Building Bridges: Fostering Collaborative Leadership and Teacher Buy-In Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
Ensuring teacher commitment is essential for successful education reforms in Nigeria's secondary schools. However, top-down directives from bureaucracy tendencies usually fail to motivate teachers at the grassroots level. Without teachers' intrinsic buy-in, change initiatives are unlikely to succeed. Using relevant literature, and case studies, this paper explores how to build bridges to foster collaborative leadership and teacher buy-in in secondary schools in Nigeria. Core strategies for enhancing teacher buy-in through effective collaborative leadership are outlined, including teacher input in decision-making, transparency, open communication, a supportive enabling environment, and distributed leadership opportunities. Conceptual clarifications of collaborative leadership and teacher buy-in were examined linking collaborative elements like independence, relevance, capability and capacity building, and self-efficacy. Case studies of where leadership styles were applied in different parts of the country and sectors. Contextually relevant structural impediments and cultural norms that inhibit collaborative leadership are also analysed within the settings of Nigerian secondary schools. Finally, the benefits of collaboration are examined, including trust building, skill gains, elimination of complex issues, and collective accountability. Collaboration leadership as pivotal in ensuring teacher buy-in and its indispensable role in sustaining impact-oriented education systems. Incremental adoption supporting teacher-guided communities of practice and representative decision participation is relevant in ensuring collaborative leadership in secondary school. Internally driven, context-attuned collaborations between education leaders and classroom experts can transform schools but require further nurturing and appraisal while acknowledging constraints and possibilities.
Keywords: *Education; Collaboration; Leadership; Teacher, Buy-in*

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INTRODUCTION
The Nigerian education system, while rich in potential, grapples with issues like overburdened teachers, hierarchical leadership structures, and limited resources. These factors can create a sense of isolation and disempowerment among teachers, hindering their ability to innovate and effectively engage their students. According to Haruna, & Omuya (2022), many secondary schools in Nigeria are struggling to keep up with the competition as knowledge providers in the 21st century. The main reason behind this is the inability to maintain consistent performance from their staff members which may be attributed to the leadership styles adopted by the school management and principals in running the affairs of the schools. To bridge these gaps and unlock the true potential of Nigerian secondary schools, there is a need for school transformation and reformation. This goes beyond merely erecting physical structures and requires building bridges of trust, facilitating collaboration, and establishing shared goals. The key to achieving these aims lies in promoting collaborative leadership and securing buy-in from teachers.

Collaborative leadership stands in stark contrast to the conventional top-down model where decisions are made in isolation and enforced upon teachers. Rather, it enables school leaders to assume the roles of facilitators and co-creators, collaborating with teachers to devise solutions, establish objectives, and overcome obstacles. This approach acknowledges the abundant knowledge and proficiency that teachers bring to the table, esteeming their insights and viewpoints in shaping the school's trajectory.

It is worthy of note that teacher buy-in is critical for the success of any educational reform. When teachers feel valued, heard, and empowered, they become more interested in their students' success and actively participate in shaping the learning environment. This requires creating a culture of open communication,

where teachers feel comfortable sharing ideas, concerns, and suggestions. It also means providing opportunities for professional development, allowing teachers to continuously hone their skills and adapt to the evolving needs of their students. Teachers' support bridges appropriate loopholes in school management and administration. However, building bridges between stakeholders is not a simple task. It requires a school commitment from all involved parties, including school leaders, teachers, parents, and the broader community. It necessitates a willingness to step out of comfort zones, challenge current paradigms, and embrace new ways of thinking and working. The benefits, however, are immeasurable. A school where teachers feel empowered and appreciated, where collaboration flourishes, and where leadership is shared, becomes a beacon of hope and innovation. It, therefore, becomes a place where every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In light of the aforementioned, this paper delves into the specific strategies and practices that can build these bridges and transform Nigerian secondary schools into thriving citadel of learning.

Beginning with a conceptualisation of collaborative leadership, the paper further examines the core principles of collaborative leadership, the concept of teacher buy-in, and strategies for fostering teacher buy-in. It will draw the parallels between collaborative leadership dynamics across education, corporate, and non-profit sectors. Distinctions from related leadership paradigms will be explored while underscoring how collaborative leadership uniquely emphasises joint stakeholder power and engagement. Within education systems, the benefits of collaborative leadership are highlighted such as improved teaching practices, student learning, and school culture. Contextual factors influencing socio-cultural acceptance of collaborative leadership locally will be analysed. Practical challenges of implementation are also examined, from principal reluctance to diffuse authority to difficulties fostering teacher leadership in the school system. Finally, this paper explores the potential benefits of collaborative leadership in secondary schools, particularly with respect to teacher motivation and efficacy.

