

TEACHER ATTRITION AMONG AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA: CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Teacher attrition is one of the most persistent challenges confronting the Nigerian education system, particularly in specialized subjects such as agricultural science. This conceptual paper examines the causes and implications of teacher attrition among agricultural science teachers in public secondary schools in Edo State, Nigeria. The study identifies low salaries, poor infrastructure, lack of teaching resources, heavy workload, inadequate professional recognition, and unstable education policies as the leading causes of attrition. The paper highlights far-reaching implications of attrition, including the shortage of qualified teachers, reduced quality of instruction, declining student achievement, and long-term threats to agricultural education and food security. Recommendations include improved teacher remuneration, better working conditions, provision of instructional resources, and supportive policy frameworks.

Keywords: Teacher attrition, agricultural science, causes and implications.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher attrition, broadly defined as the rate at which teachers leave the teaching profession either voluntarily or involuntarily, is a global issue with significant consequences for educational quality (Hong, 2010). While attrition is a natural phenomenon through retirement or career transitions, its high prevalence in developing countries, particularly Nigeria, has raised concerns about the sustainability of educational systems (Ingersoll, 2017).

In Edo State, attrition among agricultural science teachers presents a unique challenge. Agricultural science is a crucial subject within the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, designed to equip students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills in agriculture. It serves as a foundation for youth entrepreneurship, food production, and environmental sustainability (Okeke & Eze, 2021). However, the inability to retain agricultural science teachers has left many schools understaffed, resulting in declining instructional quality and reduced student interest in agriculture.

The persistence of teacher attrition undermines the broader goals of the Nigerian education system and threatens the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 2 (zero hunger) (United Nations, 2015). This conceptual paper investigates the causes and implications of teacher attrition among agricultural science teachers in Edo State, offering insights into strategies that can mitigate its negative effects and strengthen agricultural education in Nigeria.

This problem is not only educational but also socio-economic, because the loss of skilled agricultural educators has ripple effects on the farming sector, youth employment, and national productivity. Hence, addressing the challenge is not only urgent but also strategic for sustainable development in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a conceptual research design that relies on secondary data. Information was drawn from published books, journal articles, government policy documents, international reports, and previous studies on teacher attrition both within and outside Nigeria. A thematic review of these materials was carried out, with attention paid to the specific situation of agricultural science teachers in Edo State.

The use of secondary data made it possible to identify recurring patterns and causes of teacher attrition without the constraints of fieldwork. The method also provided a cost-effective way to synthesize findings from different contexts and apply them to the case of agricultural science education. In essence, the methodology is descriptive and interpretive, aiming to bring together existing knowledge to provide new insights into the issue of teacher attrition.

CONCEPT OF TEACHER ATTRITION

Teacher attrition refers to the phenomenon of teachers exiting the teaching profession, either through voluntary resignation, retirement, dismissal, or transfer to non-teaching roles (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Unlike retirement, which is expected and planned, high levels of early-career attrition create systemic disruptions. Studies show that attrition disproportionately affects specialized subjects such as science, mathematics, and agricultural science, where shortages of qualified personnel are already prevalent (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012).

Teacher attrition can also be classified into "voluntary attrition" (e.g., career changes, migration, business ventures) and "involuntary attrition" (e.g., dismissals, retrenchment, health issues). In Nigeria, voluntary attrition is especially prevalent, often fueled by poor pay and limited societal recognition for teachers compared to other professions.

CAUSES OF TEACHER ATTRITION IN AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

1. **Low Remuneration:** Agricultural science teachers, along with other teachers, face low and irregular salary payments, undermining morale and prompting exits (Ofeyeju et al., 2023).
2. **Poor Facilities and Inadequate Instructional Resources:** Many schools lack modern labs, demonstration farms, and teaching equipment (Disciplines.ng, 2024).

3. **Excessive Workload:** Heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities contribute to stress, burnout, and turnover.
4. **Limited Professional Growth Opportunities:** Many teachers lack access to meaningful professional development and suffer from stagnating promotion prospects.
5. **Policy Instability:** Frequent curriculum changes and exclusion of teachers from policymaking create uncertainty and job dissatisfaction.
6. **Inefficient School Leadership:** Research shows that a lack of supportive administration and exclusion from decision-making significantly drive teacher exits (Aminu et al., 2013).
Socio-Cultural Undervaluation: Communities often undervalue the social role of teachers, especially in agricultural disciplines, reducing job prestige.
7. **Economic Pressures and Brain Drain:** Poor compensation, economic hardship, and brain drain push many educators toward non-teaching careers or overseas migration.

IMPLICATIONS OF TEACHER ATTRITION

1. **Teacher Shortages:** Persistent attrition reduces the number of skilled agricultural science teachers, leading to chronic understaffing.
2. **Declining Instruction Quality:** Instruction often becomes theoretical, sidelining the crucial practical components of agricultural science.
3. **Reduced Student Performance and Interest:** Poor teaching quality discourages students from pursuing agriculture, fueling attrition in the long run (Disciplines.ng, 2024).
4. **Threat to Agricultural Development and Food Security:** Attrition destabilizes the pipeline of trained agricultural professionals, with broad implications for national food systems.
5. **Increased Financial Burden:** Frequent recruitment and training of replacements drain education budgets.

Furthermore, teacher turnover correlates with lower school effectiveness and academic outcomes, as evidenced in studies from other Nigerian contexts (Onanusi & Ganiyu, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Teacher attrition among agricultural science teachers in Edo State is a systemic issue tied to inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, infrastructural deficits, weak leadership, and unstable policy environments. These challenges mirror those in wider Nigerian educational systems and threaten both the quality of education and national agricultural development. To reverse this trend, holistic interventions ranging from welfare reforms to professional development and improved school leadership are required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Improve Teacher Remuneration:** Establish reliable and competitive pay structures with timely disbursement (Ofoyeju *et al.*, 2023).
2. **Upgrade Facilities:** Invest in functional farms, labs, teaching aids, and modern infrastructure.
3. **Support Professional Development:** Create structured training programs and transparent promotion pathways.

4. Reduce Workload: Recruit additional staff to relieve overburdened teachers.
5. Enhance Policy Stability: Involve teachers in curriculum reforms and decision-making.
6. Promote Positive School Leadership: Train principals in collaborative and supportive leadership styles.
7. Leverage Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborate with NGOs and agribusiness for school resourcing, mentorship, and recognition incentives.

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