

# Participatory Leadership Behaviour and Goal Attainment in Public Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria

Madukwe, Esther Chijioke, Obioma, Glory Udo, Obona, Edut Egbe, Akwu, Uka Kalu

Department of Educational Management Faculty of Educational Foundations Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar.

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## ABSTRACT

Participatory leadership behavior is essential for achieving goals, as it leverages the collective expertise and commitment of all team members. However, the primary challenge is balancing diverse perspectives to maintain cohesive and effective decision-making. Based on this, the study examined participatory leadership behaviour and goal attainment in secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Expost-facto research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions guided the study. One research hypothesis was tested in the study. The population of the study comprised all the principals from all 303 public secondary schools in the three Education Zones in Abia State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 160 principals from the 3 Education Zones (Strata) in Abia State, as sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Participatory Leadership Behaviour and Goal Attainment Questionnaire (PLBGAQ)". Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Multiple Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at .05 alpha level. Result obtained revealed that the extent to which principals practice participatory leadership behaviour in public secondary schools in Abia State was low. It was also revealed that the extent of goal attainment in the schools was also low. Participatory leadership behaviour of the principals significantly predicted goal attainment in the schools. It was recommended that, the Ministry of Education in Abia State should implement regular training programs for principals, focusing on participatory leadership skills to enhance goal attainment in public secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Leadership Behaviour, Participatory Leadership, Decision-Making, Shared Governance, Delegation of Responsibilities, System Thinking, Goal Attainment

## INTRODUCTION

Education is highly valued by modern societies as a practical tool for creating, integrating, and utilizing knowledge, as well as for social reconstruction. In the 21st century, societal development is driven by knowledge economies, where a nation's progress, competitiveness, and prosperity largely depend on the type, quality, quantity, and levels of knowledge produced and used by its citizens. No modern society can achieve significant growth and development without effective and quality education. In Nigeria, education is considered the ultimate instrument for fostering national growth and development, reflecting the widespread belief that it is the primary means through which the nation can achieve its goals. Secondary education plays a crucial role in Nigeria's success, offering individuals opportunities to acquire essential values, morals, skills, competencies, and abilities for productive living. It aims to produce a generation of youths who can think independently, respect others' feelings, value labor, and uphold the values specified in the national goals, as well as preparing individuals for higher learning and functional living (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

The attainment of school goal was categorized into: opportunity for higher education, knowledge acquisition and teaching/learning outcome (Etor, Obeten, & Obona, 2019). The broad goals of secondary schools, as stated in the National Policy on Education, are to prepare individuals for useful living and higher education (FRN, 2013). Specifically, secondary schools are intended to provide all primary school leavers with opportunities for higher education, regardless of sex, social status, religion, or ethnic background; offer a diversified curriculum to cater to different talents, opportunities, and future roles; provide trained manpower in applied science, technology, and commerce at sub-professional grades; develop and promote Nigerian language, art, and

culture within the context of the world's cultural heritage; inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and excellence; foster national unity by emphasizing common ties in diversity; raise a generation of youths who can think for themselves, respect others' views and feelings, value labor, appreciate the specified national values, and live as good citizens; and provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial, and economic development.

Given these goals, one would expect a low level of unemployment, criminal activities, and social unrest among Nigerian youths, coupled with high adherence to moral standards, involvement in productive activities, and readiness for higher learning. Unfortunately, these goals have not been fully realized in Nigeria. Many Nigerian youths remain unemployed due to a lack of employable skills, while others engage in various social vices out of frustration. Ofoha (2011) highlighted that nearly three decades after the adoption of the National Policy on Education, many Nigerian youths are idle, some involved in vices due to unemployment, and many secondary school graduates who fail to secure admission into higher institutions face uncertainty. This issue appears particularly pronounced in Abia State, where a significant percentage of senior secondary school students perform poorly in examinations such as WAEC, NECO, and JAMB. Additionally, there is a high rate of indiscipline among students, including absenteeism, truancy, lateness, poor class attendance, and fighting. Some students in the state are even involved in cultism to the extent of intimidating strict teachers, indicating that secondary schools are failing to achieve their goals in the zone.

