ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Esrom Toro Jokthan
Department of Education, Gombe State University, Gombe
etjokthan@gmail.com

Abstract
When schools are established qualified teachers must be in place to prepare students for the acquisition of knowledge and relevant skills for world of work. Teachers therefore must be recruited. This paper looked at recruitment of teachers and their retention. It was observed that there are government agencies charged with the issue of recruitment but not retention. Proposals for retaining teachers were given. It was also noted that despite these proposals, some issues like non promotion when due, lack of accommodations among others, improved school organizational factors, inadequate teachers’ pre-service preparatory institutions are lacking. The paper concluded by recommending the need to step up teacher training programmes and control teachers’ migration.

Keywords—Recruitment, retention, quality education, teacher migration

Introduction
A teacher is a person charged with the responsibility of growing members of any given society towards the acquisition of formal education, knowledge, values and skills. But not all people are professional teachers. A job analysis is the process of determining the work activities requirements and job description. A teacher must have special abilities and acquired skills necessary to succeed in teaching profession and to have his products possess the needed qualifications.

Recruitment is an act of attracting people with the right qualifications to apply for a job and if an individual is found suitable for a particular job is employed. In all part of the world, attracting young or matured inerrant into teaching is major challenge, many education system as supplementing teachers with a high growing cadre of paraprofessional who are playing a variety of roles.

In Nigeria and particularly Gombe State there are shortages of teachers in general or in specific fields: e.g. Mathematics, the Sciences and English Language. There is need to find and keep quality teachers as shortages exist in both urban and rural communities. The demand for quality teachers has become evident and profound now because pupils enrolments have also escalated. Expanding primary systems create pressure to expand the secondary sector with consequent demands for more subject specialist teachers. In all parts of the world access to higher education is growing, with a need for a wide range of teachers. Changes in employment structures are stimulating demand for more and newer forms of vocational education. The quality of training of teachers is crucial to the success of such expansion. With respect to pupils’ teacher ratio, these ratios have steadily gone up over the years and there is corresponding shortage of quality teachers.

The introduction of Universal Basic Education, UBE, has increased access to schooling; the growth in the number of school aged children has outpaced the growth in the number and supply of quality teachers in most states in Nigeria. Teachers’ shortage is of great concern even before the implementation of UBE. In the reports by several committees on education in Gombe State recently the shortages of teachers were reported and run into several tens of thousands in all the levels of education or schooling. These shortages have corresponding effects on teacher-students ratios and provision of quality education to the students.

An aging teacher workforce is certainly a reality in the state. When teachers retire their places will have to be filled by other qualified teachers unless recruitment is done vacancies will exist as it were. There are also a sizeable number of eligible teachers that will retire soon
and in the next few years. Arrangements have to be made in advance to cater for the gap. When school administrators are faced with difficulties in finding sufficient number of quality teachers, they traditionally do one of three things: they may either hire less-qualified teacher(s) or assign teacher(s) trained in one area to teach in the area of shortage, or make extensive use of substitute teachers. As a consequence, many students, especially those at risk, may be taught by teachers who lack the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to produce desired students. The effects of teacher quality are long lasting and cumulative, especially for those at risk students (Haycock, 1998).

Internationally, recruiting quality teachers is a problem due primarily to the low status of teachers (as evidenced by low salaries and condition of service). Recruitment issue in Nigeria is centralized. When it is time to recruit, the Teachers Service Commission, TSC, and State Universal Basic Education Board, SUBEB, come in. These bodies have flexible entry routes to recruitment as unqualified person(s) may be recruited as teachers at the detriment of qualified ones especially in wake of politics. In other countries e.g. UK, Australia, and the United States, recruitment is often handled at either school or local area levels. This practice can only be found in private schools in Nigeria where a principal with possibly one or two other staff can screen and recruit. (This does not mean that they recruit unqualified teachers but vacancies can be filled immediately when they exist).

The attrition rate of teachers is evident. Ingersoll (2004) reported that several factors contribute to teacher turnover. In his study from the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) the report gave reasons teachers themselves cite for their departures. Retirement: this is when a teacher spends either thirty five as years in service or he/she has reached sixty (60) years of age. Others attributed their reasons to family personal reasons or are laid off. Most teachers who left reported that there is job dissatisfaction or they have the desire to pursue a better job or improve job opportunities. The quality of leadership may cause teachers to leave. Structures and cultures within which a teachers work. This could be politics, formal or informal structures, enduring cultural values and norms may impact on the success of retention of teachers. Condition of work place, work load, intensification, salary level, increased demand of accountability, combined with declining authority to act, expanded and structural work roles, the impact of the demand on principal work on individual lives and

Why teachers leave

The need to attract and retain qualified teachers is a problem due primarily to the low status of teachers. There should be a deliberate policy by government in this area. In the United State of America, the National Commission on Teaching, reported that what matters most for teaching America’s Future is “... recruiting, preparing and retaining good teachers should be the central strategy for improving our school “If every generation of children is our most valuable natural resource, every generation of educators is a crucial social tool. In the absence of enough quality teachers, the potential of tens of millions of youngsters is unlikely to be realized.

