

# Improving Teachers' Commitment to Professional Practice in Ogun State, Nigeria: Teacher qualification and Teaching Experience as Catalysts

Ige, Temisan A. and Osunsina, F. Oladunni.

## Abstract

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*The teacher is an important input in any educational system and his/her commitment is an essential element for successful teaching and learning, because the nature of the teacher who is responsible for directing the affairs in a learning situation can either help to make or mar a well-developed curriculum. Thus this study investigated the extent to which teachers' qualification and experience relate to teachers' commitment to professional practices in Ogun state. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study covered thirty (30) public junior and senior secondary schools randomly sampled from three (3) local government areas in Ogun State. In each of the schools, a total number of twenty (20) teachers were purposively selected to participate in the study making a total of six hundred (600) teachers in all. The instrument for the study is Teachers' Commitment to Professional Practices ( $r=0.68$ ) Questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression). The result revealed that most teachers' were professionally qualified; The findings also indicated that there is a significant influence of teachers' qualification on teachers commitment to professional practice ( $F_{(7,590)}=2.745;p<0.05$ ), and that Teachers' years of teaching experience has a significant influence on teachers' commitment to professional practice ( $F_{(4,593)}=3.957;p<0.05$ ). In conclusion, the findings of this study established that teachers teaching qualification and teachers years of teaching experience significantly influenced teachers' commitment to professional practice. Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that all non-professional teachers should be encouraged to acquire relevant diplomas and degrees in education to make them eligible for registration with the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). Better physical facilities and equipment should be made available to teachers so that their work environment can be conducive to teaching and learning.*

**Keywords:** Teachers, Qualification, Experience, Commitment

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## Introduction

The successful implementation of any curriculum, irrespective of the level whether the basic, secondary or tertiary level of education, largely depends on the quality and competence of the teachers. The teacher is an important factor in any teaching and learning situation without who learning cannot take place. The effectiveness of any educational system depends greatly on the educational attainment of teachers because no system of education can be qualitatively higher than the quality and commitment of its teachers. The fact remains that teaching and learning depend on teachers, for there can be no meaningful socio-economic and political development in any country without teachers. It is on teachers' numbers, quality and devotion that the effectiveness of all educational arrangements, development and growth rest. Even where the educational planners may have the best educational policies and designs, and the government may vote the largest sum of its revenue to education, the ultimate realization of any set of aims for education depends on the teacher. It is the teacher who will ultimately be responsible for translating policy into action and principles into practice in their

interactions with their students. Teachers' influence is always felt in every aspect of the society (Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin, 2015). Teachers play an important role in educating the future members of a society through their work in schools, and the progress of a country rests on the quality of its teachers. Where all other inputs are adequately provided, without the teacher, the whole exercise will amount to nothing. Ukeje (1996) reports this fact when he stated that education unlocks the door to modernisation, and added that it is the teachers who hold the key to that door. UNICEF (2001) supports that of all the inputs that go into education, none is more important than the teacher, Mkpa (2002) emphasizes the importance of teachers as the pivot upon which the education system stands. Thus the teacher is the single most important factor in improving learning achievement (Okeke-Oti and Adaka, 2012). All these re-echo the importance of the teacher in ensuring effective curriculum and education delivery. However, the extent to which the teachers can successfully facilitate and influence educational outcomes positively is a function of their knowledge, attitude and skills (Nwokocha, Ajitoni and Ajiboye, 2016).

Moreover, teacher education refers to the

professional education of teachers towards the attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the need of a given society at any point in time (Osuji, 2009). It includes training or education occurring before the commencement of service (pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job). Every society requires adequate human and material resources to improve its social organization, preserve the culture, enhance economic development and reform the political structures. Teacher education is the process of providing teachers and student-teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills that will help them to effectively perform their job. Afe (1993) refers to teacher education as “the policies and practices designed to equip prospective teachers to perform their tasks effectively in their classroom, school and the wider society”. Teacher education revolves around the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skills required in the performance of effective duties in the classroom.

