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JOB ENRICHMENT DIMENSIONS AND TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between three job enrichment dimensions (autonomy, skill variety, and task identity) and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. An *ex-post-facto* design of the correlational survey type was adopted. From a population of 11,082 respondents (463 principals and 10,619 teachers), a sample of 480 respondents (100 principals and 380 teachers) was drawn from 100 public secondary schools. Data were collected with the Job Enrichment Dimension Questionnaire (JEDQ) and the Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ), both validated by experts and found internally consistent (Cronbach's alpha = .82 and .88, respectively). The coefficient of determination answered the research questions, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation tested three null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. Autonomy ($r = 0.250$), skill variety ($r \approx 0.27$), and task identity ($r = 0.141$) were each positively and significantly related to teachers' productivity ($p \leq .002$), but individually accounted for only about 2% to 8% of its variance. Skill variety and autonomy showed the stronger associations, and task identity the weakest. It is recommended that principals and education authorities widen teachers' discretion over instructional decisions, diversify professional roles, and give teachers ownership of whole units of work, alongside welfare and leadership measures.

Keywords: Job Enrichment; Autonomy; Skill Variety; Task Identity; Teachers' Productivity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the main channel through which the secondary school curriculum reaches learners, so the productivity of the teaching workforce sets a practical ceiling on what a school system can achieve. Concern about the morale and productivity of Nigerian public secondary school teachers is long-standing. In a review of the evidence on teacher motivation and incentives, Adelabu (2005) described a systemic motivation problem running across job context, job content, and reward systems. In Delta State, recent studies have likewise treated teachers' productivity as falling short of what stakeholders expect (Obi & Ikegwuonu, 2024) and have tied teachers' job performance to the leadership practices of principals (Awhaetoma & Okorji, 2026). Much of this literature concentrates on the context of work, such as leadership, welfare, and incentives, rather than on the content of the work itself.

Herzberg (1968) argued that lasting motivation has to be built into the job through enrichment, that is, by giving employees genuine responsibility, achievement, and opportunities to grow. Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976, 1980) turned this idea into a testable model. In their job characteristics theory, five core job dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) shape three psychological states, namely experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. These states in turn drive internal work motivation, performance, and satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Skill variety, task identity, and task significance feed meaningfulness, autonomy feeds responsibility, and feedback feeds knowledge of results.

The wider evidence supports the claim that the design of work matters. A meta-analysis of 259 studies and 219,625 participants found that 14 work characteristics explained, on average, 43% of the variance in 19 worker attitudes and behaviours (Humphrey et al., 2007). Whether the same holds for teachers in Nigerian public secondary schools is an empirical question that has received little direct attention. This study therefore examines how three enrichment dimensions, autonomy, skill variety, and task identity, relate to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The productivity of teachers in Delta State public secondary schools has been described as unsatisfactory, with concerns raised about poor work attitude, lateness, and absenteeism (Awhaetoma & Okorji, 2026; Obi & Ikegwuonu, 2024). Efforts to explain and address the problem have focused largely on principals' leadership and personnel management practices, with welfare practices showing the strongest association with teachers' productivity in one Delta State study (Obi & Ikegwuonu, 2024). These factors operate mostly around the job. Far less is known about whether the way teachers' jobs are themselves structured, that is, how much discretion teachers have, how many different skills the job calls on, and whether teachers can see a piece of work through from start to finish, is related to how productive they are.

This gap matters because job design is something school administrators can change at low cost, whereas salaries and facilities depend on government funding. If the dimensions of job enrichment are related to productivity, principals and education authorities would have an additional and practical lever. If they are not, resources should be directed elsewhere. The problem of this study, therefore, is to determine whether autonomy, skill variety, and task identity are significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

- What relationship exists between autonomy and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State?
- What relationship exists between skill variety and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State?
- What relationship exists between task identity and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State?

