



Teachers' Professional Growth and Job Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated professional growth and job engagement in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted a correlational researcher design. The population of the study comprised all 219 vice principals in the 191 public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State. Two instruments titled; "Professional Growth Questionnaire (PGQ) and Teachers' Job Engagement Scale (TJES) were used for data collection. The sample size of 175 was determined with stratified random sampling techniques. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.79 and 0.79 were computed for (PGQ) and (TJES) respectively. Simple regression was used in answering the research question while t-test associated with simple regression was used in testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 alpha levels. It was discovered that professional growth predicts 51% to Teachers' Job Engagement. It was concluded that professional growth significantly predicts to teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. In view of this, it was recommended that Ministry of Education and school administrators should encourage the training and retraining of teachers for enhance professionalism in the performance of their job. Also, the Ministry of Education and School administrators should organize seminars workshops and conferences for teachers on a regular basis for optimum teachers' productivity in the actualization of school goals and objectives.

Keywords: professional growth, job engagement, teachers, schools

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' job engagement is a crucial issue recently in secondary school education in Nigeria because of its significant or integral role it plays in school outcomes. Teachers work in school environment to foster teaching and learning for effective achievement of school goals. Teachers' Job engagement is an essential instrument or tool required for excellent students' academic achievement. Therefore, teachers' job engagement involves considerable creativity, solving problems effectively, undertaking many discretionary tasks to enhance the school system, high level of commitment and fulfilling prescribed educational roles. As a matter of fact, engaged teachers employ quality time, energy, wiliness and hardwork to do their jobs in order to achieve school goals.

According to Khan (1990) "job engagement refers to the state in which physically, cognitively, emotionally in their role performance". Furthermore Khan also opined that engagement positively affects workers performance and makes them extremely involve in their work and pay great attention to details. Teachers' job engagement is referred to as a positive, fulfilling work related state of mind characterized by Vigour dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma and Barker 2002).

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2008) "job engagement refers to a state that demonstrates dedication and absorption in the job". Therefore, job engagement is characterized by a high level of energy and strong identification with one's work.

Similarly, teacher job engagement is defined as having commitment and enthusiasm which is essential for the success of schools and is a contributing factor to academic achievements (Ruther and Jacobson 1986, Baikin, 2007). Therefore, teachers' job engagement could be described as teachers' interest or enthusiasm for teaching and learning in a school environment. Furthermore, teachers' job engagement is defined as teachers demonstrating energy involving and effectiveness in their jobs (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001). The driving force behind the importance of teachers' job engagement is that it has positive consequences for school organization. For example, empirical job engagement reports that high level of engagement leads to increased organizational commitment; job satisfaction, less absenteeism and high turnover rates improved health and well-being, extra role behaviour, advanced performance and a greater exhibition of personal initiative, proactive behaviour and high rate of motivation (Schaufeli and Salanova, (2008).

From the forgoing, teachers' job engagement is a state whereby teachers are willing to contribute optimally towards the achievement of school goals inspite of challenges or odds. Therefore, for secondary school teachers to show effective job engagement, teachers' professional growth should be seen as a vital instrument to empower teachers with knowledge, skills, usefulness and experience for higher productivity in teaching and learning in school environment.

Teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and knowledge as well as examining his or her teaching systematically (Glatthorn, 1995). This conception of professional growth is therefore broader than career development, which is defined as "the growth that occurs as a teacher moves through the professional career cycle" and broader than staff development, which is "the provision of organized in-service programmes designed to foster the growth of group of teachers".

According to Firestone and Pennell (1993), the knowledge demands of the new teaching strategies have stimulated the need to bring about the professionalization of teaching, of which professional growth is one measure tool. Teachers' commitment depends on their interest to grow professionally.

Furthermore, to Cocharn-Smith and Lythe (2001), Professional growth is seen as the process of culture building and not mere training. Professional growth is affected by the coherence of school programmes or curricular activities. Therefore, a teacher professional growth that is not supported by the school or curricular reform will be ineffective. When looking at the professional growth, one must examine the contents of the experiences, the processes by which the professional growth will occur, and the contexts in which it will take place.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the extent professional growth predicts teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the extent professional growth predicts teachers' job engagement in public secondary school in Bayelsa State.

