

Workload and Teachers' Effectiveness in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Emergent Issues in Perspectives

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Abstract

There is observably a worrisome concern in an on-going debate about the effectiveness of teachers in public secondary schools and stakeholders adduce a plethora of reasons. It is against this backdrop that this paper, juxtaposely examined teachers' workload and their effectiveness in public secondary schools. From literature, teacher's workload predominates other factors that are responsible for their presumed ineffectiveness. To this end, it was suggested that posting of teachers to urban and rural schools should not be lopsided; government should provide attractive Special Rural Allowance (SRA) for teachers in rural schools; among others. It was concluded that teachers would more likely experience inspirational motivation and idealized influence if they are assigned less or adequate workload.

Keywords: workload, teachers, school, effectiveness, emergent, issues, perspective

Introduction

Education is a means of empowering an individual through the acquisition of knowledge and skills in order to become useful to himself and the community. Nwadiani (2000) [1] acclaimed education to be the magic wand for the solution to all problems that plague mankind. Education, therefore, is a means through which man can learn and unlearn himself of certain ethics, values, beliefs and principles of life, which will further enlighten the human mind, character and personality.

The immense relevance of education to national development cannot be over-emphasized. Many countries commit huge sums of money into the funding of education. In order to ensure that a lot of people benefit from formal education, some countries make primary and secondary education free. In Nigeria, education is said to be free through the Universal Basic Education Scheme in the first nine (9) years of schooling (from primary 1 through to Junior Secondary School Class 3). In pursuance of this laudable objective, various governments in Nigeria, whether states or federal, have over the years allocated a substantial part of their annual budgets to education. This is in realization of the federal governments adoption of education as an instrument par excellence for effective national development based on the five main national objectives as enshrined in the National Policy on Education [2].

Secondary education plays significant roles in the actualization of making an individual self-reliant and developing the community. This is because it is at the secondary school level that career decisions are made, hence several secondary schools were over the years opened and existing ones expanded in infrastructure, so as to provide the needed formal education to the teeming secondary school going age. However, these schools can achieve nothing without quality and effective teachers to carryout the task of teaching and learning.

In the conceptualization of education, the teacher is obviously a prime factor. A teacher is an academic who is able to manipulate and re-engineer the other resources to achieve set goals and, in a manner, to achieve the inculcation of knowledge. He is an academic catalyst, an intellectual developer, a character molder for acceptable behaviour, a role model and a near perfect ideal of human discipline [3]. In spite of those encomiums bequeathed upon the teacher, he may still be having some challenges like lack of job satisfaction, low morale, poor social image, workload-related issues and remuneration. Teaching as an art is challenging and demanding, hence it's being perceived by teachers as highest energy dissipating activity.

Teachers' workload includes, among others, the time spent for lesson preparation, effort and time spent on organizing teaching aids, time spent on teaching students in the classroom, the number of classes, stream of classes and the number of students in each class. Time spent on marking students class work and assignments as well as personal study hours for mastery of the subject matter fall within the teachers' workload purview [4]. Thus, teachers may find themselves working outside the school hours attending to students' work, consequently lengthening their working week. The effect of this energy sapping, time consuming and stressful situation is that teachers may not be able to maximise their input for effective teaching. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to explore the plethora of research findings in order to decipher if workload and teachers' effectiveness are intricately interwoven.

Teachers' Workload

Workload is perceived by stakeholders of secondary schools to be a predictor of teachers' effectiveness. Adequate workload may lead to effectiveness and self-development of the teacher, but excessive workload could lead to ineffectiveness and frustration on the job [5]. Teachers are statutorily to teach

between fifteen (15) and twenty-one (21) periods in a week as specified in the Teachers Manual by the Ministry of Education. Under workload refers to a teachers' teaching period that is below 15 periods per week and below 1:40 teacher-students ratio per class. Over workload is the number of teaching periods taught by a teacher that exceeds 21 periods per week and a class size that exceeds 1:40 teacher-students ratio per class.

