

# TECHNOLOGY TEACHERS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Technology teachers are needed in the school system if technology education is to succeed in Nigeria. This crop of teachers with the requisite preparation are scarce in the Nigerian secondary schools. This paper highlights the status and circumstances of the technology teacher, which make them difficult to be recruited and retained in Nigerian secondary schools. Among the circumstances highlighted by this paper are low status of teachers, poor working environment, professionalism, finance, workshop equipment and materials. Recommendations are also proffered by this paper to solve the problem of recruitment and retention of technology teachers in Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

It has often been argued that if this nation must progress, it must improve its technology. It is not surprising, therefore, that the National Policy on Education (FRN, 1988), gave an adequate space and attention to technology education otherwise known as vocational education (Okon, 1995; Wali, 1991; Okafor, 1988). Precisely, the policy introduced a total vocationalisation of the secondary school curriculum beginning with the Junior Secondary School.

It was immediately made clear that a large number of new crop of teachers with requisite preparation known as "vocational teachers" (otherwise known as "technology teachers", (Okon, 1995) were needed in the school system if technology education was to succeed. These were not there. According to Aina (1986) only 5,000 of the 105,000 needed were available. Indeed, Sofolahan (1991) noted that during the 1984/85 school year, there was a need for approximately 190,000 qualified teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria. He added that apart from the general dearth of qualified teachers, special problems were envisaged in specific subject areas. He noted that the most critical shortage of teachers was the pre-vocational training for which approximately 30,000 teachers were needed for the 1984/85 academic year. In recent times, the situation is not different. In 1997, a survey report by NERDC of the state of demand and supply of vocational teachers nationwide indicated that about 270,000 representing 74% of total need were available (Aina, 2000).

In order to combat this shortage problem of vocational teachers, the Federal and State Governments established Department of Vocational/ Teacher Education in existing Polytechnics. Decree 4 of 1986, also provided for six Federal Colleges of Education (Technical), to complement the already existing two at Akoka and Gombe. Some Universities such as the former Anambra State University Technology (now ESUT), University of Science and Technology, Port-Harcourt, etc created vocational teacher education programmes.

It is disheartening that up till now, the recruitment and retention of the

vocational teacher in the secondary school have remained a gigantic problem. It is in the light of this development that this paper takes a look at:

- a) The status of vocational teachers and
- b) The special circumstances of the vocational teacher.

## **The Status of Vocational Teachers**

In a large scale study concluded in 1993 by this presenter, it was found that, generally, the status of teachers is low and that its lowness is responsible for the difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers. It was also found that the factors responsible for the low status include; poor conditions of service, teachers' negative personal and professional behaviour, teaching occupation's semi-professional status, and wider society's negative influence (Nwaokolo, 1993). It was also noted that the most single factor responsible for the LOW status of teachers is

finance. In the case of vocational teachers, the reason for the low status includes all the factors identified above. In addition, however, the vocational teachers have special reasons, which make them more difficult to recruit and retain in the school system.

### **Reasons For the Difficulty of Recruitment And Retention Of Technology Teachers In The Schools**

As mentioned earlier, the study cited above shows that poor status is responsible for all classes and categories of teachers abandoning the classrooms. However, it is important to note that whereas poor status accounts for the tendency for all teachers to abandon the classroom, the higher tendency of the vocational teacher to shun the profession goes beyond this general definition of status (Nwaokolo, 1993). In this section, therefore, only those peculiar items of evidence which explain the higher tendency are adduced below since they form the crux of this paper:

#### **a) Possession of Marketable Industrial Skills**

Technology teachers are frustrated like the other teachers, but as a respondent in the study under reference stated, they are frustrated because of lack of workshop/studio materials to work. Unlike the non-technology teachers, however, technology teachers have an easier answer to the problem of frustration in the classroom. By the nature of their training and education, they are equipped with job-related skills which, fortunately for them, are currently needed in the industries (Akinola, 1991). Employers are aware that are primarily teachers but they (the employers) test their non-pedagogic competencies in the skills (technical skills ) and offer employment to them if the skills are impressive. In this case, vocational teachers leave teaching not only because they are frustrated but because they are versatile having acquired the wherewithal to function effectively in the industry.

#### **b) Lack of Job Challenge**

It needs to be noted that money is not everything, materialistic culture, notwithstanding. Some people actually would stay and make a career in teaching if they experience job satisfaction. Unfortunately, they will leave for more challenging and satisfying jobs if teaching cannot provide the challenge desired. Respondents argue that vocational teachers do not experience the necessary job challenge to encourage them to remain in teaching. Unlike, the earlier example, vocational teachers desert the classroom not primarily because they have skills but because they lack job satisfaction (Aina, 1986).

Similar to the argument, is the desire of some vocational teachers to see things in real life form in the industry as opposed to a simulation of them in the classroom (Nwaokolo, 1993).

#### **c) Industry Offers Irresistible Opportunities**

The industrial sectors have an attraction for technology teachers and often find it difficult to resist considering the materialistic nature of the society as well as the poverty of teachers. They are paid more and for those who are talented, the industry offers them the opportunity for the creativity because the technology is also available with which to test out their ideas practically. Under normal conditions, teaching would have been the best place for research and creativity, but certain minimal conditions have to be present to make research/creativity possible. Although a further research is necessary to be able to state with certitude the sectors of the economy which absorb the larger proportion of vocational teachers deserting the classroom, a prima facie evidence (Nwaokolo, 1993) showed that majority of vocational teachers leave the classroom for the industry.

