

Teacher Shortage in Nigerian Schools: Causes, Effects and Administrators Coping Strategies

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Abstract - *The study examined causes and effects of teacher shortage in public secondary schools in Osun State. It equally investigated the administrators coping strategies in the State. The descriptive survey design was used for this study. The study population for this study consisted of administrators and teachers of public secondary schools in Osun State. A total of 275 respondents consisting of 25 administrators and 250 teachers selected from 25 public secondary schools in Osun State constituted the sample size using proportional stratified sampling technique to select 25 schools from 6 local government areas across the 3 senatorial districts in Osun State. The instrument used for this study was “Teacher Shortage and Coping Strategies Questionnaire (TSCSQ)” designed by the researchers. The instrument was pilot - tested via the test re-test technique with a reliability coefficient index of 0.83 obtained. Based on the findings of this study, it was discovered that poor teacher’s salary, high student enrolment and poor work conditions; all culminating into job dissatisfaction were responsible for teacher shortage in Osun State public secondary schools. The effects were the implications for administrators and remaining teachers’ health, commitment to the job, poor students’ performance resulting from ineffective teaching and poor quality of instruction. It was also found that overloading the existing staff with assignments and multiple responsibilities, use of substitute teachers such as Youth Corp members and student – teachers plus increased class size were the coping strategies used by the school administrators to manage teacher shortage in Osun State public secondary schools. Consequently, recommendations were given that Osun State government should do all possible within her powers to recruit adequately commensurate quantity of teachers and ensure good work environment and conditions of service.*

Keywords: *Teachers; Shortage; Teacher Shortage; Effects; Coping Strategies; Public Schools*

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, educational system is confronted with different challenges. The challenges confronting the developed countries differ from the ones confronting the developing countries. However, for these challenges, there are expectedly coping strategies in order to minimize the possible effects. Coping strategies are measure tried out to ensure the situation is improved upon. Coping strategies are the methods employed by individuals, groups, organisations, institutions or establishments with the intent of managing situations; even though it bothers on heads, leaders, managers or administrators’ situation, crisis or contingency management skills, under some specific conditions after analysis. Considering teacher shortage, coping strategies involves the school administrators ability to apply suitable methods to control the problem in the school. According to Subair [1], coping strategies in schools is any measures undertaken by school administrators to ensure adequate service delivery in the face of any challenge such as teacher shortage, interpersonal and intergroup relations, disciplinary problems, school – community crisis, and the likes. He stressed further that the central task of institutional management is to recognize the present conditions, inadequacy that point to the desirability of change and taking appropriate actions even when such moves are not the best. It involves taking such policy measures that will direct future development towards more desirable ends. For the fact that teachers could be very mobile, there is always a constant need for school head to adopt measures that will make their schools stand out among other equals, he remarked.

According to the Guardian Newspaper [2], in a study conducted by the United Nation, it was found that teacher shortage exists in countries like Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Central African Republic (CAR), Arab States, Cote d’Ivoire, Malawi, Zambia, and Ghana. Also teacher shortage in sub-saharan Africa is

particularly worrisome. Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Central African Republic are top on the list of counties that need to mount aggressive recruitment campaign of teacher over the next four years. Burkina Faso will need to increase its teaching workforce by 14 % each year from 2012 until 2015 while workforce in Eritrea and Central African Republic will have to grow by 18% and 21% respectively to plug the country's shortage [2].

In Nigeria, the three levels of education are confronted with various problems ranging from class size, school location, resource availability and resource utilization [16]. In addition, it has been observed that the total number of teachers available in Nigerian secondary schools is far below the needed for efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of instructions. According to the UNESCO report from the guardian newspaper [2], the total number of teachers available in Nigeria in 2009 was 466,800 while in 2015, 688,200 teachers will be needed. This shows that Nigeria need to increase its teaching workforce by 6.68% yearly to meet the teachers demand by 2015.

Teachers are important factor in any society for many reasons. According to Dasko [3], a teacher is a person that imparts knowledge on people, shows care when the need arises, and possesses the following traits: patience, kindness and love. Lending credence to this is Adewuyi and Ogunwuyi [4], who suggest various perspectives by which a teacher could be seen in reference to nation building; and they thus view teachers as instructors, culture transmitters, technologists, moral instructors, life-skill and value educators, parents, counselors, sportsmen and play supervisors, public educators, service deliverers, policy makers and policy implementation personnel, religious leaders and disciplinarians.

However, teacher shortage is not the exclusive problem in Nigerian educational system, it is a world phenomenon. The UNESCO Report of 1997 indicated that as at 1980, the world with total population of 5.5 billion only had 40 million teachers in its teaching profession which gave the average of one teacher per 112 inhabitants. In 1965, there were 100 secondary schools teachers for 150,000 people in Africa.

