

**FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHER RECRUITMENT,
RETENTION AND ATTRITION IN NIGERIA**

A REPORT

DATE: SATURDAY, JULY 8, 2023

TIME: 4:00 PM WAT

**PREPARED BY THE
LITERARY RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION (LRF)**

LRF Dialogue 3

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LRF Dialogue 3

BACKGROUND OF THE EVENT

Teachers in Nigeria face various challenges, including neglect, low pay, and even occasional abuse from their employers in the case of private school teachers.

The recruitment process for teachers has been described as poor, resulting in the hiring of unqualified individuals who contribute to the substandard output of students. This issue has been detrimental to the educational sector, as studies and stakeholders have consistently emphasised the critical role of teachers in student development. For example, a study reveals that when competent teachers instruct students from low-income backgrounds for three years, their performance in standardised assessments matches that of their counterparts from high-income backgrounds.

This reveals the extent to which Nigeria's teacher problem is adversely impacting its overall educational standard and hindering the country's progress. It is imperative, therefore, to develop solutions that address the problems of poor recruitment, low retention rates, and high teacher attrition in schools, considering the urgent need for national advancement through an improved educational system.

To address these issues, the Literary Renaissance Foundation (LRF) organised its third Reading Culture Dialogue focusing specifically on Nigeria's teacher crisis. This Dialogue, which takes the form of a panel discussion, gathered stakeholders and players from the educational sector to share their perspectives and generate key points to be conveyed to policymakers.

The LRF's Reading Culture Dialogue is a quarterly event that serves as a platform for stakeholders in the education and learning sector to exchange ideas and propose viable strategies for a rebirth of the reading culture and commitment to lifelong learning among the citizenry, on one hand, as well as the improvement in the quality of education and overall development of the country on the other.

By facilitating these discussions, the Foundation aims to contribute to the revival of a reading culture in Nigeria, provide equitable learning opportunities for all and, consequently, drive collective progress.

FORMAT OF THE PROGRAMME

This edition of the quarterly Dialogue was the third in the series and the second for the year. The panel comprised veteran educators, teachers, school proprietors and educational officials. Other participants included a lecturer from the college of education, a solicitor, a civil servant, and other individuals with an interest in the state of the Nigerian educational sector.

Further, the participants were of various ages and attended the Dialogue from different locations in Nigeria and overseas. The session consisted of readings of the issue guide and deliberation by the participants on problems and underlying factors of teacher recruitment, retention and attrition, and then the possible solutions to those problems.

Programme date: Saturday, July 8, 2023

Programme venue: Zoom

Facilitators: Babatunde Oladele (facilitator), Bede Ehiogu (note taker) and Mary Ogundipe (timekeeper)

Participants: Gloria Ohakwe (Lagos), Chukwuma Adekunle (Enugu), Fadekemi Kolawole (Ogun), Bobai Kabonbwok (Jos), Ifemide Omolawal (Ibadan), Linus Tagang Barry (Jos), Olasupo Olabisi (Ibadan), Olamide Omolawal (Ibadan), Williams Oladele (Ogun), Yetunde Tonmaye (Lagos), Maxwell (Ibadan), Bobai Kabonbwok (Jos), Sola Lebile (Akure), Tejumade Oke (Lagos), Esther Aworinde (Texas), Caroline

The Dialogue began at 4 p.m. WAT and lasted until 6.45 p.m. At the beginning of the event, each participant introduced themselves, giving their name, location and occupation, after which the facilitator introduced himself and his team. He also described the goals of the discussion and how it would be conducted.

The facilitator invited participants to read different sections of the issue guide so as to be acquainted with the official protocol for the dialogue. The ground rules were read and accepted by all parties before conversations began.

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.