Research Question

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent does professional growth predicts teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05% alpha level guided the study

HO₁: Professional growth does not predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary school in Bayelsa State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised all the 219 vice principals academic and administration in the 191 public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The sample size of the study consisted of 175 vice principals drawn using stratified sampling technique. Two self-designed instrument titled: Professional Growth Questionnaire (PGQ) and Teachers' Job Engagement Scale (TJES). The instruments were structured in line with Likert response of Very High Extent (VHE)

High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME) and Low extent (LE) respectively. The PGQ and TJES have 20 items each respectively. The instruments were validated by the three experts from the department of Educational Management, Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach alpha method. This gave a reliability estimate (PGQ) and (TJES) as 0.79 respectively and was accepted. The researcher with the help of three trained research assistants administered the questionnaires and out of which only 171 copies were retrieved representing 98% retrieval rate. Simple regression was used to answer the research question while t-test associated with simple regression was used to test the null hypothesis at a probability level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Research question: *To what extent does professional growth predicts teachers’ job engagement in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?*

Table 1a: Simple regression analysis on the extent professional growth predicts teachers’ job engagement

Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R. Square	Std Error of the Estimate
1	.712 ^a	.507	.502	3.67

Table 1 revealed that the computed regression co-efficient R is .712 while the squared regression value was computed to be .507. This implies that professional growth predicts teachers’ job engagement by 51% as indicated by the co-efficient of determinism. Therefore, the remaining 49% is accounted by other factors.

Hypothesis: professional growth does not significantly predict teachers’ job engagement in Public Secondary School in Bayelsa State.

Model		Unstandardized co-efficient		Standardized Co-efficient	T	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	Constant	36.6	3.155		16.888	.000
	Professional Growth	.219	.101	.712	2.174	.001

Table 1b revealed that standardized beta coefficient is .712. The t-calculated value 2.174 when subjected to 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that professional growth significantly predicts teachers’ job engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that professional growth predicts 51% of teachers’ job engagement as indicated by the co-efficient of determinism while 49% could be accounted by other factors. The hypothesis also revealed that professional growth significantly predicted teachers’ job engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State. This is in line with the argument that teachers’ commitment depends on their drive and will to grow professionally to engage in teaching learning effectively in a school environment. This was corroborated by Okorie, Igwe, Asodike, Onyeike and Anyaogo (2014) as they highlighted some merits of professional growth that will enhance secondary school to perform their roles and engage effectively. The merits are as follow;

- Professional growth gives teachers the ability to manage and organize students in a manner to assist them achieve targeted educational goals.
- Professional growth fosters teachers’ role of serving as interpreters of the curriculum plan to the students in their respective schools.
- It also helps the teachers build the capacity in their functions of producing appropriate and adequate curriculum materials.

- Professional growth helps teachers to effectively function as academic counselors of students in academic matters.
- Through professional growth, teachers improve their communication skills to promote educational activities.
- It helps teachers to effectively and meaningfully contribute to curriculum planning.
- It also helps teachers to effectively improve their abilities to formulating instructional goals and learning objectives.
- It facilitates teachers performance and they serve as elevators of students activities in classrooms (pp.55-56)

Also, this was corroborated by Melcrum (2007) as he observed that opportunities career advancement, training and development are essential drivers of job engagement in every organization. Therefore, teachers should be provided the opportunity for continuous professional growth for adequate job engagement; teachers feel more empowered or motivated when they are knowledgeable about their subjects or profession, (Short, 1994).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that professional growth independently relates significantly to teachers' job engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The evident is shown in the findings where professional growth predicts 51% of teachers' job engagement as indicated by co-efficient of determinism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the researcher therefore recommends that:

1. Ministry of Education and school administrators should encourage training and retraining of teachers for them to grow professionally by providing adequate financial resources and teachers professional growth facilities for effective job engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State.
2. The Ministry of Education and school administrators should organize seminars, workshops and conferences for teachers' on a regular basis tagged: "Teachers' professional growth and job engagement to enhance optimum teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
3. Teachers should also work tirelessly after being empowered through professional growth to ensure the achievement of school goals.

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