1.3 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated:

- Autonomy is not significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.
- Skill variety is not significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.
- Task identity is not significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

1.4 Theoretical framework and Literature Review

The study draws on three connected theories. First, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory distinguishes factors surrounding the job from the content of the job and holds that the content, such as responsibility and the work itself, is what produces lasting motivation (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959). Second, job characteristics theory specifies how job content produces motivation: core dimensions create psychological states, which in turn raise motivation and performance, with individual growth-need strength shaping how positively a person responds to a complex and challenging job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). In the original test, the model was supported among 658 employees working on 62 jobs in seven organisations. Third, self-determination theory identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as innate psychological needs whose satisfaction yields enhanced self-motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This gives an independent reason to expect autonomy in particular to matter.

The model has not escaped criticism. A review and meta-analysis of nearly 200 studies found that job characteristics relate to both psychological and behavioural outcomes, but more strongly to psychological ones, and that the predicted pattern linking characteristics to psychological states was only partly supported (Fried & Ferris, 1987). The psychometric properties of the Job Diagnostic Survey have also been reviewed critically (Taber & Taylor, 1990), and later work has argued for broader measures that add knowledge, social, and contextual characteristics (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) and for work design that serves learning, health, and development as well as motivation (Parker, 2014; Parker et al., 2017). These points imply that individual job characteristics should be expected to show real but moderate associations with a behavioural outcome such as productivity, which is the pattern anticipated in this study.

Job enrichment refers to redesigning a job so that it carries more responsibility, variety, and scope for achievement, instead of simply adding more tasks of the same kind (Herzberg, 1968). In the job characteristics framework, enrichment is described through core dimensions of the job (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1980). Three are of concern here. Autonomy is the freedom and discretion a worker has in scheduling work and deciding how it is carried out. Skill variety is the degree to which a job requires a range of skills, abilities, or talents. Task identity is the extent to which a job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work. In teaching, autonomy shows up in choices about methods, materials, pacing, and assessment; skill variety in the mix of instruction, assessment, guidance, record keeping, and co-curricular responsibilities; and task identity in whether a teacher owns a class, a unit, or a term's work from planning to evaluation.

Teachers' productivity is understood here as the output of teachers' work relative to the effort and resources invested in it, including lesson preparation and delivery, assessment and feedback, record keeping, punctuality and attendance, and contribution to the life of the school. The meta-analysis by Humphrey et al. (2007) found that motivational work characteristics explained 25% of the variance in subjective performance, with social characteristics adding a further 9%. An earlier meta-analysis reported that the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction is well established (Loher et al., 1985), and Fried and Ferris (1987) found relationships with behavioural outcomes, though weaker than with attitudes. Together these studies suggest that a single characteristic will account for only a modest share of performance.

A meta-analysis of studies on autonomy and participation found that high perceived control at work was associated with higher job satisfaction, commitment, involvement, performance, and motivation, and with lower role stress, absenteeism, and turnover intentions (Spector, 1986). Among teachers, a study of 2,569 Norwegian teachers found that perceived autonomy predicted engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion independently of teacher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). A large study in England reported that higher teacher autonomy was associated with greater job satisfaction and intention to stay in teaching, that teachers reported relatively high autonomy over classroom activities, and that they reported lower autonomy over curriculum, assessment, and professional development goals (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020).

Few studies in the sources reviewed for this paper isolate skill variety or task identity as predictors of performance, because these dimensions are usually combined into a meaningfulness composite or a motivating potential score. Related evidence on the meaningfulness side of the model comes from field experiments showing that task significance raised job performance, dedication, and helping behaviour (Grant, 2008). The expectation drawn from the model is that variety and wholeness of work make the job feel meaningful, which in turn supports effort (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Nigerian evidence on teachers' productivity has focused on motivation, incentives, and leadership. Adelabu (2005) documented weak morale and commitment among Nigerian teachers and traced it partly to the content of the job as well as to pay and conditions. In Delta State, principals' personnel management practices were positively related to teachers' productivity, with welfare practices showing the strongest relationship (Obi & Ikegwuonu, 2024), and principals' ethical role clarification and ethical guidance were significant predictors of teachers' job performance (Awhaetoma & Okorji, 2026). The international literature supports a link between job design and performance and a link between autonomy and teachers' attitudes. The Nigerian literature explains teachers' productivity mainly through leadership, welfare, and incentives. Studies that test job enrichment dimensions directly against teachers' productivity in Delta State public secondary schools were not found in the sources reviewed, and this is the gap the present study addresses.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an *ex-post-facto* research design using a correlational survey approach to examine the relationship between job enrichment dimensions and teachers' productivity. The population comprised 11,082 respondents, consisting of 463 principals and 10,619 teachers, while a sample of 480 respondents, comprising 100 principals and 380 teachers, was drawn from 100 public secondary schools. Data were collected using the Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (TPQ) and the Job Enrichment Dimension Questionnaire (JEDQ), which were validated by experts. The

