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PRINCIPALS' STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AS JOINT PREDICTORS OF TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Teachers' productivity remains a central determinant of instructional quality in secondary schools, yet in Anambra State's public schools it has persisted as a source of concern despite comparable teacher qualifications across the public and private sectors. This study investigated principals' strategic leadership practices viz: visionary thinking, strategic planning, change management, resource optimisation, and stakeholder engagement, as joint predictors of teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Anchored in Path-Goal Theory and Social Exchange Theory, the study adopted a predictive correlational design. A proportionate stratified random sample of 395 teachers was drawn from a population of 8,117 teachers across the state's six education zones. Data were collected using the Principals' Strategic Leadership Questionnaire (PSLQ) and the Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ), both of which returned acceptable reliability coefficients. One research question and one null hypothesis, concerning the composite predictive power of the five dimensions taken together, guided the study; the hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance using multiple regression analysis. Results showed that the five dimensions jointly and significantly predicted teachers' productivity, accounting for 72.7% of the variance ($R = .852$, $R^2 = .727$, Adjusted $R^2 = .723$), a considerably larger share than any single dimension explained on its own, with variance inflation factors well below the threshold for concern. The null hypothesis was accordingly rejected. The findings suggest that strategic leadership operates as an integrated practice whose full predictive strength is realised only when its dimensions function together, rather than as a set of behaviours principals may adopt selectively. It is recommended that principal preparation and continuing professional development programmes be restructured to embed all five dimensions as a single, competency-based curriculum rather than treating them as independent or optional areas of training.

Keywords: strategic leadership; teachers' productivity; principals; secondary schools; Nigeria.

Introduction

Public secondary schools in Nigeria, and in Anambra State in particular, are expected to produce knowledgeable and skilled graduates, yet persistent concerns about the quality of instruction call that expectation into question. Because the teacher remains the single most important school-based factor determining how much students learn, teachers' productivity is central to these concerns (López-Martín, Gutiérrez-de-Rozas, González-Benito, and Expósito-Casas, 2023; Sanfo and Malgoubri, 2023). Evidence at the national level gives cause for concern: following a review of grading errors in the 2025 West African Senior School Certificate Examination, the proportion of candidates obtaining credits in at least five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics, was confirmed at 62.96 percent, down from 72.12 percent in 2024 (Vanguard, 2025). Within Anambra State specifically, teachers' productivity has been identified as a persistent concern reflected in incomplete syllabus coverage, poorly prepared lessons, and weak instructional delivery (Okaforcha and Nwanozie, 2024), a problem compounded by recurrent disruptions to the school calendar (Ezeanya, Ikenga, and Azubuike, 2024).

That underperformance persists even where teachers hold adequate qualifications points to school leadership, rather than teacher capability alone, as a plausible explanation. The principal occupies the position from which the conditions for productive teaching are shaped: setting direction, deploying resources, managing change, and sustaining the relationships that keep teachers motivated. Strategic leadership, by virtue of its explicit orientation toward shaping future organisational conditions rather than only managing present operations, is the form of leadership most directly suited to this problem (Davies and Davies, 2018). Carvalho, Cabral, Verdasca, and Alves (2021) define strategic leadership as the leader's ability to envision the future, develop plans to achieve desired outcomes, and guide the organisation through the changes needed to reach higher levels of performance, while Hitt and Ireland (2017) describe it as the capacity to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others toward strategic change.

To be studied empirically, strategic leadership must be broken into the specific practices through which principals exercise it. This study examined five such practices viz: visionary thinking, strategic planning, change management, resource optimisation, and stakeholder engagement, which together capture the functions through which a principal shapes the conditions for teacher productivity. A large and growing body of research has examined these practices individually, and generally finds each of them significantly related to teacher outcomes (Akuchie and Omoh, 2022; Ganon-Shilon, Tamir, and Schechter, 2021; Mesra, Tuerah, Imbar, and Ngumarno, 2024; Van der Voet and Steijn, 2021;). What remains comparatively underexamined, particularly in the Anambra State context, is whether these practices, considered jointly as a single leadership repertoire, predict teacher productivity more powerfully than any one practice considered alone. This is an important gap, because principals do not exercise strategic leadership one dimension at a time; they exercise all five, in combination, within the same school and the same set of teachers. A single-dimension model may therefore understate the true explanatory

power of strategic leadership, and may mislead policy toward developing principals in only one or two respects rather than as fully rounded strategic leaders.

