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PRINCIPALS' MICROMANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated principals' micromanagement practices as predictors of teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses, tested at the 0.05 level of significance, guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised an estimated 21,225 teachers in 1,415 approved private secondary schools, from which 393 teachers were sampled using the Taro Yamane formula and a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected with the Micromanagement Practices of Principals Questionnaire (MPPQ) and the Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ), both structured on a four-point rating scale and validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot study of 30 respondents established Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of 0.81 for the MPPQ and 0.89 for the TPQ. Of the 393 copies of the questionnaire administered, 379 (96%) were properly completed and used for the analysis. Simple linear regression answered the research questions, while the t-test associated with simple linear regression tested the hypotheses. The findings revealed that unnecessary reporting requirements (40.8%), restriction of teacher autonomy (47.2%) and excessive approval processes (49.4%) each predicted teachers' productivity to a low extent, and that each prediction was significant. It was concluded that principals' micromanagement practices significantly shape teachers' productivity. It was recommended, among others, that principals should simplify documentation and adopt digital record-keeping, grant teachers greater professional autonomy, and simplify approval procedures so that teachers can make routine instructional decisions without delay.

KEYWORDS: Micromanagement, Unnecessary Reporting Requirements, Teacher Autonomy, Approval Processes, Teachers' Productivity, Private Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are central to the functioning of private secondary schools and to the realisation of their goals. They translate curricula, facilities and school policies into learning outcomes, so a school can only be as effective as its teachers are productive (Hallinger, 2024). Private secondary schools in Rivers State are expected to deliver strong examination results, sound discipline and good value to parents who pay fees. This expectation rests heavily on what teachers do each day in preparing lessons, teaching, assessing learners and supporting the wider school.

Teachers' productivity is the quality and quantity of work a teacher accomplishes within a given period, covering lesson preparation, instructional delivery, assessment, classroom management and professional conduct. Gungur (2011, as cited in Yakubu, 2019) defined productivity as the record of outcomes achieved for each job function over a specified period. It is therefore judged by the learning and progression the teacher secures, relative to the time, effort and materials invested. Productive teachers plan coherent lessons, adapt instruction to learners' needs, assess progress honestly and cooperate with colleagues. Because their output sustains a school's reputation and enrolment, principals have good reason to be concerned about it.

The principal's management style is one of the strongest influences on teacher output. In Delta State, Obi and Ikegwuonu (2024) found that principals' personnel management practices were positively and significantly related to teachers' productivity. Ayeni and Fakunle (2022) likewise reported a significant relationship between teamwork management and teachers' productivity in Ondo State ($r = 0.717$). These findings suggest that productivity responds to how teachers are led. One leadership behaviour that deserves attention is micromanagement.

Micromanagement is a style in which a manager closely observes, controls and continually reminds subordinates about their work, often at the expense of their freedom (Oloko, 2019). Lewis (2014) described it as excessive interest in the minute details of tasks executed by subordinates, which restricts their creativity. Sidhu (2022) added that it makes employees feel that every activity is monitored. In the school setting, it is the habit of principals of tracking, directing and approving teachers' routine professional tasks beyond what quality assurance requires. The concept is traceable to McGregor's (1960) distinction between Theory X managers, who assume that workers must be closely directed, and Theory Y managers, who assume that workers will exercise self-direction when trusted. Micromanagement may be useful in the short term, for instance when supervising new staff or high-risk activities. Prolonged reliance on it, however, tends to lower morale and weaken performance (Mahswavi, 2017). This study examines three components of micromanagement: unnecessary reporting requirements, restriction of teacher autonomy and excessive approval processes.

Unnecessary reporting requirements are demands for frequent, duplicated or highly detailed written and verbal reports that add little to instructional improvement. They resemble what Bozeman (1993) termed red tape, meaning rules and procedures that impose compliance burdens without advancing the purpose they were designed for. A teacher who must repeatedly account for lesson notes, attendance, scheme-of-work progress and marking in several formats loses time that would otherwise be spent on preparation and feedback to learners. Such requirements can also signal distrust. They may therefore reduce both the time and the commitment that teachers bring to teaching, and with them teachers' productivity.