Conceptualising Collaborative Leadership
No leader can exist without followers or collaborators to lead. Effective leadership is crucial for schools to succeed beyond the daily activities of teaching and learning. In contrast, poor leadership or lack of leadership skills can negatively impact collaborators, teaching, learning, and school system development. Collaborative leadership as a concept has been defined by several scholars. While there is no consensus as to its definition, key features or indicators exist in the different scholar's perspectives. Collaborative leadership is a type of leadership style that prioritizes joint decision-making, shared responsibility, and collective knowledge. It enables others to participate in the leadership process, empowering and trusting them to use their skills and expertise to attain common objectives (Smith, Johnson, & Brown, 2018). Smith et al., (2018) in their definition, stressed that shared decision-making and responsibility are central to collaborative leadership. More importantly, trust and empowerment with collective intelligence are valuable for attaining organisational goals.

In the same vein, VanVactor (2012) described collaborative leadership as a top-down approach to leading where a leader works towards a shared vision and leverages the collective intelligence of the team. Decision-making and authority are delegated while providing necessary support and guidance. This definition is almost synonymous with the aforementioned definition, however with the blends of top-down and team-centric approaches as distinctive characteristics. Collaborative leadership in this sense values native intelligence and shared vision from the leader to the followers. Hence, delegation and support are key elements. According to Maalouf (2019), collaborative leadership is a leadership style that recognizes the value of employees in the decision-making process and relies on their expertise and knowledge to solve problems and achieve organisational goals. Employers who adopt this style share information openly, actively listen to feedback and create an enabling environment where all employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas. In this sense, employees are seen as team members and valuable contributors by encouraging open communication and information sharing.

These definitions showcased the multifaceted nature of collaborative leadership, emphasising its fundamental principles of shared decision-making, innate intelligence, empowerment, and transparent communication. Because of their nature and characteristics, collaborative leaders are easy to trust which makes them bring diverse people together to drive change in the organisation. They possess high levels of emotional intelligence, diversity, humility, and positivity. All these attributes are essential for school leaders or principals to exhibit among the teachers for continuous growth and development of the school system. However, there other leadership styles exhibited by school leaders that may have a significant impact on the school system development.

Types of Leadership Styles

Leadership style should create a supportive environment that is conducive for all to thrive, especially in school administration and management. As discussed in the literature, there are some major leadership styles. They include:

1. **Authoritarian leadership style:** here, the leader makes decisions independently with little or no input from staff members. The leader relies on command and control with strict obedience and offers little explanation of the action taken. This style can be appropriate and efficient when decisions need to be made quickly especially when the school is in a crisis, however, it lacks inclusion and stifles creativity (Zaman et al., 2021). More so, this leadership style discourages team building and can lead to resentment in the school system. One might think that this type of leadership style is difficult to practice in secondary school settings where there is the presence of academic vice principals and other assistant heads. However, it is not out of place to assume that some school principals exhibit this form of leadership style.

2. **Democratic leadership style:** this is also referred to as participative leadership. Here, the principal invites staff members to contribute ideas and participate in the decision-making process and activities in the school system. This creates more engagement, boosts employees' morale, and fosters creativity and innovation. It should be noted that this style can be inefficient at times owing to its time-wasting resulting from the need to seek consensus (Gastil, 2010). It was this leadership style that Nelson Mandela exhibited leading the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

3. **Laissez-faire leadership style**: this can also be referred to as delegative leadership. The principal provides minimal guidance to staff members, letting them make decisions independently. He delegates tasks to subordinates and allows them to have some form of authority. This can empower staff members and encourage individual ownership. Although, it could be an avenue to do away with responsibilities especially if the principal wants to avoid taking some responsibilities. If care is not taken, it can lead to confusion and lack of direction, and may not work well with inexperienced teams.

4. **Transformational leadership style**: The school principal inspires staff members through visionary goals, leading by example, developing members' strengths, and focusing on the good of the group. This is where the school leaders make followers (Crowe, 2003). This leadership style has been shown to promote high team performance and commitment. Apart from this, it drives innovation and change and allows the team to wax stronger. To achieve this, leaders often inspire and motivate followers, articulate a clear vision for the future, and fosters personal growth and development. This creates a sense of purpose and commitment. Mahatma Gandhi employed this leadership style to lead the Indian independence movement.

5. **Transactional leadership style:** it is a form of leadership style where leaders approach followers with the purpose of exchanging one thing for another, such as jobs for wages. Here, the school principal manages to carry out duties by setting standards, measuring performance, and dispensing rewards for services rendered or penalties accordingly. The focus is on rewards and punishments and relies on clear expectations from staff members. This leadership style may be common in private secondary schools where the principal implements performance-based bonuses. Although, it is most suitable for factory jobs where routine work is common. This leadership style can be seen as manipulative which may not foster creativity or long-term commitment among staff members or employees. More so, scholars warn that over-emphasis on transactions can be over-demanding and risky to lead diverse followers.

By implication, leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should embrace the combination of different styles. What makes collaborative leadership unique is that it integrates one or more of these leadership styles such that it considers the context, team members, task at hand and culture that operates within the system.

