

# SCHOOL LEADER SUPPORT AND FUNCTIONALITY OF N-POWER TEACHERS IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*The study sought to investigate the influence of school leaders' support on the functionality of N-power rural primary school teachers in Rivers state. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Multistage sampling procedure was used to gather data for the study. Proportionate to size sampling technique and total enumeration were used to select the sample for the study. An instrument was developed and administered in the sampled schools to five hundred and fifty-eight (558) academic staff. The instrument had a reliability value of 0.87. One research question was answered using descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, frequency counts and percentages while inferential statistics of multiple regressions was used to test the two hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that N-power teachers' level of functionality was low in the state (with the weighted mean of  $1.84 > 2.5$ ). All the school leader support factors were significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Motivation factor ( $\beta = 0.130$ ,  $t = 4.147$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ); professional development factor ( $\beta = 0.090$ ,  $t = 2.481$ ,  $p = 0.013 < 0.05$ ); welfare factor ( $\beta = 0.098$ ,  $t = 2.651$ ,  $p = 0.008 < 0.05$ ); and supervision factor ( $\beta = 0.078$ ,  $t = 2.663$ ,  $p = 0.008 < 0.05$ ). There is significant joint influence of school leader support factors (motivation, professional development, welfare and supervision) on functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state, Nigeria ( $F_{(1,538)} = 1.822$ ,  $p = 0.002 < 0.05$ ).*

**Keywords:** School Leader, Support, Functionality, N-power Teachers.

## Introduction

Attainment of the objectives behind the establishment of the N-power teachers' programme in Nigeria seems to be at the low ebb in terms of the functionality and effectiveness of the graduates recruited as teachers to teach at the primary school level of the Nigerian educational system. There seems to be traces of

unsatisfactory level of functionality among these graduates recruited as teachers due to series of factors ranging from lack of required teaching qualifications to poor level of supports given to these N-power teachers at the various school levels. Teachers teaching at the foundational levels of the Nigerian educational system are expected to be sound in academics, morals and character due to the place of primary education as the foundation of all levels of education and the bedrock of the entire educational system (Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2012). According to the scholar, the success of other levels of education literarily depends on the success of primary education.

Education cannot hence, be an instrument par excellence for achieving national development if primary education is not effectively taken care of to accomplish its aims and objectives. Teachers are the backbones of the entire educational system; their effectiveness is therefore, the most essential element affecting the future development of any educational process (Akudo, 2007). The federal government of Nigeria was initially commended for coming up with the N-power scheme to improve on the problem of shortage of personnel in the Nigerian school system, especially at the Basic education level.

However, the scheme later becomes questionable in the light of complaints from different educational stakeholders in the country. Part of the complaints is that, the level of proficiency of these N-power teachers appears to be low in terms of their ability to inculcate the right types of values and competencies into the lives of the young learners. There seems to be no worthwhile contributions from these N-power teachers towards the achievement of the objectives of primary education in Nigeria. The effectiveness of these N-power teachers at the classroom levels therefore becomes an issue of concern.

N-Power teachers' scheme was originally designed to engage Nigerian graduate youths as teachers' assistant in schools around the country, especially at the Basic education level of the Nigerian educational system. They are to work as support teachers across Nigerian schools. However, it has been observed that staff teachers have saddled them with the whole of classroom responsibilities which they were never trained to handle. N-Power Teach Volunteers are deployed as teaching assistants in primary schools that appear to be understaffed in Nigeria. They are not expected to replace the current teachers, but to work as support teachers across the country, assisting with teaching, school management and other functions within the schools; where possible, they are also required to assist in taking basic education to children in marginalized communities (N-Power Information Guide, 2017). In 2016,

through the N-Power, the Federal Government engaged and deployed 200,000 young Nigerians into public primary schools, primary healthcare centers in all the Local Government Areas in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria (2017). *N-Power Information Guide* Abuja: NSIP.

FGN, 2017). However, looking into what looks like distasteful happenings around the functionality or effectiveness of these N-power teachers to teach competently at the primary school level, there is a need to look into the school leadership support and the functionality of these N-power teachers.