Many teachers are observably made to teach over thirty-five (35) periods in a week. Some of them may also perform teaching and administrative tasks like control of students, supervision of students during labour and Agricultural Science practical lessons, being house masters in schools with boarding facilities, give and correct assignments, evaluate the students, preside over assemblies, mark the school register and fill the weekly diary, keep the students continuous assessment scores and collate examination results. They write lesson plans and lesson notes, distribute and care for teaching materials, supervise students' food, serve as library attendants, hostel masters and solve students' accommodation problems, and serve in many other capacities as directed by the principal.

Perhaps, teachers' workload has increased in recent times. This could be attributed to the emphasis that is recently placed on the relevance of comprehensive or semi-comprehensive school programmes. Subjects like Music, Arts, Craft, Electronics, Agricultural Science and Mechanics are acclaimed relevant and are taught in schools. Consequently, some schools offer between fifteen (15) and eighteen (18) subjects. In this circumstance, teachers may be compelled to teach as many as thirty-eight (38) periods per week.

Teachers' workload may become disturbing when viewed against the backdrop of alleged scarcity of qualified teachers and the seeming increase in secondary school enrolment. The National Policy on Education asserted that the number of students per class for a teacher to effectively manage should not exceed forty [2]. From observation, some teachers are made to teach up to seventy (70) students in a class. Thus, teachers may not be able to attend to all the students on individual basis within the forty (40) minutes allotted to each period, and teachers expected effectiveness under this situation may seem elusive.

Burnout on the part of teachers may occur as a result of stress occasioned by excessive workload [6]. This could be as a result of "work extension" (i.e. doing official work at home) which probably make some teachers use holiday and personal leisure periods for academic and extracurricular activities. Work extension may be due to the many subjects being handled by teachers. The situation may become worrisome when teachers are allegedly made to teach subjects outside their discipline as a result of lack of teachers in those subject areas. Teachers, therefore, may not be able to complete their scheme of work, and may be ineffective in the course of teaching.

Teachers' Effectiveness

The concept of effectiveness has received wide attention in organization behaviour literature [6,7,8]. The impressive arrays of literature on effectiveness as well as its acclaimed central importance of the concept, however, belie the problems faced by theorists in developing a clear definition of the concept. Effectiveness involves the ability to do something or carryout a programme or ability to achieve a goal (with minimum efforts

and use of scarce resource) that is very crucial to the rapid development of any economy.

Famro (2018) [7], defined effectiveness as "oriented having to do with the achievement of co-operative and organisational goals". It indicates how proactive or active somebody is lexically. Ogunsaju (2009) [6] conceptualized effectiveness as the ability to acquire inputs, process these inputs, channel the outputs and maintain stability. Heman (2019) [8] also viewed effectiveness as task accomplishment and an act by which employees carry out their assigned duties in accordance with laid down procedures. Effectiveness is an accomplishment of goals. Effects alone do not yield effectiveness, as individuals must possess abilities needed and other personal traits.

However, clarifying the way teacher effectiveness is defined is important for two main reasons. First, what is measured reflects what is valued, and as a corollary, what is measured is valued. Definitions nominate and shape what needs to be measured. If for example, policy conversations revolve around scores from standardized tests, the significant outcomes can be narrowed to those that can be measured with standardized test scores. On the other hand, when policy conversations concern the interaction between teachers and students, the focus shifts to classrooms and documenting effective interactions among teachers and their students. Also, different definitions lead to different policy solutions.

Given the importance of these distinctions, this paper uses the term "teacher effectiveness" but does so with a broader definition than is typically associated with that term in current policy conversations. In this paper, a more nuanced definition of teacher effectiveness is provided; this definition includes the varied roles that teachers play as well as the varied students' outcomes education stakeholders value. Students' outcomes are the focus here. Outputs can therefore, be referred to as the student's achievement as a result of "teachers' effectiveness". Also, teacher's effectiveness as used in this paper, is limited to mean impact on students' achievement specifically.

Teachers' Workload and Effectiveness

Workload issues are crucial and teachers must be free to teach and spend time preparing high quality lessons for students. A flexible approach to the strategy of reducing teachers' workload by head teachers and governing bodies is also essential. Against this background, Dynarski (2008) [9] observed that teachers are working excessively long hours and have to do much of their non-teaching work in their time. He suggested a limit in the number of hours in which teachers can be expected to carry out other duties and limits to the duties expected of teachers.