The attainment of school goals can be measured by the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the maintenance of student discipline, high academic performance, and the acquisition of vocational skills. Effective teaching and learning enable students to achieve cognitive, affective, and psychomotor educational objectives, correlating with academic performance, discipline, and skills acquisition. Poor discipline not only leads to unacceptable behavior in school but also contributes to societal issues. Effective student disciplinary control ensures the existence of cultured, law-abiding youths. According to Kayode (2010), disciplinary control makes students well-adjusted, happy, achievement-oriented, and ready to participate in learning activities, positively impacting the school and society.

The effectiveness of schools in achieving their predetermined goals often depends on the leadership behavior of school administrators, who are responsible for creating an environment that motivates and commits teachers to excel. Schools that excel in all domains of student learning are typically led by school heads who significantly contribute to teacher effectiveness (Hallinger & Hack, as cited in Ogungbemi, 2012). This suggests that the leadership approach of school heads is crucial for achieving educational goals. Participatory leadership behavior, which involves active involvement of relevant stakeholders in decision-making, has been identified as positively influencing staff attitudes and ensuring the attainment of organizational goals (Banjarnahor et al., 2018; Bell & Mjoli, 2014; Burhanuddin & Yunisrina, 2014; Gyasi, 2015; Mokoena, 2012; Omorobi et al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2020; Somech, 2010; Tatlal & Iqbal, 2012).

Participatory leadership encourages the involvement of all educational stakeholders, such as students, teachers, parents, and community members, in school administration to collaboratively pursue the overall school goals (Wadesango, 2011). Practices such as participatory decision-making, shared governance, system thinking, and delegation of responsibilities create a goal-oriented atmosphere for efficient goal attainment. Hollyns (2017) noted that excluding stakeholders from decision-making can lead to conflicting interests, misunderstandings, burnout, and poor goal implementation. Participatory leadership behaviors include participatory decision-making, system thinking, delegation of responsibilities, and shared governance (Androniceanu & Ristea, 2014; Arnold & Wade, 2015; Chapman, 2005; Comeau, 2010; Finnel, 2014; Houston, 2008; Kyarimpa, 2010; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Mathew & Jones, 2007; Miller & Miles, 2008; Mohamed, 2011; Peretomode, 2004; Shaked & Schechter, 2016; Van der Westhuizen, 2004).

Researchers agree that participatory decision-making fosters collaboration among school stakeholders (Antonio & Gamage, 2007; Mokoena, 2011; Sagie & Aycan, 2003), boosts teacher commitment and performance (Kiprop & Kandie, 2012; Olorunsola & Olayemi, 2011; Tijani, 2020), and enhances educational delivery (Meintjes, 2018; Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013), thereby facilitating goal attainment. Studies confirm the effectiveness of participatory decision-making in achieving secondary school goals (Androniceanu

& Ristea, 2014; Inandi & Giliç, 2016; Isah, 2012; Mokoena, 2011; Muthoni, 2015; Singh & Manser, 2002). Applying participatory decision-making in secondary schools in Abia State may thus improve goal attainment.

Similarly, system thinking, another participatory leadership behavior, promotes collaboration among educational stakeholders and achieves school goals (Crick et al., 2017; Shaked & Schechter, 2017, 2018, 2019). Systems thinking views school leadership as facilitating a unified whole, with all subjects acting interdependently to achieve school objectives. Research by Mchunu (2015), Mette and Riegel (2016), Prestridge (2013), and Shaked and Schechter (2016a, 2016b) supports systems thinking's role in school improvement and effectiveness. Shared governance, which distributes decision-making authority among stakeholders, also improves school effectiveness and goal attainment (Atashzadeh-Shoorideh et al., 2019; Sattarzadeh-Pashabeig et al., 2018).

Delegating responsibilities is another key participatory leadership behavior that enhances school improvement (Bakar, 2015; Muhammad, 2015). Research by Kungu (2016), Kyarimpa (2010), Morake et al. (2012), Nwa Onyecha (2003), Nzekwe (2004), and Ruto (2011) shows that delegation by school heads facilitates goal achievement. Effective delegation by principals can ensure teaching effectiveness and school goal attainment in Abia State. This study is based on Robert House's Path-Goal Theory (1974), which posits that leaders assist group members in achieving goals by clarifying paths and removing obstacles. The theory implies that principals, as secondary school leaders, must provide necessary information, support, facilities, and resources for effective instruction, impacting school goal attainment.