Although, teaching is a multidimensional practice and some dimensions of this practice appear to be more open to change than others (Spillane and Zeuli 1999). Specifically, teachers revise dimensions of their practice, including materials used and grouping arrangements, more readily and more dramatically than dimensions such as discourse norms and academic tasks (Spillane and Jennings, 1997). Newton (2010) focused on the dimensions of practice that reflect more complex and sophisticated understandings of classroom instruction; namely, dimensions that are conducive to students' learning by engaging them in rigorous intellectual work within a subject area. The quality of classroom practice is defined by the following indicators or dimensions: (a) the degree to which teachers' goals are focused on content and skills that promote student thinking, (b) the degree to which students engage in meaningful tasks that require creative work, (c) the degree to which students are given opportunities to participate in classroom conversations, to share their work, and to learn from mistakes, (d) the extent to which lesson activities are carried out effectively, and (e) the extent to which the overall instruction of the lesson focuses on understanding instead of procedural learning (Newton, 2010). The following are some of the hazards of teacher commitment to professional

practice: work environment, lack of self-motivation, monotonous way of teaching, lack of encouragement from higher officials/ management and insufficient salary. Angle and Perry (1981); Salami, (2008) and Al-Kahtani (2012) found that educational level is related to organizational commitment.

There are several factors which can influence teachers' commitment to professional practice according to **Hamilton-Ekeke (2013)**; a teacher's professional qualification is tied to his/her competence in instruction and management of students and materials in the classroom. The Nigeria educational system requires that all teachers in all educational institutions nationwide should be professionally trained. This is with the view of enhancing teacher's commitment to the teaching profession. There are many factors that determine the quality of teaching, including teacher qualifications and experiences, their level of motivation, and working conditions. Studies show that when teachers are motivated and love the teaching profession, students are also motivated to learn and they learn the content taught by their teachers more effectively (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca and Malone, 2006). Teacher qualification refers to academic and professional qualifications that enable a person to become a registered teacher at all levels of education. It also relates to the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, competence and creativity needed for quality productive engagement in the teaching profession (Etiubon and Benson, 2014). Darling-Hammond (2007) defined a well-qualified teacher as one who is fully certified and holds the equivalent of a major in the field being taught. According to Aina and Olanipekun (2015) teachers' qualification is a particular skill or type of experience or knowledge someone possesses to make him or her suitable to teach. Aina and Olanipekun (2015) also pointed out that Professional development is an aspect of teachers' qualifications that is paramount for an effective classroom teacher. Teachers' qualifications could, therefore, mean all the skills a teacher required to teach effectively. Such skills include formal education, experience, subject matter knowledge, pedagogy studies, duration of training, certificate/licensing and professional development (Zuzovsky, 2009). Someone without proper knowledge of pedagogy or someone who spent few years in training without completing the required years does not possess teacher qualifications

**the study conducted by Affum-Osei, Acquah and Acheampong (2015), their findings** showed that high qualification employees had a high level of commitment. Also, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found that there is a strong relationship between educational level and organizational commitment.

Although, teaching is also seen as “scientific process because teaching involves the systematic planning and programming of instruction and experience and the use of technological tools that will lead learners to acquire certain new and valuable skills, knowledge and competence both mental and physical” It is, therefore, a necessity for academic and professional qualification of teachers not to be overemphasized in effective teaching and learning process (Adu and Ade-Ajayi, 2015). Adelowokan and Makinde (2011) argued that teachers' experience tends to reflect in class control and ability to meet up with the needs of individual students. The length of teaching experience has been an important factor determining how effectively the teaching-learning process in a school has achieved. Rodriques and Mckay (2010) defined experienced teachers as those who have taught for many years (5 years and above) and are able to motivate students and hold their attention, know how to manage their classroom effectively and can change course in the middle of a lesson to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to enhance students learning. The definition of experience teachers hinge principally on the number of years taught, time-related criteria can range from 2 years or 3 years Bastick (2002) to 9 years or more (Atay, 2008; Bovina, 2002). Bovina (2002) found out that teachers with more than five years of teaching had a more positive attitude toward teaching than did less experienced teachers. Martin, Yin, and Mayall (2006) found out that experienced teachers managed their classrooms more effectively than less experienced teachers. Domike (2012) outlined experience phases in the teaching career. He opined that experiences in the teaching profession have to do with factors such as exploration, stabilization, experimentation and diversification. These phases are:  
 Career exploration phase: which is starting out, (1-5 years) is a period of survival, discovery and enthusiasm. Teachers take up responsibilities during this phase with uncertainties and complexities of the environment. At the fourth year of the teacher's profession, stability plays a great role to characterize the teacher's response to commitment. With

