

**ATTRITION AND STRATEGIES FOR TEACHER RETENTION IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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Abstract

Teacher attrition and mobility is an educational wastage issue. The purpose of this study was to determine the dimensions, causes of teacher attrition and the strategies for teacher retention in secondary schools in Anambra state. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and was guided by three research questions. The population of the study was made up of 6,342 public secondary school teachers in the six education zones of the state. The sample for the study was 634 public secondary school teachers in Anambra state. Researchers' designed, 4-point scale questionnaire which was validated by experts and tested for reliability was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the three research questions. The findings show among others that teacher attrition or teacher turnover takes place for a number of reasons which include low social recognition for teachers and lack of opportunities for professional development. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government intensify programmes for teachers' development and capacity building. The society in general and employers of teachers in particular should do all that is needed to accord the teaching profession its rightful pride of place among professions.

Keywords: Attrition; Strategies; Teacher Retention; Secondary School

Introduction

Teachers are the basic ingredients in the educational advancement of any nation, so the education system must be responsible and responsive enough to ensure the recruitment, training and retention of adequate, skilled and high performing teachers for the nation's educational goals to be achieved. However, teacher attrition especially at the secondary school level has become a major challenge to achieving the educational goals.

Teacher attrition, also referred to as teacher turnover, is a phenomenon that is characterized by teachers leaving work in the classroom to take up and pursue other professional responsibilities inside or outside the educational system (Miller and Chait, 2018). It is the educational sector labour mobility by which, among other reasons, teachers seek professional 'greener pastures' which in turn leaves the school bereft of much needed teaching staff. Egu, Nwaju and Chinonye (2011) described teacher attrition as a major problem facing recruitment and retaining of teachers in the Nigerian educational system. Adverse teacher mobility represents educational capital wastage, especially when teachers leave the classroom to pursue careers outside the educational system.

Human capital acquired through training and experience in the job is lost when teachers leave the profession (Egu et al, 2011). Teacher attrition is costly because the government is forced to spend huge amounts of funds to recruit and induct new teachers as replacements; while at the same time school principals still scramble each year to fill vacant positions left by both retiring and departing teachers. Utah Foundation (2007) reports that high teacher turnover restricts children to low-quality education and gives rise to unequal distribution of teachers. Egu et al (2011) further observed that teacher attrition is highest among newly employed teachers posted to the rural areas with few amenities, facilities and experienced teachers to mentor them. Ingersoll and Smith (2003), report that 20% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years.

Economically, teacher attrition is costly. High teacher attrition forces the government, as well as proprietors of private schools, to expend school resources, more often than necessary, to recruit, hire and induct new teachers. It is not uncommon to observe principals of public schools making regular visits to educational boards to request for teachers to fill vacant teacher positions, especially in core subject areas such as Mathematics and the Science subjects. Borman and Dowling (2008) confirm in their review of six different studies that mathematics and science teachers have the highest attrition, they are more likely take other jobs than teaching.

Herzberg's (1959) Two Factor theory provides a good framework for studies on teacher attrition. Herzberg's motivational-hygiene theory states that there are certain factors in the workplace that result in job satisfaction while another set of factors cause dissatisfaction. From his experiments using 200 engineers at their job, Herzberg postulated that there are two groups of factors that result in

satisfaction or dissatisfaction which he termed Hygiene factors and motivational factors. Hygiene factors do not satisfy the individual needs but cause dissatisfaction (e.g. Job benefits, work environment, job security, salary, etc). Motivational factors are those that give the individual positive satisfaction and spur him/ her on to work harder (e.g. recognition, work challenges, responsibilities, etc). These two groups of factors are important because the satisfaction of these needs provide the motivational basis for teachers to remain in the profession, become satisfied and committed to their jobs.

Teacher attrition is a problem in Nigeria and the world at large. According to Heller (2004), the teaching profession has the highest attrition rate of all professions. The introduction of educational programmes such as Universal Basic Education has brought about a large increase in enrolment at the primary and secondary levels of education, without a corresponding increase in teaching strength of schools. Teachers continue to retire, while others move to other jobs outside the education system for a variety of reasons. It becomes expedient to investigate the causes of teacher attrition.

Teaching is often referred to as a noble profession but most people's assessment of the monetary and non-monetary benefits in the profession vis-à-vis other professions compel prospective teachers to seek alternative careers and teachers to leave the profession. This state of affair is worrisome and calls for urgent solution.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to determine dimensions of teacher attrition, the causes of teacher attrition and the strategies for improving teachers' retention in the teaching profession. Specifically, the study determined the dimensions of teacher attrition, the causes of teacher attrition and the strategies for improving teachers' retention in the teaching profession in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study and they included:

1. What are the dimensions of teacher attrition in Anambra State?
2. What are the causes of teacher attrition in Anambra State?
3. What are the strategies for improving teacher retention in Anambra State?