1.1   Mary Follett's Theory of Collaborative Leadership

Mary Follet was one of the earliest theorists on leadership who believed that leaders are meant to transform group experience into power, rather than the all-powerful one-man-knows-it-all style of leadership. According to Follett, the conventional wisdom of aggressive, masterful, dominating leadership attributes are not the essential qualities to leadership but, on the contrary, they often mitigate directly against leadership (Mark and Marsh, 2010). She explained that the astute leader does not depend on using physical force; instead, he expresses rather than dominates his group to maintain control. He brings out the best in the group by bringing together everyone within the group to give everyone's innate energy the power to achieve the optimal.
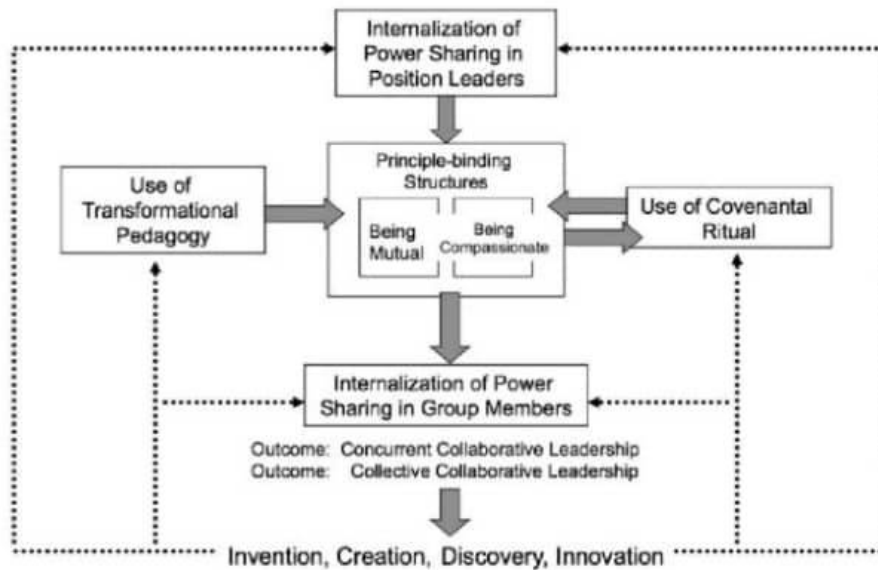
Follett's model of Collaborative Leadership

Fig 1: Mary Follett's Theory of Collaborative Leadership model

For Pollet, power sharing must be internalised by the leader and the group members. To achieve this, there are sets of principles and values the leader brings to the group. The group internalise these values through the tenets of compassion and mutuality. Continuously, transformational pedagogy is introduced to keep the group active and abreast of challenges (Gaspar, Sandra L., 2004). Here, all group members participate in decision making and the review of extant rules and values for workability. In sum, the group is open and amenable to change. This ultimately will lead to invention, creativity, discovery, and innovation. Three main principles of Follett's theory of management are summarised below.

- Direct contact between leaders and workers.
- The notion that all members are equally important within the organization.
- The stimulation of the concept of teamwork.

1.2 Key Principles of Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership relies on core principles to guide leaders in fostering collective intelligence, shared responsibility, and empowered teams for greater success. These principles include:

1. Shared decision-making: this has to do with moving beyond top-down directives. Collaborative leaders involve team members in the decision-making process. This creates a sense of ownership and promotes deeper commitment to the chosen course of action. This tenet emphasises that a collaborative leader facilitates group discussions, seeks and actively listens to input from team members, and holds brainstorming sessions for problem-solving.

2. Transparency and open communication: this is one of the core principles of collaborative leadership. This principle stressed that information should be readily available, shared, and accessible to all so that there can be trust and accountability within the team. This eliminates isolation or segregation and creates a sense of belongingness and togetherness. The school principal is expected to openly communicate goals and plans, provide regular updates, encourage questions and feedback, and avoid hidden agendas for the betterment of school system.

3. Empowerment and delegation: Collaborative leaders recognise the expertise and potential of their team members. They actively delegate tasks and responsibilities, entrusting individuals to make decisions within their areas of expertise. This principle encourages school principals to provide staff members with the resources and support they need to succeed, giving them autonomy over their work, and celebrating individual and staff members' achievements.

4. Focus on collaboration and teamwork: Collaborative leaders actively build strong relationships and encourage teamwork within the institution. They should understand that synergy and collective talent are more powerful than individual efforts. It is expected that they will promote cross-functional teams, facilitate team-building activities, recognise and reward collaborative efforts, creating an environment where staff members can lean on each other to thrive.

5. Leveraging diversity and valuing different perspectives: Collaborative leaders appreciate the diverse experiences, backgrounds, and ideas that team members bring, recognizing their strength in fostering creativity and innovation. Leaders are expected to create an inclusive environment where all voices are heard, actively seek diverse perspectives in decision-making, and encourage respectful discussion and debate.

6. Continuous learning and growth: Collaborative leaders prioritize continuous learning for themselves and their teams, fostering a culture of seeking feedback, learning from mistakes, and adapting to new challenges. It is expected that collaborative leaders provide opportunities for skill development and training, encourage knowledge sharing within the team, and embrace innovation and experimentation.

7. Leading by example: collaborative leaders practice what they preach. They demonstrate open communication, trust their team members, and actively participate in collaborative efforts. Being approachable and available, actively listening to feedback, admitting mistakes taking responsibility, and celebrating successes together are the hallmarks of this principle that collaborative leaders must embrace.