unattractive incentives, the teacher is interested in enhancing his educational attainment for greener pastures. Pedagogical mastery is identified and pursued with vigour and greater flexibility applied. Between 1-10 years, beginning teachers were found to have pitfalls in their application of instructional methods and in group dynamics. Between the 15-25 years of teaching, in mid-career years, teachers draw a balance sheet of their career lives and examine the possibility or unlikelihood of changing careers. At this stage, teachers are more critical, direct and dominance prevails. After the phase of uncertainty, from 26-33 years of professional experience, some teachers achieve serenity and greater confidence to invest in teaching.

Although, teacher commitment is closely connected to teachers' work performance and their ability to innovate and to integrate new ideas into their own practice, Teacher commitment is regarded as a key concern in educational systems across the globe, because of its influence on student outcomes and general school effectiveness (Park, 2005). Nir (2002) posits three types of teacher commitment: commitment to teaching, commitment to students, and commitment to the organization. Teacher commitment can also be synthesised as a multidimensional construct that is reflected in four dimensions as follows: commitment to students, commitment to teaching, commitment to school, and commitment to the profession (Thien, Razak and Ramayah, 2014). Tabuso (2009) believed that teachers who are committed are those who dedicate themselves absolutely to the teaching profession and to the educational organization. Organizationally-committed teachers are contented teachers who display promptness and faithfulness. They have a noble record of attendance and are ready to obey school policies. Professional commitment displays the kind of person and worker one is and assigning ones best at work and functioning with honesty (Rensburg, 2010).

Considering the foregoing, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between teacher variables such as qualification and years of teaching experience on teachers' commitment to professional practice in public secondary schools in Abeokuta South, Abeokuta North and Odeda local government areas of Ogun state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teachers play an important role in the teaching and

learning process, and teachers' identity determines the way the teachers teach, their actions, values and experience which has a lot to do with their commitment to professional practice. Studies have revealed that teachers experience and qualification have a significant effect on students' achievement and that teachers' teaching qualification and experience are strong determinants of student academic achievements. However, previous reviews on teacher quality and experience have examined the influence on students' achievement but nothing serious has been done on teachers' qualification, experience and commitment. Thus, this study is designed to determine the influence of teachers' qualification and experience as they relate to teachers' commitment to professional practice in Ogun state.

### Research Questions

1. What is the influence of teachers' teaching qualification on teachers' commitment to professional practice?
2. What is the influence of teachers' years of teaching experience on teachers' commitment to professional practice?

### Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type. This is because the variables studied have already been manifested and the researcher had no control over them. The population of the study

comprised of junior and senior secondary school teachers in Abeokuta South, Abeokuta North and Odeda local government areas in Ogun state. There are 26 public junior and senior secondary schools in Abeokuta North, 39 public junior and senior secondary schools in Abeokuta South and 17 public junior and senior secondary schools in Odeda local government areas of Ogun state, out of which thirty (30) schools were randomly sampled for the study. In each of the schools, a total of twenty teachers (20) were selected through purposive random sampling technique, the only criterion for the selection of teachers is: teachers who have been in the same school for more than three (3) years were selected for the study. This amounted to the total of six hundred teachers which formed the sample of the study. Six hundred (600) questionnaires were administered but five hundred and ninety-eight (598) questionnaires were retrieved. The teachers' commitment to professional practice questionnaire ( $r=0.78$ ) was adapted from Celep (2000) to evaluate teachers' commitment to professional practice.

