



# Planning Teachers' Workload for Effective Service Delivery in the School System

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## Abstract

The school system generally provides services to its clientele through the teachers. The teachers are therefore indispensable elements in schools through them, the goals and objectives of the education sector are achieved. Their demand and supply are therefore critical to the survival of the education sector. The nature of the teacher's job (teaching, assessing, recording and other non-teaching responsibilities) more often exposes them to work overload and stress. This paper focuses on the planning of teacher's workload for effective service delivery in the school system. It reiterates that the overall achievement of the objectives of any level of education, if teachers are overstretched, it will result to work pressure, boredom, stress and underachievement. Planning teacher's workload therefore have the advantage of ensuring that teachers are optionally utilized.

**Keywords:** Planning, Teachers, Workload, Effective, Service Delivery, School System, Nigeria.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Adiele, E. E. (2017). Planning Teachers' Workload for Effective Service Delivery in the School System. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 10(3), 272-277. Retrieved [DATE] from <http://www.ij sre.com>

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## INTRODUCTION

The unequivocal statement in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers remains incontrovertible. Teachers play significant role in the future development of any country by inculcating in the young minds certain desirable habits and develop in them certain skills that are considered as work oriented skills needed in national development. Teachers undoubtedly therefore are the pivot on which the wheel of any education system revolves.

While the above statements are true, it is equally true that the workload assigned to teachers have significant consequences not only on the students and the entire education system, but also on the overall effectiveness and productivity of the teachers themselves.

Thus the overall attainment of the education goals is contingent on how reasonable the workloads assigned to teachers in the system are. Teachers' workload is directly measured by the overall number of teachers available in the system against the number of students taught, the volume of non-teaching assignment, the number of scripts to mark and record, and other responsibilities considered worthwhile by the school administrator that is regularly or occasionally assigned to the teacher.

The effectiveness of school service delivery is contingent on what the school administrator conceives as the role expectations of the teachers. In this regard, a major function of the school administrator is to rationally analyze what constitute teachers' workload and decides how best to optionally utilize them to achieve results. It is necessary therefore for the school head to work out the most efficient method in assigning workloads that will enable the teachers put in their best toward achieving maximum result. Application of rationality in assigning workload to teachers is necessary because teachers, first and foremost must be seen from the angle of humans who have emotions, can be stressed, depressed, agitated and get bored if overworked. It is for this reason that Ukeje (1992, p. 66) had quipped that excellent management resides in "knowing exactly what you want men to do and then seeing that they do it in the best cheapest way".

The problem in the way schools are managed lies in school administrator not knowing how much work that are reasonable for teachers to do within a stated period of time, hence it is either teachers are been over utilized or underutilized. Either way, this has serious consequences on the overall school goal attainment and the psyche of the teachers. It is the position of this paper that teachers workload can be planned to minimize work overload or underutilization.

## **HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE TEACHER UTILIZATION/SERVICE DELIVERY**

Assigning appropriate workload to staff in the school is contingent on the availability and adequacy of teachers in the school. A major setback in proper utilization of teachers in the education system in Nigeria has been that of wrong estimate of teacher requirement for the education sector at all levels of the education system. From early days of Nigerian independence till date, the education system has witnessed shortfalls in teacher demand and supply. For example, the Ashby commission of 1959 was one of the earliest commissions that submitted report on the Nigerian future manpower needs in post primary schools, while later committee on the implementation of national policy on education also submitted report on the manpower requirement of secondary schools for effective implementation of the new policy on education. This later committee for instance had projected that from 1981 to 1989, an additional 114,929 teachers with varying qualifications will be required throughout the federation to meet teacher demands in the secondary school level. The committee also estimated that about 100,000 additional teachers will be required for senior secondary schools in Nigeria shortly after that period (Adiele, 2002). These targets and subsequent reports on teacher demands were never met.

In such situations the school manager is left to plan with staff strength that is far below the prescribed standard. It may be deduced that this reason account for the apparent lack of commitment by the school managers in planning workload and supervised teaching. The system appears to have relapsed into the dictum of everyone to himself and God for us all.

