

# Mentoring Practices of Principals for Teachers' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria

# Anachuna Obinna Nonso Obi Emenike

Department of Educational Management and Policy, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

### Doi:10.19044/esj.2021.v17n19p142

Submitted: 25 March 2021 Copyright 2021 Author(s)

Accepted: 11 May 2021 Under Creative Commons BY-NC-ND

Published: 30 June 2021 4.0 OPEN ACCESS

#### Cite As:

Anachuna, O. N, & Obi, Emenike (2021). *Mentoring Practices of Principals for Teachers' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.* 

European Scientific Journal, ESJ, 17(19), 142. <a href="https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2021.v17n19p142">https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2021.v17n19p142</a>

### **Abstract**

The seeming teacher turnover in secondary schools in Nigeria necessitated this study on mentoring practices of principals for teachers' retention in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. One research question guided the study. The population of the study comprised 256 principals and the entire population was used for the study. Researchers' developed questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in Educational measurement and evaluation, Department of Educational Foundation and the other in Educational planning and management, Educational Management and Policy, all in the Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.75. The researchers with the help of ten research assistants distributed and successfully collected 256 copies of questionnaire administered. The research question was answered using the arithmetic mean. It was found among others that principals in public secondary schools in Anambra state use formal and informal mentoring to a very low extent for teachers' retention. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that government should provide adequate resources necessary for effective mentoring programme in secondary schools

**Keywords:** Mentoring, Teachers' retention, mentee, mentor

### Introduction

Education is a tool for strengthening ones' intellectual power, building character, maintaining emotional balance as well as moral and cultural empowerment of individuals to bring about positive development in the society. The skills and potentials of individuals for self-reliance and actualization could be developed through education. Nigeria, just like other countries of the world, acknowledges the fact that education is a vital instrument for national development and social change and as such has joined other countries of the world in the match towards worthwhile educational investments and reforms. Consequently, one of the goals of education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) is the development of appropriate skills, mental, physical, and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society. The purpose of any of the three levels of formal education (Basic, Secondary or Tertiary) in Nigeria is to effect changes in children's behaviour by exposing them to relevant experiences through systematic presentation of skills, attitudes, concepts, and principles. Therefore, this study focuses on public secondary level of education in Nigeria.

ISSN: 1857-7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857-7431

Secondary school education is the form of education children receive after nine years of basic education and before the tertiary stage. Secondary education is concerned with the acquisition of fundamental principles and knowledge for the study of different disciplines at tertiary level of education (Ofojebe & Nnebedum, 2016). The importance of secondary education lies in its position both as the bridge between the basic and tertiary education and also as the agent for preparing individuals for useful living in the society (FRN, 2013). Basically, there are two categories of secondary schools in Nigeria; public and private secondary schools.

Public secondary schools are schools that are owned by the government and its agencies, and they are controlled and managed directly by public education authority, governing agencies or by a governing body (council, committees among others), most of whose members are appointed by public authority or are elected by public franchise. Private secondary schools on the other hand are schools owned, financed, and managed by private individuals, missions, corporate organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Irrespective of ownership, secondary schools have common objectives to achieve as stated by FRN (2013, p.17-18) as follows:

- a) Provide holders of the Basic Education Certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- b) Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles;
- c) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- d) Provide entrepreneurial, technical, and vocational job specific skills for self-reliance and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- e) Develop and promote Nigerian Languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;
- f) Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- g) Foster patriotism, national unity, and security education with emphasis on the common ties in spite of our diversity; and
- h) Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others, and appreciate the dignity of labour.