Data collected from the study were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, simple percentage, mean, standard deviation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** what is the influence of teachers' teaching qualification on teachers' commitment to professional practice?

**Table 1: Analysis of variance of the Influence of teachers' teaching qualification on their commitment to professional practice**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	861.987	7	123.141	2.745	0.008
Within Groups	26464.702	590	44.855		
Total	27326.689	597			

**Research Question 2:** what is the influence of teachers' years of teaching experience on teachers' commitment to professional practice?

**Table 2: Analysis of variance of the Influence of teachers' years of teaching experience on their commitment to professional practice**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	710.502	4	177.626	3.957	.004
Within Groups	26616.187	593	44.884		
Total	27326.689	597			

The result in table 2 shows that the years of teachers' teaching experience has a significant influence on teachers' commitment to professional practice ( $F_{(4,593)}=3.957; p<0.05$ ). This implies that the longer the teachers' stay in service the better their commitment. In order to determine the magnitude of the mean scores of the groups EMMs was carried out and the result was presented in table 2

### Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant influence of teachers' teaching qualification on teachers' commitment to professional practice. This implies that the higher the teachers' qualification, the better the commitment to professional practice. The import of this result based on the mean score showed that teachers with higher qualification are more committed. This is in line with Mathieu and Zajac (1990), who found that there is a strong relationship between educational level and organizational commitment. It is likely that workers with high educational qualifications occupy higher ranks and therefore have more responsibilities which invariably require more commitment to the organization (Salami, 2008) and that educational level may lead to high level of commitment (Amangala, 2013). This negates the study of Al-Kahtani (2012) and Igbal (2011) who found that educational level is negatively related with organizational commitment and that more educated people may have high expectations which the organization will be unable to meet.

The finding of this study also shows that there is a significant influence of years of teachers' teaching experience on teachers' commitment to professional practice. This implies that the longer the teacher stays in service the better his/her commitment. The import of this result based on the mean score showed that teachers who just got into the teaching job are so committed and as they stay longer (6-10 years) their commitment drops. It was latter, observed that teachers' commitment to practice that has dwindle begin to pick up when the experience reached 11-15 years and 16-20 years, perhaps this may be attributed to the administrative duties and some other duties that accompany the long stay in service and as a result of that teacher become committed, however it is important to note that this study showed that the commitment is lower immediately after five years. This finding is in agreement with many scholars which have established that after the first five years'

experience does not have any contribution to teachers' practice. According to Rice (2010), the impact of experience is strongest during the first few years of teaching; after that, marginal returns diminish. Ladd (2008) also collaborated that, teachers with more than 20 years of experience are more effective than teachers with no experience, but are not much more effective than those with 5 years of experience. Studies have also documented some evidence that effectiveness *declines* after some point, particularly among high school teachers (Rice, 2010). The findings contradict the findings of Bovina (2002) who found out that teachers with more than five years of teaching had a more positive attitude toward teaching than did less experienced teachers.

### Summary of Major Findings

The findings of this study showed that

1. Teachers' teaching qualification has a significant influence on teachers' commitment to professional practice ( $F_{(7,590)}=2.745; p<0.05$ ).
2. Teachers' years of teaching experience has a significant influence on teachers' commitment to professional practice ( $F_{(4,593)}=3.957; p<0.05$ ).

### Conclusion

The findings of this study established that teachers teaching qualification and teachers years of teaching experience significantly influenced teachers' commitment to professional practice.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- i. All the non- professional teachers should be encouraged to acquire relevant diplomas and degrees in education to make them eligible for registration with the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN).
- ii. Better physical facilities and equipment should be made available to teachers so that their work environment can be conducive to teaching and learning.
- iii. There is the need for the government to motivate teachers to boost their commitment more by providing them with necessary incentives such as adequate and regular payment of their

salaries, allowances and deductions, excellent work environment and other benefits that compare favourably with their counterparts in other professions.

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