



## TEACHERS' ATTRITION IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA: CAUSES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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### Abstract:

The seeming high teacher turnover in private secondary schools necessitated this study on teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State: causes and the way forward. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. One research question guided the study. The population of the study comprised 17,217 teachers in the 923 private secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for the study comprised 391 teachers using the Taro Yamen sample size formular. A researcher's developed questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts who are lecturers, two in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Foundations and the other in Educational Management and Planning, Department of Educational Management and Policy all in the Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The Cronbach's Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.72. The researcher with the help of ten research assistants distributed and

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successfully collected 368 copies of the questionnaire administered. The research question was answered using the arithmetic mean. It was found among others that non-participation of teachers in professional development programmes like conferences and seminars is one of the causes of teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that private secondary school principals in Enugu State should sponsor and allow teachers to participate in professional development programmes with the view of curbing the high rate of teachers' attrition.

**Keywords:** teachers' attrition, private secondary schools

## 1. Introduction

The growth and development of any nation or society largely depend on its citizens whose competences and skills can effectively be developed through education. The skills and potential of individuals for self-reliance and actualization could be developed through education. Nigeria as a nation acknowledges the fact that education is a vital instrument for national development and social change as such has joined other countries of the world in the march towards worthwhile educational investments and reforms. One of the goals of education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) is the development of appropriate skills, mental, physical, and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.

The purpose of any level of formal education (basic, secondary or tertiary) in Nigeria is to effect changes in students' behaviour by exposing them to relevant experiences through the systematic presentation of skills, attitudes, concepts and principles. Secondary school education is the concern of this study and is the form of education children receive after nine years of basic education and before the tertiary stage. Secondary education is concerned with the acquisition of fundamental principles and knowledge for the study of different disciplines at the tertiary level of education (Ofojebe & Nnebedum, 2016). The importance of secondary education lies in its position both as the bridge between basic and tertiary education and also as the agent for preparing individuals for useful living in society (FRN, 2013). There are two categories of secondary schools in Nigeria; public and private secondary schools.

Public secondary schools are schools that are owned by the government and its agencies. Such schools are controlled and managed directly by public education authorities, governing agencies or by a governing body (council, committees among others), most of whose members are appointed by public authority or are elected by public franchise (UNESCO, 2001). Private secondary schools which is the concern of this study, on the other hand, are schools owned, financed and managed by private individuals, missions, corporate organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Private secondary schools, according to Etuk (2005), were set up for the reason

of providing better teaching and learning conditions than those obtained in public secondary schools.

Irrespective of the ownership, secondary schools in Nigeria have common objectives to achieve as stated by FRN (2013, p.17-18) as follows:

- 1) Provide holders of the Basic Education Certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- 2) Offer a diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles;
- 3) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- 4) Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- 5) Develop and promote Nigerian Languages, art and culture in the context of the world's cultural heritage;
- 6) Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- 7) Foster patriotism, national unity and security education with emphasis on common ties in spite of our diversity; and
- 8) Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour.

The achievement of the above objectives has been the priority of secondary school education in Nigeria whether public or private. The secondary education level is managed by the principal who is responsible for utilizing the available school resources to enhance the attainment of the stated goals of the school. The success or failure of a particular secondary school will be attributed to the principal. However, principals alone cannot work in isolation towards the achievement of the goals; they therefore should work together with their teachers as no educational level in Nigeria (Private secondary education inclusive) could rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2013). Therefore, to be able to achieve the goals and objectives of secondary education in Nigeria, the hiring and retention of qualified and experienced teachers are of utmost importance because they are the cornerstone upon which the excellence of education rests. Teachers play important roles in the achievement of stated educational objectives and in the task of nation-building for sustainable development because they turn educational policies into practice in a normal classroom setting.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that the goals of secondary education in Nigeria cannot be achieved when adequately trained and motivated teaching staff leave the teaching profession before their retirement age or seek transfers to other schools. There is therefore the need to keep teachers satisfied with their jobs and careers so that they remain in the teaching profession. Teaching comparatively speaking is a highly stressful career, and teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate (Hanushek,

2007; Ingersoll, & Smith, 2003). This is not a welcome development because as observed by Faremi (2017), the retention of highly qualified teachers is of great importance if the objectives of secondary education in Nigeria are to be achieved as the high rate of teachers' attrition will truncate the achievement of the stated goals.

Teachers' attrition is the process whereby teachers are moved from one school to another and or leave the teaching profession entirely before their retirement age for other professions. Teachers' attrition has an adverse effect on productivity and service delivery. Every school, whether public or private, strives to retain a pool of qualified, committed and talented teaching staff that can deliver quality education to its students and in turn produce students of high quality. When qualified teachers, for any reason, have intentions of leaving the school system or teaching field, it would portend a negative impact on students and the institution's overall performance as well.