Poor staffing conditions equally account for the inequitable distribution of workload among teachers. In some schools, teachers of social science subjects are more in number, while other disciplines have shortages. This account for uneven distribution of workload making those that are more to have lesser workload. A common feature of the patterns of

teacher recruitment in Nigeria is that more teachers are recruited in the arts and social sciences than in the sciences. It is not surprising then that over the years, the overall performance of school leavers in the sciences has remarkably remained abysmal and poor.

Another major hindrance to effective teacher utilization for quality service delivery is the astronomical increase in classroom population without corresponding increase in facilities and manpower provision. It might be instructive to state that even teachers with the highest academic qualification still need facilities of various kinds for their efforts to yield positive results in terms of teaching-learning outcome. No matter how evenly distributed a teacher's workload may appear, not much can be achieved if teachers do not have the material resources to complement their effort. This too could be frustrating.

## **PLANNING TEACHER DEMAND AND SUPPLY FOR RATIONAL WORKLOAD**

The education system constantly experiences shortages of teachers at different point in time. It is for this reason that planning for teacher's recruitment is a regular management and personnel function in the education sector, to ensure that supplies are available to match demands (Enahwo, 1990). Teacher demand is the number of teachers needed in the education system at all levels to achieve a fixed students-teacher ratio, while teacher supply is the number of teachers that will be offered employment at the prevailing salary structure. (Enahwo, 1990).

The demand and supply factor in education to a great extent affects the availability of teachers in the system and by extension the workload of those recruited to teach. In planning teacher's workload therefore, the following questions should be addressed: First, do the schools have the required number of teachers needed in the various subject areas to achieve the overall objectives of education? Secondly, does the school have the necessary fund to employ and pay the wages of those who are qualified and willing to take up teaching as job? A major problem and set back in any education system is the inability of the system to meet with teacher demand in the sector. When the number of teachers required in the system cannot be met, it invariably result in the over use of the available ones, hence low output in service delivery.

A major characteristic of most education system has been shortage of teaching staff. Study by Adiele (2002) reveals that the prescribed students-teachers ration of 40:1 at the secondary school level in Nigeria has been problematic to achieve. This is the same in both primary and tertiary levels of education. Adiele and Abraham (2004) equally found that the pupil-teacher ratio at the primary school level was as high as 150:1 and 60:1 for secondary schools education in eastern states of the country. There are no indications that the staffing situation in the education system at all levels has improved.

All educational programmes embarked upon in Nigeria had suffered setbacks as a result of the teacher factor. For example in 2003/2004 academic session it was envisaged that basic education programmes would have achieved 85% universal access to junior secondary education at 10% expanded access rate and 100% transition rate (Adiele & Abraham 2004). This target was never achieved due to the fact that teachers of diverse qualifications and specializations who were to be used for programme implementation were not adequate, the available ones were then overstressed leading to programme failure. Obanya (2007) had observed that there are two principal ways of looking at the quantity dimension of the teacher and the teaching question: First is the number of teachers available in the system in relationship to needs (overall demand). Second is the availability of specialized teachers for specific subjects on the school curriculum.

Several factors accounts for the failure of the system to meet up with teacher demand in the education sector. First is the over rising cost of education and second is the poor

funding of education. Since education especially at the basic level is provided under the social welfare package, the government bears the cost of education at the first two levels (primary & junior secondary). For this reason, it is the responsibility of the government to adequately fund education. But over the years, governments have not been able to live up to its corporate social responsibility of funding basic education. The one area that suffers the effect of such poor funding is teacher recruitment. Increase in the demand for education results in increase in teacher demand, but this is not followed by increase in the funding of education. The cost of teachers' salary and entitlements alone consumes over 60% of the total cost of education (Adiele & Abraham, 2004). Thus it has been difficult for the education system to meet up with teacher demand and this has invariably affected the quality of education offered at all levels of the education system.

## **PLANNING TEACHERS' WORKLOAD FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING**

A major management function of the school administrator is to plan to make the best use of his teachers. A teacher's workload is measured by the number of periods that he spends in the classroom and other school related activities. It equally includes the ratio of students per teacher, the number of classes taught and non-classroom responsibilities (Adiele, 2002).

Planning teachers' workload involves activities geared towards ensuring proper use of teachers by assigning to them the rightful duties based on their qualification and experiences (Ukeje, 1992). To Nwaham (1997) planning for teachers' workload is a function performed by school heads geared towards providing effective utilization of human resources to achieve both the objectives of the school system, the satisfaction and development of the employees.