The issue can be expressed in terms of the inadequacy of qualified and experience teachers; it can as well be seen as inadequacy of willing and committed teachers in the state public schools. According to Bradley [5], shortage of teachers lies in

the distribution of teachers. Lunenburg and Ornstein [6] also corroborate that many teachers were not willing to teach in rural area especially, those of low income students. Here in Nigeria, Taiwo [7] reported that when other regions were being plagued with the problem of acute teacher shortages during the expansion brought about by the free education program, Lagos was exempted. He reported that teachers were attracted on account of the urban life of Lagos. According to Makinde [8], 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. According to Fadipe [9], there are four major types of teacher shortage, these are:

a. Over Shortage: This refers to the over vacancies of teachers to be filled. Such shortages take into consideration the specialization needed as well as the number of quantity desired which is however in short supply.

b. Hidden Shortage: These include teachers that teach subjects in which they do not know or specialize. These categories of teachers fall in the category of teachers that are being mal-employed. Such teachers work in the areas which they do not fit according to their qualifications.

c. Suppressed Shortage: This is a situation where a subject is under-represented in the time table because of a lack of suitable teachers

d. Modernized Shortage: This relates to teachers who are formally qualified but already out of touch with current development in their fields. Such teachers need a short orientation through seminars, workshops, conferences, and the likes.

Teacher shortage can also take the form of imbalance or disproportion in teachers-students ratio in schools. Researchers have shown that teachers are almost always in short supply in schools [7]. For instance, it is arguable that a supply - demand balance or even an over-production in the number of teachers does not guarantee sufficiency in every subject area. Teacher shortage can also be subject - oriented in nature. According to Makinde [8], well qualified Language and Science teachers especially women, are concentrated in urban areas, thus resulting to shortage of language and science teachers in rural areas.

Similarly, Adeyemi [10] observed that science teachers were in less proportion compared to non-science teachers in secondary schools.

Retirement had also been fingered as one of the major cause of teacher shortage. Some teachers disengaged on the account of age or length of service. These groups of people have worked for a stipulated period of time. Those in this category are eligible for full pension after their disengagement. They are those who have reached the mandatory 60 years of age or have served the maximum 35 years in service as a result; they are due for retirement or disengagement from the service of teaching service commission of the state. Finding conducted by Ingersoll [14] showed that few percentage of vacancies were due to retirement. Adeogun [11] and Adeyemi [10] both agreed that retirement of teachers without a corresponding replacement mean that shortage will persist. According to Smithers and Robinson [12], excessive workload on the teachers such as administrative duties, preparation of lesson notes, conduct of continuous and end of the term evaluations in the school might be another reason why some of them disengaged from teaching. In addition to this, many times teachers are expected to be in charge of school club activities and other school activities. To be able to carry out these activities in the school, adequate number of teachers are needed. Smithers and Robinson [12] opined that poor salary structure as one of the major causes of attrition of teachers underpins teaching as an attractive profession.

According to Makinde [8], expansion in the school enrolment should lead to recruiting more people to teach students. This recruitment will bring all sorts of teachers: some among them would be dedicated while others not dedicated, thus, leading to a shortage of committed and intelligent teachers in another perspective. Adeogun [1] was of the opinion that the inability of government to pay decent salaries to teachers is as a result of under-funding of educational sector which consequently resulted in shortages of qualified teaching personnel as the proportion number of teachers demanded are not supplied on one hand, while some of those on ground opted-out due to what he termed indecent "wage".

The effect of teacher shortage is not limited to poor quality of instructions and poor students' academic performance, but also has significant effects on both the schools' administrators and the teaching personnel. Investigation by Smithers and Robinson

[13], shows that the head teachers are left to bear the brunt of finding people and living with consequences of appointing staff not of the desired caliber, but also in many cases, they have to do a lot more teaching themselves in order to plug the gaps. According to Smithers and Robinson [13], the extra stress on teachers as a result of plugging the gap for teacher shortage is emerging in various ways from shouting at the children, more tiredness, headaches, absences, and illnesses, ultimately to higher levels of resignation than there need be. The shortages are causing further shortage, by either taking over classes or covering for absences. At least head teachers are to some extent in control, but many of the consequences of under-recruitment and extra load are passed down to the teaching staff. This has resulted in raised stress levels which have shown up in a spectrum of behaviors as mentioned above.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

There is need for adequate number of teachers in schools to teach and guide learning activities effectively. However, in Osun State, the total number of teachers needed to teach all the subjects stands at 8,400 for effective service delivery in the public secondary schools. But between 2008/2009 - 2011/2012 academic sessions, 3000 teachers disengaged from teaching in Osun State public secondary schools voluntarily or compulsorily. During this period, the total number of teachers newly recruited by the state government was 1,080 without reduction in the number of periods per day or the number of subjects in the curriculum. The situation gives more challenges to those on the job and in some schools certain subjects could not be taught due to inadequate number of teachers. Consequently, this study assessed causes of teacher shortage in public secondary schools, its effects and school administrators coping strategies employed in Osun State, Nigeria.