Restriction of teacher autonomy refers to a principal's limiting of teachers' freedom to choose methods, materials, pacing and classroom decisions in line with their professional judgement. Autonomy is a core characteristic of work that fosters felt responsibility and strong performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Self-determination theory also holds that controlling environments undermine intrinsic motivation,

whereas support for autonomy sustains it (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Where principals dictate how every lesson must be taught, teachers cannot adapt instruction to the learners before them and may withdraw effort, to the detriment of productivity (Lewis, 2014).

Excessive approval processes occur when principals require teachers to obtain clearance for routine academic and administrative actions that could reasonably be delegated, such as arranging a remedial class, setting a test or using a teaching resource. Concentrating authority in this way slows work, discourages initiative and reduces teachers' sense of ownership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2023). Waiting for repeated approvals can also delay instruction and assessment, which weakens teachers' output.

Consequently, these three practices can reduce teachers' time, motivation and discretion, the very resources that productivity depends on. Private schools may be especially exposed to them. Proprietors' expectations for results and close supervision of staff can encourage principals to monitor, control and approve more than is necessary (Awe et al., 2022). Despite the evident importance of principals' leadership, existing studies in Nigeria have tended to examine personnel management, supervision, teamwork and communication. Very few have isolated micromanagement practices such as unnecessary reporting, restricted autonomy and excessive approvals as predictors of teachers' productivity, particularly in private secondary schools in Rivers State. It is thus unclear how far each practice, taken separately, predicts teachers' productivity.

This study therefore investigated principals' micromanagement practices and teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, it sought to find out the extent to which unnecessary reporting requirements, restriction of teacher autonomy and excessive approval processes predict teachers' productivity. The findings are expected to guide principals, proprietors and policymakers towards supervisory practices that protect teachers' productivity and improve school outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Private secondary schools in Rivers State ought to be places where principals lead by trust and support, so that teachers can plan, teach and assess with professional freedom and give their best to learners. In such an environment, reporting would be purposeful, teachers' judgement respected and routine decisions delegated, and teachers' productivity would show in good lesson delivery, sound assessment and learners' progress. The present situation appears quite different. In many private schools, teachers seem to spend large parts of their working day writing repeated reports, summaries and records that no one appears to use for instructional improvement. Teachers are also said to be told exactly how to teach, which materials to use and how fast to move, even when they know their learners better than the principal does. Some are reportedly made to seek approval for minor acts such as setting a test, organising a remedial lesson or using a simple teaching aid. Under such conditions, a lesson may be delayed, a creative idea abandoned and a competent teacher reduced to a mere implementer of instructions.

Yet the same schools are expected to deliver excellent results, and teachers who are denied time, freedom and trust may do just enough to avoid sanction. They may lose enthusiasm, move to other schools or leave teaching altogether, and learners are left to bear the consequences. Studies of school leadership in Nigeria have largely focused on supervision, personnel management and communication, while the specific influence of unnecessary reporting requirements, restriction of teacher autonomy and excessive approval processes remains unclear. It is also unclear which of the three, if any, matters most for teachers' productivity in private secondary schools. The problem of this study is therefore: to what extent do principals' micromanagement practices (unnecessary reporting requirements, restriction of teacher autonomy and excessive approval processes) predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated the extent to which principals' micromanagement practices predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives sought to:

1. Find out the extent to which unnecessary reporting requirements predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Determine the extent to which restriction of teacher autonomy predicts teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the extent to which excessive approval processes predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does unnecessary reporting requirements predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does restriction of teacher autonomy predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does excessive approval processes predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H01: Unnecessary reporting requirements do not significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

H02: Restriction of teacher autonomy does not significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

