



## ADDRESSING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION FROM THE FIRST POINT OF THE VALUE CHAIN: WHAT ARE THE FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHER RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND ATTRITION IN NIGERIA?

### Introduction

Teachers are universally recognised as the bedrock of educational systems. The quality of instruction they provide directly influences the academic achievements of students, and the long-term success of these students considerably depends on the presence of effective teachers throughout their formative years. This connection between teacher quality and the performance of students has been noted by various scholars and organisations involved in education policies worldwide.

For instance, a 2009 study<sup>1</sup> found that if students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are instructed by highly effective teachers in elementary schools for three consecutive years, they can achieve proficiency in standardised assessments at the same level as students from privileged backgrounds. Conversely, poor teaching over a three-year period negatively impacts the academic growth of all students irrespective of their background. This emphasises the critical role that teachers play in education.

However, Nigeria, despite being in dire need of national development that can be facilitated by quality education, faces a shortage of qualified teachers.<sup>2</sup> Recent literature has noted a large number of unqualified personnel in both public and private schools.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, studies report persistent turnover of staff in schools, substantial attrition rate, and extreme job dissatisfaction among teachers.<sup>4</sup> Further, a recent survey conducted by the [Literary Renaissance Foundation](#) reveals a considerable number of disgruntled teachers and a poor rate of recruitment, with subjects regularly falling into abeyance due to the unavailability of teachers.

These points are corroborated by Madumere-Obike, Ukala and Nwabueze,<sup>5</sup> who emphasise that the quality of teaching in Nigeria has been undermined

<sup>1</sup> National Academy of Education (2009) Teacher quality. Education Policy White Paper. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED531145.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Oke, T.I. and Kefas, S.R. (2019) Education and Human Resources Planning for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria. *KIU Journal of Humanities*, 3(4), 17-25.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Oke, A.O., Ajagbe, M.A., Ogbari, M.E. and Adeyeye, J.O. (2016) Teacher retention and attrition: A review of the literature. *Mediterranean Journal of Sciences*, 7(2), 371-378

<sup>5</sup> Madumere-Obike, C.U., Ukala, C. and Nwabueze, A.I. (2017) Managing teacher attrition rate for quality education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Educational Planning*, 25(4), 47-58.

by high rates of teacher attrition, low retention, and poor recruitment strategies that fail to bring in sufficiently qualified personnel.

Therefore, as a nation striving for improved educational standards, Nigeria needs to devote careful attention to better recruitment and retention of teachers in its schools.

### Addressing the issue

This issue guide proffers recommendations for addressing the problem of unqualified teachers in Nigerian schools while suggesting strategies for improved recruitment, retention, and a reduction of the attrition rate.

Three policy options will be discussed, namely improving teacher recruitment strategies, reducing unsatisfactory working conditions, and providing encouraging support systems.

### Option One: Improving Teacher Recruitment Strategies

The recruitment of teachers in Nigerian schools requires improvement. The recruitment process needs to be standardised and regulated to attract qualified and motivated individuals to the teaching profession. Teachers need to have undergone relevant training and must be certified before they can be employed, rather than in a situation where random individuals are employed because they have nothing better to do. However, the employment benefits, especially the salary, need to be significantly improved as well to attract qualified individuals to the profession. The value of teachers and a teaching career should also be stressed in communities to encourage a positive mindset about the kind of remuneration that teachers require.

### A Primary Drawback

Many schools will be unable to cater to the calibre of teachers required and thus will be forced to make do with what they have if they do close altogether. This hinders the accessibility of schools for children from low-income families and communities. Moreover, parents with extremely low incomes, who form a majority of the Nigerian population, cannot afford to pay the cost of education that comes with an increased teacher salary.

Action	Drawback
The government should standardise teacher-recruitment process in both public and private schools, with specific criteria to ensure recruitment of only qualified people rather than job hunters with no teaching credentials or qualifications.	The government has shown little interest in education and may not be willing to undertake the investment that a standard recruitment policy requires.
Authorities in the state and local educational districts should organise short-term teacher-training courses	Teaching careers are held in little regard and many people might be

that individuals could take to get basic teaching qualifications.	disinclined to take teacher-training courses.
Competitive salaries should be offered to teachers to attract respect, interest and commitment.	Budgetary concerns may make this untenable for government-owned schools, while many private schools may be unable to offer competitive pay. Also, teacher pay can only be commensurate with the amount of money that parents pay for tuition and many parents in local communities are unable to afford the cost of quality education.
Local governments and non-governmental agencies should conduct creative campaigns aimed at improving the perception of the teaching profession in local communities	If competitive salaries are not offered to teachers, the campaigns might have little or no effect.
What else can be done to improve teacher recruitment?	What are the drawbacks?