Teachers lacking in competencies will as well be limited in capacity to function effectively at the classroom level. Training constitutes an integral aspect of teaching profession. A teacher could only function effectively when the teacher's training needs are met. This, no doubt is the reason.

Abin (2018), questioned the federal Government of Nigeria over the pronouncement of success of the programme. The programme cannot be said to be successful when the majority of the N-power teachers handling different subjects for pupils at the basic education level are nonprofessional teachers. Many of them have different degrees in non-education programmes, with apparent manifestation in poor classroom management, poor teaching methods, poor subject mastery, inability to adapt to education changing environment, among others. These and many others are grave impediments towards achieving sustainable educational development in Nigeria.

Availability of other variables such as motivation (Ikenyiri, and Ihua-Maduenyi, 2011; Oladele, 2005), supervision Nakpodia (2006), good welfare package (Ogunjimi, Olujuwon and Udofia, 2018) and professional development (Oladele, 2013) are all contributory factors to an institutional success, if present or failure if absent, as they could be important variables of improvement to address areas of teachers' weaknesses and give recognition to them, thereby creating a cordial working atmosphere based on good human relations.

Motivation is one of the measures of the independent variable (school leader support) of this study. It hence, plays a vital role in sustaining employees' job commitment in an organization such as an educational institution. Organization's success among others lies in a motivated workforce, as highly motivated employees tend to produce at the highest possible level and exert greater effort than employees who are not motivated (Ikenyiri, and Ihua-

Maduenyi, 2011; Oladele, 2005). Motivation is a process which focuses on how employee's morale or spirit to work can better be improved in an organization. It is an important ingredient that leads to effective teaching in schools and by extension, has a positive impact on students' academic performance (Ogunjimi, Olujuwon and Udofia, 2018). This is very true of a school system; a motivated teacher is encouraged to put in his\her best in the course of translating the contents of the curriculum.

Teachers' motivation, school performance, and quality of outputs are interconnected and cannot be separated. The most talented and innovative teachers are not solely motivated by financial rewards such as money, but seek satisfaction from their work due to their psychological and emotional state of mind. Teachers' motivation therefore plays an important role in the promotion of teaching and learning excellence. Generally, motivated teachers are more likely to motivate students to learn in the classroom, ensure the implementation of educational reforms and have feelings of job satisfaction and fulfillment. Teachers' motivation can therefore be seen to be highly fundamental to the effective teaching and learning process. This then implies that, there could be a positive influence of motivation on N-power teachers in the performance of their duties if it is appropriately deploy to them.

Professional development is another index of the independent variable captured in this study and it is of immense contribution to a functional educational system. Teachers are the backbones of any educational system and so, need frequent training to stay relevant to the needs and aspirations of the society (Abiodun-Oyebanji 2021). In today's competitive world, training of teachers has become extremely necessary, especially to cope with the changing demands of the new technological innovation and inventions. It is also very necessary as it improves the quality of the teachers. Faremi (2021) concluded that professional training of teachers is quite critical to enhance development of specific skills and attitudes needed to perform their jobs and improve the overall educational efficiency. Improving the overall organizational efficiency is therefore strictly tied to the quality of professionalism in the system, continuous assistance or coaching will make teachers get updated with current knowledge in their areas of specialization, scope of their jobs and become better in the performance of their duties.

Instructional supervision is seen as one of the indicators of school leader's support in the modern era centers on the improvement of the teaching-learning situation to the benefits of both the teachers and learners (Nakpodia, 2006).

Instructional supervision helps in the identification of areas of strengths and weaknesses of teachers. It goes further to include follow-up activities that should be directed at the improvement of identified areas of teachers' weaknesses and gives recognition to the teachers and create a cordial working atmosphere based on good human relations (Jaiyeoba and Akinwumi, 2004). Supervision of instruction no doubt provides opportunities for teachers to be groomed through joint identification of areas of weaknesses and as well jointly come together to proffer solutions to classroom interactions. This will assist teachers to carry out their teaching tasks effectively and efficiently in line with professional codes of conduct. If schools are not supervised adequately, no doubt, it will have inimical effects on the overall performances of staff and students and the overall educational objectives may as well be jeopardized. It therefore becomes mandatory for school administrators to consequently adopt various instructional supervisory techniques towards ensuring qualitative and quantities service delivery by the teachers; most especially the N-power teachers who are mostly green horns in the field of education.