Yet, while politicians, education policy makers, school and zone administrators, business leaders and media pundits are all having their say, there is a rich source of insight within educational sector that has not been drawn into discussion. No one has asked the most respected teachers what they think about how Nigerian schools can have and hold like teachers of today and tomorrow. It is ironic that even those of us that remains on the job and have known that there are those who are recognized and honoured by colleagues e.g. the Nigeria Union of Teachers, NUT, and Communities for their professional excellence and exemplary dedication have not been asked to comment on recruitment and retention issues let alone ask them to proffer solutions. We all know that the observations, opinions and recommendations of Master Teacher on the subject of recruitment and retention are of immeasurable value but how many of them do we run to for their words of wisdom?
personal responsibility might influence teachers’ migration.

**Teacher retention**

Teachers’ shortages exist and have negative consequences on quality education given to our students. If we are to request each reader of this article to comment on whether there are enough teachers needed in the neighbourhood schools the answer is anybody’s guess: no! Some teachers chose to enter teaching because they believe that teaching is important work and contributes significantly to the development of society. Primarily, some teachers may be attracted to teaching by intrinsic motivation, but extrinsic factors play a major role in retaining them. If a question is to be asked to an old employed teacher whether he/she would like to start teaching all over again? The answer is any body’s guess. However, it is believed that most academically able new teachers are most likely to leave early.

Schools and school system require a cadre of qualified and experienced educators to provide them with a number of suitably qualified and trained aspirants to apply for an assumed position in schools. Some settings make attraction and retaining of teachers limited thus positions in some schools e.g. rural or remote areas may be vacant without qualified persons to fill. Although salaries can make a difference now, (unlike in the early 90s through the close of that decade when teachers will have to spend almost a year without pay) teachers generally will like good working conditions. Any one of us that visits Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria will definitely agree with me that the environment is very favourable for learning. A good working environment might affect decisions to stay on a job.

Schools are located in both rural and urban settings and teachers are posted to these schools. A teacher in a rural school is naturally deprived of many social benefits; while the teacher in an urban area suffers from numerous disciplinary problems from students. In order to retain teachers in rural schools, deliberate efforts should be put in place to compensate especially those that do not have the built in drive towards fulfilling their own potentials. In the seventies, an attempt was made at providing staff quarters in rural areas. Universal Primary Education teachers of that time were quick to grab the facility, moved in quickly and settled down to work. Teachers in schools with disciplinary problems should consider involving parents, counsellors and psychologists.

Some teachers are novice; such beginning teachers will require some form of induction as this will help in redefining their needs. Let them see teaching in the first year as a phase of learning that follows and build on the learning of the profession. If teachers receive no support during this time, one or two outcome may occur first; the teacher may leave the profession or transfer to other schools in search of support. The second may be he may stay in the profession but learn poor practices in an attempt to cope with his other struggles of life e.g. unemployment.

Effective induction programmes should focus on the subject specific pedagogical strategies needed to foster students learning. Mentors need to be selected based on high quality standards and training to analyze and evaluate instructions effectively and conduct discussions about their experiences with novices. Mentors should be available to mentees even after official induction programmes. It is believed that novice teachers who are supported and their financial or other social obligations for induction programmes are catered for their likelihood to remain in teaching are high.

A school administrator’s support can have profound impact on retaining teachers. In a research work by Goldberg and Proctor (2000) on 400 teachers surveyed in the USA, 89% identified school administrator’s support has a great impact on beginning teachers’ life. A Principal/ Head teacher’s attitude has great impact in ensuring whether a teacher will stay on or leave. Lower class size if created will more likely make some teachers remain in the profession because of lower threshold to
stressful conditions. If the workload is reduced to the minimum teaching load of twenty four periods per week teachers are likely to remain in the profession.

Issues and challenges
It is possible to have some among readers that are teachers that will remain teachers possibly because they have spent substantive years on the job and established big families. Those who are academically able would have left. Unemployment may be a reason for remaining on the job. It is only the new teachers with sound educational promise that may leave. Although salaries are better today than it was some years back, the importance of good working conditions in making a decision to stay on a the job is fundamental. School organizational factor may play a crucial role in teacher retention. Some examples of these organizational factors will include inadequate support from school administration, students’ motivation, disciplinary problems and limited teachers input in and influence over school policies. These factors may affect motivation and commitment by those teachers who are already at the school. Whether through migration or attrition, teacher turnover is expensive. The tax payer is complaining loss in teaching quality this lowers students’ attainment and achievement.

The number of routes within which quality teachers graduate is very insignificant that is why the Gombe State Government like most states in the Nigeria (except Imo, Ondo and Rivers states) realising that as a problem have established Colleges of Education. Teachers that qualify should be encouraged to enter into teaching and remain in it. Teachers’ recruitment can begin at the secondary school level especially when students are given talks on careers. Career talk at this level is important and should be encouraged. Secondary school students can form and enrol as members in Future Teacher or Future Educator clubs. Certificate course for graduates or paraprofessional who like to take up to teaching should be organised in our universities and opportunities be given to graduate teachers to attend. Many Nigerian universities have established Postgraduate Diploma in Education, PGDE programs. Universities or/and government should include forgivable loans and scholarships partnerships between schools and Universities to provide incentives that are helpful in attracting teacher candidates. Such incentives may include bonus or salary increments for those teachers who are willing to teach in rural schools.

Conclusion
Most schools in Gombe State like most states in the nation have an aging teacher workforce with high percentage of teachers nearing retirement age. The pre-service teacher preparatory programs of the colleges of education and universities in the nation have historically produced an inadequate supply of new teachers to replenish the teacher workforce. However, a growing percentage of newly licensed teachers are choosing not to enter the profession or are leaving the classrooms within the first few years. This phenomenon if not checked the problem with teacher recruitment and retention and the desired quality education will remain mirage.

References


