



Curbing the Challenges of Teacher Shortage in Public Primary Schools

BY

Ajudeonu Helen I. Ph.D

Primary Education Department

College of Education, Agbor Delta State

Mobile Phone: 08038677747

Email: ajudeonu.helen@gmail.com

THEME: CURBING EMERGING CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Abstract

This study titled: Curbing the Challenges of Teacher Shortage in Public Primary Schools has largely been shaped by recent events in the country, specifically 'Unemployment' in Nigeria. The study covered Agbor Education Zone of Delta State. The sample was three hundred and twenty teachers. The instrument for the study were questionnaire and data collected from the Education Zone. The researcher also visited some schools for first hand information of the situation. The paper identified the causes of the shortage of teachers to include retirement of teachers and non-employment for replacement, irregular payment of salaries and fringe benefits, low status of primary school teachers among others. The study revealed that there was shortage of teachers which had implications for both teaching and learning. Finally it recommended that there should be employment of teachers and equal distribution of teachers to all schools in urban and rural area since every primary school has primary class one to primary class six.

Introduction

The dearth of teachers is the greatest challenge facing educational system in Nigeria today especially in public primary schools. On 28 May, 2019 the punch Newspaper reported “primary education” teacher scarcity hits public schools, (28) twenty-eight states fail to recruit personnel. It was stated that “there is no state in this country (Nigeria) that is not having an acute shortage of teachers in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural organization’s standard of twenty five (25) pupils per teacher (Punch 2019).

The place of teachers in the educational system constitute an important aspect in the school system. Teachers are critical resource in every country, since every teaching strongly influences what and how much pupils achieve in school. In Nigerian the educational system is currently faced with the shortage of sound and motivated teachers. This is largely because the art of teaching is still considered a vocation not a profession with many unqualified teachers in primary schools without going through the requisite of professional training.

Teachers are important in the education system and in any society for many reasons, this is because teaching is of peculiar and dynamic profession. Ukeje (1999) opined that a school is a mirror of the society and an agent of societal change. He further asserted that teaching is a process of nation building, and the teacher, an instrument of nation building. This indicate that the teacher is accountable for the nation’s destiny.

In Nigeria today the number of public primary schools and teachers available for basic education are both woefully in adequate. In 2013, the shortage of primary school teachers in Nigeria was acute-in excess of 338,000. This was compounded by the fact that 28 of the 36 state governments haven’t employed any new teachers since 2015 to date (Mba 2019). Meanwhile the pupils population is increasing and teachers are also retiring. This devastating effect is highlighted at Rimawa primary

school in Goronyo, Sokoto state. The school has 1,170 pupils and only (10) ten teachers. (Punch (2019)).

The situation is not found in Sokoto state alone but in other states in the country. Like in Ekiti State teachers have not been employed for the past six years – (NUT). In Ondo State teachers were recruited last in 2005. In Enugu State at carter primary school – Ogui, there are only five teacher including the Headmaster. In Ebonyi State at Akanto primary school in Amasiri clan Atikpo North Local Government Area, there are three teachers, this included the Headmaster meaning the school has two teachers in a primary school of primary one to primary six (Punch 2019). No educationist can say that this is normal.

The issue of teacher shortage is not limited to lack of unemployment by Government but could be expressed in terms of unwillingness and commitment of teachers in most states. It could be observed that most public primary schools in big towns and cities are fairly adequate in numbers of teachers. As opined by Bradley (1999) and Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) many teachers were not willing to teach in rural areas. This was supported by Makinde (2010) that schools in rural areas do not receive their quota of trained teachers while many of the few ones in the rural areas seek frequent transfer into the city.

DES (1986) and Fadipe (2000) categorized teacher shortage into four major types: over shortage, hidden storage, suppressed shortage and modernized shortage.

- a. Over shortage: This refers to vacancies of teachers to be filled. This is simply the number of vacancies existing in the primary schools.
- b. Hidden shortage : These include teachers that teach subjects in which they do not know or specialize in. Such teachers work in areas which they do not fit according to their qualifications in such primary school that practice rotational teaching in the upper classes of the primary schools.