Consequently, the achievement of the above objectives has been the priority of secondary school education in Nigeria. Achieving the goals of secondary education in Nigeria is therefore indispensable if excellence is required for the human resource base needed to move Nigeria to an enviable position it ought to occupy. The secondary education level is managed by the principal who is responsible for utilizing the available school resources to enhance the attainment of the stated goals of the school. FRN (2013) maintained that no educational level in Nigeria (Secondary education inclusive) could rise above the quality of its teachers. Therefore, to be able to achieve the goals and objectives of secondary education in Nigeria, the hiring and retention of qualified and experienced teachers are of utmost importance. This is because they are the cornerstone upon which the excellence of education rests. Teachers play important roles in the achievement of the stated educational objectives and in the task of nation building for sustainable development because they turn educational policies into practice in a normal classroom setting.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that the goals of secondary education in Nigeria cannot be achieved without the retention of adequately trained and motivated teaching staff. There is therefore the need to keep teachers satisfied with their jobs and careers so that they can remain in the teaching profession. Teaching is a highly stressful career, and teachers are

leaving the profession at an alarming rate (Hanushek, 2007; Ingersoll, & Smith, 2003). This is not a welcome development because as observed by Faremi (2017), the retention of highly qualified teachers is of great importance if the objectives of secondary education in Nigeria are to be achieved. Teacher retention, according to Masood (2011), is the act of keeping teachers on the job without being moved from one school to another and or leaving the teaching profession entirely for other professions. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 1994) maintained that teacher retention is the proportion of teachers in one year who are still teaching the following year in the same school.

Retention is about how a particular school manages its workforce or more specifically its relationship with its workforce. Retention is also an action of holding something in position or containing it. Hence, the researchers defined teachers' retention as a state or a condition of attracting and enabling teachers to work and remain with the school organization before retirement. Retention is conceptualized in terms of teachers staying and teachers leaving. The main purpose of retention is to prevent competent teachers from leaving the school organization as this could have adverse effects on productivity and service delivery.

Every school, whether public or private, strives to retain a pool of qualified, committed, and talented teaching staff that can deliver quality education to its students and in turn produce students of high quality. When qualified teachers for any reason have intentions of leaving the school system or teaching field, it would portend a negative impact on students and the institution's overall performance as well. Thus, it is essential to retain highly qualified teachers in the school system on continuous basis for quality education delivery viz-a-viz the achievement of the objectives of secondary school education. It is important for schools, through the employment process, to attract quality teachers. However, it is more important for educational managers to devise means with which to retain the talented teachers in the service of the school organizations in order for teachers to benefit from the investment already made in them (Michael, 2008). Brown and Wynn (2009) emphasized that unless schools, specifically administrators, begin to take a more proactive approach in supporting their new and veteran teachers, teachers are going to continue to leave the field and all schools and children will suffer. Therefore, retaining teachers in schools, most especially the new ones, is an important and powerful force in the betterment of schools, students, and education as a whole (Gurule-Gonzales, 1995; King, 2004).

Specifically, principals are not just supervisors within the school, but are also the leaders looked up to by teachers to listen to them, assist them, and value them (Jiang & Chan, 2007; Ladd, 2009). The principal is the central leader who sets the tone and culture of the school, serves as a role model to the teacher, and shapes the professional image of the future for the teachers

(Ladd, 2009). Principals' involvement with teachers, therefore, can be a significant factor in retaining teachers and in inspiring the passion that keeps beginning teachers from dropping out (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Although the leadership (principals) of the school may not have much influence over the reasons for going into teaching, principals are critical players on whether teachers decide to stay with the profession or not (ASCD, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 1994).

Retaining highly qualified teachers should be a top priority for school principals. Principals need to implement programme and have incentives to retain highly qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Fullan (2003) reported that effective leaders have the ability to change organizational culture which, in turn, can create an atmosphere of job satisfaction that produces high retention rates. Secondary school principals therefore need to engage some practices towards ensuring the retention of teachers. This is due to the fact that teachers might be persuaded to take the lower salaries in exchange for better working conditions (Hanushek & Luque, 2000). One of the strategies towards ensuring teachers' retention is mentoring programme. Chisolm (2008), in agreement, maintained that factors such as principal behaviors, principal leadership, school climate/teacher morale, professional development opportunities, and teacher mentoring programs seem to positively impact teachers' decisions to remain in the profession.

