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## Evaluating the Influence of Principals' Leadership Styles On Agricultural Science Teachers' Productivity; Implications for Teaching and Researching In Rivers State Secondary Schools

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### **Abstract**

*Leadership of an organization and the productivity of employees are two fundamental variables that determine the success of every organization. This study investigated the influence of principals' leadership styles on the productivity of agricultural science teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study was guided by three research questions and one hypothesis. A total of 92 principals and 92 agricultural science teachers were used for the study. Two sets of self-made instruments were used to obtain data. The instruments passed through face and content validation. The coefficient of temporal stability of the Principals' Leadership Styles Questionnaire (PLSQ) and Agricultural Science Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (ASTPQ) stood at 0.75 and 0.88 respectively. Findings revealed that: a greater proportion of the principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State adopt democratic leadership style; agricultural science teachers in the state are moderately productive; the level of productivity of the agricultural science teachers is significantly influenced by principals' leadership styles. It was recommended that principals in the state should adopt democratic leadership style in order to achieve good level of productivity among agricultural science teachers.*

### **Keywords:**

- Leadership Styles

- Principles
- Evaluation
- Productivity

The attainment of educational goals depends largely on the school leadership. Good leadership is required to plan, control and organize the numerous school activities through which the goals of the secondary education are achieved. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) described secondary education as the education the child receives after primary school and before the tertiary stage. Among the roles of the secondary school is the linking of the primary and tertiary levels of education. The ability of the secondary school system to achieve this enormous task is dependent on the quality of the school administration.

Yukl (2006) defined leadership as the process by which a person exerts influence over other people and inspires, motivates and directs their activities to help achieve group or organizational goals. Egbule (2002) affirmed that leadership is of great significance to the achievement of organizational goals as it largely sets the tone for the level of staff's dedication, discipline and Productivity.

Leadership in the secondary school is vested in the school principal. Oyedeji and Fasasi (2006) see the principal as the chief executive of a secondary school who takes responsibility for all that happen in the school. Among the responsibilities of the principal are the implementation of school policies, regulations, finances, facilities and procedures to ensure that the teachers, students and other workers in the secondary school meet the approved curricular and goals of the school.

The school principals adopt various leadership styles in the administration of schools. Mullins (2010) described leadership style as the manner in which the functions of leadership are carried out, and the way in which the manager typically behaves towards members of the group. Adeyemi (2004) identified the autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles as the three leadership styles adopted in Nigerian schools.

Autocratic leadership style represents a style in which decision-making power is centralized in the leader. The leader is arbitrary, power-oriented, coercive, punitive and close-minded. An autocratic leader stresses obedience, loyalty and strict adherence to rules (Bass and Bass, 2008).

Democratic leadership style on the other hand is a style in which there is collaboration between the leader and the group for key policies and decision-making process. A democratic leader is considerate, consultative and concerned with the maintenance of good working relations with followers (Bass and Bass, 2008).

Laissez-faire style is described as a style that allows for complete freedom of action to groups and individuals without leader direction or participation (Lea, 2011). The primary leadership role in laissez-faire style is to provide support services, such as materials and supplies and to participate only when requested by the group" (Knezevich, 1995).

No leadership style is considered best under all situations. However, the principal should be able to device and exhibit leadership behaviours that will enable

him or her get along with majority of the stakeholders in the school system in order to achieve desirable level of productivity.

Productivity of employees is a fundamental issue in every organization because it determines the sustainability and quality of organizations. Ayodele (2000) buttressed this notion when he explained that “no matter how effective and efficient an administrator is, he hardly achieves success without the support and cooperation of well-trained and dedicated staff”.

At the basic level, productivity is defined as the quality and quantity of outputs delivered per unit of input utilized. Narrowed to the field of education, productivity according to United State Department of Education (2013) refers to “graduating significant number of students with higher levels of mastery and expertise at a lower cost per outcome”. Similarly, Ejiogu (2005) described productivity in educational system as the ratio between the total educational output and the resource inputs utilized in the production process. Jackson Public School District (2012) identified some competencies for productive teachers.