A lot of factors can cause teacher attrition ranging from poor salaries, lack of a conducive teaching environment, and lack of mentorship among others. Principals' involvement with teachers, can be a significant factor in reducing teachers' attrition and in inspiring the passion that keeps teachers, especially the beginning ones from leaving the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Principals may not have much influence over the reasons why teachers choose the teaching profession, however, they are critical players in whether teachers decide to stay in the profession or not (ASCD, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 1994). Aside from teachers' salaries which are considered to be poor when compared with what is obtainable in other professions, there could be other reasons why teachers leave the teaching profession before their retirement age or even seek transfers to other schools. In line with this, Akudo and Oni, (2016) maintained that salaries are not the most important factor in teacher retention, but that teacher retention is a major function of the principal. This supports, Loeb and Page (2002) who revealed that teachers who begin to work transfers to other schools and to other professions often appear to be influenced only modestly by salaries and more by other factors such as working conditions, school leadership, teacher support, resources, facilities and safety among other factors. Archie (2005) maintained that when competent and qualified teachers leave schools for another profession or transfer to another school, it could be detrimental to the achievement of the set objectives of the school and invariably affect the quality of graduates.

Teachers' attrition has become such a critical issue that it has come to the attention of policymakers, educational planners and administrators (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). The ugly trend seems to be higher in private secondary schools than in public secondary schools. When a teacher leaves a school, the school not only loses the teacher, but also loses the investments made in him, including workshops, in-service training, and teacher socialization activities. An effort towards retaining experienced and qualified teachers therefore is imperative if the objectives of secondary education are to be achieved. Fullan (2003) reported that effective leaders can change the organizational culture which in turn, can create an atmosphere of job satisfaction that produces high retention rates because

teachers might be persuaded to take lower salaries in exchange for better working conditions and stay on the job without seeking transfers in other schools.

The causes of teachers' attrition include; a lack of professional development programmes, lack of mentoring, lack of collaborative school culture practices, and lack of administrative support among others. Other causes include; a lack of classroom autonomy, a lack of supportive principal leadership and a lack of an orderly school environment (Britton, 2016, 2016; Evans-Daobbs, 2018; Fisher, 2011; Grissom, 2008; Locklear, 2010; Okello, 2018 & Partridge, 2007).

It seems as if most private secondary school teachers in Enugu State are looking for a better opportunity to leave the teaching profession for other public schools or even other professions. Building a professional teacher corps is a process that only begins with recruiting highly qualified teachers. Once recruited, these teachers need professional development, mentoring, collaborations and other administrative supports to develop a strong sense of their own efficacy based on high-quality teaching skills and experience. Regrettably, the extent to which private secondary schools in Enugu State make sure that the high teachers' attrition rate is reduced is not known as the attrition rate of teachers in Enugu State is on the increase. Teachers are not adequately mentored, teachers seem not to be involved in the decision-making process in the school, and teachers seem not to be receiving adequate support from their principals. Worse still, teachers are not subjected to adequate training and professional development programmes. These and many other factors could be the reason why teachers seek to transfer to other schools or leave the teaching profession entirely before their retirement age. It was against this backdrop that this study, teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State: Causes and way forward was necessitated.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Teachers' consistently leaving the teaching profession or seeking transfer from one school to another is quite alarming and has become a global phenomenon. There are many reported cases of teachers either seeking transfer from one school to another or leaving the teaching profession entirely before their retirement age. It is not an overstatement to say that teachers (most especially private secondary school teachers) consistently are looking for better opportunities to leave the teaching profession for other sectors or to other schools that they adjudged better than the others. Brain drain of qualified teachers has been recorded in many private secondary schools in Enugu State and hence raised a human resource capacity concern which has a negative effect on the overall student academic achievement due to lack of continuity.

Many factors could be responsible for teacher turnover in private secondary schools in Enugu State. Unfortunately, the process of retaining teachers has been a daunting task for private secondary schools in Enugu State. Private secondary school principals in Enugu State appear not to be adequately sponsoring or allowing their teachers to go for further training, Professional and self-development programmes, and

appear not to be adequately encouraging their teachers to attend conferences and workshops and other teacher' socialising activities which will help them to keep abreast of new developments in the field of teaching and thereby facilitating their decision to remain in the teaching profession till retirement without seeking for transfers to other schools or other professions. Worse still, principals seem not to be providing an avenue for mentorship. It is in light of these and other related problems that this study investigated the causes of teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State.

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to find out the causes of teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State and the way forward.

Specifically, this study found out:

- The causes of teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State.

### **2.2 Research Question**

The following research question guided the study:

- What are the causes of teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State?

## **3. Method**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. Anambra State Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 17, 217 teachers in the 923 private secondary schools in the six education zones in Enugu State Nigeria. A sample of 391 private secondary school teachers was drawn from the total population using Taro Yamen sample size formular.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher from the views of experts and the literature reviewed. The questionnaire was subjected to face validation using three experts who are lecturers; two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency (reliability) of the instruments which yielded a coefficient of 0.72. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of 10 research assistants who are postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The research question was answered using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation.