Mentoring, according to Blanson (2005), is a multi-dimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing, and supporting a teacher. In mentoring, Darling-Hammond (1996) stated that when a veteran teacher is assigned to a novice teacher to help him or her learn the philosophy, cultural values, and established sets of behavior expected by the school where they are employed in mentoring, the mentor always serves as a guide, counselor, confidant, adviser, and a role model to the mentee. It is usually expected that the relationship will enable the mentee to develop holistically. In a mentoring relationship, people learn by doing because under the guidance and direction of the mentor, the mentee is given a direct access to important insights and past experiences. In the school system, principals, vice principals, and heads of departments are the leaders and invariably the mentors. They are expected to continue to develop their leadership skills by exposing new and inexperienced teachers to the right professional knowledge and etiquettes. Teachers who are mentored always have a slightly higher retention rate than teachers who were not mentored (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Gold 1999). Teachers, most especially the new ones who spend their first year in a school environment that support mentoring, are likely to have higher morale, be more committed to teaching, and plan to remain in the teaching profession (Weiss, 1996). Darling-Hammond (1999) and Feiman-Nemser (1996) maintained that mentoring is a successful strategy to ease the transition from teacher

ISSN: 1857-7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857-7431

preparation programs to in-service teaching, improve retention rates, and increase student performance. Inman and Marlow (2004) noted that when beginning teachers are mentored, they gain a sense of empowerment, feel support from their colleagues, and identify their work environment as positive. Rockoff (2008) and Borauk (2009) maintained that mentoring is important as it improves the ultimate performance of teachers. They further posited that mentoring helps to maintain the quality of teaching and learning and also to reduce the number of teachers leaving the teaching profession thereby enhancing teacher retention.

Department of Education (DOE) (2008) acknowledged two types of mentoring, namely; informal and formal mentoring. DOE (2008) maintained that informal mentoring is a natural occurrence and one person out of three will turn to another for mentoring naturally. On the other hand, DOE maintained that formal mentoring is structured and mentors are carefully selected to distribute skills and knowledge to mentees. Inzer and Crawford (2005) in concurrence maintained that informal mentoring occurs in a relationship between two people where one gains insight, knowledge, wisdom, friendship, and support from the other. They also reported that informal organizational mentoring is more beneficial than formal mentoring. Informal mentors provided higher amounts of several types of career development functions, including coaching, providing challenging assignments, or increasing mentees' exposure and visibility. Informal mentors were more likely to engage in positive psychosocial activities such as counseling, facilitating social interactions, role modeling, and providing friendship. In informal mentoring, the mentee and mentor are selective about whom they wish to approach for a mentoring relationship and it can last for years. Informal mentoring is a strong and valuable tool for developing an employee and it occurs in a relationship that is voluntarily formed by both persons (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Raschdorf (2015) posited that there are effective variables found in various mentorship programs. Some of the variables according to Raschdorf (2015) are release time for mentees and mentors to observe each other teach, informal as well as formal visitation with mentors, fostering the mentee's perception of value, and the self-selection of the mentor. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) maintained that the time that mentors spend with their mentees should not be restricted to formal visitations. The selection of mentors, specifically mentees choosing their own mentor, is found to be a crucial component of an effective mentoring relationship (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Conway (2001) in tandem maintained that beginning teachers who can find their own mentor usually value and benefit more from the relationship than a teacher who was assigned one.

In formal mentoring relationships, it may be the case that the mentee has several mentors, each of whom takes on a different phase of the relationship (Raschdorf, 2015). Multiple mentors throughout the life of a mentoring program are the key to successful outcomes for the mentee. More planning time with mentors and informal mentoring meetings are also another source of satisfaction and support for new teachers. Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerny and O'Brien (1995) maintained that trust and respect are far more integral to the success of the mentorship relationship. Abell et al. (1995) further stated that this trust and respect is the tie that binds the mentee to the mentor and allows the more productive mentor-mentee relationship. Also, without professional trust and respect, a relationship in which ideas are freely shared cannot be developed. Raschdorf (2015) posited that an easy way to ensure trust and respect is in place from the start is allowing teachers to choose their mentor at the onset of their formative years of teaching. The mentee's perception of the mentor's experience and knowledge about students and content contributes to the mentee's respect for the mentor. However, if teachers lack professional respect for their mentors, the relationship is perceived as less useful.