Welfare package is the last measure of the school leader support in this study. A hope for a reward is a powerful incentive that could motivate or drive teachers to be more committed to their job. Health insurance for instance, is an indispensable strategy that could be used to motivate workers or teachers to work better. Administrators of schools are now being encouraged to offer several incentive packages to keep their teachers well positioned and better focused in performing with high excellent drive in the school organization. Incentive packages that could be explored or adopted include free transportation, mortgage facilities, free medical care and free teachers' child education (Okendu, 2012). The welfare packages should be carefully designed very tactically in such a way that it will be in line with the institutional goals and objectives. Such incentives could be short term, focused on driving N-power teachers' behaviour toward the achievement of educational goals.

School leaders' support occupies a central position in the management of primary education in Nigeria. School heads by virtue of their positions are the managers of the school system and the quality of managerial functions and supports rendered to teachers in line with the performance of their duties determine to a large extent the teachers' effectiveness (Odumodu, 2011). School leader support services in this context, imply provisions of enabling work environment for teachers to render the needed services effectively in the school system. For Campbell (2007), management practices in educational institutions revolve around putting in place all enabling environment by the

school heads to foster teachers' morale and commitment and professional development. Along the same line, Jefferson (2004) affirms that provision of management support practices to teachers involve giving supportive instructional supervision, adequate welfare, rewards, in-service education programme as and when due to promote teachers' motivation; which plays vital roles in sustaining employees' job commitment in an organization such as an educational institution.

From the discussion above, it is observed that there may be connection between the school leader's support and functionality of N-power teachers in primary schools. There is a need to, therefore, find out what effect will leadership supports have on the functionality of N-power teachers.

One research question and two hypotheses guided the research,

1. What is the level of functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state?
2. Is there any relationship between the school leaders support and the functionality of the N-power teachers in the primary schools in Rivers state?

**Ho<sup>1</sup>.** There are no significant contributions of the influence of leader's support factors to functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state at 0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sup>2</sup>.** There is no significant joint contributions of Influence of leader support factors to functionality of N-power teachers in rural public primary schools in Rivers state, Nigeria at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Method**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state. 50% of the total number of local governments in Rivers state was randomly selected. This gave a total of twelve (12) local governments. In the second stage, proportionate to size sampling technique was used to select 50% of schools in each of the sampled 12 local governments, this gave a total of fifty-two schools (52). In the third stage, 50% of N-power teachers in each of the primary schools selected in stage 2 was used as respondents for the study. This gave a total of five hundred and fifty-eight (558) teachers for the study and there was total enumeration of head teachers in the sampled schools. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected.

## Results

**Table 1: Level of Functionality of N-Power Teachers in Rural Primary Schools in Rivers State**

S/ N	Items	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean decision (Less than 2.5 = low Above 2.5 = high)
1	The level of communication skill of N-power teachers in your school	54 (10%)	47 (8.7%)	220 (40.7%)	219 (40.5%)	1.78	.565	Low
2	The level of listening skill of N-power teachers to understand instructions when given	50 (9.2%)	49 (9.1%)	248 (45.9%)	194 (35.9%)	1.89	.516	Low
3	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school focus on collaborative teaching	40 (7.4%)	57 (10.5%)	210 (38.8%)	233 (43.1%)	1.82	.639	Low
4	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school get adaptable to educational changing environment	58 (10.7%)	40 (7.4%)	220 (40.7%)	222 (41.1%)	1.83	.529	Low
5	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school are productively engaged	60 (11.1%)	34 (6.3%)	220 (40.7%)	225 (41.6%)	1.84	.676	Low
6	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school show empathy to their students.	60 (11.1%)	50 (9.3%)	220 (40.7%)	218 (40.3%)	1.93	.588	Low
7	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school have patience towards pupils	55 (10.2%)	56 (10.3%)	210 (38.8%)	219 (40.5%)	1.90	.549	Low

