

Risk Management of Peter's Principle and Its Negative Effect on Academic Best Practices in Tertiary Institutions: Implications for Effective Educational Administration and Planning

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Abstract- In education, managing the risks of the Peter Principle, which states that employees are promoted to their level of incompetence, cannot be overlooked due to its damaging effect on the overall success of the organisation. The papers highlight that the risk factors of the Peter Principle in academia include promoting individuals based on non-academic success rather than leadership ability. The principle tends to reduce staff morale and hinder academic achievement in the workforce. This occurs because individuals are promoted to roles where their incompetencies become apparent, resulting in ineffective leadership that can stifle best practices in education and impede overall progress. The present study offers a theoretical overview of Peter's principle in educational management, outlines the risk mitigation factors of the Peter Principle in the educational environment, and discusses ways to promote and enhance best practices in educational management, including a brief conclusion.

Indexed Terms- Risk Management, Peter's Principle, Academic Best Practices & Educational Administration and Planning

I. INTRODUCTION

Quality education is crucial for society as it fosters individual independence, drives economic growth, and enhances social well-being. By equipping individuals with critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative skills it improves job prospects and earnings. Little wonder Bullough (2012) posits that quality education reduces inequality, boosts social mobility, improves public health, promotes peace and tolerance, and

supports sustainable development by enabling communities to innovate and adapt. In contrast, poor educational quality perpetuates cycles of poverty, stalls economic progress, widens social inequalities, undermines public health, and reduces civic participation, ultimately leading to a less stable and prosperous society. Those in such communities often face limited job opportunities, higher risks of exploitation, and difficulties in improving their living standards, hindering overall societal progress and the development of educational administration and planning.

Educational administration and planning are crucial for achieving the overall goals of education and ensuring academic safety measures. Effective educational management involves delivering a quality curriculum, providing strong leadership, and encouraging accountable student participation in classroom activities. In the academic setting, best practices include applying the most effective pedagogical strategies for instructors and maintaining ethical conduct for students and staff. This involves active and collaborative learning, differentiated instruction, offering prompt and personalised feedback, fostering strong student-faculty relationships, and upholding principles of academic integrity (Ali & Tanveer, 2019). Within this context, best practices also mean honest work, proper source acknowledgement, effective time management, and the efficient use of institutional resources. For instructors, it involves clear communication, setting high expectations, and creating an inclusive learning environment that respects diverse student needs.

Boni and Walker (2016) posit that the concept of global best practices in education remains subjective, with variations in perspectives, contexts, and indicators employed to evaluate them. The absence of a standardised definition presents challenges for organisations and educational institutions in effectively identifying, adopting, and benchmarking these practices. The term "global best practices" denotes the most efficacious and proficient methods of conducting business, managing resources, and attaining goals across different nations and cultures. It encompasses a distinctive mode of global governance that relies on existing practices to establish claims of political authority (Bernstein & Ven, 2017).

Academic best practices are the foundational principles that ensure effective and ethical engagement within higher education, fostering a student-centred learning environment, promoting academic integrity, and encouraging effective teaching and learning processes. The practices encompass strategies for planning and delivering engaging instruction, providing timely and constructive feedback, encouraging student interaction, and setting clear, high expectations to support student success and develop a strong sense of scholarship. Peters and Heron (1993) informed that academic best practices enhance student and staff engagement, performance, motivation, and overall learning outcomes by creating positive learning environments, fostering teacher-student relationships, providing effective feedback, encouraging growth mindsets, and improving institutional quality. These practices promote academic integrity and contribute to the credibility of educational institutions while cultivating a culture of ethical behaviour.

However, best practices are hard to find in the academic environment, which is because the *Peter principle*, also called the Peter effect, is a concept that originated from the work of Dr. Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull, and is used by most administrators. The principle originated in the early 1969 book *The Peter Principle*, stipulates why Things Always Go Wrong by Dr. Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull. The principle posits that in a hierarchical system, employees are promoted based on their competence in their current role, eventually leading them to a position

for which they lack the necessary skills. The theory is based on the assumption that

- i. Promotion an individual to the level of incompetence: The core idea is that promotions continue until an employee reaches a role they cannot perform effectively, at which point they remain stuck, neither able to advance further nor being competent enough to be removed.
- ii. Mismatch in skills application: The principle highlights that skills for one job do not automatically translate to the next, particularly when moving from technical or specialised roles into managerial ones.
- iii. Idea of hierarchical Systems: The Peter Principle applies to any hierarchical organisation, including businesses, government agencies, and non-profits.