The purpose of this study, accordingly, was to determine the joint predictive value of principals' strategic leadership practices, considered together as visionary thinking, strategic planning, change management, resource optimisation, and stakeholder engagement, on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question:

The study was guided by one research question:

1. What is the joint predictive value of principals' strategic leadership practices on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypothesis:

One corresponding null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance:

Ho: principals' strategic leadership practices do not significantly jointly predict teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Literature Review

Strategic Leadership as a Multidimensional Construct

Teachers' productivity is understood in this study as the effectiveness and efficiency with which teachers carry out their core instructional responsibilities viz: instructional delivery, classroom management, and the engagement of students in learning, in order to bring about desired learning outcomes (Akinfolarin, 2017). Principals' strategic leadership, correspondingly, is treated not as a single behaviour but as a bundle of five complementary practices. Visionary thinking is the principal's ability to see beyond present difficulties to a clear, motivating picture of what the school can become. Strategic planning is the systematic translation of that vision into achievable goals through deliberate planning and organised implementation (Mesra, Tuerah, Imbar, and Ngumarno, 2024). Change management is how principals guide schools through transitions with minimal disruption to teaching and learning (Akuchie and Omoh, 2022). Resource optimisation concerns how principals obtain and deploy human, material, and financial resources to maximise their impact on instruction, particularly where resources are constrained (Ganon-Shilon, Tamir, and Schechter, 2021). Stakeholder engagement concerns how principals build and sustain productive relationships with parents, community members, and education authorities in support of school goals.

Because these five practices address different, largely non-overlapping conditions for productive teaching, the conceptual expectation is that they will predict teacher productivity more powerfully in combination than any one of them can alone. Vision supplies direction but not organisation; planning supplies organisation but not the means of implementation; resource

optimisation supplies means but not adaptability; change management supplies adaptability but not external support; and stakeholder engagement supplies that support. A principal who exercises all five removes a wider range of the obstacles to productive teaching than one who is strong in only a single respect, which is the theoretical basis for examining strategic leadership as a joint, rather than a piecemeal, predictor.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971) and Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958). Path-Goal Theory holds that a leader's central function is to clarify the paths by which followers can achieve valued goals, removing obstacles and providing the support and resources needed along the way. Applied to schools, the theory suggests that principals who articulate clear visions, translate them into workable plans, manage change considerately, optimise available resources, and maintain supportive stakeholder relationships are, in combination, clarifying and smoothing the path by which teachers achieve productive instructional outcomes. Social Exchange Theory complements this account by explaining the motivational mechanism involved: when principals invest effort in these behaviours, teachers perceive the investment as valuable to their own professional welfare and feel a reciprocal obligation to respond with improved instructional delivery, classroom management, and engagement of students. Read together, the two theories imply that the predictive relationship between strategic leadership and teacher productivity should be strongest when the leadership behaviours are considered as an integrated whole, since it is the cumulative clearing of obstacles and the cumulative sense of reciprocal obligation, rather than any single behaviour, that most fully shapes how productively teachers work.

Empirical Review

A number of Nigerian studies have examined principals' leadership across multiple dimensions in relation to teacher productivity, generally supporting the expectation that combined or multidimensional leadership measures are strongly related to teacher outcomes. Ugbari and Akpomi (2024) examined the relationship between principals' leadership styles and job productivity among teachers in secondary schools in Rivers State and reported a significant relationship, adopting, as the present study does, a multidimensional rather than a unitary conception of leadership. Ifejika and Daerefamama (2025) similarly studied principals' strategic management practices as determinants of teachers' job performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and found that several strategic practices, considered together, significantly determined teacher performance. Omuya, Eleojo, and Adebayo (2024) investigated stakeholders' perceptions of school head leadership style practices and teachers' productivity across the North Central Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria and likewise found that the breadth of principals' leadership practices bore a significant relationship with teachers' productivity.

A useful point of contrast is offered by He, Guo, and Abazie (2024), whose study of instructional leadership in Anambra State examined a single leadership dimension and obtained a

significant, but comparatively more circumscribed, predictive relationship with teacher outcomes. This contrast is instructive: a model containing one predictor can only account for the variance attributable to that predictor, whereas a model containing several complementary predictors is positioned to capture a broader range of the influences that bear on teacher productivity. Taken together, the reviewed studies support the expectation that principals' strategic leadership practices, considered jointly, will predict teachers' productivity more strongly than any single practice considered in isolation, which is the specific gap the present study addresses for the Anambra State context using a composite, five-dimension model tested through multiple regression.

