

PERCEPTION OF RURAL AND URBAN PRE-PRIMARY/
PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS
WORKSHOPS AS A RETRAINING PROGRAMME IN
RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to find out the extent teacher workshops were implemented and also determine if there is difference in the perception of the rural and urban teachers towards the workshops. The study whose population was 8577 teachers adopted the stratified random sampling in selecting 843 teachers for the study. A researcher made questionnaire titled “perception of rural and urban teachers towards teachers’ workshops” was the main instrument. The data generated was analyzed using population and independent t-tests statistics. The analysis revealed that the implementation of teacher workshops is significantly low and the urban and rural teachers significantly differ in their perceptions toward the teacher workshops. The study recommended that those who select the teachers for workshops should develop a schedule or adopt a random selection approach that would give all the teachers equal opportunities for participation and there should be the provision of comfortable accommodation and transport systems to enable all participants attend the workshops without any form of stress.

Key words: Perception, rural and urban teachers, workshops

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INTRODUCTION

The need to raise proficient manpower and efficient workforce is the dream of any organization. To attain this goal, most organizations and agencies embark on strategies that would lead to high productivity. Observations have shown that both private and public organizations organize workshops, seminars, conferences and other forms of retraining programmes as a means of improving the job performance of the staff in their organizations. In line with this, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBE), Nigeria Teachers' Institute (NTI), Ministry of Education, Companies in Rivers State and other agencies have since the take off of the UBE programme engaged in regular organization of workshops for teachers.

The number of agencies and the frequency with which the workshops are organized is one thing another is how well the workshops are organized. Apart from the extent of its organization, it is observable that the UBE officials and Headmasters select the teachers who attend the workshops, thereby not giving all the teachers equal opportunity to be selected for the retraining programmes. Outside the issue of how well it is implemented and the selection process, the workshops hold in specific urban centres which are close to the urban teachers as against the rural teachers who attend the workshops from the rural areas which are several kilometers away from their places of abode. Considering that the coming of the rural teachers to urban centers for workshops are solely their own making they are bound to be faced with problems such as transportation, accommodation, feeding and general welfare. One is therefore bound to reason that the perception of the urban and rural teachers towards the workshops may not be the same. Following this background, the researcher was bound to among other things find out:

- (1) the extend teachers' workshops are implemented; and
- (2) the perception of urban and rural teachers' towards the workshops.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The guide the study, the following research questions were posed.

- (1) To what extent are teachers' workshops implemented?
- (2) What difference, if any, exist between urban and rural teachers' perception towards the implementation of the workshops?

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

Consequently, the following hypotheses were postulated in course of the study.

- (1) The extent of implementation of teachers' workshop is not significant.
- (2) There is no significant difference between urban and rural teachers' perception towards the implementation of the workshops.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers and workshops

The goals of teacher education as stipulated by the Federal Government in the National Policy on Education (2004), among other things stated that "in-service training shall be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education and shall also take care of all inadequacies" (p 40). In the bid to accomplish the task of ensuring that well motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers are found in the primary schools, the Federal Government (2000) explained that the on-going effort to raise the level of the general education of teachers' as well as efforts to raise the level of their initial professional preparation will be pursued, broadened and intensified ... the co-ordinating body for the UBE will collaborate with the National Teachers Institute (NTI) to train the initial teachers required for the take-off of the UBE programme (pp 9-10).

The provision as contained in the UBE implementation guide line justifies why retraining programmes such as workshops, conferences, seminars, short refresher courses are made to be an integral part of the on-going UBE programme. However, Adiele and Abraham (2004) explained that:

so far, the above statement has remained a paper work or mere declaration of government intensions. As at March 2005, no teacher training institution of any category has been 'mobilized for the development of any teacher career improvement programme. If such programme "exists" it is doubtful if a single teacher has benefited from such scheme (p. 150).

No doubt, government and other stake holders are aware that the failure of most educational programmes at the primary school level is attributed to the recruitment of unqualified teachers and lack of retraining of serving ones.

But it seems that no lesson is learnt from the experiences of the past, if Adiele and Abraham's account is correct. Besides, Rasik (1972) asserted that the effectiveness of any

educational programme is a measure of the caliber of teachers in its service. It is apparent that, training and retraining of teachers is an important ingredient that improves the teachers' general job performance. Therefore, teachers' as human resource developers need to undergo on-the-job training and re-orientation from time to time so as to originate and develop ideas on their teaching methodology, grasp good knowledge of the subject matter as well as gain the expertise needed for the day-to-day activities of the school (Uya, 2004).