Based on the foregoing, it is evident that goal attainment in secondary schools may not be maximized without principals adopting effective participatory leadership behaviors to harness all efforts towards ensuring the effectiveness of the school system. The high rate of social upheaval among youths in Abia State, the proliferation of unemployed youths in the state, the high rate of indiscipline and moral decadence among secondary school students, and the persistent trend of poor academic performance in internal and external examinations have raised concerns about the level at which the goals of secondary education have been achieved.

Although measures such as the recruitment of more teachers, renovation of dilapidated structures, and reorganization of the secondary school curriculum have been implemented by the Abia State government in an attempt to address these issues, secondary schools still perform below expectations. This ongoing problem is a source of concern for the researchers. Consequently, the researchers were motivated to examine participatory leadership behavior and goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine participatory leadership behaviour and goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. The extent of goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State
2. The extent to which principals practice participatory leadership behaviour in public secondary schools in Abia State
3. How principals' participatory leadership behaviour predict goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State

### **Research questions**

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the extent of goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State?
2. What is the extent of practice of participatory leadership behaviour by principals in public secondary schools in Abia State?

## Statement of hypothesis

One hypothesis was tested in this study and was stated as follows:

1. Participatory leadership behaviour does not significantly predict goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State

## METHODOLOGY

This research work was conducted in Abia State. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions guided the study. One research hypothesis was tested in the study. The population of the study comprised all the principals from 303 public secondary schools in the three Education Zones in Abia State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 160 principals from the 3 Education Zones (Strata) in Abia State, as sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Participatory Leadership Behaviour and Goal Attainment Questionnaire (PLBGAQ)”. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Multiple Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at .05 alpha level. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts in Educational Management and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar. The internal consistency of the items was established at 0.84 r-value using Cronbach Alpha reliability scale. The PLBGAQ was administered to the 160 principals to measure the participatory leadership behaviour and the extent of goal attainment in their schools. Letters of participation were given to all the participating principals with detailed explanations of the purpose of the research, and the advantages and dangers of participating in the study. Those who accepted to be part of the study were pleaded to respond objectively to the items and were given two weeks duration to do so without interference. The instrument was designed using a modified four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). In rating the scale, positive items were rated 4,3,2,1, while the rating was reversed for negative items. 9 items were designed to measure the goal attainment, while 20 items were developed to measure participatory leadership behaviour based on four participatory leadership behaviour sub-scales (participatory decision-making, system thinking, shared governance and delegation of responsibilities). Out of 160 questionnaires administered, 157 were retrieved and used for data analysis in this study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. The research hypothesis was analyzed using Multiple Regression analysis at 0.05 alpha level. Both participatory leadership behaviour variables and goal attainment were measured continuously. In taking decision on the extent of attainment and participatory leadership behaviour, scores below the criterion mean of 2.50 was taken to mean that the extent of goal attainment or participatory leadership behaviour was low, while those above the criterion mean was taken to mean that the extent was high. This formed the decision rule for the research questions.

## RESULT

**Research question1:** What is the extent of goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State? The responses to this research question are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the extent of goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
1	There is effective monitoring of students’ progress in my school	1.71	.641	Disagree
2	Students’ performance in terminal examinations is high	1.85	.579	Disagree
3	Students are very disciplined in my school	1.45	.499	Disagree

4	Students level of acquisition of Vocational skills is high	1.75	.615	Disagree
5	Students' performance in external examinations is high	1.95	.585	Disagree
6	There is quality teaching and learning	2.10	.709	Disagree
7	Many students' have high self-esteem in my school	2.61	.657	Agree
8	Students always display self-efficacy in learning activities	2.66	.782	Agree
9	Many students in my school have high academic self-concept	2.02	.702	Disagree
	Average Mean and Std. Dev.	2.01	.641	Disagreed

The result of the analysis in Table 1 shows that all the items except item 7 and 8, have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Given that the average mean is 2.01, which is below the criterion mean of 2.50, there is high degree of acceptance that the extent of goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State is low. This means that the goals of secondary schools have not been adequately achieved in public secondary schools in Abia State.