Peter's Principle (or the theory) uses the concept of promoting employees to their "level of incompetence" to explain ineffective management by highlighting the need for better promotion criteria and employee development. Its uses in management include fostering a culture that prevents this trend by implementing thorough competency-based assessments, providing targeted training, supporting alternative career paths, and encouraging feedback to identify individuals who are not a good fit for higher roles, ultimately leading to improved leadership and productivity.

Possible areas of academic best practices in educational management

Possible areas of academic best practices include academic integrity (plagiarism, collusion, ethical conduct) and effective learning strategies (time management, note-taking, research, critical thinking, active learning, referencing, academic writing). Other areas involve fostering collaboration and communication through teamwork and feedback, implementing effective teaching and assessment methods (like active learning and differentiated instruction). Best practices provide a roadmap for improved performance, efficiency, reduced errors, and risk mitigation, serving as a benchmark for quality and effectiveness. Bullough (2012) outlined some areas that need best practices to include Practice Areas

- i. Project Management: Using successful methodologies and processes that lead to the efficient and effective completion of projects.
- ii. Efficiency and effectiveness: They offer optimised methods for completing tasks, reducing wasted resources and time and are proven to achieve superior results, leading to higher quality outcomes.
- iii. Healthcare: Ensuring staff have the necessary training and resources to provide optimal patient care and improve patient outcomes.
- iv. Information Technology (IT): Developing and applying proven methods for software development, system configuration, and cybersecurity to enhance efficiency and security.
- v. Quality Management: Implementing strategies and principles that help organizations consistently deliver high-quality products and services to meet or exceed customer expectations.
- vi. Human Resources (HR): Adopting superior techniques for recruiting, training, and managing employees to achieve organisational goals and foster a positive work environment.
- vii. Knowledge Transfer: They provide a framework for sharing lessons learned and successful strategies, preventing others from repeating past mistakes.
- viii. Innovation: The process of identifying and adopting best practices can spark new ideas and creative solutions within an organization.

Uses of the Peter theory in educational management theory in Management

- i. Improving Promotion Decisions: Competency-Based Assessment: The theory encourages companies to move beyond rewarding pure performance and instead use competency-based assessments to evaluate an employee's potential for leadership and their fit for higher roles.
- ii. Skill/ job Alignment: It highlights the importance of ensuring that the skills needed for the new role are a good match for the individual's capabilities.
- iii. Developing Employees: Targeted Training: Companies can provide specific training and support to equip employees with

the skills needed for higher positions, preventing them from reaching incompetence.

- iv. Alternative Career Paths: The theory suggests offering alternative career paths or lateral moves for employees who excel in their current roles but may not be suited for higher managerial positions.

Preventing Ineffective Management

Poskey (2008) observed that ineffective leadership results in a negative influence on others, thus making them desist from work. Thus, undermining the interest of the organisation, or, for that matter, the interest of its employees. We introduce ten models of ineffective leadership. Ineffective leadership can be thought of as directly contrasting successful leadership; while the latter has a positive influence on workers to achieve common goals, ineffective leadership, on the other hand, hurts workers' motivations to attain common goals. As such, ineffective leadership that is lacking in ethics or engages in dirty tricks, as mentioned in the Encyclopedia of Leadership (Encyclopedia, 2004).

According to Goldman (2006), ineffective leadership is the result of personal turmoil. Likewise, a leader's selfishness gives priority to a leader's needs over his/her subordinate's needs or undermines a leader's institutional commitments. Some silent points to note about the theory includes recognising the signs of the Peter Principle, managers can address ineffective leadership stemming from promotions to unsuitable roles, implementing strategies to avoid the principle can lead to more effective management, which in turn can improve employee morale, increase productivity, and reduce overall error rates also, Peter Principle encourages a balanced approach to promotions, considering both job performance and the potential to be an effective leader.

Mitigating risks of the Peter Principle in the educational environment

To alleviate the risky measures of the Peter Principle (staff/employees being promoted to their level of incompetence), institutions of learning should implement skill-based promotions over seniority; thus, overdependence on seniority syndrome may hinder individuals' pursuit of job excellence. Hence, the following may be helpful as outlined by Reschly, Myers and Hartel (2002)