METHODS

The descriptive survey design was used. The study population consisted 1,053 public secondary school administrators and 5,400 teachers. A total number of 275 respondents consisting of 25 administrators and 250 teachers were selected from 25 schools. In selecting secondary schools, proportional stratified sampling technique was used. The 25 schools were selected from 6 local government areas

across the 3 senatorial districts in Osun State. Two Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each senatorial districts given a total of six LGAs across the state. This represents 20% of the LGAs in the State. Furthermore, administrators of the 25 schools and teachers from each school were selected. A questionnaire self - designed and titled “Teacher Shortage and Coping Strategies Questionnaire (TSCSQ)”, validated and its reliability equally determined via a pilot study using test re-test reliability technique with a coefficient index of 0.83 was used. The research questions raised were answered using percentage for the study.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the causes of teacher shortage in public secondary schools in Osun State? To answer the question, the respondents’ responses were subjected to analysis using simple percentage. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the causes of teacher shortage. It reveals that 217(78.9%) strongly agreed that poor teacher’s salary has the highest among the causes of teacher shortage. High student’s enrolment 197(71.6%) was also seen as the second reasons for teacher shortage. The study also revealed that 196(71.3%) strongly agreed that poor working conditions was another cause of teacher shortage. Furthermore, 158(57.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that poor funding of education was another

cause of teacher shortage while 186(67.7%) strongly agreed that job dissatisfaction is also another reasons for teacher shortage. Also, 138(50.2%) strongly disagreed to retirement as cause of teacher shortage while 137(49.8%) agreed. Therefore, low teacher’s salary was the major cause of teacher shortage in Osun State public secondary schools.

Research Question Two: What are the effects of teacher shortage on Osun State public secondary schools? In answering this research question, responses were collected from the respondents using open/unrestricted questionnaire in which the respondents were given an opportunity to give their own opinion on the effects of teacher shortage. The responses were analyzed and presented in Table 2.

In Table 2, the findings reveals that 244(88.7%) respondents agreed that high level of stress on the school administrators and teachers was the highest effect identified. Poor quality of instruction 221(80.4%) was the second effect identified by the respondents. Poor students’ academic performance 212(77.1%) was the third effect while 167(60.7%) agreed that teacher shortage also lowers the standard of education. However, 230(83.6%) of the respondents, disagreed to ineffective teaching as an effect of teacher shortage. Therefore, the effect of teacher shortage in Osun State public secondary school has high level of stress on the school administrators and teachers as identified by the respondents.

Table 1. Causes of Teacher Shortage (N=275)

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D
1	Poor funding of education	116(42.2%)	42(15.3%)	88(32%)	29(10.5%)
2	Poor teacher’s salary	156(56.7%)	61(22.2%)	34(12.4%)	24(8.7%)
3	High student’s enrolment	120(43.6%)	77(28%)	50(18.2%)	28(10.2%)
4	Poor working condition	118(42.9%)	78(28.4%)	59(21.5%)	20(7.3%)
5	Retirement	66(24%)	71(25.8%)	83(30.2%)	55(20%)
6	Job dissatisfaction	105 (38.2%)	81(29.5%)	62(22.5%)	27(9.8%)

Table 2. Effects of Teacher Shortage (N=275)

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE	DISAGREE
1	High level of stress on the school administrators and teachers	244(88.7%)	31(11.3%)
2	Poor quality of instruction	221(80.4%)	54(19.6%)
3	Lower the standard of education	167(60.7%)	108(39.3%)
4	Poor students’ academic performance	212(77.1%)	63(23%)
5	Ineffective teaching	45(16.4%)	230(83.6%)

Table 3. Coping Strategies for Teacher Shortage (N=275)

S/ N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D
1	Adjustment in the scheme of work	26(9.5%)	66(24%)	79(28.7%)	104(37.8%)
2	Overloading the existing staff with assignments and multiple responsibilities	110(40%)	101(36.7%)	42(15.3%)	22(8%)
3	School administrators helping out sometimes	56(20.4%)	60(21.8%)	90(33.7%)	69(25.1%)
4	Assigning roles to staff members who are unqualified	60(21.8%)	56(20.3%)	89(32.4%)	70(25.5%)
5	Making use of substitute teachers	103(37.5%)	52(18.9%)	44(16%)	76(27.6%)
6	Increasing class size	100(36.4%)	85(30.9%)	56(20.4%)	34(12.4%)

Research Question Three: What coping strategies are employed by school administrators to manage teacher shortage in Osun State public secondary school? The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the coping strategies used by the school administrators in public secondary schools to manage teacher shortage. It reveals that 211(76.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed to overloading the existing staff with assignments and multiple responsibilities. Use of substitute teachers 155(56.4%) and increase in class size 185(67.3%) were other coping strategies. Furthermore, the study reveals that 159(58.8%), 159(58.8%) and 183(66.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed to school administrators helping out sometimes, assigning roles to staff members who are unqualified and adjust the scheme of work respectively as some other coping strategies. Therefore, overloading the existing staff with assignments and multiple responsibilities was the coping strategy commonly used by the school administrators to manage teacher shortage.