Agricultural science teacher is an academic staff in secondary school, who is skilled in the pedagogy and technical areas of agriculture and charged with the responsibility of exposing students to learning experiences in agriculture at the secondary school level. Among the responsibilities of agricultural science teacher are impacting theory and practical skills to students in crop production, horticulture, forestry, crop protection, animal production, fisheries, wildlife conservation, soil science, agricultural extension, agricultural economics and others. A productive agricultural science teacher is a teacher who is committed toward achieving the goals of agricultural education in the school by making efficient use of the available resources. In secondary schools, the productivity of agricultural science teachers is central to achieving educational goals as spelt out in the national policy of education.

This study is hinged on the path-goal theory of leadership developed by House (1971). The theory proposes that the leader's behaviour is contingent to the satisfaction, motivation and performance of his or her subordinates. House (1971) explained that the job of the leader is to clarify the task to be performed by the subordinates; remove roadblocks and pitfalls that prevent goal attainment; and increase personal satisfaction of subordinates en route.

The relationship that exists between the school principal and other workers in the school influences the school activities. Achieving the goals of agricultural education at the secondary school level requires that the school principals work collaboratively with the agricultural science teachers, students, non-academic staff, parents and other authorities in the school system.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is observed that a large number of agricultural science teachers in Rivers State are negligent to their duties. Many of the agricultural science teachers turn-up late to school; some are truants; many others do not help in school discipline and some others are irregular to classroom. In some schools, students are deprived of learning experiences in the laboratory and school farm. This was the view of Egun (2009) when

he observed that “agricultural education topics are taught like an art subject without practical orientation”.

It is a norm in Rivers State that classroom teachers grow in teaching profession and become school heads. Every teacher with a degree in education or Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), with a requisite level of experience is qualified as a potential school principal. This condition has assisted teachers who do not have professional training in school administration to become school principals. Consequently, some of the principals in the state do not work collaboratively with the agricultural science teachers. Some principals are less concerned with the conduct of the teachers; many others are involved in favouritism and discrimination of teachers; while some others are selfish and are involved in extortion of students. People are beginning to query the capabilities of the principals (Oyedeji, 1998; Adeyemi, 2004). This study is designed to ascertain the influence of principals’ leadership styles on agricultural science teachers’ productivity in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What leadership styles are adopted by principals in senior secondary schools in River State?
2. What is the level of productivity of agricultural science teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. To what extent do principals’ leadership styles influence agricultural science teachers’ productivity?

### **Hypothesis**

One research hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

**Ho:** There is no significant difference between principals’ leadership styles and agricultural science teachers’ productivity in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Methodology**

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The sample comprised of 92 principals and 92 agricultural science teachers drawn from a population of 247 principals and 681 agricultural science teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in River State. Stratified random sampling technique was employed in selecting 92 schools used for the study. In each of the selected schools, the principal and the agricultural science teacher handling Senior Secondary Three (SS 3) were used as the respondents for the study.

Two sets of researcher-made instruments were used to obtain data from respondents. Agricultural Science Teachers’ Productivity Questionnaire (ASTPQ) was administered to the principals to elicit information on the level of productivity of agricultural science teachers while the Principals Leadership Style Questionnaire (PLSQ) was administered to agricultural science teachers to obtain data on the leadership styles of the principals. The ASTPQ consists of two (2) sections. Section A seeks information on the demographic characteristics of the principals while Section B

consists of 30 items structured to gather information on the productivity of agricultural science teachers using five- point Likert scale as follows: Very Highly Productive (VHP)-(5), Highly Productive (HP)-(4), Moderately Productive (MP)-(3), Poorly Productive (PP)-(2) and Very Poorly Productive (VPP)-(1). The PLSQ consists of three (2) sections. Section A obtained data on the demographic characteristics of agricultural science teachers. Sections B consists of one (1) structured or fixed-response item to elicit information on the leadership styles adopted by principals.