### Option Two: Reducing Unsatisfactory Working Conditions

Efforts need to be made to reduce the poor working conditions of teachers in schools to improve job satisfaction, and thus increase retention while reducing the attrition of teachers. Schools need to reduce the number of students who are placed under a single teacher's care, as well as reduce the number of subjects that each teacher takes. When schools have limited resources to spend on salaries, they should adopt a lean curriculum and operate efficiently, rather than overwork teachers on little pay, thereby compromising their welfare. In addition, labour regulations that protect the rights of teachers should be enacted to reduce the arbitrary power of employers who treat teachers with scant respect, and even contempt.

### A Primary Drawback

There may be delays or a lack of response from administrators and policymakers on whom lies the onus of ensuring that the working conditions of teachers are improved. School administrators might prove resistant to change, especially if they perceive a potential reduction in their existing privileges, while the political backing that is required to implement educational or labour reforms might be difficult to obtain.

Action	Drawback
Reduce teacher-student ratio and the number of subjects each teacher handles by employing more capable hands	Financial constraints might hinder the recruitment of an adequate number of teachers, leading to overwork of available teachers

In the absence of adequate pay, schools should reduce teacher workload and run a lean curriculum	Stubborn administrators with a desire to impress parents and compete with other schools, even if those schools have bigger or better facilities, will oppose this change.
Government should work to reduce arbitrary employer power which frustrates teachers and often treats them with lack of respect.	Government is typically slow and indecisive in passing regulations.
Teacher unions should strive to regulate the employment conditions of teachers. This includes making regulations that protect teachers from employer abuse.	Such unions can be rigid and bureaucratic. The conservative elements within these bodies might also be reluctant to advocate change that can be perceived as radical.
What else can be done to improve teacher recruitment?	What are the drawbacks?

### Option Three: Providing Encouraging Support Systems

The rate of teacher attrition in Nigeria can be reduced and retention improved through the provision of teacher support systems. Supportive working environments can be created by offering incentives such as rewards for excellent performance and regular professional development programmes to help them advance their careers. Further, incentives can also be provided to encourage prospective teachers to acquire teaching certifications.

### A Primary Drawback

A possible lacklustre response from relevant policymakers, pressure groups and actors in the academic sector is a significant barrier. Moreover, given that sustained effort is needed from activists and other vested individuals to push through the changes required, other pressing social issues such as insecurity, rising inflation and growing poverty rate might limit the zeal with which these parties approach the issue.

Action	Drawback
Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should offer incentives to encourage citizens to enrol in teaching programmes and acquire teaching certifications.	Lukewarm disposition of the government toward education may not make this tenable. It may also be challenging to find NGOs with enough resources to offer such incentives.
Schools should be encouraged to implement performance-based incentives and rewards to recognise and motivate teachers for their achievements.	This might involve committing extra resources which schools may not be able to afford.

Schools should provide adequate teaching support such as standard teaching guides to ease the work of teachers and improve their job satisfaction.	Many schools are governed by administrators who, unless forced, will make only half-hearted attempts to provide the relevant materials.
Schools, governments and NGOs should sponsor teaching development programmes that help teachers gain more technical knowledge of teaching and class-based activities.	Lack of adequate planning and collaboration among these key actors might hinder the organisation of such programmes. Additionally, ungenerous and recalcitrant individuals in the educational system might insist that the programmes should be monetised.
What else can be done to provide support and encouragement for teachers?	What are the drawbacks?

### About This Issue Guide

*This issue advisory is a preliminary note for the Literary Renaissance Foundation's (LRF) panel discussion on the factors affecting teacher recruitment, retention and attrition in Nigeria. Prepared by the Research and Development Team of the [LRF](#), the guide explores strategies and policies that can optimise or manage these factors and contribute to a robust and effective teaching workforce. It presents three policy options: Option One focuses on improving teacher recruitment strategies; Option Two addresses job dissatisfaction and improving working conditions; and Option Three highlights supportive programmes that can enhance teacher retention.*

*The [LRF](#) is a non-profit aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 of taking strategic and deliberate action to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for everyone and promoting lifelong opportunities for all.<sup>6</sup>*

### Ground Rules

- Focus on the options and actions we can take nationally and in our communities.
- Consider all options fairly.
- Listening is just as important as speaking.
- No one or two individuals should dominate.
- Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations' [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#)