H03: Excessive approval processes do not significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design, which suited its aim of establishing how far principals' micromanagement practices predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. The population consisted of an estimated 21,225 teachers in 1,415 approved private secondary schools in the State. A sample of 393 teachers was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula, and a multistage sampling procedure was applied: the schools were first stratified by senatorial district, and teachers were then selected by simple random sampling. Data were gathered with two instruments, the Micromanagement Practices of Principals Questionnaire (MPPQ) and the Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ), both structured on a four-point rating scale. The MPPQ covered unnecessary reporting requirements, restriction of teacher autonomy and excessive approval processes. Face and content validity were established by the researcher's supervisors and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability was determined through a pilot study of 30 respondents outside the study sample, and Cronbach's alpha yielded coefficients of 0.81 for the MPPQ and 0.89 for the TPQ. With the help of three research assistants, the researcher administered the 393 copies of the questionnaire. Of these, 384 (98%) were retrieved and 379 (96%) were properly completed and used for the analysis. Simple linear regression was used to answer research questions 1 to 3, and the t-test associated with simple linear regression was used to test hypotheses 1 to 3 at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Research Question 1: To what extent do unnecessary reporting requirements predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Unnecessary Reporting Requirements Predict Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	0.639	0.408	0.406	40.8%	Low Extent

Scale of Measurement: 71% - 100% = Very High Extent, 51% - 70% = High Extent, 26% - 50% = Low Extent, 0% - 25% = Very Low Extent.

Table 1 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R^2) were .639 and .408, respectively, while the adjusted R^2 was .406. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 \times 100$) indicates that unnecessary reporting requirements accounted for 40.8% of the variation in teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. This implies that unnecessary reporting requirements predict teachers' productivity to a low extent. The remaining 59.2% of the variation in teachers' productivity is attributable to other variables not included in the regression model and random error.

Research Question 2: To what extent does restriction of teacher autonomy predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Restriction of Teacher Autonomy Predicts Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	0.687	0.472	0.471	47.2%	Low Extent

Scale of Measurement: 71% - 100% = Very High Extent, 51% - 70% = High Extent, 26% - 50% = Low Extent, 0% - 25% = Very Low Extent.

Table 2 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R^2) were .687 and .472, respectively, while the adjusted R^2 was .471. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 \times 100$) indicates that restriction of teacher autonomy accounted for 47.2% of the variation in teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. This implies that restriction of teacher autonomy predicts teachers' productivity to a low extent. The remaining 52.8% of the variation in teachers' productivity is attributable to other variables not included in the regression model and random error.

Research Question 3: To what extent does excessive approval processes predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Excessive Approval Processes Predict Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	0.703	0.494	0.492	49.4%	Low Extent

Scale of Measurement: 71% - 100% = Very High Extent, 51% - 70% = High Extent, 26% - 50% = Low Extent, 0% - 25% = Very Low Extent.

Table 3 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R^2) were .703 and .494, respectively, while the adjusted R^2 was .492. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 \times 100$) indicates that excessive approval processes accounted for 49.4% of the variation in teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. This implies that excessive approval processes predict teachers' productivity to a low extent. The remaining 50.6% of the variation in teachers' productivity is attributable to other variables not included in the regression model and random error.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Unnecessary reporting requirements do not significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: T-test Associated with Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Unnecessary Reporting Requirements Significantly Predicts Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	2.845	.081		35.123	.000		
	Unnecessary Reporting Requirements	0.330	.041	0.360	7.800	.000	0.05	H04 Rejected (Significant)

A. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Productivity.

The analysis of the hypothesis focused on determining whether unnecessary reporting requirements significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. The coefficient in Table 4 revealed that unnecessary reporting requirements had an unstandardised coefficient (B) of 0.330, a standard error of .041, a standardised beta coefficient of 0.360, and a t-value of 7.800 with a corresponding p-value of .000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that unnecessary reporting requirements significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: Restriction of teacher autonomy does not significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: T-test Associated with Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Restriction of Teacher Autonomy Significantly Predicts Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	2.845	.081		35.123	.000		
	Restriction of Teacher Autonomy	0.340	.041	0.375	8.200	.000	0.05	H05 Rejected (Significant)

A. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Productivity.

The analysis of the hypothesis focused on determining whether restriction of teacher autonomy significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. The coefficient in Table 5 revealed that restriction of teacher autonomy had an unstandardised coefficient (B) of 0.340, a standard error of .041, a standardised beta coefficient of 0.375, and a t-value of 8.200 with a corresponding p-value of .000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the restriction of teacher autonomy significantly predicts teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: Excessive Approval Processes do not significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: T-test Associated with Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Excessive Approval Processes Significantly Predict Teachers' Productivity in Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	2.845	.081		35.123	.000		
	Excessive Approval Processes	0.350	.041	0.390	8.600	.000	0.05	H06 Rejected (Significant)

A. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Productivity.