Research Method

The study was a descriptive survey conducted in Anambra State. All the six education zones, namely Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha were covered. The population of the study was made up of 6,342 public secondary school teachers in the six education zones of the state. This comprised 830 teachers from Aguata, 1,694 teachers from Awka, 937 teachers from Nnewi, 989 teachers from Ogidi, 1,394 teachers from Onitsha and 498 teachers from Otuocha

education zones respectively. The sample for the study was 634 public secondary school teachers in Anambra state. This represented 10% of public secondary school teachers in the six education zones of Anambra state. The choice of 10% is in line with the recommendation made by Eze (2005) that in a survey involving a population of few thousands, at least 5% of the population should be used as the sample size.

Data were collected with an instrument developed by the researchers. It has four (4) sections. Section A sought personal data from respondents and gave instructions on how to fill the questionnaire. Sections B, C and D contained items of the questionnaire. The response options were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). This instrument was duly validated by two experts in educational management and one expert in measurement and evaluation from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was adopted using 20 copies of the questionnaire was done to collect data from 20 teachers in secondary schools in Enugu state. Chronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability which yielded an average index of 0.83. Data collected was analysed using mean and standard deviations.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the dimensions of teacher attrition in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of teachers on the dimensions of teacher attrition.

S/N.	Items on dimensions of teacher attrition	\bar{x}	Sd	Remarks
1	Teachers leave their jobs temporarily on secondment to other government establishments	3.3	0.1	Agreed
2	Teachers leave the teaching profession to work in new areas not related to teaching	3.2	0.3	Agreed
3	High performing teachers leave when they are appointed to political posts	3.6	0.1	Agreed
4	Many science based teachers leave teaching to pursue other careers	2.6	0.2	Agreed
5	Some teachers remain in their jobs and do other business	3.8	0.2	Agreed
6	Others resign their jobs permanently	2.7	0.1	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.2	0.02	Agreed

Table 1 shows the responses and mean scores of the respondents on teacher attrition. The analysis shows that the respondents agreed to all the items 1, 2, 3,

4, 5 and 6 as the dimensions of teacher attrition with mean scores of 3.3, 3.2, 3.6, 2.6, 3.8 and 2.7 respectively and standard deviations ranging from 0.1 to 0.3. This shows the non-disparity of the means.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of teacher attrition in Anambra State?
Table 2; Mean responses on causes of teacher attrition.

S/N.	Causes of teacher attrition	\bar{x}	Sd	Remarks
7	Lack of transparency in hiring qualified teachers.	2.9		Agreed
8	Due processes are not followed during recruitment of teachers.	3.1	0.3	Agreed
9	Low social status accorded the teaching profession	3.1	0.1	Agreed
10	Family resettlement [migration].	3.5	0.1	Agreed
11	Young teachers leave for employment in better paying job.	3.6	0.2	Agreed
12	Teachers leave their profession to acquire improvement in academic qualification	2.2	0.1	Disagreed
13	Gender discrimination	2.0	0.1	Disagreed
14	Poor school environment	3.3	0.3	Agreed
15	Low salary	3.9	0.2	Agreed
16	Long distance of school from my home location	3.1	0.1	Agreed
17	Lack of professional development opportunities for teachers	3.8	0.2	Agreed
18	Unequal work distribution or dual behavior of my supervisor in my school of teaching	1.9	0.1	Disagreed
19	Late payment of salary	3.6	0.2	Agreed
20	Lack of teachers participation in decision making process	3.3	0.1	Agreed
21	Excessive workload	3.6	0.1	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.1	0.008	

Table 2 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of the respondents on teacher attrition. The analysis shows that the respondents agreed on items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20 and 21 and disagreed on items 12, 13 and 18 with the mean scores of 2.9, 3.1, 3.1, 3.5, 3.6, 3.3, 3.9, 3.1, 3.8, 3.6, 3.3, 3.6 and 2.2, 2.0, 1.9 respectively. The standard deviations also cluster around the mean.

Research Question 3: What are the strategies for improving teacher retention in Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean Responses of teachers on possible strategies for improving teacher retention.