## **4. Results**

**RQ1:** What are the causes of Teachers' Attrition in Private Secondary Schools in Enugu State?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings and standard deviation scores of teachers on causes of teachers' attrition in Private Secondary Schools in Enugu State

S/N	Items	Private Principals (N = 391)		
		Mean	SD	Remark
1.	The principal is not always available and accessible whenever teachers need them for assistance	3.71	0.568	Agree
2.	Not establishing teacher leadership positions e.g. head or chairman of a committee	3.39	0.738	Agree
3.	Non-recognition of teachers' good and exceptional works by the principal	3.00	0.649	Agree
4	Not involving the teachers in meaning decision makings in the school	3.25	0.889	Agree
5.	Not providing opportunities for teachers to work cooperatively as a group	3.36	0.535	Agree
6.	Lack of mentorship programmes for teachers	2,56	0.825	Agree
7.	Lack of professional judgment of teachers by principals	3.31	0.658	Agree
8.	Lack of opportunities for teachers to attend conferences and seminars	3.42	0.586	Agree
9.	Lack of provision of assistance for teachers in the review of their lesson plans where they are finding it difficult	3.21	0.680	Agree
10.	Lack of opportunities for teachers to obtain additional formal professional or subject qualification	3.23	0.706	Agree
11.	Lack of opportunities for teachers to embark on ICT Training courses like computer training courses	3.24	0.602	Agree
12.	Lack of opportunities for teachers to work as a team.	3.41	0.627	Agree
13.	Regular subject meeting to ensure that teachers understand the curriculum for easy implementation	3.11	0.696	Agree
	<b>Mean of means</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>0.386</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Results on Table 1 showed that the mean ratings of principals of private secondary schools for all the 13 items are above 2.50 which implies that teachers agreed that those factors are responsible for teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State. Thus the causes of teachers attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State include among others; non availability of the principals whenever teachers need them for assistance, accessibility of the principal by the teachers, lack of recognition of teachers' good and exceptional works, not involving teachers in important decision making in the school, not encouraging teachers to attend seminars and conferences, not giving teachers

leadership positions, not having regular meetings with teachers and lack of mentorship programmes for teachers.

## **5. Discussion of Findings**

### **5.1 Causes of Teachers' Attrition in Private Secondary State**

The findings of the study disclosed that a lot of factors are responsible for teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State. These factors include among others; not allowing teachers to obtain additional qualifications, lack of opportunities for teachers to embark on computer training programmes, non-availability of the principals whenever teachers need them for assistance, accessibility of the principal by the teachers, lack of recognition of teachers' good and exceptional works, not involving teachers in important decision making in the school, not encouraging teachers to attend seminars and conferences, not giving teachers leadership positions, not having regular meetings with teachers and lack of mentorship programmes for teachers. The findings tally with Smith (2015) who found that a mentoring programme is not applied for teachers' retention in secondary schools in Guateng province. The findings of the study also tally with Sankey (2017) who revealed that teachers' involvement in the decision-making process and the provision of opportunities for teachers to share ideas through planning and dialogue help in reducing the high rate of teacher attrition in schools. The finding of this study further is in tandem with Smith (2015) whose study found out that professional development for teachers was not applied to teachers' retention hence the reason for the high rate of teachers' attrition in schools. The findings also align with the findings of Samili (2017) who revealed that there is a lack of application of professional development practices for private secondary school teachers in Manayara region and maintained that that is one of the reasons teachers leave the teaching profession. However, the findings disagree with Wills (2014) who found out that mentoring practices were applied in schools in Florida. The findings also differ with Estict (2018) whose study revealed that mentoring practices are applied for teachers' retention in school settings in New Jersey.

Various arguments can be raised to account for these findings. One reason could be that the principals may not be aware of the mentoring programmes that they can adopt or perhaps they may not know that adequate application of mentoring programmes can help among others in reducing teachers' attrition. Another reason could be that the private secondary school principals may be ignorant of the fact that encouraging teachers to attend seminars and conferences could help them strengthen the teachers' connections to the teaching profession and to their respective schools thereby reducing teachers' attrition. Another reason could be inadequate funding of private secondary schools as the funds made available are so inadequate to sponsor teachers to attend seminars and conferences. These factors could be the reason most teachers in private secondary schools in Enugu State are looking for an opportunity to leave the private schools in search of a place even in the public schools and other sectors in search for an avenue for their personal and professional growth and development as teachers.

## 6. Conclusion

An inference that is drawn from the findings of this study is that a lot of factors are responsible for teachers' attrition in private secondary schools in Enugu State. It is concluded that if these factors are not checkmated, teachers' attrition rate will continue to be very high in that category of schools.

### 6.1 Recommendations

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

- Proprietors and principals of private secondary schools should provide an avenue for mentors to be assigned to teachers most especially the newly recruited teachers.
- Proprietors and principals of private secondary schools should encourage and sponsor teachers to attend seminars conferences and in-service training which will lead to professional growth and development.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

I confirm that I have carefully read and accepted the journal's policies and I confirm that I have received a permission from co-authors to publish this paper with the journal and I equally confirm that this paper is not already published elsewhere.

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