The instruments were validated by experts in the field of agricultural education. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed using test-retest and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Technique. The coefficient of temporal stability of the Principals' Leadership Styles Questionnaire (PLSQ) and Agricultural Science Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (ASTPQ) stood at 0.75 and 0.88 respectively.

Questionnaires were administered directly to the respondents by the researcher and research assistants. A total of 90 copies each of PLSQ and ASTPQ were retrieved and used in data analyses. Data relating to the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the fixed-response item in Section B of PLSQ were analyzed with simple frequencies and percentages. In analyzing the five-point Likert scale in ASTPQ, mean scores of 3.00 and above (3.00 – 5.00) were considered as “Productive” while mean scores below 3.00 (1.00 – 2.99) were considered as “Unproductive”. Mean, percentage, standard deviation, and One-Way ANOVA were used to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis. Hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** what leadership styles are adopted by principals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

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**Table 1: Perception of Agricultural Science Teachers on Leadership Styles Adopted by Principals of Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.**

Leadership style	Frequency	Percentage
1. Autocratic	36	40.00
2. Democratic	42	46.67
3. Laissez faire	12	13.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, (2015).**

Data in Table 1 revealed that forty per cent (40.00%) of the principals in the state adopt autocratic style; forty-seven per cent (46.67%) adopt democratic style while thirteen per cent (13.33%) adopt laissez faire style.

**Research Question 2:** what is the level of productivity of agricultural science teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Level of Productivity of Agricultural Science Teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. (N=90).**

S/N	Item	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1	Your agricultural science teacher writes lesson plans regularly	4.02	0.61	Productive
2	Lesson plans are clear, logical and sequential for effective teaching-learning	3.59	0.82	Productive
3	Uses teaching methods and procedures that are relevant to lesson objectives	3.46	0.89	Productive
4	Includes relevant students activities in lesson	3.33	0.78	Productive
5	Communicates effectively with students	3.58	0.81	Productive
6	Prepares appropriate evaluation activities	3.57	1.02	Productive
7	Provides students with appropriate evaluation feedback	3.43	0.89	Productive
8	Displays a thorough knowledge of curriculum and subject matter	3.42	0.88	Productive
9	Selects learning content based on the prescribed curriculum	4.04	0.83	Productive
10	Provides opportunity for individual differences in learning	3.44	0.77	Productive
11	Is regular and punctual to school	3.26	0.80	Productive
12	Is regular and punctual to class	3.61	0.81	Productive
13	Uses instructional materials adequately	3.50	0.79	Productive
14	Demonstrates good classroom management	3.68	0.91	Productive
15	Keeps accurate record of students attendance	3.42	0.82	Productive
16	Has self-discipline	3.47	0.89	Productive
17	Helps in students discipline	3.63	0.68	Productive
18	Participates in school sports and other co-curricular activities	3.56	0.80	Productive
19	Laboratory learning experiences are included in his lessons	3.54	0.91	Productive
20	Establishes and manages school farm	3.53	0.82	Productive
21	Completes duties accurately and promptly	3.56	0.69	Productive
22	Performs duties in professional manner	3.61	0.78	Productive
23	Adheres to authorized policies	3.47	0.90	Productive
24	Students performance in agricultural science is good	3.43	0.93	Productive
25	Is informed regarding current policies and regulations applicable to his or her position	3.11	0.97	Productive
26	Has good working relationship with his or her colleagues	3.60	0.90	Productive
27	Publishes articles regularly in newspapers and agricultural related journals	2.23	0.81	Unproductive
28	Attends and participates actively in workshops, meeting and other activities to promote professional improvement.	2.22	0.79	Unproductive
29	Provides for the safety needs of the students.	3.30	0.72	Productive
30	Maintains inventory of tools, supplies and equipment assigned to him/her for the discharge of his/her duties.	3.41	0.88	Productive

**Grand mean and S.D** **3.43 0.83**

**Source: Field Survey, (2015).**

Table 2 showed that agricultural science teachers are productive in 28 out of the 30 productive activities (items). While item 9 had the highest mean score of 4.04, item 28 recorded the least mean score of 2.22. The grand mean and standard derivation of the level of production of agricultural science teachers stood at 3.43 and 0.83 respectively. This indicates that agricultural science teachers in the state are moderately productive.