8. Emotional intelligence and empathy: above all, collaborative leaders are found to display emotional intelligence and empathy in their dealings with others. They consider the individual team member, situation on the ground, culture, and systems. It is believed that together everyone achieves more.

By upholding these key principles, collaborative leaders can foster innovation, build trust, engage teams, and gain the support of team members for the achievement of institutional goals and objectives.

1.3 Collaborative Leadership in Education

An institution where it is expedient to work together in unison to achieve a common goal requires collaborative leadership. In the education sector especially in secondary schools where the principal leads and needs the cooperation of vice principals (academic and administration), administrative staff, school accountants, heads of department, and other staff members to perform a variety of responsibilities requires collaborative leadership. This is because secondary schools present unique challenges and opportunities for collaborative leadership. Collaborative leaders are needed in secondary schools for these purposes:

1. Navigating Curriculum challenges: Secondary educators face pressure to deliver diverse and rigorous curriculum while preparing students for higher education or the workforce. Collaborative leadership fosters the sharing of best practices, innovative teaching methods, and curriculum resources, leading to richer and more relevant learning experiences.

2. Lead a change: Societies are evolving with the advancement in technologies and artificial intelligence with real societal challenges and opportunities. Effective school leadership is critical to managing these changes and leading the change. School principals should bring together professionals in different areas of subjects to channel the curricula and extra-curricular activities that will meet the growing change and demands in society.

3. Addressing complex needs of students: During their time in secondary school, students experience significant physical, emotional, and intellectual changes. To address these complex needs, it is important for educators, counselors, parents (parents teacher associations), and even students to work together in a collaborative leadership approach. By sharing their expertise and perspectives, this diverse group can provide more comprehensive and responsive support for students to excel in their academic and life endeavours.

4. Promoting equity and inclusion in the school system: secondary schools in Nigeria by nature operate hierarchical structures and systems. This does not support participative and collaborative activities. There is a need to shift from that rigid nature to an innovative leadership style. Secondary schools should strive to create inclusive environments where all staff and students can thrive. School leaders and principals with collaborative leadership skills allow diverse voices to be heard and included in decision-making, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources for all students.

5. Enhancing school climate and culture: In a typical Nigerian secondary school, the school leader or principal is always seen as the head or sole leader who cannot be challenged with respect to decisions and rules made. It has become a culture. Secondary schools need a positive school climate fostered by trust and collaboration. This is crucial for student well-being, engagement, and academic success. Collaborative leadership creates a sense of shared responsibility and ownership among teachers, especially in the area of curriculum development and implementation. This will lead to a more positive and supportive learning environment.

6. Developing future leaders: the need to develop future leaders makes collaborative leadership practice more pivotal. One of the reasons why collaborative leadership should be practiced in the education sector is the focus on student development; and the need to raise good leaders who will promote

inclusivity and unity. By implementing collaborative leadership models, students can gain communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that will be useful in their future leadership roles. Apart from student leaders, there are also teacher leaders who will champion the academic development of students. Collaborative leadership raises these categories of leaders for school sustainability and social development.

1.3.1 Challenges of Implementing Collaborative Leadership in Schools:

While the benefits are substantial, implementing collaborative leadership in secondary schools comes with its own set of challenges:

i. Balancing expertise and empowerment: Finding the right balance between leveraging the expertise of experienced educators and empowering newer teachers and students to contribute can be tricky. However, if a collaborative culture has been built right from the onset, finding experienced teachers who are vast and understand the culture of a particular school won't be difficult.

ii. Managing time and resources: Allocating sufficient time for collaborative meetings and ensuring equitable access to resources for all stakeholders requires careful planning and management. This is achievable if there is a conscious effort and commitment from stakeholders.

iii. Overcoming power dynamics: there is no absence of power dynamics in secondary schools, however, addressing potential power imbalances between administrators, teachers, parents, and students is crucial for ensuring all voices are heard and valued.

1.3.2 Effective Strategies for Collaborative Leadership:

Despite the challenges, several strategies can make collaborative leadership successful in secondary schools:

i. Clear Vision and Goals: Establishing a shared vision and well-defined goals for collaboration provides direction and motivates all internal and external stakeholders of the schools.

ii. Building Trust and Shared Values: Fostering trust, respectful communication, and shared values create a foundation for effective collaboration.

iii. Diverse Representation: Ensuring diverse representation in decision-making processes leads to more inclusive and equitable solutions.

iv. Effective Facilitation: Employing skilled facilitators who can guide discussions, manage diverse perspectives, and ensure everyone feels heard is crucial.

v. Ongoing Reflection and Evaluation: Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of collaborative practices and adjusting as needed helps ensure continuous improvement.

vi. To conclude, despite the challenges that exist, there is a clear need for collaborative leadership in secondary schools. By understanding the needs and possibilities at this level and implementing effective strategies, schools can create a collaborative environment that benefits all stakeholders. This leads to a more impactful and successful educational experience for all students.