- c. Suppressed shortage: This is a situation where a subject is underrepresented or suppressed in the school time-table because of lack of qualified or suitable teachers in primary schools. This is also expressed in putting two classes of different grade together due to insufficient number of teachers. For example putting primary three and four into a class to be under one teacher.
- d. Modernized shortage: This relates to teachers who are formally qualified but already out of touch with current development in their fields.

Researches have shown that teacher's shortage are plagued in education system. This has been traced to people leaving the teaching profession when more attractive jobs become available in government, politics or private enterprise (Adeyemi (2011), Subair and Talabi 2015).

There are many reasons advocated for teachers shortage in schools. These include poor and irregular salaries, low social status in society, lack of incentives and career advancement opportunities. Adeyemi (2008) explained that many teachers leave the teaching profession due to discouragement and frustration resulting from low social status accorded the teaching profession in the society. Ubom, (2002) has reported that teacher shortage has been attributed to low salaries and social prestige given to teachers.

In recent times, due to unemployment of teachers by the state governments most schools lack teachers in Nigeria. Most states of the federation has not employed teachers since 2015 which is about fourteen years ago. The implication is that there are no replacement of retiring teachers. Therefore retirement has been one of the major causes of teacher shortage. Retirement means teachers disengaging from the job on the account of age or length of service or year of service. This group of people have worked for a stipulated period of time of thirty five years or they exit from the job on the account of attaining the retirement age of sixty years. Retirement of teachers has created vacancies in primary schools.

Ingersoll (2000) re-ported in his findings that percentage of vacancies were due to retirement of teachers. Adeyemi (2011) opined that retirement of teachers without corresponding replacement mean that shortage will exist. Also Adeogun (2010) was of the opinion that the non payment or delayed payment and irregular payment of teachers salaries consequently resulted in shortage of teachers in schools. This could be seen in many states in Nigeria that owed teachers salaries for months such states included Benue, Kwara and Ondo States (Punch 2019)

Teacher shortage has implications for the primary schools specifically both on the Head teachers, teachers and on pupils. The effect of teacher shortage has resulted on poor performance of pupils in examination as asserted by Ihejieto (1993). (Subair and Talabi 2015). The effect of teacher shortage extend to school head teachers and the teachers. School headteachers take up teaching of classes with their administrative job. Teachers are saddled with teaching more than a class and covering for absences (Adelabu (2005).

Primary school education is the most important education in the life of a child. It is not only valuable to the child, it is critical to the development of any country and its educational system. Following the recent publications in Nigerian Newspapers and Media on teacher shortage in Nigerian public primary schools, the researcher decided to take up this research. This study therefore intends to find out if there is shortage of teachers in public primary schools and seek to profer solutions for solving this problem.

Research Questions

1. Are there shortage of teachers in public primary schools in Delta State?
2. What are the causes of teacher shortage in public primary schools?
3. What are the effects of the shortage of teachers on public primary schools?
4. What are the ways of curbing the problem of Shortage of teachers in public primary schools?

Method

This study employed the descriptive survey design. The population for the study comprised all teachers in public primary school in Agbor Education Zone of Delta State which is made of up two local government areas namely Ika North East and Ika South Local Government Areas.

The stratified sampling technique was used to select sample for the study. The sample for the study comprised a total number of three hundred and twenty teachers. A self-designed questionnaire was the only instrument for data collection. It was made up of two sections. Section A seek for bio-data information about the respondent while section B contained 15 items rated on four likert scale of strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagree and strongly disagreed. The validity of the instrument was determined by two experts in school of Education that gave it face and content validity. The reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.68 using Crobanch alpha. The instrument was distributed through assistance of school teacher with some information collected from the Local Education Authority Offices.

Results

Research question one: Are there shortage of teachers in Agbor Education Zone of Delta State?

The data collected from the Education Zone and the researcher field work by direct visit to some of the school in the Education zone the study revealed shortage of teachers. From the data, there were schools with less than seven teachers, which is the normal requirement of every public primary school with primary class one to primary class six and a headteacher. A school had (2) two teachers, two schools had three (3) teachers each, four schools had four teacher (4) each, six schools had five teachers each and eleven schools had six teachers each. A total of twenty one (21) public primary school had acute shortage of teachers.