The basic administrative functions in planning for teacher workload revolve around:

- Efforts at ensuring that able and willing teachers are available to more students;
- Ensuring that teachers' efforts and energies are directed towards genuine educational objectives;
- Assessing teachers' abilities and ensuring that they are maximally utilized for instructional purposes;
- Recognizing individual differences among teachers and assigning teaching jobs accordingly; and
- Ensuring that teaching staff are relieved of routine duties meant for non-teaching staff.

Inherent in any good staffing design is the optimal utilization of staff. In this regards it has been suggested that school administrators should be guided by the following principles while assigning workload to teachers:

- Teachers should be assigned to those subjects for which they are reasonably prepared;
- The best teachers should be assigned to classes needing the greatest help, such as beginning classes, examination classes, slow classes and troublesome but brilliant classes;
- Teachers should be assigned to age levels they can best work with; and
- Teaching load should be seen to be equitably shared (Adiele, 2002).

Teacher's job descriptions should include the various duties performed in line with the following:

- Preparing lessons to be taught, teaching students in the classroom;
- Giving assignments, test etc. and marking and recording such assignments and test;
- Taking part in general school activities;
- Participating in professional activities in the school.

In planning for teachers' workload, the interest of the teacher and the learner must be paramount. This is so because too much workload will surely affect teacher's productivity and hence reduce his morale. A teacher will be demoralized if he finds his class too large and too many scripts to mark and record. If teacher's responsibilities are of intolerable magnitude, it will result to stress and the learners are bound to suffer for it.

One major reason why teacher's workload must be planned by the school manager is to avoid stress and anxiety in the workplace. Teachers like other persons are normal human beings with complete physiological compositions. Thus, they like others are faced regularly with performance expectations from the school, family responsibilities (which include husbands/wives, children, parents, in-laws and other extended family relations). They equally have role expectations in the church, among friends, community where they live etc. So they try to strike a balance between the various role expectations of jobs, family, relationships and others. All these factors make different kinds of demand on the teacher, many of which he/she may have no control over and sometimes may be overwhelmed and unable to cope. When this occurs, stress sets in and productivity drops.

To avoid the situation of stress among teachers, the school manager therefore should be able to plan the content of the workload to avoid long hours of engagement of teachers, work overload, pressure, difficult tasks, lack of breaks, lack of variety in activities, poor physical work conditions (Mato, 2016). It might be instructive for school managers to adhere to the following while assigning workload to reduce stress among teachers:

- No one teacher should do a work that will require up to 3 persons to do;
- There should be planned work schedule (school timetable) detailing starting time, break time and ending time;
- Improved physical environment: good and well ventilated staff rooms, beautification of school environment;
- Provide social support to teachers;
- Workload should be spread to all staff;
- Involve staff in discussion in work schedules that concerns them, they may have suggestions that you may not have considered. This will encourage group participation and sense of belonging to staff;
- Encourage staff members to spend time with their families and watch movies etc; above all, they should avoid school related work during vacation and engage in other hobbies.

## **CONCLUSION**

The paper looked at the planning of teacher's workload for effective service delivery in the school system. Planning was crucial to ascertain the demand and supply of teachers for rational workload and how to utilize the available ones for optimum service delivery. It was established that poor planning will result in not just work overload, but stress, boredom and poor level of productivity. Whereas hindrances exists that affect effective teacher utilization such as shortfall in the recruitment of teachers to man the education system, poor staffing conditions, increase in classroom population etc., planning is imperative to ensure that

teacher's efforts are directed towards genuine educational objectives and target. A major conclusion derived from this paper is that teacher's morale and productivity are likely going to drop if they perceive that their workload are far higher than others who earn similar salaries. It therefore behoves on the school manager to determine how best to use teachers for maximum goal attainment.

## Recommendations

The paper makes the following recommendations:

- Workshops and seminars for school administrators and managers should be organized to educate them on how to design teacher's job specifications and workload;
- There is need for school administrators and managers to regularly constitute committees to assist in the planning for the assignment of subjects to teachers based on subject area specialization and experience;
- Teachers handling external examination classes should be exempted from other school responsibilities to reduce the workload; and
- Moral support from the school administrator in the form of social support, welfare package and show of concern to staff professional growth will help boost morale of teachers.

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