1.4 Defining Teacher Buy-In

Effective collaborative school leadership brings about teacher buy-in. Schaffer (2014) views teacher buy-in as the willingness and acceptance of teachers to support or participate in a new curriculum, reform, or programme. It is non-coercive and appeals to the sense and psychological state of teachers. Similarly, Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) see teacher buy-in as the teachers' acceptance of or commitment to a programme or initiative based on their perceptions that it is feasible, fair, and aligned with their values. In other words, the school culture and values must be in tandem with the teachers' own beliefs before their support and participation in a school programme can be guaranteed. The question is who creates that sense of culture and values? - The school leader or principal. That is why effective collaborative school leadership brings about teacher buy-in.

Also, Matherson & Windle (2017) defined teacher buy-in as the level of support demonstrated by teachers for a change initiative. It involves their commitment to implementing the change in the classroom and their belief that it will lead to positive outcomes. Teacher buy-in in this sense is dynamic and supports innovations for the better of the students and the school system.

In summary, teacher buy-in refers to the degree to which educators accept, support, invest in, and commit to implementing a new programme or reform idea in their classroom and the general school environment. This is based on their perception of its feasibility, belongingness, alignment with their values, and the potential benefits it can bring. It is considered an essential element for the successful and long-term implementation of any new education programme. Hence, to bring about innovations in the education sector, there is a need for teacher buy-in.

1.4.1 Strategies for Fostering Teacher Buy-In

Fostering teacher support in secondary schools is crucial for the successful implementation of any school programme or activity. This is because teachers directly interact with students and parents. Their behavior and attitude can significantly affect the success of school programmes and activities, as well as their relationship with other stakeholders. Therefore, it is crucial to gain the support and commitment of teachers in the school administration and curriculum delivery. Here are some key strategies to achieve this:

Communication and Transparency:

Clarity of purpose and goals: the school leader must clearly communicate the goals and objectives of any school programme or curricula activity. The role of each individual should be understood by everybody and agreed upon. The rationale, expected outcomes, and benefits of the school programmes should also be understood by all the teachers. It is imperative for the school leader to encourage open discussion and address concerns honestly. This way it makes them feel included and part of school affairs. More so, two-way communication should be enhanced. The school leaders should create opportunities for teachers to ask questions, provide feedback, and share their perspectives. Regular updates and open dialogue build trust and understanding. Also, transparency in decision-making is key; school leaders can involve teachers in decision-making processes whenever possible. Share information and rationale behind major decisions to ensure shared ownership.

Professional Development and Support:

One of the strategies to gain teachers' support is for the school leaders to show they care about their personal growth and welfare. Offer relevant professional development, resources, and ongoing support to effectively implement new initiatives and address teacher concerns. What about mentorship and peer coaching? school leaders should establish peer coaching or mentorship programmes to support teacher learning and implementation. Sharing experiences and best practices fosters collaboration and motivation. In addition, their success should be celebrated. Let them feel among and their efforts be recognised by the school authorities. Positive reinforcement boosts teachers' morale and encourages continued buy-in.

Collaboration and Empowerment:

Two heads are better than one they say, reason why collaboration empowers every member of the team to achieve more. School leaders should involve teachers in planning and implementing school programmes and initiatives. This fosters ownership and allows them to adapt it to their specific contexts and needs. Empowerment comes from distributed leadership. Empower teachers to take leadership roles in various aspects of the school development. This promotes ownership, innovation, and professional growth. Also, creating structures for shared decision-making on matters directly impacting teachers' practice empowers teachers, demonstrates respect for their expertise, and builds trust.

Adapting to Different Needs:

To gain teachers' support, it is germane for school leaders to recognise diversity and promote unity in its very essence. To do this, they should acknowledge and address the varied needs, concerns, and perspectives of different teachers and groups. When a new programme is to be implemented, consider piloting it with a smaller group before full implementation. This allows for adjustments and builds confidence before wider adoption. More so, this will allow for some flexibility in implementing the programme to cater to individual needs and contexts. Again, this demonstrates trust and encourages ownership.

Addressing Concerns and Resistance:

The school leaders should proactively address concerns. Potential concerns should be identified early on and actively addressed them through open communication and clear explanations. In addressing concerns, collaborative problem-solving is critical. The school leaders should work with teachers to find solutions to implementation challenges rather than imposing solutions from the top down. In addressing concerns, school leaders should demonstrate empathy: Acknowledge and validate teachers' concerns and frustrations. Show understanding and willingness to work collaboratively to find solutions.

Building a Supportive Culture:

To gain the maximum support of teachers, school leaders should foster a culture of trust and respect where teachers feel their voices are heard and their expertise valued. They are to encourage open and honest communication, including constructive criticism and feedback. This allows for continuous improvement and builds trust. In building a supportive culture, emphasis should be on collaboration and teamwork among teachers because shared experiences and support contribute to positive morale and buy-in.

By implementing these strategies, school leaders can foster genuine teacher buy-in, leading to more successful implementation of school initiatives and ultimately, improved student outcomes. It should be noted that it's an ongoing process requiring active listening, adaptability, and a commitment to collaboration.