Research question two: What are the causes of shortage of teachers in public primary schools in Delta state?

Table II: Responses on the causes of shortage of teachers in public primary schools in Delta State

Table 2 shows frequency count, percentage, mean and standard derivations on the causes of shortage of teachers in public primary school

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD DEV.
1	Unemployment of teachers' salaries	212 (66.25)	86 (26.88)	12 (3.75)	10 (3.13)	3.56	0.97
2	Low status in the society	168 (52.80)	108 (33.75)	26 (8.13)	18 (5.63)	3.33	0.88
3	Poor work environment	120 (37.50)	110 (43.38)	30 (9.38)	60 (18.74)	2.91	0.75
4	Irregular payment of salaries	104 (32.50)	142 (44.38)	42 (13.13)	32 (10.00)	2.99	0.77
5	Retirement of teachers	172 (53.75)	96 (30.00)	18 (5.63)	34 (10.63)	3.27	0.86
	Weighted average				3.21		

Figure in parentheses are percentages

Table 2: Table two revealed the mean scores and standard Derivations of respondents on the causes of shortage of teachers in public primary schools. Most of the items have a mean of 2.50 and above and a weighted average of 3.21. this finding revealed that respondents agreed on the causes of shortage of teachers to included non—employment of teachers by the government, retirement of teachers, irregular payment of salaries and fringe benefits, low status of teachers in the society and poor working environment.

Research question Three: What are the effects of shortage of teachers on public primary schools?

Table III: shows frequency count, percentage mean and standard derivations on the effect of shortages of teachers.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD DEV.
1	Ineffective teaching	82 (25.63)	13.2 (41.25)	46 (14.38)	60 (18.75)	2.74	0.72
2	Poor quality of instruction	90 (28.13)	104 (32.50)	68 (21.25)	58 (18.13)	2.71	0.72
3	Lowered standard of education	78 (24.38)	134 (41.88)	40 (12.50)	68 (21.25)	2.69	0.72
4	Poor pupils academic performance	120 (37.50)	110 (34.38)	30 (9.38)	60 (18.75)	2.91	0.75
5	High stress level on the teachers	162 (53.63)	102 (31.88)	22 (6.88)	34 (10.63)	3.23	0.86
	Weighted average					2.83	

Figures in parentheses are in percentages

Table 3: showed mean scores and standard derivations of respondents on the effect of shortage of teachers in schools. The mean score of most of the items under review are above 2.50 while the weighted average for the research questions was 2.83 showed that shortage of teachers had effects on the teachers and pupils in the schools.

Research question 4: What are the ways of solving the problem of teacher shortage in public primary schools?

Table 4: shows frequency count, percentage, mean and standard derivations on the ways of curbing shortage teachers in public primary schools.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD DEV.
1	Improvement of teacher status	144 (45.00)	104 (32.50)	56 (17.50)	16 (5.00)	3.05	0.79
2	Regular payment of salaries /benefit	212 (66.25)	86 (26.88)	12 (3.75)	10 (3.13)	3.56	0.97
3	Employment of teachers yearly to replace retires	136 (42.50)	126 (39.38)	22 (6.88)	36 (11.25)	3.13	0.81
4	Giving career advancement opportunities to teachers	118 (36.88)	122 (38.13)	36 (11.25)	44 (13.75)	2.98	0.77
5	Good working environment for teachers	134 (41.88)	106 (33.13)	28 (8.75)	52 (16.25)	3.01	0.83
Weighted average						3.14	

Figures in parentheses are in percentages

Table 4 revealed the mean scores and standard derivations on the ways of curbing the challenges of shortage of teachers in public primary school. The mean scores of all the items were above the decision mean of 2.50 with a weighted average of 3.14. The result obtained from the study showed that employment and replacement of retired teachers, improvement on payment of teachers' salaries and fringe benefit, working environment, and teachers status in the society will help in curbing shortage of teachers in schools in public primary school.

Discussion of Findings

The result of this study revealed that there are shortage of teachers in public primary schools in Agbor Education of Delta State. There were schools with just two teachers, three teachers, four teachers and five teachers. This is less than the normal teaching staff required in a primary school which was supposed to have a least seven teachers with one as the head teacher, in a normal stream of primary one to primary six. This finding is supported by the Adeyemi (2011) and A Kinduro (2003) who reported shortage of teachers in Ondo and Ekiti States.