S/N	Possible strategies for improving teacher retention	\bar{x}	<i>Sd</i>	Remarks
22	Teachers' salaries should be increased to a very reasonable extent.	3.9	0.2	Agreed
23	There should be provision for professional development opportunities for teachers.	3.9	0.1	Agreed
24	There should be equal distribution of work among teachers	3.0	1.1	Agreed
25	There should be reduction in the workload of teaching	3.3	0.3	Agreed
26	Teachers' salaries/allowances should be paid on time	3.8	0.2	Agreed
27	Teaching profession should be positioned in such a way that the masses should be able to see it as a great profession and accord it a great respect	3.8	0.1	Agreed
28	Teachers should be allowed to participate in all the key decision that affects them.	3.5	0.1	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.6	0.2	

Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of the respondents on strategies for improving teachers' retention. The analysis shows that the respondents agreed on items 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 with mean scores of 3.9, 3.9, 3.0, 3.3, 3.8, 3.8 and 3.5 respectively. Therefore the respondents agreed that the strategies as contained in the items will help in improving teacher retention in Anambra state.

Discussion

In this study, six types of teaching force mobility that give rise to attrition among secondary school teachers in Anambra State. They are: teachers leaving the profession to work in other areas not related to teaching, when some high performing teachers are appointed to political posts, science based subject teachers leaving teaching to pursue other careers in industry, through retirement, some stay on the job but engage in other business. It is common in the State for teachers to stay and combine teaching with other businesses or jobs. This finding agrees with Thomas (2017) who found that economic recession forced some teachers to engage in other part-time jobs and businesses until they could get a

better paying job. The findings of this study also corroborate Egu et. al., (2011) and Borman and Dowling (2008) position that teacher attrition is subject based. This accounts for the fact that most schools in the area lacked adequate number of qualified mathematics and science subject teachers.

The researchers also found the reasons for teacher attrition among secondary school teachers in Anambra state and they include lack of transparency and due process in teacher recruitment, postings/ transfers to rural schools of young/ new teachers who prefer staying in urban areas with better amenities; low recognition and social status accorded the teaching profession; female teachers leaving to join their husbands. All the above reasons corroborate Egu, et.al. (2011) who also found similar causes of teacher attrition and Hassan (2013) study which reported that teachers in Afghanistan leave the profession in large numbers due to long distance postings, heavy and unequal workload, low salary and lack of professional development. The respondents however did not agree that gender discrimination in school appointments. On the other hand, teachers in Anambra state are mainly females, but they are not discriminated against in appointment as principals, although the government makes deliberate effort to ensure male representation in school appointments. Majority of the respondents also disagree that teachers leave the service to acquire additional qualifications. Most teachers who embark on further studies are given permission to do in-service training and are not forced to leave their jobs.

Other reasons for high teacher attrition are excessive workloads, lack of teacher participation in the decision-making process, non-conducive school environment, and lack of opportunities for professional development. This study shows that causes of teacher attrition include motivational factors such as poor recognition, lack of opportunities for self improvement, non participation in decision-making and hygiene factors such as a poor work environment, poor remuneration, teacher posting and family resettlement among others.

On the strategies for improving teacher retention, the respondents claim the following would help stem the tide of teacher attrition: making teaching socially attractive for young people, improving teachers' remuneration and conditions of service, encouraging teacher participation in decision-making, providing opportunities for teacher professional development, avoiding work overload, providing mentoring for newly recruited teachers as a vital part of staff personnel function. Newly recruited teachers should be given adequate orientation to cushion the initial stress of starting as teachers. These researchers agree with Babalola and Ayeni (2009) that deliberate and sincere effort should be made to encourage teacher retention if any meaningful and sustained educational progress is to be made. Teacher retention will, therefore, be achieved if teachers are accorded social recognition and enabling environment provided for teachers' professional growth.

Conclusion

From the results of this study, it was concluded that teacher attrition is caused mainly by the low status accorded the teaching profession, poor work environment and poor remuneration, lack of opportunities for professional development, non-involvement of teachers in decision-making are some of the causes of high teacher turnover. The government and all concerned with education must stop paying lip service to the importance of education and take immediate steps to curtail teacher attrition.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should make deliberate and sincere efforts to recruit and retain the best caliber of people into the teaching service by improving teachers' conditions of service and improving the social status of teachers.
2. Provision of accommodation, with amenities such as potable water, electricity and health services for rural schools will help entice new young teachers to accept postings to the rural areas.
3. Indigenes of places with peculiar circumstances (such as remote and inaccessible areas) that teachers reject postings / transfers should be recruited to teach in their local environments.
4. Government should step up the recruitment of qualified teaching staff in vital core subjects that lack teachers in order to reduce excessive workloads for the limited number of existing teachers in these subjects.
5. Human capital development programmes through in-service training and study leave with pay must be emphasized to help teachers professionally actualize themselves.

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