1.4.2   Case Studies on Collaborative Leadership and Teacher Buy-In

In collaborative leadership and teacher buy-in scenarios, the leader sees himself as part of the group or team. They collaboratively determine leadership behaviours in terms of decision-making, task distribution, relationships, and functions according to individual and group capacities. According to Manion (2005), when a leader and followers collaborate towards a common goal, they can generate more and better solutions compared to a strictly linear organisation where the leader commands followers. These aforementioned assertions can be highlighted in the following case studies:

Case Study 1: Successful Collaboration and teacher buy-in in XXX (name withheld) Secondary School in Tunkus, Plateau State Nigeria

Context: There is a small secondary school in a rural area of Tunkus, Plateau state, Nigeria that has struggled with low student performance and teacher morale for a decade. In 2014, the new principal, Mr. Jubril, posted to the secondary school adopted a collaborative leadership approach.

Strategies:

Shared Vision and Goals: First, Mr. Jubril holds a meeting with all the teachers to air their views on challenges faced in the past and present in relation to teachers' welfare and the academic performance of students. It was discovered that the teachers were left to exist in a vacuum without being carried along. Mr. Jubril shared his intentions and goals and it was agreed in the meeting that there is a need to meet with all the stakeholders in the community.

Without much ado, a town hall meeting with teachers, parents, and community members was held to develop a shared vision for improving student learning.

Distributed Leadership: Mr. Jubril establishes teacher committees responsible for curriculum development, assessment, and professional development. He ensured that Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) was constituted and functional with a teacher representative and parent representative leading the charge.

Mentorship and Peer Coaching: He implements a peer coaching programme where experienced teachers mentor newer ones.

Information-driven Decision Making: Mr. Jubril encourages teachers to observe students, analyse their previous performance, and collaboratively identify areas for improvement.

Community Engagement: He involves parents and community members in school activities and fundraising initiatives leveraging on the political elites' support in the community.

Key Outcomes:

- Teacher buy-in increases as they feel valued and empowered.
- Collaborative planning leads to a more relevant and engaging curriculum.
- Peer coaching improves teaching skills and confidence.
- Community support by providing resources and infrastructures.
- Student performance significantly improves over two years.

Case Study 2: Unsuccessful Top-Down Approach in XYZ (name withheld) Secondary School in Okporowo, Ahoada East, Rivers State

Context: In 2012, a Secondary School in Okporowo, Ahoada East, Rivers State implemented a new technology-based learning programme. The principal, Mr. Francis, takes a top-down approach wherein staff members are not carried along in the process.

Strategies:

Limited Communication: Mr. Francis announces the initiative at a staff meeting, providing minimal information and explanation.

Minimal Training: Teachers receive one-day training on the new technology which was considered inadequate by many.

Centralized Decision Making: Mr. Francis dictates how the technology will be applied in the classrooms while ensuring the teachers follow this process strictly.

Lack of Resources: Insufficient technical support and equipment hinder smooth implementation.

Constructive Feedback Ignored: Teacher concerns about the initiative's practicability and effectiveness are dismissed by Mr. Francis.

Key Outcomes:

- Teacher buy-in remains low due to a lack of trust and feeling undervalued.

- Inadequate training leads to frustration and resistance among teachers.
- The rigid implementation plan fails to adapt to classroom realities.
- Technical difficulties further demotivate teachers and students.
- Student engagement with the technology remains low, and achievement scores show no significant improvement.

Implications:

Both case studies highlight the importance of communication, collaboration, and shared ownership for successful educational change.

Case 1 demonstrates that distributed leadership, information-driven decision making, and community engagement can empower teachers and improve student outcomes.

Case 2 emphasises the detrimental effects of top-down approaches, limited training, and ignoring teacher concerns.

These contrasting case studies serve as valuable lessons for Nigerian school leaders seeking to implement collaborative leadership and achieve sustainable improvements in their schools.

1.5 Collaborative Leadership in Other Sectors

Apart from the educational sector, it is worth examining how collaborative leadership is being practiced in other sectors.

Collaborative Leadership in the Health Sector

In healthcare organisations, leaders often see their role as transactional activity (Schneller and Smeltzer, 2006). As discussed earlier, transactional leaders approach followers with the purpose of exchanging their labour and time for wages. According to scholars, healthcare management is hierarchically structured and the chain of command is linear. Command and control are passed down from the senior-level managers, through the positions of middle and

first-line managers, to individual employees. The management work in silos and each unit work independently and report to the top. This leadership style is a mechanistic, deterministic, and reductionistic model that does not encourage creativity, dynamism, and trust relationships.

By continuously employing this leadership style and model, it reduces employees' morale, job satisfaction, and job performance thereby affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare services. It is, therefore, suggested that there is a need to build a collaborative working environment in healthcare systems wherein leaders encourage individual initiatives to take risks and make decisions, allowing personal and professional growth and development.