8	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school share best teaching practices	58 (10.7%)	41 (7.6%)	209 (38.7%)	232 (42.9%)	1.79	.473	Low
9	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school instill confidence in their students.	45 (8.3%)	52 (9.6%)	234 (43.3%)	209 (38.7%)	1.84	.566	Low
10	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school creates a sense of belonging in classrooms	45 (8.3%)	50 (9.3%)	228 (42.2%)	217 (40.2%)	1.85	.589	Low
11	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school manage classrooms effectively	30 (5.5%)	64 (11.9%)	229 (42.4%)	217 (40.2%)	1.82	.569	Low
12	To what extent do N-power teachers in your school have sound mastery of the subject matter	29 (5.3%)	69 (12.7%)	211 (39.1%)	231 (42.8%)	1.80	.451	Low
Weighted mean value = <b>1.84</b>								Low

*Decision range: mean score of 2.50 and above is high and mean score of less than 2.50 is low*

Table 1 reveals statistics on the level of functionality of N-power teachers in Rivers state. Looking at the results on the table especially the weighted mean average of 1.84, going by the importance of education in national development, one would expect a higher mean value than the 1.84 weighted mean value seen on the table. It therefore means that the performance of these N-power teachers was low.



**Table 2: Significance of the Relative Contributions of Influence of Leader’s Support Factors to Functionality of N-Power Teachers in Rural Primary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	p-value	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)			
(Constant)	15.169	0.495		30.666	0.000	
Motivation	0.106	0.026	0.130	4.147	0.000	S
Professional development	0.075	0.030	0.090	2.481	0.013	S
Welfare	0.196	0.074	0.098	2.651	0.008	S
Supervision	0.146	0.055	0.078	2.663	0.008	S

S = Significant at  $p < 0.05$ ; NS = Not Significant at  $p > 0.05$

Table 2 shows the four school leader’s support factors with their unstandardized regression weights and corresponding standard errors, Beta (β) coefficients and t-values. The results in the table indicate that motivation factor ( $\beta = 0.130$ ,  $t = 4.147$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ); professional development factor ( $\beta = -0.090$ ,  $t = 2.481$ ,  $p = 0.013 < 0.05$ ); welfare factor ( $\beta = 0.098$ ,  $t = 2.651$ ,  $p = 0.008 < 0.05$ ); and supervision factor ( $\beta = 0.078$ ,  $t = 2.663$ ,  $p = 0.008 < 0.05$ ) had significant relative influence on functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state.

The table also shows that motivation factor has the highest contribution to the influence of school leader support factors on functionality of N-power teachers (the highest value of  $\beta = 0.130$ , and of  $t = 4.147$ ). This proves the importance of motivation in facilitating the functionality of N-power teachers in the sampled rural primary schools. Since all the school leader support factors are significant at  $p < 0.05$ , as shown in Table 2, the hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that, school leader support factors had significant relative influence on functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 3. Joint Contribution of Influence of Leader Support Factors to Functionality of N-Power Teachers in Rural Public Primary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria****Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.142 <sup>a</sup>	.140	.009		0.53322

Predictors: (Constant), School leader support

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Remark
Regression	3.109	1	0.517	1.822	0.002 <sup>b</sup>	Significant p<0.05
Residual	151.545	538	0.284			
Total	154.654	539				

a. Dependent variable: Npower teachers' functionality.

b. Predictors (constant), school leader support.

Table 3 presents the analysis of hypothesis 2 testing for the significance of the joint influence of school leader support factors (motivation, professional development, welfare and instructional supervision) on functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state. The model summary shows an R Square of 0.14. This means that 14% of the total variance in functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state is attributed to the joint influence of all school leader support factors. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) shows that the F-test is significant ( $F_{(1,538)} = 1.822$ ,  $p = 0.002 < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the independent variable (school leader support) and the dependent variable (functionality of N-power teachers) had linear and significant relationship.