The finding of the study on the causes of shortage of teachers revealed irregular payment of salaries as the greatest cause of teacher shortage. Kamah, Ughili & Abada (2013) & Adeyemi (2011). The poor and irregular payment of teachers salaries has turned the primary school teachers into a pitied group of people in the society. Low status of teachers in the society was also a cause of teachers shortage. Most people believe that primary school teachers do not have a class or have lower status compared even to teachers in secondary school and tertiary institution. The ways teachers are treated contributed to this lowered status. The government or ministry are always calling for teacher certificate verification and screening and this further increased for the hurt 'ghost-teachers'. This gives the society a negative image on primary school teachers and is demeaning to teacher (Kamah et al 2013).

Retirement and non-replacement or employment is considered as a major cause of teacher shortage in primary schools. This agreed with the reports of Ingersoll (2000) & Adeogun (2013)

Retirement and non-replacement or employment is considered as a major cause of teacher shortage in primary schools. This agreed with the reports of Ingersoll (2000) & Adeogun (2013) who showed that vacancies existed due to retirement and this persisted since there was no replacement. Teacher retirement

has been a negative mark on teachers, retired teachers are not paid for years after retirement. In Delta State, retired teacher has become 'Okada Riders' and many have lost their lives in the process due to accident before receiving the retirement benefits.

Findings also revealed poor working environment in primary school as another cause of teacher shortage. This is in line with the findings of Komah et al who described teachers working environment as the most impoverished of all sectors of labour force with dilapidated and inadequate classrooms and other inadequate infrastructures. Lastly lack of career advancement opportunities contribute to shortage of teachers. While most professions like the medical are always given opportunities to advance in their career, primary school teachers are denied most of such advancement opportunities.

The shortage of teachers in public primary school has significant effects on teachers, and pupils in various ways. It has contributed to high stress on the teachers since the few teachers in the schools struggle to cover up the absence of the required teachers producing extra-stress leading to some health challenges of headaches, tiredness and illnesses. The shortage of teachers is not limited to high level of stress on teachers, others included ineffective teaching, poor quality of instruction and pupils poor academic performance Lunenbory Ornestein (2008) & Subair & Talabi (2015).

On the research question four, possible ways of solving the problem of teachers shortage in public primary schools, the result showed regular payment of teachers salaries and fringe benefits was accepted as the best solution. This agreed with earlier findings of (Subair & Talabi 2015) that practicing teachers are particularly concerned about payment of salaries and fringe benefits rather than other non- monetary incentives. Also Ubom (2002) & Fadipe (2005) found that in Nigeria, prompt payment of teachers salaries induced greater commitment to

teaching. Others ways of tackling the problem of teachers shortage were employment of teachers yearly to replace retiring teaching and meeting up with the increasing pupils population Adeyemi (2011) and Adeogun (2010)

Also improved working environment could be a solution. This finding, agreed with Ubom (2002) that improvements in the supply of teaching and learning materials and general classroom and school environment would improve teachers' motivation.

Conclusion

There were shortages of teachers in public primary school in Agbor Education Zone of Delta State. The shortages were more in rural areas than urban areas by the researchers field work. This was caused by uneven distribution of teachers to schools. Primary education is the bedrock of the educational system, the government should take very pragmatic and decisive actions in addressing this problem of shortage of teachers in schools. Welfare of teachers and the working environment should be given attention to bring dedication and commitment into the profession.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendation are made

- There should be regular and if possible yearly recruitment of teachers to replace the retirees and to meet up with the increasing population.
- Teacher's welfare should be given prorty. Teachers in primary school should be given special allowances and other benefits such as car loan and housing loan especially to those in rural areas to encourage retention of teachers in the profession.

- Good working environment should be provided such as classrooms, adequate teaching and learning materials for pupils and teachers effective teaching and learning processes.
- There should be even distribution of teachers to both Rural and urban schools. Since every school has primary one to six classes, at least every school should have seven teachers including the head teacher.
- Teachers should be trained and re-trained through workshop and seminars to meet up with new challenges in the teaching profession.

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