Inzer and Crawford (2005) maintained that it is important to identify who will administer the mentoring program. They argued that it is necessary that a coordinator be assigned to oversee the program development and to monitor the ongoing program. Also, there should be a committee to develop and monitor the program. This committee should be comprised of senior personnel and the targeted mentoring group. All mentors should receive formal training. Organizations should develop training according to their own unique needs. However, quality training provided by a qualified professional remains paramount to a mentoring program success. Inzer and Crawford (2005) maintained that the training should cover mentoring history, participant roles, success factors for pairing mentors and mentees, practical hints and suggestions, and general expectations mentors and mentees have of each other. They further maintained that training should also include an overview of the program structure, guidelines, policy, goals, and evaluation criteria. Both formal and informal mentoring are important variables towards ensuring teachers' retention in secondary schools. Principals therefore should ensure the implementation of the mentoring process as one of the practices towards ensuring teachers' retention which also will improve teaching and learning (Graczewski et al., 2009; Moswela, 2006).

Almost every teacher in secondary schools in Nigeria and Anambra State in particular seem to be looking for a better opportunity to leave the teaching profession for greener pastures. This is coupled with the responsibility of the principal ensuring that teachers are retained which, regrettably, some are not doing religiously. Public secondary schools'

principals in Anambra State seem not to be employing adequate management practices towards teachers' retention. Building a professional teacher corps is a process that only begins with recruiting highly qualified teachers. Once recruited, these teachers need to be mentored in order to develop a strong sense of their own efficacy based on high-quality teaching skills and experience. Student achievement is directly impacted by the number of effective teachers that remain in the profession to acquire the level of efficacy needed in their subject area to positively improve student success (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The extent to which principals use formal and informal mentoring programs towards teachers' retention is not known, hence the need for this study on mentoring practices of principals for teachers' retention in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

# **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain mentoring practices used by principals for teachers' retention in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, this study ascertained:

• Formal and informal mentoring practices of principal for teachers' retention in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question guided the study:

• What are the formal and informal mentoring practices of principal for teachers' retention in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

#### Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to Akuezuilo and Agu (2003), descriptive research design describes and interprets what is the; opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident or trends that are developing, and it seeks to find out the conditions or relationships that exist. The design was found appropriate for the study because it allowed for description of the mentoring practices for teachers' retention already provided for by the principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

The study was carried out in Anambra state. Anambra state is one of the five states in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. There are six educational zones in Anambra state namely; Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha, and Otuocha educational zones.

The population of the study comprised 256 public secondary school principals in the six education zones in Anambra State (information gathered from the department of Planning, Research and Statistics of the Anambra state post primary schools service commission headquarters Awka, February,

2021). There was no sample for the study as the entire population was purposively used for the study.

The instrument that was used for data collection is a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument was developed by the researchers from views of experts and based on literature reviewed. The questionnaire adopted "Very high extent (VHE), High extent (HE), Low extent (LE) and Very low extent (VLE) response pattern."

The questionnaire was subjected to validation using three experts; one from Educational Management and Policy and two from measurement and evaluation, Educational Foundations Department all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

The reliability of the instrument was established using 20 principals in 20 secondary schools in Enugu state. Cronbach alpha method was used to determine reliability of the items. The reliability coefficient yielded overall reliability coefficient of 0.75. Frankel and Wallen (2000) maintained that items will be considered reliable and desirable for consistency level if they yield a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above. The instrument was therefore considered reliable.

The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help of 10 research assistants. Direct delivery method was used and 100% return rate was recorded.

The research questions was answered using the arithmetic mean. Any response with a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while any mean score below 2.50 was not accepted.

