What kind of perception and understanding (negative or positive) do you have regarding the leadership practice of principals in your school?

Participant 'A' expressed that he has positive and negative perception about the leadership practice of principals in his school. He explained that his positive perception is driven by their effort, and that principals could have done better if fund are made available in the school. He also added that he has negative perception about the leadership practice of principals in his school, and that principals have been found deficient in some areas of their functions and plan due to lack of educational funds. He argued that the present government makes educational acquisition difficult. He buttressed his point that the negligence of the government of Kogi State has made some schools non-functional. According to him,

> *Where there are no funds educational motivation is lacking. This is one of the things we suffer as a school.*

Participant 'B' also expressed that he has positive perception about the leadership practice of principals in his school. He argued that the shortcomings in the leadership practice of principals in his school are connected bad governance in Kogi State. He made reference to past government that have supported the leadership of his school. He ended on a note that despite the bad governance in the State, the principal is still up and doing in his leadership practice.

Participant 'C' expressed that he has a positive perception about the leadership practice of principals in his school based on what they have done. They are good at motivating teachers financially and non-financially.

Participant 'D' expressed that he has a negative perception about the leadership practice of principals in his school. He supported his position by saying the main principal is not effective. The principal is not motivating the teachers. In most cases, he stays in his office to do his paper work instead of going round classes to monitor teaching and learning.

5. Emerging Themes

Few terms emerged during the interview. For example, the participants repeatedly mentioned support, study leaves and non-payment of salaries. Participant 'C' made emphasis on support through saving scheme, proceeds from economic trees and staff contribution scheme. Majorly, the two of the participants were emphatically mentioning support as financial aid as remedy in the phase of unpaid salaries.

i. **Support:** The support meant by participants is both financial and non-financial in nature. The financial support has to do with the provision of token or grant for teachers who are going for further studies. The non-financial support has to do with the study leave granted by the principal, but the teacher in question is still paid anytime the salary comes. Teachers (under such leave) will come back to their place of work when they are on break in the school where he or she is doing his or her programme.

ii. **Study Leaves:** Teachers are given study leaves by the principal to allow them to obtain higher degree or certificate. It is a rule in the educational system of Kogi State that teachers must acquire higher degree to be rated high in the annual evaluation form and get promoted.

iii. **Non-payment of Salaries:** This is a situation faced by teachers in Kogi State. Their salaries are not being paid regularly. Some of the teachers are owed for several months. Some of them are paid percentage.

iv. **Saving Scheme:** This is a scheme that takes care of contingency of teachers. Teachers who have cogent and urgent financial need can often obtain aids from the saving scheme.

v. **Staff Contribution Scheme:** It is all about assisting all the staff in the school financially. The scheme embraces contributions of all staff to take care of emergency among teachers in the school.

vi. **Division of Labour:** This is the breaking down of school activities into units which can be handled with specialty by teachers. Individual teachers have their area of specialization. So teachers handle a particular unit of the school activities skillfully.

vii. **Proceeds from Economic Trees:** These are money from the sale from the economic trees in the school premises. Though, participant 'C' claimed that his school does not engage in agribusiness. The school only plants these trees for the benefits of all staff.

6. CONCLUSION

The leadership of schools in the rural areas of Kogi State is deduced satisfactory. Majority of principals in the rural schools possess the common qualities of transformational leaders. Teachers have different perception about their school leadership. From the findings of this study, it is deduced that teachers' perceptions in the rural school of Kogi State are positive. There are number of factors that are responsible for the kind of perception that the teachers developed about their school leadership. Finding reveals that teachers' perceptions are influenced by their own experience, personal lifestyle the level of commitment and dedication of the principals, financial support of the school leaders, leadership-by-example, culture and religion. The study recommends that:

i. The stakeholders of education in Kogi State including the government should provide financial supports for rural schools. This will systematically boost the principals' leadership practices towards achieving effective teaching and quality learning in the rural schools.

ii. Principals should avoid allowing teachers to take complete responsibility of leadership in the rural schools of Kogi State. This will curb the excessiveness of some teachers who may feel they are totally free and can take any decision without caring about its consequence on the school and students.

iii. Principals should adopt 'transformational leadership practice' in the rural schools of Kogi State. This leadership practice can inspire the teachers to perform better in the rural schools.

REFERENCES

Alabi, F. O. (2014). Teachers' perception of classroom management effectiveness in Secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies. 5*(8), 155-158.

Alvoid, L., and Black, W. (2014). *The changing role of the principal: How high-achieving districts are recalibrating school leadership*. Center for American Progress.

Arikewuyo, M. (2007). Teachers perception of principals leadership capacities in Nigeria. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal, 5*(3), 15-23. https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol5/iss3/15

Bandura, A. (2008). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant and M.B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (pp. 94-124). New York: Routledge.