**Discussion**

A research question was raised to find out the level of functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in River state. The responses of the respondents revealed that N-power teachers' level of functionality was low in

the state. This finding is in support of the work of Okon and Bassey, (2018) who concluded in their study that N-power teachers could not effectively function in the realm of qualitative instructional delivery due to the fact that they did not satisfy the condition of minimum qualification required to teach at the Nigerian basic educational level.

Also, the finding is in support of Abin (2018), who questioned the announcement of the federal Government of Nigeria over the pronouncement of success of the N-power programme. The programme cannot be said to be successful when N-power teachers handling different subjects for pupils at the basic levels are of different degrees of weaknesses such as poor classroom communication, poor teaching methods, poor subject mastery, and inability to adapt to education changing environment among others. These are grave impediments towards achieving sustainable development in Nigerian educational system.

Statistical result revealed that all the factors of school leader support identified in this study are significant, it further means that they are potent contributors in a bid to improve the level of functionality of N-power teachers in the state. Since all the school leader support factors were significant at  $p < 0.05$ , the hypothesis was therefore rejected. Motivation factor has the highest contribution to the influence of school leader support factors on functionality of N-power teachers (the highest value of  $\beta = 0.130$ , and of  $t = 4.147$ ).

This finding is in support of Ikenyiri, and Ihua-Maduenyi, (2011). They concluded in their study that organization's success lied in a motivated workforce as highly motivated employees strive to produce at the highest possible level and exert greater effort than employees who were not motivated.

Also, the finding further supported the work of Udo in Ezeani and Oladele (2013). They affirmed that professional training of employees enhanced development of specific skills and attitudes needed to perform a particular job or series of jobs to maximize the productivity of the individual and improve the overall organizational efficiency. It was also in support of the findings of Ngala and Odebero (2010) who submitted that professional training of teachers was seen as a vehicle to improve on teachers teaching effectiveness. They further noted that teachers getting involved in staff development programmes, particularly pursuing higher education and training motivated them into taking their teaching roles more seriously.

Also, the finding was in consonance with the work of Rahman, Jumani, Akhter, Christhi and Ajmal (2011), they asserted that regular training programmes for teachers provided them with the necessary job knowledge, skills and ability and competency that are relevant for a smooth career of a teacher.

The finding of this further supported the work of Ogunjimi, Olujuwon and Udofia, (2018). They see welfare package as an important ingredient that leads to effective teaching in schools and has a positive impact on students' performance. It is also in support of Haruna (2009) who asserted that adequate teachers' welfare programmes improved teachers' job performance in various ways for the development of a workable educational system in the country.

The hypothesis testing for the joint influence of leader support factors (motivation, professional development, welfare and instructional supervision) on functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state. The model summary shows an R Square of 0.14. This means that 14% of the total variance in functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state, Nigeria is attributed to the joint influence of all school leader support factors. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) shows that the F-test is significant ( $F_{(1,538)} = 1.822, p = 0.002 < 0.05$ ).

The result proves that all the four school leader support factors (motivation, professional development, welfare and instructional supervision) joined together, had significant influence on functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state. Based on this result, hypothesis 2 was rejected. This finding was in support of the findings of Akubue (2012) who affirmed that management support practices such as teachers' welfare, professional growth, supportive supervision, giving rewards, counselling employees and organizational career planning make effective teachers, who will be in optimal capacity to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of educational goals and objectives.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the level of functionality of N-power teachers in the state was low. This could be as a result of some of the problems identified by literature especially lack of education degree background for some of these N-power teachers. All the hypotheses raised were found to be significant with the adjusted R square showing that

school leader supports could actually influence the level of functionality of N-power teachers in rural primary schools in Rivers state.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The state government in collaboration with the federal government should work together towards improving the quality of N-power service delivery not only in Rivers State but across states in Nigeria.
2. School heads at the various school levels should start giving priorities to the needs of these N-power teachers. They could be communicating the needs of the N-power teachers to the government on behalf of the N-power teachers.
3. The level at which the N-power teachers are motivated should be increased to improve their level of functionality.

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