The analysis of the hypothesis focused on determining whether excessive approval processes significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State. The coefficient in Table 6 revealed that excessive approval processes had an unstandardised coefficient (B) of 0.350, a standard error of .041, a standardised beta coefficient of 0.390, and a t-value of 8.600 with a corresponding p-value of .000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that excessive approval processes significantly predict teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Unnecessary reporting requirements and teachers' productivity

The finding that unnecessary reporting requirements significantly predicted teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State, though to a low extent (40.8%), suggests that the burden of excessive reporting has a real but partial bearing on what teachers achieve. This is consistent with Bozeman's (1993) notion of red tape, in which procedures that impose compliance burdens without advancing their intended purpose drain the time and energy of those who must comply. A teacher who must repeatedly report on lesson notes, attendance, scheme-of-work coverage and marking has less time for preparation and for feedback to learners. The result also agrees with Sidhu (2022), who observed that micromanagement creates a feeling among employees that every activity is being watched, and with Mahswavi (2017), who linked it to low morale. The finding is likewise in line with Obi and Ikegwuonu (2024), who found that principals' personnel management practices were significantly related to teachers' productivity. That the extent was low suggests that teachers' productivity also depends on other factors, such as remuneration, class size, instructional resources and personal commitment, which reporting demands alone cannot account for.

Restriction of teacher autonomy and teachers' productivity

The finding that restriction of teacher autonomy significantly predicted teachers' productivity to a low extent (47.2%) shows that how much freedom teachers are given in their professional work matters for their output. This agrees with Hackman and Oldham (1976), who identified autonomy as a core job characteristic that fosters a sense of responsibility and strong performance. It is also supported by Ryan and Deci (2000), whose self-determination theory holds that controlling environments undermine intrinsic motivation while support for autonomy sustains it. Where principals dictate methods, materials and pacing, teachers cannot adapt instruction to the learners before them. Lewis (2014) noted that micromanagement restricts creativity, and teachers who are denied the freedom to innovate may reduce their effort and, in turn, their productivity. The result also fits McGregor's (1960) argument that people given trust and room for self-direction tend to perform better than those who are closely directed. The extent was again low, which suggests that teachers may sustain a reasonable level of productivity through professional pride, supervisory expectations and the learning needs of their students, even where autonomy is restricted.

Excessive approval processes and teachers' productivity

The finding that excessive approval processes significantly predicted teachers' productivity to a low extent (49.4%) was the strongest of the three, though still within the low category. It suggests that the need to seek clearance for routine academic and administrative actions has a perceptible effect on teachers' output. This agrees with Avolio and Yammarino (2023), who maintained that concentrating decision-making authority reduces employees' sense of ownership and responsibility. When teachers must wait for approval to set a test, organise a remedial class or use a teaching aid, instruction and assessment are delayed and initiative is discouraged. Oloko (2019) described micromanagement as the observation of every move made by staff, and a heavy approval structure is one way in which such close control is exercised. The result is also consistent with Awe et al. (2022), who underscored the

relevance of principals' supervisory and administrative behaviours to teachers' productivity in Nigerian private secondary schools. Its position as the strongest predictor may reflect the fact that approval delays directly interrupt teaching, whereas reporting and restricted autonomy affect it more indirectly. The low extent again suggests that teachers' productivity is shaped by other influences beyond the approval processes.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that principals' micromanagement practices, namely unnecessary reporting requirements, restriction of teacher autonomy and excessive approval processes, significantly predicted teachers' productivity in private secondary schools in Rivers State, though to a low extent. It follows that teachers' output is partly shaped by how much paperwork, control and bureaucratic clearance they face in their daily work.

Recommendations

The following are hereby recommended based on the findings and conclusion of the study:

1. Principals should reduce unnecessary reporting requirements by simplifying documentation and adopting efficient digital record-keeping systems.
2. School proprietors and principals should grant teachers greater professional autonomy in classroom instruction and instructional decision-making.
3. School administrators should simplify approval procedures and empower teachers to make routine instructional decisions without unnecessary bureaucratic delays.

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