**Research Question 3:** Do principals' leadership styles influence agricultural science teachers' productivity?

**Table 3: Mean Productivity of Agricultural Science Teachers Under Various Principals Leadership Styles.**

S/N	Item	Autocratic Mean(n=36)	Democratic Mean (n=42)	Laissez faire Mean (n=12)
1	Your agricultural science teacher writes lesson plans regularly	4.03	4.21	3.33
2	Lesson plans are clear, logical and sequential for effective teaching-learning	3.25	4.05	3.00
3	Uses teaching methods and procedures that are relevant to lesson objectives	3.36	3.71	2.83
4	Includes relevant students activities in lesson	2.97	3.74	2.33
5	Communicates effectively with students	3.42	3.95	2.92
6	Prepares appropriate evaluation activities	3.33	4.14	2.25
7	Provides students with appropriate evaluation feedback	3.42	3.29	2.25
8	Displays a thorough knowledge of curriculum and subject matter	3.36	3.83	2.17
9	Selects learning content based on the prescribed curriculum	3.86	4.45	3.17
10	Provides opportunity for individual differences in learning	3.11	3.93	2.75
11	Is regular and punctual to school	3.25	3.62	2.17
12	Is regular and punctual to class	3.39	4.07	2.67
13	Uses instructional materials adequately	3.25	4.14	2.08
14	Demonstrates good classroom management	3.50	4.14	2.67
15	Keeps accurate record of students attendance	3.25	3.79	2.67
16	Has self-discipline	3.50	3.60	2.92
17	Helps in students discipline	3.36	4.12	2.83
18	Participates in school sports and other co-curricular activities	3.39	4.02	2.42
19	Laboratory learning experiences are included in his lessons	3.42	3.93	2.58
20	Establishes and manages school farm	3.42	3.90	2.58
21	Completes duties accurately and promptly	3.28	4.07	2.67
22	Performs duties in professional manner	3.33	4.14	2.58

23	Adheres to authorized policies	3.31	3.90	2.42
24	Students performance in agricultural science is good	3.44	3.67	2.50
25	Is informed regarding current policies and regulations applicable to his or her position	2.58	3.62	2.50
26	Has good working relationship with his or her colleagues	3.56	3.90	2.67
27	Publishes articles regularly in newspapers and agricultural related journals	1.78	2.67	2.08
28	Attends and participates actively in workshops, meeting and other activities to promote professional improvement.	1.75	2.55	2.50
29	Provides for the safety needs of the students.	3.44	3.36	2.67
30	Maintains inventory of tools, supplies and equipment assigned to him/her for the discharge of his/her duties.	3.58	3.55	2.42
	<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>2.59</b>

**Source: Field survey (2015)**

Analyses of data in Table 3 reveal that agricultural science teachers recorded productive performance in 26 out of 30 items under autocratic leadership style; 28 and 3 under democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles respectively. Table 4 further reveals that while agricultural science teachers under autocratic leadership style were unproductive in items 4, 25, 27 and 28 they were unproductive only in items 27 and 28 under democratic leadership style. Productive performance was recorded only in items 1, 2, and 9 under laissez-faire leadership style. Grand mean scores of 3.26, 3.80 and 2.59 were recorded in autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire styles respectively. This implies that agricultural science teachers under autocratic and democratic leadership styles were productive while those under laissez-faire leadership style were unproductive. However productivity is highest under democratic leadership style.

**Table 4: One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Summary Table for Principals Leadership Styles and Agricultural Science Teachers Productivity.**

Source of variance	Sum of square	DF	Mean	F-cal	F-crit.
Between Groups	13806.36	2	6903.18	138.36	3.07
Within Groups	4340.63	87	49.89		
TOTAL	18146.99	89			

**SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY (2015)**

The analysis of data presented in Table 4 showed that there is significant relationship between principals' leadership styles and agricultural science teachers' productivity since the F-calculated is greater than the F-Critical. The F-calculated is 138.36 while the F-critical is 3.07. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.