Methodology

The study adopted a predictive correlational research design, appropriate for determining the extent to which a set of independent variables predicts a dependent variable. The study was conducted in Anambra State, in the South-Eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria, across the 274 public secondary schools distributed over the state's six education zones viz: Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Onitsha, Ogidi, and Otuocha. The population comprised all 8,117 teachers in these schools, according to Anambra State Post Primary Schools Service Commission records. Teachers were used as the sole respondents because they work directly under their principals' day-to-day leadership and are best positioned to report both on their principals' strategic leadership behaviours and on their own productivity; involving principals as co-respondents would have created a conflict of interest in self-assessing their own leadership. A sample of 395 teachers was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula at a 0.05 margin of error, adjusted upward from a minimum of 382 to allow for non-response. A multi-stage, proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used: the six education zones served as strata, teachers were proportionately allocated to zones based on each zone's share of the total teacher population, schools were selected within zones by simple random sampling, and five teachers were then randomly selected from each sampled school. Data were collected using two instruments. The Principals' Strategic Leadership Questionnaire (PSLQ) measured the five dimensions of strategic leadership using 40 items adapted from the Strategic Leadership Questionnaire developed by Davies and Davies (2004), scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ) measured teachers' productivity using items adapted from the Teachers' Task Performance Scale developed by Diehl and Stroebe (1987), using a Yes/No response format. Both instruments were subjected to face and content validation by experts in Educational Management and Policy and in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability, established through a pilot study of 40 teachers in a comparable but excluded population, yielded Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from .793 to .841 across the individual clusters, with an overall coefficient of .827 for the combined instrument, values that comfortably exceed the generally accepted threshold of .70 for research instruments. Data were analysed using multiple linear regression to determine the joint predictive value of the five strategic leadership dimensions on teachers' productivity. The overall model was considered a statistically significant fit when the p-

value associated with the regression ANOVA F-test fell below the .05 alpha level, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to indicate the proportion of variance in teachers' productivity accounted for by the five predictors jointly. The corresponding null hypothesis was rejected wherever this F-test achieved significance at $p < .05$.

Results

Research Question: What is the joint predictive value of principals' strategic leadership practices on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: *Multiple Regression Model Summary and ANOVA for Strategic Leadership Dimensions as Joint Predictors of Teachers' Productivity*

R	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	df	p
.852	.727	.723	206.865	5, 389	< .001

Note. n = 395. Dependent variable: teachers' productivity.

As shown in Table 1, the five dimensions of strategic leadership together produced a strong multiple correlation with teachers' productivity (R = .852) and jointly accounted for 72.7% of the variance in teachers' productivity ($R^2 = .727$, Adjusted $R^2 = .723$), a very large effect. The overall model was statistically significant, $F (5, 389) = 206.865$, $p < .001$.

Table 2: *Regression Coefficients for the Five Strategic Leadership Dimensions Predicting Teachers' Productivity*

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	-1.766	.073	—	-24.094	< .001	—
Visionary Thinking	.223	.012	.488	18.373	< .001	1.188
Strategic Planning	.193	.011	.480	18.044	< .001	1.207
Change Management	.132	.010	.340	12.817	< .001	1.168
Resource Optimisation	.115	.010	.310	11.651	< .001	1.160
Stakeholder Engagement	.075	.011	.179	6.754	< .001	1.122

Note. n = 395. B = unstandardised coefficient; β = standardised coefficient; VIF = variance inflation factor.

Table 2 shows that each of the five dimensions made a statistically significant individual contribution to the joint model. Visionary thinking (β = .488) and strategic planning (β = .480) were the strongest joint predictors, followed by change management (β = .340), resource optimisation (β = .310), and stakeholder engagement (β = .179); all five were significant at $p < .001$. Variance inflation factors ranged from 1.122 to 1.207, well below the conventional threshold of 10, indicating an absence of problematic multicollinearity among the predictors and confirming that each dimension contributed information the others did not capture.

Regarding the corresponding hypothesis which states that principals' strategic leadership practices do not significantly jointly predict teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State, the ANOVA F-test was statistically significant, $F(5, 389) = 206.865$, $p < .001$as shown in Table 3 below. Since this p-value is below the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that principals' strategic leadership practices, taken jointly, significantly predict teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: *ANOVA for the Five Strategic Leadership Dimensions Predicting Teachers' Productivity*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.631	5	2.926	206.865	< .001
	Residual	5.499	389	.014		
	Total	20.130	394			

Discussion of Findings

The finding that the five dimensions of strategic leadership jointly predicted teachers' productivity, explaining a considerably larger share of the variance than any single dimension could on its own, is consistent with the conceptual expectation set out earlier: that the five practices are complementary rather than redundant. Vision supplies direction, planning supplies organisation, resource optimisation supplies means, change management supplies adaptability, and stakeholder engagement supplies external support; each addresses a condition of productive teaching that the others leave unmet. The low variance inflation factors observed here reinforce this interpretation, since they indicate that the dimensions are empirically distinct constructs rather than overlapping measures of the same underlying behaviour.