- i. Regular evaluation: Regularly evaluate employees' current skills and their potential for future roles, not just their performance in the current one.
 - ii. Structured Leadership: Use tools like behavioural interviews, case studies, and peer reviews to assess future-oriented competencies such as strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and leadership potential.
 - iii. Performance Tracking: Establish a culture of continuous feedback and performance reviews to identify early signs of an individual struggling in a new role.
 - iv. Provision of Comprehensive Training programmes: Offer specific training, workshops, and mentoring programs to help newly promoted employees develop the necessary skills for their new roles.
 - v. Foster democratic communication: Encourage employees to voice concerns about their readiness for a role and create an environment where feedback can be given and received constructively.
 - vi. Implement Flexible Role Design: Allow for incremental leadership responsibilities and flexible roles, giving employees a chance to develop and prove their leadership capabilities before a formal promotion.
 - vii. Encourage Self-Reflection: Equip employees with tools for self-assessment to help them understand their own strengths and areas for development, increasing their self-awareness regarding their career progression.
- iii. Focus on Student Wellness: Prioritise the well-being of students as an integral part of fostering a dynamic and supportive learning environment.
 - iv. Continuous Professional Development: Provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and advance their careers.
 - v. Persistent monitoring, evaluation and assessment: Implement ongoing monitoring and evaluation of educational strategies and technologies to ensure they remain relevant and effective.
 - vi. Investment in Innovation: Prioritise investments in technology infrastructure and teacher training programs to foster innovation and adapt to evolving educational needs.

Implications of Peter's principle in educational administration and planning

The implications of Peter's Principle in educational management include potential misplaced leaders, reduced effectiveness in roles such as department heads, decreased morale, team disruption and overall inefficiency in educational institutions. This occurs when teachers are promoted to management positions for which their teaching skills are insufficient, leading to incompetence at the new level. To mitigate these effects, schools must implement targeted professional development, robust mentoring, and strategic promotion processes that consider skills beyond past performance. Specifically, Black (2020) highlights the educational, administrative and planning implications of the theory as follows.

How to foster and enhance best practices in educational management

Rajani (2002) informed that to enhance best practices in educational management, institutions should focus on data-driven decision-making, technology integration, collaborative leadership, and stakeholder engagement.

- i. Collaborative and Distributed Leadership: Empowering multiple individuals through delegation of authority to enhance institutional adaptability and foster shared responsibility, leading to higher teacher morale and engagement.
- ii. Supportive School Culture: Create an environment characterised by trust, effective

- i. Reduces staff effectiveness: When a teacher in an administrative role is ineffective, their performance suffers in their new position, which can also negatively affect their primary role as a classroom teacher.
- ii. Brings about incompetent leaders: A competent teacher promoted to a department head or other administrative role may lack the necessary management and leadership skills to excel, leading to a "level of incompetence".
- iii. Kills and reduced self-confidence of staff: Individuals promoted beyond their capabilities may experience feelings of inadequacy and imposter syndrome, eroding

- their confidence and hindering their ability to make decisions.
- iv. Hinders team building: A leader struggling in their role can lead to frustration among colleagues who must compensate for their shortcomings or deal with the consequences of poor decisions, disrupting the team's harmony.
 - v. Reduces workers' innovation skills: A once innovative individual might become more reactive in a role they are not equipped to handle, leading to a decline in new ideas and proactive problem-solving.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Peter Principle's practical application in management involves preventing employees from being promoted to a level where they are no longer competent. The study has it that by focusing on skill-based promotion criteria, providing continuous training and development, offering alternative career paths and higher pay for existing successful roles, and implementing talent management systems for better performance evaluation and career planning. To prevent ineffective management, organisations should implement robust leadership training, foster a culture of accountability and feedback, set clear goals and expectations, promote open communication, encourage employee development, and use performance data to monitor progress and identify issues early. Organisations must address poor management by providing resources, conducting regular reviews, and ensuring that leadership development is a continuous process, not just a one-time fix.

However, the Nigerian educational system's main "prospects" include its potential for economic growth, increased self-reliance for individuals, and fostering a united nation, as outlined in its National Policy on Education. These potential benefits are challenged by significant problems such as poor funding, a lack of adequate infrastructure, an insufficient number of qualified and trained teachers, high dropout rates, and issues like corruption within the system. In conclusion, Peter's Principles should be drawn upon to highlight common flaws in hierarchical organisational promotion systems, where employees are promoted based on past performance rather than future potential,

leading to widespread managerial incompetence. By understanding the Peter Principle, organisations can improve their talent development and promotion strategies to avoid placing individuals in roles they are not equipped to handle, thereby enhancing overall efficiency and morale

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the research study, the researcher has ensured that all sourced materials utilised in this study have been appropriately acknowledged. Thereby ensuring that the credit was given to whom it is due. Any form of intellectual theft was strictly avoided. The authors utilised Grammarly checker to ensure the validity and reliability of the work. This was done because the author was interested in ensuring the principles of academic integrity in the study.

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