internal consistency of the instruments was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of .82 for job enrichment dimensions, and .88 for teachers' productivity. Data were analysed using coefficient of determination to answer the research questions and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation to examine the relationships among the study variables at the .05 level of significance.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Answering Research Question 1

What relationship exists between autonomy and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 1: Relationship between autonomy and teachers' productivity

Variables	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	R	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Autonomy	2.59	0.77	0.250	0.062	6.2	Positive relationship
Teachers' productivity	2.71	0.83				

Table 1 shows the relationship between autonomy and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State. The mean score for autonomy was 2.59, with a standard deviation of 0.77, while teachers' productivity had a mean score of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 0.83. The correlation coefficient of (r = 0.250) indicates a positive relationship between autonomy and teachers' productivity. This implies that an increase in teachers' autonomy tends to be associated with an increase in their productivity. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.062) indicates that autonomy shares approximately 6.2% of the variance in teachers' productivity. The remaining 93.8% may be associated with other factors not examined in this analysis. Therefore, autonomy has a positive relationship with teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

3.2 Answering Research Question 2

What relationship exists between skill variety and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Relationship between skill variety and teachers' productivity

Variables	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	R	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Skill variety	2.72	0.78	0.277	0.078	7.8	Positive relationship
Teachers' productivity	2.71	0.83				

Table 2 presents the relationship between skill variety and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State. The mean score for skill variety was 2.72, with a standard deviation of 0.78, while teachers' productivity had a mean score of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 0.83. The correlation coefficient of (r = 0.277) indicates a positive relationship between skill variety and teachers' productivity. This suggests that opportunities for teachers to apply different skills in performing their duties tend to be associated with higher productivity. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = .078) indicates that skill variety shares approximately 7.8% of the variance in teachers' productivity. The remaining 92.2% may be attributable to other factors not covered in the analysis. Therefore, skill variety has a positive relationship with teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

3.3 Answering Research Question 3

What relationship exists between task identity and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 3: Relationship between task identity and teachers' productivity

Variables	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	r	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Task identity	2.69	0.75	0.141	0.020	2	Positive relationship
Teachers' productivity	2.71	0.83				

Table 3 shows the relationship between task identity and teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State. The mean score for task identity was 2.69, with a standard deviation of 0.75, while teachers' productivity had a mean score of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 0.83. The correlation coefficient of (r = 0.141) indicates a positive but weak relationship between task identity and teachers' productivity. This suggests that teachers' opportunities to complete identifiable and meaningful units of work are positively associated with their productivity, although the relationship is relatively small. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.020) indicates that task identity shares approximately 2.0% of the variance in teachers' productivity. The remaining 98.0% may be associated with other factors not examined in this analysis. Therefore, task identity has a positive relationship with teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

3.3.1 Hypotheses Testing

3.3.1.1 Hypothesis 1

Autonomy is not significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Pearson r on autonomy and teachers' productivity

		Autonomy	**Teachers' Productivity**
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.250
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	480	480
Teachers' Productivity	Pearson Correlation	0.250	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	480	480

Significant at 0.05

Table 4 presents the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationship between autonomy and teachers' productivity. The result shows a correlation coefficient of (r = 0.250), with a significance value of (p = 0.001), based on 480 respondents. Since the reported significance value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship between autonomy and teachers' productivity is statistically significant. The null hypothesis, which states that autonomy is not significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State, is therefore rejected. This finding indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between autonomy and teachers' productivity. In practical terms, greater autonomy among teachers tends to be associated with higher productivity.