Bandura, A., and Locke, E. (2003). Negative Self-Efficacy and Goal Effects Revisited. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(1), 87-99.

Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and Performance*. New York: Free Press.

Bass, B. M. (1997). Does the transactional/transformational leadership paradigm transcend organizational and national boundaries? *American Psychologist, 52*, 130-139. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.2.130

Baumeister, R. F., DeWall, N., Ciarocco, N. J., and Twenge J. M. (2005). Attitudes and Social Cognition: Social Exclusion Impairs Self-Regulation. In L. Fried (Ed.), Teaching Teachers about Emotion Regulation in the Classroom. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(3), 1-11. http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n3.1

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.

Burns, J. M. (2003). *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: Grove Press.

Chang, I. H., Chin, J. M., and Hsu, C. M. (2008). Teachers' Perceptions of the Dimensions and Implementation of Technology Leadership of Principals in Taiwanese Elementary Schools. *Educational Technology & Society, 11*(4), 229-245. https://www.learntechlib.org/p/75058/

Demir, K. (2008). Transformational leadership and collective efficacy: the moderating roles of collaborative culture and teachers' self-efficacy. *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 8*(33), 93-112.

Devine, J. L. (2008). *A comparison of teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles of middle school principals and instructional leaders and their relationship to teachers' perceptions of school climate* (Publication No. 48) [Doctoral dissertation, Western Connecticut State University]. Education Dissertations. http://repository.wcsu.edu/educationdis/48

Durowoju, E. O., & Onuka, A. O. U. (2015). Teacher self-efficacy enhancement and school location: implication for students' achievement in economics in senior secondary school in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice. 6*(11), 109-115.

Ergeneli, A., Gohar, R., and Temirbekova, Z. (2007). Transformational leadership: its relationship to culture value dimensions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 31*(6), 703-724. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2007.07.003

Fried, L. (2011). Teaching Teachers about Emotion Regulation in the Classroom. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(3), 1-11. https://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n3.1

Geijsel, F., Sleegers, P., Leithwood, K., and Jantzi, D. (2003). Transformational leadership effects on teachers' commitment and effort toward school reform. *Journal of Educational Administration, 41*(3), 228-256. https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578230310474403

Glover, E. (2007). Real principals listen. *Educational Leadership. 65*(1), 60-63.

Hang, P. (2011). *Teachers' Perceptions Of Their Principals' Leadership Capacities*. Master of Education Graduate: Royal University of Phnom Penh.

Hardman, B. K. (2011). *Teacher's Perception of their Principal's Leadership Style and the Effects on Student Achievement in Improving and non-improving schools*. (Publication No. 3726) [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida]. http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/3726

Hargreaves, A. (2011). The emotional politics of teaching and teacher development: With implications for educational leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice. 1*(4), 315-336. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360312980010401

Jantzi, D., and Leithwood, K. (1996). Towards an explanation of variations in teachers' perception of transformational school leadership. *Education Administration Quarterly. 32*(4), 512-538.

Kruger, M. L., Witziers, B. and Sleegers, P. (2007). The impact of school leadership on school level factors: Validation of a causal model. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 18*, 1-20.

Kwasi, A. E. (2014). The impact of human resource management practices on teachers' turnover in private basic schools: A case study of some selected schools in Obuasi Municipality. In M. Uysal and C. K. Çağanağa (Eds.). Teachers' opinions of human resources management functions in private schools. *Educational Research and Reviews. 13*(12), 487-494. https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR2017.3407

Leach, F. (2013). Corruption as Abuse of Power: Sexual Violence in Educational Institutions. In D. D. Whawo (Ed.). Identifiable Corrupt Practices Among Staff and Students of Secondary Schools in Delta State of Nigeria. *International Journal of Secondary Education, 3*(5), 50-54. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijsedu.20150305.12

Leithwood, K. (1992). Transformational leadership: where does it stand? *The Education Digest*, *58*, 17-20.

Leithwood, K. (2005). Understanding successful principal leadership: Progress on a broken front. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *43*(6), 619-629.

Leithwood, K., and Jantzi, D. (2000). Principal and teacher leader effects: A replication. *School Leadership and Management, 20*(4), 415-434. https://doi.org/10.1080/713696963

Leithwood, K., and Riehl, C. (2003). What we know about successful school leadership. In E. E. Williams (Ed.). *Teachers' perceptions of principal leadership in relation to student achievement. ETD Collection for AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library.* Atlanta University Center.

Leithwood, K. A. (1993). *Contributions of transformational leadership to school restructuring*. Houston, TX: University Council for Educational Administration.