In another development, Akinola (1991) revealed that a secretary's salary was higher than that of her teacher. She noted that graduates of this profession (secretarial) got employed very easily — in these days of unemployment. Agabi (1992) found that a significant proportion of vocational and technical teachers in training came into the profession as a last resort and were prepared to change course at slightest opportunity. He then recommended that the real economic conditions and social status of teachers should be improved to ensure that teachers take the

profession more seriously.

### **Recommendations**

Since the problems of teachers are fairly well known, this work has resisted the temptation to dwell in full detail on the- factors found in the study under reference save giving a broad mention of them and dealing in more details with the case of the technology teacher. In my considered view, the recommendations should attract more attention. The discourse, therefore, dealt with the case of all teachers and finally drew attention to the special need of vocational teachers.

#### **General For All Teachers**

1) Since the most single factor responsible for the poor status of teachers is 'finance', any visible recommendation towards enhancing the recruitment and retention of all categories of teachers must start with money. Therefore, it is hereby recommended that:

- (a) A different salary structure needs to be established for primary and secondary school teachers and styled Teaching Service Salary Structure (TSSS). The structure should reflect about 40% rise on equivalent steps of the regular grade Level structure (GL) operated for most other public services, fringe benefits are to be adjusted accordingly. Where salaries are reviewed for inflationary reasons across the board, the TSSS must reflect that change so that it continues to enjoy a pride of place. The rationale for service salary is the same, teachers are not in a position as others, to aggrandize 'perks' incidental to the offices of those outside the classroom (Nwaokolo, 1993); and
  - (b) Deliberate steps should be taken to ensure that teachers are paid at the same time as other public servants are paid. It is unfair that teachers should get their salaries and fringe benefits long after others have enjoyed theirs.
- 2) The teachers' working environment needs a total overhaul. The bare open office for large numbers staff with some sharing tables is very inappropriate. Teaching and learning environments need to be minimally comfortable "ECOWAS' classroom", (to borrow a respondent's terminology), is unsuitable. Nwaokolo (1993) recommended, a closed office containing not more than three teachers is more appropriate for learning and person-to-person relationship with students.
- 3) The study under reference revealed that there is a positive relationship between professionalism and status. It has also been ascertained that the teaching occupation is not yet a full profession in Nigeria. In order to enhance the status of the teaching profession and the teacher, the following recommendations need to be taken seriously by both the government and the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT):
- (a) The teaching occupation must resist the serious temptation and pressure to admit unqualified and underqualified persons as teachers. In addition, I recommend that a single minimum qualification of a Bachelor's degree in Education be established for all teachers irrespective of whether they teach in the primary or secondary schools. The difference in the primary school teacher and the secondary school teacher should related only to specialization,
  - (b) The government should take very seriously the issue of setting up the Teacher's Council referred to in the National Policy on Education. It should register practitioners and regulate standards as planned.
  - (c) The NUT as presently constituted has been criticized for being weak. Nwaokolo (1993) revealed that many respondents in the study under reference see many of the NUT officials as stooges. They are also

perceived as very ineffective as far as professional development of teachers is concerned. They reckon that as a trade union, NUT has recorded more successes. In some states, some NUT officials are said not to be professional teachers themselves. This is not true professionalism!

My recommendation, therefore, is that periodic elections to offices in the body should be based on merit, respecting such parameters as professional status of the individuals, proven integrity, track records of performance and general exposure. In addition, NUT must take seriously the organisation of professional activities for the development of teachers such as seminars, workshops, publication of journals, etc.

- 4) To whom much is given, much is expected. If teachers enjoy a separate salary structure, there will be no excuse whatsoever for teachers to remain negative in their behaviour. My recommendation is that teachers should sit up. The NUT and the Teacher's Council should deal decisively with the professional misbehaviour of their members. Sanctions should be applied fairly and firmly. Dressing can be a personal matter but it should not be forgotten that there should be appropriate dressing for teaching jobs. No lawyer walks into the high court to defend a case without his her wig and gown. Therefore, appropriate dressing and general appearance should become a matter for professional scrutiny. Teachers must realise that their status depends in part on what the public observes of them.

### **Special For Technology Teachers**

- (a) The special case of the technology teacher needs special attention. Technology teaching allowance of between 35% and 40% of their monthly salary paid monthly is recommended to stem the exodus to the industry. This will certainly not fully bridge the gap between the classroom pay and the industry pay but many more vocational teachers would stay. The perception that there is something special for them, something over and above what other teachers get, may do the magic in a number of cases. There is, no doubt, also that teaching as an activity holds some satisfaction for some people (Farrugia, 1985). Such people would not mind staying with little encouragement.
- (b) In addition it is strongly recommended that the workshop/studios/laboratories be equipped with relevant machines and hand tools. Relevant because many introductory equipment imported are, in fact, reported to be inappropriate. More than anything else, the technical workshops will benefit a great deal from simple hand tools. These are about the only items of equipment which self-employed mechanics and other artisans have and they do the bulk of maintenance jobs in the society.

Finally, as technology education is capital intensive, the Federal Government should consider allocating to education a huge proportion of the proceeds from both the education tax and those from the Buhari Committee, which were recently introduced. Since technological development is crucial for the survival and development of the nation, it will be a wise decision!

### **Conclusion**

The status and circumstances of technology teachers in the Nigerian school system has made it imperative for special attention to be given to this group of teachers if they must be recruited and retained in the system. It is hoped that the recommendations highlighted in this paper if implemented, will go a long way in achieving this purpose.

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