Collaborative Leadership in the Corporate Organisations

Leadership style that operates in the industry is dynamic and not rigid like in the health sector. This could be seen as a result of multiplayer who are keen on maintaining competitive advantage and remaining competitive and sustainable. Be that as it may, the majority of organisations are hierarchical in nature with a mixture of transactional and authoritarian styles (Zaman et al., 2021). The researchers found that organisational leaders lack credibility owing to their poor transparency and accountability nature. Employees crave leaders whom they can trust and share their concerns with. As businesses evolve, collaboration is becoming a requirement to deliver business survival and development. The era of globalisation, technological advancement, and extreme competition has necessitated the need for businesses to be dynamic, especially in the leadership approach to management. Business leaders should, therefore, exhibit collaborative leadership styles to get the best out of their employees and keep the business viable and sustainable. This is because this leadership style integrates one or more forms of leadership style such as participative, democratic, and charismatic styles.

Collaborative Leadership in the Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operate within a diverse landscape, and consequently, there's no single leadership style that universally defines them. In the non-profit sector, resources are often limited, and achieving positive social change is paramount, therefore, traditional top-down leadership models are being replaced by collaborative leadership. Collaborative leadership style is one of the predominant leadership styles within the NGO sector. This approach emphasises shared decision-making, collective ownership, and leveraging diverse perspectives to achieve a common goal. It recognises the importance of involving stakeholders at all levels of the organisation and encourages teamwork to drive impactful change. It's increasingly popular due to its potential to foster innovation, empower staff, and achieve sustainable impact.

Apart from this leadership style, the transformational leadership style also thrives in the NGO sector. This style inspires and motivates teams to achieve their full potential and create positive change. It can be effective in mobilising resources and promoting innovation in the social sector. Similarly, servant leadership is also popular in the NGO space. Its philosophy prioritises serving the needs of others, prioritizing community and staff well-being alongside organizational goals. It can foster strong trust and collaboration within the NGO. As previously mentioned, scholars argued that in this dispensation, collaborative leadership is thriving and has replaced all other leadership styles since it has the features of transformational, servant, democratic, and charismatic leadership styles (Zaman et al., 2021; Smith et al., (2018).

1.6 Contextually Relevant Issues in Collaborative Leadership (local/cultural values about leadership)

Nigeria with about 250 ethnic groups has its uniqueness in terms of culture, belief systems, traditions, and demographic characteristics. In the view of Olajuwon and Perumal (2017), all these tend to affect the practice of collaborative leadership in Nigerian secondary schools. Some contextually relevant issues that can arise related to collaborative leadership within Nigerian secondary schools include:

Power Dynamics:
This plays a major role in Nigerian society and can be divided into different layers.
Teacher-Administration Relations – Nigerian culture promotes hierarchically structured systems and institutions where elders or seniors, titles, and positions are valued and respected. This can challenge democratic collaboration between principals, administrators, and teachers. Addressing power imbalance issues is very key to fostering trust and a sense of ownership.
Teacher-Student Relations: Teachers may want to exert control and authority over students given their position and this will pose a challenge for collaborative initiatives. It is important to balance collaborative decision-making with respecting established hierarchies while also ensuring that the voices of students are heard in a meaningful way.
Community Involvement: Integrating parents and community members effectively into the school programmes and activities without jeopardizing professional autonomy or creating unrealistic expectations could be an issue if not managed.
Reluctance to Diffuse Power: Some secondary school leaders could see collaborative leadership practice as a threat and competition to their office, hence, may be reluctant to diffuse power to teaching staff and administrators.

Cultural Norms:
Respect for Authority: this is sacrosanct in Nigeria's cultural system. Navigating collaborative practices within a culture that emphasises respect for elders and authority figures is a herculean task. Between leaders/seniors/elders and followers/juniors/younger ones, irrespective of titles or positions occupied, one must know how to talk, relate, and exert power, if not it will affect shared decision-making and school administration.
Communication Styles: Ensuring inclusive participation and addressing potential differences in communication styles is crucial to achieving a common goal and keeping the team together.
Existing School Culture: Building upon existing strengths and addressing potential resistance to change within the school community is a serious challenge and must be carefully planned by any collaborative leaders in Nigerian secondary schools.
Diversity management - With Nigeria's linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity, ensuring collaborative decisions reflect differing cultural perspectives and local community values requires proactive inclusion.

Gender Dynamics:
It is important to ensure that female teachers and students have equal opportunities for participation and leadership. This means that they should have the same chances as their male counterparts to take part in activities, speak up in discussions, and hold leadership positions. This is a big task to surmount in a situation where culture still places men above women. However, by promoting gender equality, we can create a fair and inclusive environment that benefits everyone.

Resource Constraints:
Time Commitment: Lack of funding, staffing, and infrastructure support can limit collaborative planning time and space, while low salaries impact motivation. However, creative low-cost solutions can help

overcome these challenges. Having to wait for consensus on desperate issues that require proactive measures requires careful attention.

High workload concerns - Heavy teaching workloads and high student-teacher ratios can lead to fatigue, which limits willingness to engage in unpaid after-hours collaboration. Hence, mandating participation may backfire.

Training and Development: Resources to provide adequate and continuous training and support for teachers and administrators to develop collaborative skills that will make everybody work together as a team may be hampered because of lack of resources.