**Research question 2:** What is the extent of practice of participatory leadership behaviour by principals in public secondary schools in Abia State? The responses to this research question are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the extent participatory leadership behaviour is practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Abia State

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Encouraging teachers to take part in the formulation of school policies is a good practice	1.69	.715	Disagree
2	Considering ideas/suggestions of teachers while making decisions is a healthy leadership practice	2.11	.626	Disagree
3	Taking decisions in a round table meeting with all teachers can reduce conflict in schools	1.70	.560	Disagree
4	Making rules and regulations that are binding on all teachers alone can enhance prompt compliance	2.55	.812	Agree
5	It is proper to seek teachers' opinions before making decisions on issues affecting their jobs	1.89	.538	Disagree
6	Discussing instructional problems at P.T.A. meetings promotes collaboration	2.86	.655	Agree
7	I do not allow parents to take part in school decision-making process because they are always irrational	3.06	.591	Agree
8	Seeking the opinion of all staff can fast track decision-	1.59	.578	Disagree

	making process in the school			
9	I seek the opinion of teachers before taking critical decisions in the school.	1.89	.620	Disagree
10	I give parent adequate opportunity to make suggestions in my school.	2.66	.477	Agree
11	Sharing leadership responsibilities with teachers encourages commitment	2.06	.380	Disagree
12	Allowing members of the school Management Board to participate fully in the running of the school is good	2.31	.462	Disagree
13	Stakeholders are not allowed to carry out leadership roles in my school because it may lead to competition	3.29	.457	Agree
14	Leadership issues are not always discussed with teachers in the school to avoid conflict	2.69	.722	Agree
15	Giving staff leadership responsibilities can constitute threats to school administration	2.35	.479	Disagree
16	Sharing administrative responsibilities with teachers can enhance school improvement	2.25	.757	Disagree
17	Giving every teacher opportunity to perform management function in the school can motivate them to work better	2.30	.645	Disagree
18	Delegating responsibilities to teachers help administrators to work well	2.29	.842	Disagree
19	Giving teachers authority to act on their own can bring problem in schools	2.86	.729	Agree
20	My teachers do not have the abilities to perform administrative functions	2.75	.829	Agree
	Average mean & S.D	2.35	.600	

The result in Table 2 indicates that items 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 have mean scores below the criterion mean of 2.50, while items 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 19 and 20 have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Given that the overall mean is 2.35 which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50, there high degree of acceptance that the extent participatory leadership behaviour is practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Abia State is low. This implies that principals in public secondary schools in Abia State do not properly practice participatory leadership behaviour in ntheir schools.

### Hypothesis

Participatory leadership behaviour does not significantly predict goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 2: Summary of Multiple Regression analysis for the relationship between participatory leadership behaviour and goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
.681	.454	.450	1.657			
Model	Sum of squares		df	Mean square	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	360.733		4	90.183	32.950	.000
Residual	416.018		152	2.737		
Total	776.752		156			
Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	
(Constant)	3.559	2.020		1.757	.081	
Participatory decision-making	.470	.119	.250	3.960	.000	
System thinking	.085	.082	.065	1.029	.305	
Shared governance	-.024	-.080	-.019	-.306	.760	
Delegation of responsibilities	.734	.066	.670	11.065	.000	

a. Criterion: Goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State.

b. Predictors: (Constant), participatory decision-making, system thinking, shared governance and delegation of responsibilities.

The result in Table 3 shows a Multiple Regression coefficient (R) of .681 and a coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) of .454. This implies that there is a positive relationship between participatory leadership behaviour and goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State. This result also shows that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 32.950 ( $p < .05$ ), which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with critical F-ratio of 2.41 and 4:152 degrees of freedom. This implies that all the sub-variables of participatory leadership behaviour (participatory decision-making, system thinking, shared governance and delegation of responsibilities) significantly contributed to the observed variance in goal attainment in public secondary schools in the State. Furthermore, the result in Table 3 indicates that the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is .454. This means that 54.4 % of the variance in goal attainment across the schools is attributed to the variation in participatory decision-making, system thinking, shared governance and delegation of responsibilities. Thus 54.6 % of the variance in goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State is attributed to other variables extraneous to this study. Accordingly, the analysis in Table 3 reveals that t-values for all the participatory leadership behaviour variables are: participatory decision-making (3.960,  $p < .05$ ), system thinking (1.029,  $p > .05$ ), shared governance (-.306,  $p > .05$ ) and delegation of responsibilities (11.065,  $p < .05$ ). This result indicates that was most potent in predicting the variance in goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State, seconded by participatory decision-making.