3.3.1.2 Hypothesis 2

Skill variety is not significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 5 presents the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationship between skill variety and teachers' productivity. The result reveals a correlation coefficient of (r = .268), with a significance value of (p = 0.001), based on 480 respondents. Since the significance value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship between skill variety and teachers' productivity is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding indicates that skill variety is significantly and positively related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State. It suggests that teachers who have opportunities to utilise a variety of skills in carrying out their responsibilities tend to demonstrate higher productivity.

Table 5: Pearson r on skill variety and teachers' productivity

		Skill Variety	**Teachers' Productivity**
Skill Variety	Pearson Correlation	1	0.268
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	480	480
Teachers' Productivity	Pearson Correlation	0.268	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	

	N	480	480

Significant at 0.05

3.3.1.3 Hypothesis 3

Task identity is not significantly related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 6: Pearson r on task identity and teachers' productivity

		Task Identity	Teachers' Productivity
Task Identity	Pearson Correlation	1	0.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.002
	N	480	480
Teachers' Productivity	Pearson Correlation	0.141	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	
	N	480	480

Significant at 0.05

Table 6 presents the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationship between task identity and teachers' productivity. The result indicates a correlation coefficient of (r = 0.141), with a significance value of (p = 0.002), based on 480 respondents. Since the significance value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship between task identity and teachers' productivity is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding indicates that task identity has a statistically significant but weak positive relationship with teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State. It suggests that teachers' opportunities to complete identifiable units of work are associated with their productivity, although the strength of this relationship is relatively low.

4 DISCUSSION

Autonomy was positively and significantly related to teachers' productivity (r = .250, p = .001) and shared about 6.2% of its variance. This agrees with the meta-analytic finding that high perceived control at work goes with higher performance, motivation, satisfaction, and commitment (Spector, 1986). It also supports studies of teachers in other settings. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) found that perceived autonomy independently predicted engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion among Norwegian teachers, and Worth and Van den Brande (2020) found that teacher autonomy was associated with higher job satisfaction and a stronger intention to stay in teaching in England. Those studies measured attitudes and retention; the present result shows that an association also appears with a productivity measure among teachers in Nigerian public secondary schools. Two explanations are consistent with the result. In job characteristics theory, autonomy builds a sense of personal responsibility for outcomes, which sustains effort (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Self-determination theory reaches the same expectation by treating autonomy as an innate need whose satisfaction strengthens self-motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A further, untested possibility is that public school teachers work within prescribed curricula and external supervision, so the discretion that remains over methods, classroom management, and assessment tasks carries extra weight. A reverse reading is also possible: principals may grant more discretion to teachers they already regard as productive.

Skill variety showed the strongest association with productivity (r = 0.268 in the hypothesis test and r = 0.277 in the research question analysis, p = 0.001; about 7% to 8% of shared variance). This is in line with the central proposition of job characteristics theory that jobs calling on a range of skills are experienced as more meaningful and so sustain effort (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and with the broader finding that motivational work characteristics taken together explain a substantial share of subjective performance (Humphrey et al., 2007). Teaching is well suited to this mechanism because the role can include instruction, assessment, guidance, mentoring, record keeping, and co-curricular leadership. Teachers who are able to use several of these skills are less likely to experience the job as routine. The result should be read with care, however, because variety that arrives as extra, unsupported duties can become overload rather than enrichment, and the effect of challenging work depends on how positively a person responds to it (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Task identity had the weakest association (r = .141, p = 0.002; 2.0% of shared variance). The relationship is statistically significant largely because the sample is fairly large (N = 480), and its practical weight is small. The weaker result matches the observation that job characteristics relate less strongly to behavioural outcomes than to psychological ones (Fried & Ferris, 1987). It may also reflect how teaching is organised. Timetables divide a teacher's week into short

periods across several classes, curricula are set externally, and the final evaluation of learners is often carried out by bodies outside the school, so few teachers see a whole piece of work through from planning to final result. These explanations are plausible but were not tested in this study.