#### Result

**Table 1.** What are the formal and informal mentoring practices of principals for teachers' retention in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

	•		N = 256
S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Decision
1	Selection of mentors in the school	2.06	Low extent
2	Provision of formal training for mentors	1.56	Low extent
3	Formal assigning teachers to mentors for mentorship	2.02	Low extent
4	Allowing teachers to choose mentors by themselves	2.50	High extent
5	Provision for peer mentoring	1.60	Low extent
6	Provision for distant mentoring	2.07	Low extent
7	Allocation of meeting time for teachers and their mentors within normal school hours	2.02	Low extent
8	Encouraging mentoring relationship after normal school hours	2.56	High extent
9	Planning time with the mentors	2.02	Low extent
10	Allowing for multiple mentors	2.02	Low extent
11	Provision of necessary resources for mentoring	2.02	Low extent
12	Selection of a committee to develop mentoring program	2.05	Low extent
13	Assigning coordinators to monitor the mentoring program	2.02	Low extent

	Grand Mean	2.04	Low extent
16	Evaluation of the mentoring program by the principal	2.05	Low extent
15	Principal monitoring the mentoring by him/herself	2.02	Low extent
14	Evaluation of the mentoring program through the coordinators	2.02	Low extent

Table 1 above revealed that principals of public secondary schools in Anambra State only applied items 4 and 8 to a high extent as formal and informal mentoring practices for teachers' retention in secondary schools in Anambra State as their mean were 2.50 and above. However, they rated items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 with a mean ratings below 2.50 and therefore were to a very low extent applied as formal and informal mentoring practices being used for teachers' retention in secondary schools in Anambra State.

The grand mean of 2.04 indicated that public secondary school principals in Anambra State to a very low extent apply formal and informal mentoring practices towards the retention of teachers.

### Discussion

The study revealed that principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State allows teachers to choose mentors by themselves and also encourages mentoring relationships after normal school hours. However, the study further revealed that public secondary schools principals in Anambra State do not select and provide formal training for mentors; do not formally assign teachers to mentors; do not provide an avenue for peer and distant mentoring; do not have planning time with mentors nor allocate meeting time for teachers and their mentors to meet within normal school hours; do not allow for multiple mentoring nor provide necessary resources for mentoring to take place; principals as well do not select committee to develop mentoring program neither do they assign coordinators to monitor and evaluate the mentoring program; and principals do not monitor nor evaluate the mentoring program by themselves.

The findings of this study is not in line with Inzer and Crawford (2005) who maintained that it is necessary that a coordinator be assigned to oversee the mentoring program development and monitor the ongoing mentoring program. Furthermore, the findings is not in line with McCormack and West (2006) that maintained that multiple mentors throughout the life of a mentoring program are the key to successful outcome for the mentee. On the other hand, the findings of the study is in line with Raschdorf (2015) and Smith and Ingersoll (2004) who found out among others that allowing teachers to choose their mentors is a crucial component of an effective mentoring relationship and an easy way to ensure trust and respect in the mentoring relationship. Furthermore, the finding is tandem with that of Ingersoll and

Strong (2011) that the time that mentors spend with their mentees should not be restricted to formal visitations.

The findings on mentoring practices of principals in summary indicated that public secondary school principals in Anambra State, Nigeria applied formal and informal mentoring practices to a very low extent towards the retention of teachers. This is not in line with Graczewski et al. (2009) and Moswela (2006) who posited that both formal and informal mentoring are important variables towards ensuring teachers' retention in secondary schools. One possible reason why principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State apply to a low extent formal and informal mentoring practices for teachers retention could be that they may not be aware that such could enhance the retention of teachers and or perhaps that the government failed to equip them with adequate resources necessary for a successful mentoring relationship.

# Conclusion

An inference that is drawn from the findings of this study is that public secondary school principals in Anambra State to a low extent apply formal and informal mentoring practices for teachers' retention. Therefore, one can conclude that the low application of these two forms of mentoring could lead to teachers leaving the teaching profession for other professions at any slightest opportunity.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1. The government should provide adequate resources necessary for effective mentoring programme in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
- 2. Principals should formally assign mentors to teachers for effective mentoring relationship.
- 3. Principal should appoint coordinators and form committees who will develop, monitor and evaluate the mentoring program.

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