The perceptions of new and inexperienced teachers were sought on teacher's workload and effectiveness. It seemed that senior teachers got the "bad" classes. The lower-level classes had most students who would incidentally challenge the teachers in terms of discipline as well as learning difficulties. In the study, Rockoff (2004) found that the perception of the new teachers was that they were usually assigned the "left over" courses. The veteran teachers had the new teachers get the lowest level classes but they also got the widest variety of classes, even out of their field of experience. These all contributed to what many teachers called "an impossible workload".

Rockoff (2004) [10] suggested that effort needs to be made not to give new teachers a schedule filled with the worst classes all day long, as this will burnout teachers very quickly. Rice (2003) [11] asserted that no differentiation was made for a twenty-year veteran and a novice teacher. They are assigned the same number of courses to teach, and usually the new teachers have the more difficult courses in terms of content and student population. He suggested that the beginning teachers must work even harder to build up the resources file. It was also suggested that first year teachers should have one less class to teach than older teachers.

Teaching is adjudged stressful by teachers due to high workload and insufficient time for teachers' personal welfare: then making them increasingly ineffective as earlier found by Borg and Ridnig (2001) [12] and Kalimo and Hakanen (2000) [13]. This ineffectiveness may be due largely to teachers' involvement in virtually all the facets of the education process. In comparison with other professions, teachers display high levels of education and cynicism, the core dimension of burnout [9]. In this study, Dynarski found that teachers' workload is the major cause of psychological strain and ineffectiveness among teachers. Therefore, teachers under stress and psychological strain as a result of work overload possibly face a trade-off between the protection of their primary performance goals (effectiveness) and the mental effort that has to be invested in the job.

Famro (2018) [7] also found a positive correlation between adequate workload and teachers' effectiveness. Teachers with adequate workload seem to display high enthusiasm and effectiveness when it comes to mobilizing interest, synergy and curiosity among students. Most importantly, healthy and engaged teachers with adequate workload are possibly more effective and likely to perform and achieve educational goals better than their colleagues with burnout symptoms due largely to work overload. This study also found that 39 out of 140 sampled teachers were under loaded and effective in their teaching assignments.

In the same vein, Johnson and Hall (2008) [14] found a positive correlation between less workload and teachers' effectiveness. Teachers with less workload displayed high level of personal commitment to their work and dedication to student's growth needs. This finding is not in congruent with Kyriacoci (2001) [15] who found a negative correlation between teachers' workload and their job effectiveness. According to Brain (2005) [16], the major bane of teachers' effectiveness is not workload related issues, but commitment to job demands in teaching and personal resolve to face and solve challenges arising from educational tasks.

In line with this finding, Kennedy (2001) [17] had earlier observed that high workload is usually associated with cognitive competence and these related variables directly predict teachers' effectiveness; just as the related administration, planning and monitoring is reported to be growing in volume, frequency and degree of details. In the same vein, cognitive competence and commitment have strong relationship with teachers' qualification, which may invariably influence teachers' workload. It was, however, observed in the study that majority of the teachers who were overloaded were those with higher qualifications. It was also asserted that the same set of teachers with high workload were more susceptible

to stress and therefore, less effective in the discharge of their teaching tasks.

Suggestions

- i. There is the need to identify indicators of all the components in the concept of teachers effectiveness so that they can be measured and scored.
- ii. Since teacher observations take many forms and measure different aspects of teaching, valid and appropriate instruments are crucial as well as trained raters to utilize those instruments in standard ways so that results will be comparable across classrooms.
- iii. Posting of teachers to schools in the urban and rural areas should not be lopsided. This will help reduce over workload of teachers in most schools, especially in the rural areas.
- iv. Government should provide attractive Special Rural Allowance (SRA) for teachers in rural schools. This may motivate such teachers to remain in rural schools and thus help reduce the overloaded tasks of the hitherto few teachers.

Conclusion

Effective teaching goes beyond just imparting knowledge but it is a purposeful activity carried out by someone with a specialized knowledge in a skilled way to enhance the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of a person or group of persons. Based on the empirical studies reviewed in this paper, it can be justifiably asserted here that significant relationship exists between workload and effectiveness of teachers in public secondary schools in Nigeria; although few researchers found divergent relationships.

It is pertinent to note that teachers would more likely experience inspirational motivation and idealized influence if they are assigned less or adequate workload.

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