MacNeill, N., Silcox, S., and Boyd, R. (2018). Transformational and Transactional Leadership: a false dichotomy of leadership in schools. *Education Today*, 10-12.
http://www.educationtoday.com.au/_images/articles/pdf/article-pdf-1433.pdf

Martin, T. J. (2016). *Teachers' perceptions of principal leadership practices in Middle Tennessee Schools*. (Publication No. 3124) [Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University]. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3124

Mohammed, S. (2016). The Principals' Supervisory Roles For Quality Education and Effective School Administration of Basic Education Schools in Nigeria**.** *International Conference Proceedings*, Dubai, UAE, 19-28.

Mulford, B. (2003). *School leaders: changing roles and impact on teacher and school effectiveness*. Education and Training Policy Division: OECD.

Noonan, B., & Walker, K. (2008). Trust in the contemporary principalship. *Canadian Journal of Education Administration and Policy*, *85*, 1-17. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ842497.pdf

Nosike, A. N., and Oguzor, N. S. (2011). Understanding school leadership and management in contemporary Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences. 1*(Special Issue), 145-151.

Ringler, M. C., O'Neal., D., Rawls, J., & Cumiskey, S. (2013). The role of school leaders in teacher leadership development. *Rural Educator*, *35*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.35608/RURALED.V35I1.363

Robbins, S. P., and Coulter, M. (2007). *Management* (9th ed.). London: Prentice-Hall.

Ross, J. A., and Gray, P. (2006). Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment to Organizational Values: The Mediating Effects of Collective Teacher Efficacy. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *17*(2), 179-199.

Sergiovanni, T. (1996). *Leadership for the schoolhouse*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tengi, M. L., Mansor, M., and Hashim, Z. (2017). A Review Theory of Transformational Leadership for School. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences. 7*(3), 792-799. http://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i3/2847

Wang, S. S., Treat, T. A., and Brownell, K. D. (2008). Cognitive processing about classroom-relevant contexts: Teachers' attention to and utilization of girls' body size, ethnicity, attractiveness, and facial affect. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(2), 473-489. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.100.2.473

Wang, Y. (2006). Cognitive informatics-Towards the future generation computers that think and feel (Keynote speech)". In *Proceedings of the 5th IEEE International Conference on Cognitive Informatics (ICCI '06)* (pp. 3-7). Beijing, China: IEEE CS Press.

Ward, C. J. (2013). Why leadership matters: one school's journey to success. *Educational leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development*, *24*(1), 62-74. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1013148.pdf

Whawo, D. D. (2015). Identifiable Corrupt Practices Among Staff and Students of Secondary Schools in Delta State of Nigeria. *International Journal of Secondary Education, 3*(5), 50-54. http://dx.doi.org/10.11648/j.ijsedu.20150305.12

Williams, E. E. (2006). Teachers' perceptions of principal leadership in relation to student achievement. (Publication No. 3258821) [Doctoral dissertation, Atlanta University Center]. http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations

Zaretsky, R., and Katz, Y. J. (2018). The Relationship between Teachers' Perceptions of Emotional Labor and Teacher Burnout and Teachers' Educational Level. *Athens Journal of Education. 6*(2), 127-144. https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.6-2-3

PERCEPCIJA NASTAVNIKA I RAZUMEVANJE RUKOVOĐENJA ŠKOLOM U RURALNOJ NIGERIJI

Fokus ove studije je na percepciji nastavnika i razumevanju rukovođenja školom u ruralnoj Nigeriji u okviru koje su korišćene dve strategije i to: interakcija (strategija isključenja) i intervju (strategija inkluzije). Studija je sprovedena u seoskim školama države Kogi za čije potrebe su postavljeni odgovarajući kriterijumi inkluzije i isključenja, dok je kao instrument korišćen intervju otvorenog tipa. Na osnovu sprovedenog intervjua prikupljeni su podaci za kvalitativnu analizu koji su sistematski pregledani i organizovani na osnovu sličnosti u odgovorima ispitanika. Dobijeni rezultati ukazuju na to da nastavnici pozitivno percipiraju školske rukovodioce i da ih posmatraju kao osobe koje na njih deluju inspirativno, kao i da su svesni ciljeva svakog pojedinog nastavnika. Na osnovu rezultata dobijenih u studiji može se zaključiti i da nastavnici smatraju da je rukovodstvo u školama u ruralnim oblastima države Kogi zadovoljavajuće i da većina direktora u seoskim školama poseduje zajedničke kvalitete transformacionih lidera. S obzirom na dobijene rezultate, preporuka je da zainteresovane strane, uključujući i vladu, trebaju da poboljšaju praksu koja se odnosi na rukovođenje direktora kroz poboljšanje efikasnosti nastave i kvaliteta učenja, a da direktori treba da usvoje „praksu transformacionog liderstva" u ruralnim školama države Kogi.

Ključne reči: *rukovođenje školom, praksa rukovođenja školom, percepcija nastavnika, motivacija, transformaciono učenje, ruralne škole*