All three dimensions were positively related to productivity, in the order skill variety, autonomy, and task identity. By Cohen's (1988) conventions (r = 0.10, 0.30, and 0.50 for small, medium, and large), all three correlations are small. Gignac and Szodorai (2016) found, from 708 meta-analytic correlations, that r values of 0.10, 0.20, and 0.30 are better treated as relatively small, typical, and relatively large for research on individual differences. On that yardstick, autonomy and skill variety fall between typical and large, and task identity between small and typical. The relationships are therefore real and of useful size, but each dimension leaves more than 90% of the variance in productivity unexplained. This is not surprising. The meta-analysis by Humphrey et al. (2007) shows that sets of work characteristics, not single ones, account for large shares of performance, and other Nigerian evidence points to leadership practices, ethical guidance, and welfare as important correlates of teachers' productivity and job performance in Delta State (Awhaetoma & Okorji, 2026; Obi & Ikegwuonu, 2024). Job enrichment should therefore be treated as one part of a wider set of conditions, which includes the motivation and reward problems documented by Adelabu (2005), and not as a stand-alone remedy.

Limitations

The study has limits that readers should keep in mind. The design is correlational and ex-post-facto, so the results describe association and cannot establish that enrichment causes higher productivity. The data are self-reported, which allows common-method effects, and the sample combined principals and teachers, whose vantage points on the same variables differ and who are nested within schools. Only three of the five core job dimensions were examined, so task significance, feedback, and a composite motivating potential score were not available. The analysis was bivariate, with no control for teacher or school characteristics, and the sample came from one state. Finally, measures derived from the Job Diagnostic Survey tradition have known psychometric limitations (Taber & Taylor, 1990), and broader work design instruments exist (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Future studies should test all five dimensions, analyse principals' and teachers' responses separately or with multilevel models, use multiple regression to compare the unique contribution of each dimension while controlling for leadership and welfare variables, and use longitudinal or experimental designs.

5 CONCLUSION

The study set out to find out whether autonomy, skill variety, and task identity are related to teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Delta State. All three were positively and significantly related to productivity, so the three null hypotheses were rejected. Skill variety and autonomy showed the stronger relationships and task identity the weakest, and each dimension on its own accounted for roughly 2% to 8% of the variance in productivity. The results support job characteristics theory in a Nigerian public secondary school setting while showing that job design is only one of several influences on teachers' productivity. Enriching the content of teachers' work is a reasonable and low-cost addition to, but not a substitute for, sound leadership, welfare provision, and adequate resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Principals and the Delta State Post Primary Education Board should widen teachers' discretion over instructional decisions, such as teaching methods, lesson sequencing, classroom assessment tasks, and the choice of teaching materials, within the limits set by the curriculum.
- Principals should deliberately diversify the roles open to teachers, for example through subject committees, mentoring of new teachers, guidance and counselling support, ICT use, and co-curricular leadership. These roles should be matched to teachers' interests and ability, and their workload should be monitored so that variety does not turn into overload.
- Where timetabling allows, teachers should be given ownership of whole units of work, such as a class or subject for a full term, from planning through teaching to assessment and review, so that the results of their effort are visible to them.
- Job enrichment should be combined with welfare provision, recognition, and ethical, supportive leadership, because these are also related to teachers' productivity in Delta State.
- Principals should be trained in basic job design and delegation so that they can apply enrichment in a way that fits the growth needs and readiness of individual teachers

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Statement of ethical approval

The author declare that ethical standards were observed in the conduct of this research. Permission was sought from the principals of all the secondary schools used for this research.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was sought from participant and research assistant volunteer to assist with collection of data before they were recruited and coached.

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