## DISCUSSION

The result of the research question revealed that the extent of goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State was considerably low. It was also revealed that principals did not properly practice participatory leadership behaviour in the schools. The study also showed that participatory leadership behaviour accounted

significantly to the variance in goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State. These results affirm Robert House Path-goal theory which states leaders set the path for goal attainment such that the behaviour of the leadership can enhance or hinder effective attainment of the goals of the organization. The results establish that secondary school administrators in Abia State did not properly apply participatory leadership behaviour in their schools, which may be the leading problem behind the poor goal attainment in the schools. This results agree with opinions Banjarnahor, Hutabarat, Sibuea and Situmorang (2018), Bell and Mjoli (2014), Burlhanuddin and Yunisrina (2014), Gyasi (2015), Mokoena (2012), Omorobi, Mbon, Owan and Ekpenyong (2020), Saleem, Aslam, Yin and Rao (2020), Somech (2010) and Tatlah and Iqbal (2012) who in their different observations stressed that participatory leadership behaviour is a modern leadership approach that is feasible in enhancing collaboration among stakeholders in an effort to ensure effectiveness of the school system.

These results are in line with the findings of Ajayi, Haastrup and Arogundade (2009), Androniceanu and Ristea (2014), Finnel (2014), Inandi and Giliç (2016), Isah (2012), Kiilu (2015), Kiteme (2013), Kungu (2016), Kyarimpa (2010), Mchunu (2015), Mette and Riegel (2016), Mokoena (2011), Morake, Monobe and Mbulawa (2012), M, uthoni (2015) Nwa Onyecha (2003), Nzekwe (2004), Obadara (2013), Prestridge (2013), Ruto (2011), Shaked and Schechter (2016a), Shaked and Schechter (2016b), Sharma (2005), and Singh and Manser (2002) who established in the different studies that effective application participatory decision-making, efficient adoption of system thinking in school administration, proper application of shared governance in school leadership and delegation of leadership responsibilities to subordinates in schools are feasible measures to articulate the efforts of all stakeholders in the school system towards effective realization of the pre-determined goals of the system.

However, the results show that there are other factors contributing to the observed poor goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State, as participatory leadership behaviour of the principals only accounted for 45.4 % of the observed variation in goal attainment across the schools. This implies that factors such as the personal characteristics of the principals such as their gender, level of experience, qualifications, marital status and even age, which may influence their leadership behaviour in schools, may also contribute variance in goal attainment in the schools. Factors residing within the teachers may also contribute to how instructional activities are delivered in the schools. Students may also contribute to the poor goal attainment in the schools. This weakness of this study is that the researchers focused entirely on principals' behaviour as the determinants of goal attainment with less interest in factors surrounding teachers, students and even parent. Thus research may be designed in these areas to correct the weakness of the present result.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the extent of goal attainment in public secondary schools in Abia State was low. Similarly, it was further concluded that the extent to which principals practices participatory leadership behaviour in the schools was low. Lastly, it was concluded that participatory leadership behaviour have positive relationship with goal attainment in the schools, and that an improvement in the participatory decision-making practice, system thinking practice, shared governance practice and delegation of responsibilities will lead to an improvement in the level of goal attainment in the schools. This study has implication for professional development of principals in the State.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research findings, it was recommended that:

- I. The Ministry of Education in Abia State should implement regular training programs for principals, focusing on participatory leadership skills to enhance goal attainment in public secondary schools.
- II. Schools should establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to regularly assess leadership effectiveness, using feedback from teachers and students to ensure alignment with school goals and continuous improvement.



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## Contribution to knowledge

By exploring the dynamics of participatory leadership within the context of Nigerian public secondary schools, the research highlights how participatory decision-making processes, system thinking, and shared leadership practices can positively impact the achievement of educational goals. It provides empirical evidence on the correlation between teachers' and administrators' involvement in leadership activities and the overall effectiveness and efficiency of school operations. This study not only underscores the importance of collaborative leadership styles in fostering a conducive learning environment but also offers practical insights for policymakers and educational leaders aiming to improve school performance through enhanced stakeholder engagement. Additionally, it bridges a gap in the literature by focusing on a specific Nigerian context.

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## Declaration of conflicting interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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