This finding agrees with that of Ugbari and Akpomi (2024), who reported that principals' leadership practices, examined across multiple dimensions, were significantly related to teachers' job productivity in Rivers State; both studies adopt a multidimensional rather than a unitary conception of leadership and relate it to a productivity outcome in Nigerian public secondary schools, which makes the two designs closely comparable in structure. The finding is similarly consistent with that of Ifejika and Daerefamama (2025), who observed that several strategic practices operated together to influence teacher performance, and with Omuya, Eleojo, and Adebayo (2024), whose multi-stakeholder study likewise found that the breadth of principals' leadership practices bore a pervasive relationship with teachers' productivity across Nigerian school settings. In each case, the probable reason for the agreement is that these studies, like the present one, examined bundles of related practices, which allows a cumulative effect to become visible in a way that single-dimension studies cannot achieve.

A useful contrast is offered by He, Guo, and Abazie (2024), whose study of instructional leadership in Anambra State examined a single leadership dimension and obtained a significant,

but more circumscribed, predictive relationship with teacher outcomes. The difference in explanatory power is best understood as methodological rather than substantive: a model containing one predictor can only account for the variance attributable to that predictor, whereas a model containing five complementary predictors captures a broader range of the influences operating on teacher productivity. This comparison does not diminish the importance of instructional leadership; rather, it illustrates the analytical advantage of the multidimensional approach adopted here, and lends support to the argument that principal preparation should address the several dimensions of strategic leadership in combination rather than in isolation.

The rejection of the null hypothesis is the most consequential finding of this study. Had the hypothesis been retained while the individual dimensions nonetheless predicted productivity separately, the more defensible conclusion would have been that the dimensions overlap substantially and that little is gained by considering them together — implying that leadership development might reasonably concentrate on one or two dimensions alone. The rejection obtained here, together with the low variance inflation factors, indicates instead that the dimensions function as complements rather than substitutes. It should nonetheless be borne in mind that the design underlying these results is predictive rather than experimental, so the findings establish association and explanatory power rather than causation; the strength of the joint model is properly interpreted as evidence that strategic leadership accounts for a substantial share of the variation in teacher productivity, not that it is the sole determinant of it.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, it is concluded that principals' strategic leadership practices, considered jointly, constitute a significant and substantial predictor of teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The productivity with which teachers discharge their instructional responsibilities is therefore not solely a function of their qualifications or personal disposition, but is significantly bound up with the quality and comprehensiveness of the strategic leadership exercised by the principals who lead them. Strategic leadership exerts its influence as a coherent, integrated practice rather than as a set of separable behaviours, with its predictive strength greatest when exercised in its entirety. Efforts to raise teacher productivity in the state's public secondary schools are accordingly unlikely to succeed if principals are developed in only one or two of the five dimensions; the evidence instead supports developing the full strategic leadership repertoire as a single, integrated capability.

Recommendations

1. The Anambra State Post Primary School Services Commission (PPSSC) and Ministry of Education should jointly develop and implement a comprehensive strategic leadership development programme for principals across all six education zones of the state, embedding all five dimensions — visionary thinking, strategic planning, change management, resource optimisation, and stakeholder engagement — into a single, integrated, competency-based

principal preparation and continuous development curriculum, rather than offering training in these dimensions as separate or optional modules.

2. Principal performance appraisal instruments used by the PPSSC should be redesigned to assess all five strategic leadership dimensions jointly, so that appraisal outcomes reflect the composite strength of a principal's leadership repertoire rather than isolated strengths in any single dimension.

3. Education policy makers should treat strategic leadership capacity-building as a whole-of-practice intervention when allocating funding and designing school-improvement programmes, since the evidence indicates that the full predictive power of strategic leadership is only realised when its dimensions operate together.

4. Further research should test the joint predictive model established here using objective measures of teacher productivity, additional respondent groups such as principals and students, and longitudinal designs, in order to determine whether the strength of the composite relationship observed holds under different measurement conditions and over time.

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