### **Discussion of Findings**

The results on the perception of agricultural science teachers on the style of leadership adopted by principals in Senior Secondary Schools in the state revealed that forty-seven per cent (46.7%) of the principals in the sampled schools adopt democratic style. This is followed by the autocratic style. This result is consistent with the findings of Ayandakan et al (2001) and Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013). The choice of leadership style adopted by the principals may have been influenced by the quality of the teachers and the situation on ground. House and Mitchell (1974) opined that the choice of leadership style is influenced by employee and environment characteristics. Principals in schools with highly skilled and dedicated teachers are more likely to have adopted democratic style whereas principals in schools with new, unskilled or undedicated teachers may have adopted autocratic style. Laissez-faire style is not common among the principals. However, it has been observed that it is a preferred style by principals who are truants; those who lack self discipline and those who are not interested in the academic achievement of their schools.

The results on Table 2 showed that the principals rated agricultural science teachers "productive" in 28 out of the 30 items on productive activities. The poor rating of agricultural science teachers in items 27 and 28 is an indication that majority of the agricultural science teachers in the state do not publish articles and do not attend workshops and meetings that promote professional improvement. The inability of agricultural science teachers to publish articles may be linked to their level of education. Teachers are more attracted to publishing articles when they enroll for post-graduate programme or after obtaining a post-graduate degree. The poor mean score recorded by agricultural science teachers in item 28 is an indication that agricultural science teachers in the state are not adequately availed with seminars, workshops and training opportunities. The grand mean of 3.43 recorded by the agricultural science teachers implies that agricultural science teachers in the state are moderately productive. This finding is coherent with previous research outcomes (Adepoju 1996; Bolarinwa, 2002; Adeyemi, 2010). The reason for this level of productivity may be linked to the type of leadership style adopted by majority of the principals. The effectiveness of a leadership style to a large extent is determined by the productivity of the subordinates. Therefore, the implication of this result is that majority of the principals in senior secondary school in the state adopt suitable leadership styles in the administration of the schools.

The results on Table 3 showed that the productivity of agricultural science teachers is rated highest under democratic leadership style. This was followed by the autocratic style. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Olaniyan, 1997; Ijaiya, 2000). The disparity in grand mean score recorded under the three leadership styles (democratic = 3.80, autocratic = 3.26, laissez faire = 2.59) shows that there is difference in the level of productivity of the agricultural science teachers under the various styles. The implication of this result is that the agricultural science teachers in schools with democratic leadership are highly productive. Those in schools with autocratic style are moderately productive while those in schools with laissez-faire leadership style are poorly productive. This result is buttressed by the outcome of

hypothesis one which revealed that there is significant relationship between principals leadership styles and agricultural science teachers productivity in the state.

Scholars (Bass and Bass, 2008; Mullins, 2010) have agreed that democratic leadership result to high degree of staff morale. The high level of productivity recorded by agricultural science teachers who work under democratic principals may have been engendered by high morale resulting from participation in school decision – making, good leader-subordinate relationship as well as improved staff welfare. On the other land, the poor level of productivity recorded by agricultural science teachers who work under laissez-faire principals may have been prompted by adoption of incompatible leadership style for truant, unskilled and undedicated teachers.

### **Conclusion**

The outcome of this study has shown that a large number of the principals in the state adopt democratic leadership style in school administration. The study has revealed that the level of productivity of agricultural science teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State is moderate. This study has clearly shown that the leadership styles of the principals have a significant influence on the productivity of agricultural science teachers. The outcome of this investigation has proven that democratic leadership style is the most suitable for agricultural science teachers in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended to improve the administration of secondary schools in Rivers State:

1. Principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State should adopt democratic leadership style;
2. School principals should be made to attend seminars, workshops and other educative programmes on school leadership;
3. There should be a periodic detailed assessment of school leadership and teacher productivity.

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