The projection that the manpower need of the primary school system will be met is based on the execution of the UBE Implementation Guideline of (2000) as stated by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The guide line states that the initial teachers required for the take-off of the programme will be trained by the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) in collaboration with the co-ordinating body of the UBE. To achieve this target, teachers of diverse qualifications and specialization will be needed to keep-up the existing teachers and meet the manpower requirement of schools. Contrarily, we had witnessed the training of school certificate holders in a crash programme that lasted barely one year across the country between 2001 and 2002. This is one of the most commendable efforts of government in terms of teacher training and retraining (Adiele & Abraham, 2004).

Babolola (2009) revealed that the Federal Government earmarks two billion Naira for a nationwide on-the-job training workshop for public primary school teachers in order to boost the country's Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The programme is said to have been organized in collaboration with National Teachers' Institute (NTI). A total of 12,000 teachers were drawn from all parts of the country to benefit from the one-week training programme scheduled between 23rd and 28th November, 2009. A breakdown of the beneficiaries from the various States in the south-west zone shows that Ekiti had over 2,340 teachers, Lagos: 5,882, Ogun 3,662; Osun 3,453 and Oyo: 5,828. In Rivers State a similar training programme took place between 8th and 12th of February, 2010 in 5 different centres where 2,477 teachers were retrained. The resource persons were Lecturers from Rivers State University of Education Port Harcourt (Consultancy Services, Rivers State University of Education, 2010). A deduction of the available literature indicates that teacher workshops are on-going across the country. One thing is to organize it another is the extent it can be organized well.

METHODOLOGY

The study stratified the public primary school teachers into two on the basis of urban and rural. The total number of teachers was 8,577. The 8,577 teachers were found in 868 schools. The urban schools were 260 with 2,823 teachers while the rural schools were 608 schools with 5,754 teachers (Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board, 2010). To sample 10% of the population, 10% of the 260 urban and 608 rural schools were selected for the study. To successfully do the selection, the researcher wrote the names of each of the urban and rural schools and put them into two different bags tagged urban and rural schools. To select the schools for the exercise, the researcher dipped his hand into the bag containing the slips and each time a slip was picked, he wrote the name of the school contained on it but if the name was previously picked, he threw the slip back into the bag and thoroughly mixed the slips before picking again. The researcher carried out this exercise until he picked 61 and 26 schools respectively representing 10% of the rural and urban schools in Rivers State. In all 87 or 10.02% of the public primary schools were selected for the study.

On arriving at each of the 87 schools, the researcher sought the permission of the Headmaster to obtain the list of the teachers in the schools. After which, he carried out a simple random sampling to select 10 teachers from each of the 87 schools. In all, 870 teachers representing 10.14% of the teachers were sampled for the study. The composition of the 870 teachers showed that 260 urban and 610 rural teachers were sampled. Out of the 870 teachers sampled for the study, 843 teachers correctly responded to the questionnaire while 27 were wrongly filled. Therefore 843 which showed a return rate of 96.60% of the administered questionnaire was used for the study.

The questionnaire titled “perception of teachers’ workshops” was administered through the help of some research assistants. For effective retrieval of the questionnaire, the researcher and his assistants bargained to either wait or go back within 2-3 days to retrieve the questionnaire. After the retrieval, the data collected were scored, coded and fed into the computer. All the data generated was analyzed using the appropriate SPSS programmes.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The results of data analysis were presented hypothesis by hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant level.

Hypothesis 1: The extent of implementation of teachers' workshop is not significant.

Table 1

Population t-test analysis of the extent of implementation of teachers' workshops.

N	\bar{X}	S	μ	df	t-calculated	t-critical	Level of Significant
843	19.56	8.83	21.00	842	-4.74	1.96	.05

Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value of -4.74 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance and 842 degrees of freedom. This means that the extent of implementation of teachers' workshops is significantly low.

Hypothesis 2: There is significant difference between urban and rural teachers' perception towards the implementation of workshops.

Table 2

Independent t-test analysis of urban and rural teachers' perception towards the implementation of teacher workshops.

School Location	N	\bar{X}	S	t-calculated	t-critical	df	Level of Significant
Urban	284	21.41	6.58	4.38 ^x	1.96	841	.05
Rural	559	18.62	9.65				

Table 2 indicates that the t-calculated value of 4.38 is higher than the t-critical of 1.96 at .05 significance level and 841 degrees of freedom. Since the value of t-calculated is higher than the t-critical, the null hypothesis is rejected thus there is significant difference between urban and rural teachers' perception towards the implementation of workshops.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that:

- (1) the extent of implementation of teachers' workshops is significantly low; and
- (2) there is significant difference between urban and rural teachers' perception towards the implementation of workshops.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Implementation level of teachers' workshops

One of the findings of this study states that the extent teachers' workshops are implemented is significantly low. This is to say that workshop has not gained a recognizable implementation level. It may be surprising to note that teachers' retraining programmes for primary school teachers have not met expectations. This finding may be confusing to most people because from 2006, observations have shown that the UBE board and other agencies such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the National Teachers Institute (NTI), Shell Petroleum Development Company Nigeria (SPDC), ELF Oil Company Nigeria and other companies have organized teacher retraining workshops. The oil companies sponsor the workshops and seminars for teachers in the areas where they operate.