DISCUSSION

The outcome of the analyzed data showed that poor teachers' salary was the greatest cause of teacher shortage in the state. Supporting the findings is Smither and Robison [12], who found that in different states, poor teacher's salary was the major barrier to entering the profession. Also supporting this finding is Adeogun [11], who found that teachers who disengaged from teaching in public schools were due to poor teacher's salary. Similarly, this finding corroborates Adeyemi's [10] report that salaries in teaching were low in relation to those offered in alternative professions. However, findings of Corwins

(2001), did not support this finding. He remarked that most teachers in Texas when asked the reasons for teacher shortage cited treatment received from administrators, students' attitude and behaviours as the most important causes of teacher shortage. It was also found in this study that high student's enrolment is another most important cause of teacher shortage. These corroborate findings made by many researchers such as Ingersoll [15], Makinde [8] and Adeogun [11] who identified high student's enrolment as one of the serious cause of teacher shortage. Adeyemi [10] argued that an expanding school system requires a corresponding number of adequately trained teachers. Even if there was no increase in total enrolment, school system must still recruit teachers yearly to replace its loses due to death, retirement, change of profession, marriage of women teacher and other causes. Furthermore, poor working condition was also seen as a significant cause of teacher shortage. This gave credence to the findings of Ingersoll [15], who observed that poor working conditions represent one of the major factors for the high dropout rate among teachers during their first years of work. Poor working conditions affect teachers' level of satisfaction hence their unwillingness to continue teaching. Inadequate space to sit and talk with students, inadequate library, laboratory equipment or proper administrative services is likely to create resentment among teachers and influence their decision to cease working in the education system. However, Smithers and Robinson [12], did not support this finding and remarked that excessive workload on the teachers make some of them to disengaged from teaching.

The findings revealed that effects of teacher shortage in Osun State public secondary schools among others include high level of stress on the school

administrators and remaining teachers; poor quality of instruction; poor students' academic performance and ultimately, dwindling standard of education. The findings corroborate the findings of Lunenburg and Ornstein [6], who reported stress on the teaching staff and school administrators, poor quality of instruction, poor students' academic performance among others as effects of teacher shortage.

On the coping strategies commonly adopted by the school administrators, analyses of the results showed among others that existing staff are overloaded with assignments and multiple responsibilities while unprofessionally qualified teachers are sometimes appointed to serve on temporary basis; use of substitute teachers and increase in class size. These findings is in agreement with that of Ingersoll [15] and Taiwo [7], that school administrators who are faced with serious shortage of teachers used to appoint temporary teachers who are not professionally qualified and overload the existing staff with assignments and multiple responsibilities to ease the effect of the shortage. Moreover, Smithers and Robinson [13] and Ingersoll [15], observed that school administrators in secondary schools adopt many coping strategies to cover their vacant posts such as increase in class size, making use of substitute teachers, assigning roles to staff members who are unqualified etc. Subair [1] and Adeyemi [10] also supported the study and remarked that in a bid to cope with the problem of teacher shortage, schools administrators rely on redistribution of work from vacant positions among the teaching staff, often to teachers who have no training in that particular subjects.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, poor teacher's salary was the cause of teacher shortage in Osun State public secondary schools. The finding also revealed that the effects of teacher shortage have implications for administrators and remaining teachers' health, commitment to the job and satisfaction. It was also found that overloading the existing staff with assignments and multiple responsibilities were the coping strategies used by the school administrators to manage teacher shortage in public secondary schools in Osun State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the situation of teacher shortage, it is thus recommended that:

- for people to take up teaching profession, Osun State government should have a special salary scale structure for teachers. This would attract young and vibrant professionals with specialized skills who are presently trouping out of the universities and colleges into the teaching job. This will consequently help to retain them.
- Osun State Teaching Service Commission should employ adequate number of teachers to schools. This will help the school administrators to reduce multiple assignments and responsibilities being given to the existing staff in the school. It will also help the school administrators in reducing the ratio of teachers to students, and stop the habit of relying on substitute teachers such as corps member and teaching practice students.
- In addition, recruitment of enough teachers will eliminate or minimize stress being experienced by school administrators and teachers,
- Osun State government should provide good working environment such as: provision of classrooms equipped with teaching aids, laboratories, well ventilated and furnished staff rooms, well equipped libraries with textbooks for students and teachers for effective teaching – learning process.

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