Discussion structure

The discussion on the factors affecting teacher recruitment, retention and attrition was approached from three potential policy actions:

- ❖ Option One: Improving Teacher Recruitment Strategies
- ❖ Option Two: Reducing Unsatisfactory Working Conditions
- ❖ Option Three: Providing Encouraging Support Systems

The participants first discussed the general problems surrounding the issues in teacher recruitment by sharing their personal experiences and insights as to why it persisted. Then, they discussed each policy option described in the issue guide and analysed the strategies to rectify the problem. For each proposal, a drawback was also presented to understand possible barriers to implementation. Each person actively participated in the debate, contributing their ideas and carefully listening to others.

The discussions were well coordinated. There was an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding during the conversations, and every participant was given the opportunity to speak if they indicated by raising their hand in their video or through a Zoom icon. Subsequent speakers frequently analysed the ideas and contributions of the previous speakers, leading to very rich debates and insights.

The resulting details from each policy option are presented below.

Option One: Improving Teacher Recruitment Strategies

The first policy option focused on recruiting better, more qualified teachers to teach in schools. This includes both ensuring that only certified professionals are employed and encouraging more prospective teachers to take short-term professional teaching courses.

The following actions were considered:

- 1) Government should standardise the 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.
- 2) Local governments and schools should highlight short-term teacher-training courses that individuals could take to get basic teaching qualifications.

- 3) Competitive salaries should be offered to teachers to secure respect, interest and commitment.
- 4) Local governments and non-governmental agencies should conduct creative campaigns aimed at improving people's perception of the teaching profession in local communities.

The possible obstacles to implementing these action points were identified with each drawback representing a barrier to the action described in the corresponding number.

- 1) The government has shown little interest in education and might prove uncommitted to a standard recruitment policy.
- 2) Teaching careers are held in little regard and many people might be disinclined to take teacher-training courses.
- 3) A lack of resources means that many schools might be unable to offer competitive pay. Moreover, 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.
- 4) If competitive salaries are not offered to teachers, the campaigns might have little or no effect.

These points were discussed at length by the participants. Some emphasised the importance of building a positive societal culture around the teaching profession, rather than the current contempt with which it is regarded. However, most speakers stressed the role of the increasing rate of poverty and corruption as the foundation of most recruitment problems.

Option Two: Reducing Unsatisfactory Working Conditions

It was agreed that a reduction of unsatisfactory working conditions would result in a concomitant reduction of attrition and an increase in teacher-retention rates. The approaches below were discussed:

- 1) Schools should reduce the teacher-student ratio and the number of subjects each teacher handles by employing more teachers.
- 2) In the absence of adequate pay, schools should reduce teacher workload and run a lean curriculum.
- 3) The government should work to reduce arbitrary employer power which frustrates teachers and often shows them a flagrant lack of respect.
- 4) Teacher unions should strive to regulate the employment conditions of teachers, including ping regulations protecting teachers from employer abuse.

The drawbacks to these propositions were also presented for discussion:

- 1) Non-availability of finance might hinder the recruitment of an adequate number of teachers, leading to overwork of available teachers.

- 2) Stubborn administrators with a desire to impress parents and compete with other schools, even if those schools have larger resources, will oppose this change.
- 3) Government is typically slow and indecisive in passing necessary regulations.
- 4) 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.

Option Three: Providing Encouraging Support Systems

Under policy option three, support systems that can motivate teachers and encourage other professionals to both join and remain in the sector were discussed. Below are the action points:

- 1) Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should offer incentives to encourage people to enrol for teaching programmes and acquire teaching certifications.
- 2) Schools should be encouraged to implement performance-based incentives and rewards to recognise and motivate teachers for their achievements.
- 3) Schools should provide adequate teaching support such as standard teaching guides to ease the work of teachers and improve their job satisfaction.
- 4) Schools, government and NGOs should sponsor teaching development programmes that help teachers gain more technical knowledge of teaching and class-based activities.