Infrastructure and Technology: Ensuring access to technology and resources needed for effective collaboration across departments and stakeholders is a challenge, especially among public secondary schools in Nigeria.

Accountability and Evaluation:
The difficulty in defining clear metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative leadership on student learning and school development has not been addressed. The present makeup of Nigerian secondary schools especially the public schools seem not prepared for that yet. And where the standard is not set, accountability and evaluation become a problem. This poses a serious challenge for collaborative leadership to thrive. More so, to maintain individual accountability for performance while fostering a sense of collective responsibility for school success must be considered. To establish a collaborative environment, transparent mechanisms for providing and receiving feedback should be put in place.

School Size and Location:
Adapting a collaborative leadership approach to the specific needs and challenges of urban, rural, and diverse secondary school communities poses a challenge. Specifically, rural secondary schools can suffer isolation limiting collaborative opportunities with peer schools.

Government Regulations and Policies:
Another contextual issue is the instability in government policies in Nigeria. To ensure collaborative practices that will align with national educational policies and regulations must be contended by any collaborative leader willing to make a change.

Policy framework gaps - Nigeria's education system governance structures are deficient in providing formal mechanisms and consistency in funding things like continuing professional teacher training in learning communities, hence, constraining growth and development.

Essentially the contextual issues afore-discussed relating to structural-cultural impediments, resource deficiencies, gender dynamics, workload burnout, diversity management, remoteness challenges, instability in government policy, and so on are challenges facing the implementation of collaborative leadership in Nigerian secondary schools. Understanding and carefully navigating these issues in context is key for education leaders driving collaborative transformation.

1.6 Benefits of Collaborative Leadership for Fostering Teacher Buy-in
There are innumerable benefits to practicing collaborative leadership in ensuring teacher support in secondary schools.

i. It ensures Buy-in: In fact, one of the rationales for practicing collaborative leadership is to foster buy-in. Collaborative leadership practices create a sense of ownership among team members. In this case, teachers feel part and parcel of the school administration and programmes. Their opinion and initiatives are welcome which strengthens their commitment to school growth and the academic development of students.

ii. Participation in decision-making and programme implementation: the practice of collaborative leadership fosters more involvement of teachers in matters that concerns the school. Because they were part of the ideation and planning phase, they will be more than willing to ensure the successful implementation of school programmes.

iii. It builds trust in the school system: When there is teacher buy-in as a result of collaborative leadership practice, it gradually builds a trust culture among the team, school principals, and school administrators. Trust strengthens the school teachers to support organisational programmes that are of utmost priority.

iv. Elimination of complex issues: the coming together of diverse people with differently unique ideas helps to solve problems that are complex for the school. Everybody's input is heard and sustainable solutions are provided faster as compared to lone decision making.

v. Skill Building: The collaborative process builds vital skills in individuals and the group - teamwork, communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, data analysis, teacher leadership, expanding teaching capabilities, and self-efficacy.

vi. Shared Accountability - Collaboration creates a culture of shared responsibility, where teaching staff willingly participate in co-creating policies and programmes that are beneficial to the students and the school instead of relying solely on administrative directives.

vii. Fosters tailor-made solutions and relevance among teachers: Locally optimized initiatives are shaped by teacher insight that reflects the on-the-ground realities of student needs, classroom contexts, and school culture. Buy-in is increased through relevance.

1.7 Conclusion and Recommendations

The successful transformation of secondary schools to meet the pressing needs of students requires teachers to be fully committed to and drive change initiatives within their classrooms. However, top-down approaches have historically had limited success without staff buy-in. Collaborative leadership approaches offer a powerful instrument to inspire greater teacher support and ownership by incorporating their voices into transparent decision-making processes that enhance professional capabilities and deliver contextually optimized solutions.

Emerging case study evidence suggests that distributed leadership, information-driven decision-making, and community engagement can empower teachers and improve student outcomes whereas top-down approaches, limited training, and ignoring teacher concerns can be detrimental to teacher buy-in and school growth and development. More so, collaborative leadership can be adopted and adapted into different sectors not just the education sector to enhance innovation and global relevance. While contextually relevant issues are hindrances to effective collaborative leadership practice in secondary schools, structures such as teacher-guided continuous professional learning communities, representative leadership teams, tailored coaching and mentoring supports, and inclusive digitally-enabled collaboration hold great promise. By involving educators as partners in shaping reforms, schools can build trust, improve skill levels, increase local relevance, inspire peers, and share accountability. Although the collaborative approach requires more effort initially, the sustainable positive impact depends on schools recognizing their teachers as insightful change leaders and the primary enablers of student growth in their classrooms.

Achieving a collaborative vision on a large scale in Nigeria is likely to encounter significant cultural and structural obstacles within traditionally hierarchical governance systems. However, incremental adoption through grassroots school-based efforts or district-level pilot initiatives can demonstrate local value. The numerous challenges facing Nigeria's next-generation students should motivate proactive experimentation and investment in leadership approaches that have been proven globally to unlock teacher potential. With structured mechanisms and resource commitments that facilitate collaborative teacher leadership, Nigerian secondary schools can transition from being sources of frustration to becoming engines of collaborative innovation.

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