The perception that the workshops so far organized have not met the required level means that not all teachers attend the workshops. This is because only few teachers are selected to represent their schools in each of the workshops. The current approach, in which teachers are either selected by the headteacher or officers at the board, does not create room for a good proportion of the teachers to attend the workshops. By the selection approach, only a few benefit from it. The selection approach does not allow all teachers to benefit from the workshops and seminars. The headteachers and board officials may consistently select the same set of teachers who are their friends, relations or loyalist and leaving out others. Corroborating the Nigerian experience, Bhaskar (2010) stated that the effect of teacher retraining programmes in Orissa are yet to be determined as they remain a subject of debate. The selection approach is therefore one of the significant factors responsible for the low implementation of workshops as perceived by the teachers.

Commenting on the proportion of teachers that attend the workshops, Imogie (2000) pointed out that if the primary school system makes it compulsory for teachers to be involved in in-service training through workshops of different kinds, the selection process need to be changed because a situation where workshop participants are selected by Ministry of Education or UBE officials cannot give room for all teachers to attend the workshops. Commenting on who organizes the workshops, Adiele and Abraham (2004) observed that the UBE implementation guideline stipulates that the NTI in collaboration with the UBE shall train teachers required for the UBE programme. Adiele and Abraham (2004) further explained that "since March, 2005, no

teacher training institution of any category has been mobilized for the development of any teacher career improvement programme. If such programme exists it is doubtful if a single teacher has benefited from such scheme” (p 150). In recognition of Adiele and Abraham’s observation, the government in 2009 earmarked two billion Naira for on-the-job training workshop for public primary school teachers in Nigeria (Babalola, 2009). No doubt, if the exercise was well implemented, in terms of quality of instruction and general teachers’ welfare the perception of teachers would have been positive.

Differences in the perception of urban and rural teachers towards workshops

The study further established that a significant difference exists between the perception of the urban and rural teachers in the implementation workshops. The disparity in the views of the urban and rural teachers on this issue can be rationalized. The teachers’ workshops for instance are held in the cities. The cities as venues for the workshops are convenient centers for the urban teachers, who attend the workshops from the comfort of their homes. It is unlike the rural teachers whose attendance of the workshops is entirely of their own making. They attend the workshops by traveling to the cities which are many kilometers away from their schools. At the workshop centres there are no accommodations for them. Feeding arrangements are solely their own business apart from the lunch at the workshop venues. Sometimes, the rural teachers sleep in open classrooms, just to attend workshops. In view of these experiences, which are indeed different from that of the urban teachers, they are bound to have a different perception of the workshops.

It may be frightening that the perceptions of urban and rural teachers about workshops are not the same because no organization can improve the proficiency of his workers without workshops. In this connection, Osuji (1998) explained that 83.8% of the teachers had not attended workshops. The question therefore is “can quality education be guaranteed without quality training?” This question is borne out of the belief that attendance at conferences, workshops and refresher courses are good means of refreshing and replenishing the intellectual body of knowledge needed for teachers’ effectiveness. Since Osuji submitted that few teachers attend workshops and this study established that rural teachers face more difficult situations while attending workshops it may also mean that rural teachers benefit less from the workshops.

CONCLUSIONS

Teacher workshops appear to be the commonest form of teacher retraining programme that accommodates the teachers irrespective of their school location. On identifying the viability of using workshops to improve the professional worth of teachers, the government in liaison with her relevant agencies institutionalizes the use of workshops to retrain teachers. In as much as the idea behind the adoption of workshops as a retraining strategy is not condemnable the ways those who attend the workshops are selected and the welfare of those who come from distant places to attend the workshops are not given the needed attention. The issues of how participants are selected and the welfare of those who come from distant places pose some degree of problems in deriving the gains of using workshops in improving teachers overall performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

1. Considering the fact that teacher workshops is a catalyst for teacher efficiency and the study criticized the current approach in selecting teachers for workshops, the UBE /ministry officials and the Headmasters need to develop a schedule or adopt a random selection approach that would give all the teachers equal opportunities for participation in workshops and other teacher training exercises.
2. Those who organize the workshops should as a matter of policy provide comfortable accommodation and transport system that can enable all participants attend the workshops without any form of stress.

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