The following are their respective drawbacks:

- 1) A lukewarm attitude from the government may prove to be a delay in the process. It may also be challenging to find NGOs with enough resources to offer such incentives.
- 2) This might involve committing extra resources which the schools may not afford.
- 3) Many schools are governed by administrators who, unless forced, will make only lacklustre attempts to provide the relevant materials.
- 4) 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.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The dialogue shed light on the critical issues plaguing teachers in Nigeria's education system, with the discussion centering on the problems that lead to poor recruitment, low retention and high attrition rate of teachers in Nigerian schools, as well as the support systems that need implementing and the negative factors that should be curbed. Participants expressed deep concern about the poor academic environment, job dissatisfaction and low teacher quality, all of which have contributed to a decline in the education sector's overall standard.

Several root causes for these challenges were identified, including a high level of poverty, absence of professionalism in teacher recruitment, and a lack of effective skill training among many teachers who do not attend teacher colleges. Additionally, corruption in the educational sector, especially in private schools, was revealed to have undermined efforts to maintain quality standards and ensure the welfare of teachers.

To address these issues, the panel suggested several strategies. Leveraging technology to engage students and enhance learning was one approach, though it was equally recognised that access to devices and the internet remains a challenge, particularly in rural areas. An overhaul of the educational system was deemed necessary too, with a strong emphasis on curbing corruption and promoting good governance in both public and private schools.

The consensus among the panellists was that improved pay for teachers is vital. However, while they acknowledged that better financial compensation would help attract and retain competent educators, they also noted that the burden of funding schools should not rest solely on the government. In fact, it should involve collaboration from various stakeholders, including parents, alumni associations and the private sector.

Ultimately, the Dialogue reveals a range of informed opinions on addressing the issues of teacher quality and job dissatisfaction in Nigeria's education system, with the recognition that it requires a holistic approach and collective effort from all segments of society. The outcome of the Dialogue will inform suggestions that will be made to educational policymakers, with the aim of ensuring that the quality of teaching is improved in schools to enhance overall output.

Recurring points among speakers include the following:

- ❖ Poor welfare packages, health care options, accessibility to loans or any other social necessities that could help teachers live a good life are lacking in the system.

- ❖ The teaching and learning environment is mostly poor; the students are disaffected and uninterested in learning; and teachers are overworked due to an imbalanced teacher-student ratio.
- ❖ Many teachers are employed without professional qualifications/training.
- ❖ Society views teachers as inferior, creating low self-esteem among many teachers, and discouraging interest in the profession.
- ❖ The tertiary admissions format allows for the weakest students to be accepted into colleges of education.
- ❖ There is a general erosion of values, causing dishonesty, corruption, nepotism and double-dealing to become rampant.
- ❖ The same factors affecting teacher attrition and retention can be seen on a large scale in the ongoing brain drain in the country.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- 1) Leadership is critical to improvement in the educational sector. The required change must begin with the political leaders.
- 2) The government should reinforce its supervisory role in schools.
- 3) More public funding must go into education. There must be proper remuneration for teachers and school environments must be maintained to a tolerable level.
- 4) Due to the current state of the nation, the government cannot bear the burden alone. Private bodies, individuals, alumni and parents should collaborate with the government to improve the educational sector.
- 5) There need to be sensitisation campaigns. Teacher attitudes towards learning must change, while parents and society must be enlightened on the critical role of teachers and the danger of having unqualified and disgruntled teachers in schools.
- 6) Stakeholders must also conduct sensitisation campaigns on key societal values. While the importance of money is noted, fundamental values of society, such as honesty, transparency, accountability, inclusion and altruism, must be stressed.

About LRF

The [Literary Renaissance Foundation](#) (LRF) is a non-profit organisation that is aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 of undertaking strategic and deliberate actions to ensure an inclusive and equitable quality education for everyone as well as promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The LRF was founded as a response to the increasing rate of illiteracy in Nigeria as well as an effort to curb the apathy to reading and learning among the citizens. The foundation was incorporated by the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria on March 23, 2018.