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## APPRAISAL OF TEACHERS UNWILLINGNESS TO TEACH IN RURAL AREAS OF CHANCHAGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA.

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### Abstract

*Among the major challenges to the achievement of “education for all” is the shortage of teachers particularly in remote areas of developing countries where the rate of out-of-school children is highly increasing. For example, in Nigeria, according to UNICEF 2018, there are about 10.5 million children who are not in school. The aim of this study was to determine the perceived factors contributing to Teachers unwillingness to teach in rural areas of Chanchaga local government area in Niger State and how to improve factors that will further attract and retain them. A total of 118 teachers with teaching experience of about ten years who once taught or currently are teaching in rural schools were randomly selected. A questionnaire was used to obtain information from the respondents. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and facilitated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings revealed that poor standard of living in the rural areas, stressful nature of working at rural communities and preference to live in the urban cities as personal factors for teachers not willing to teach in the rural areas. It was also discovered that special salary scale, additional allowances, and provision of adequate facilities for rural teachers are factors that can retain teachers to teach in the rural areas. It is therefore recommended that government need to provide additional incentives such as; special salary scale, adequate facilities and additional allowances for teachers in the rural areas so as to retain them in order to achieve the target of “education for all” in few years coming.*

**Keywords:** Teachers, Rural areas, Teaching, Education for all

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### Introduction

Growing concern about the shortage of teachers particularly at the rural areas has focused considerable attention on education and teaching profession, the acute shortage of teachers in rural schools remains an intractable problem that possess a serious challenge to equitable quality education delivery (Aminu 2014). Several reports from both developed and developing nations has indicated that teachers prefer to teach in the urban cities than the rural areas, this could be attributed to the availability of social amenities and other facilities which can be found in the cities than in the rural areas. Researches indicated that most schools in the rural areas are battling with inadequate facilities, lack of conducive learning atmosphere and shortage of teachers (Unicef 2017).

Over the last ten years, Niger State government reports have consistently identified difficulties in filling teacher vacancies in rural and remote areas (Niger State Secondary Education Board, 2015). The difficulty of the shortage in rural and remote schools could be associated to negative perceptions of teaching in these environments. Paul (2012) indicated that social, cultural and professional isolation either experienced or perceived, and high probabilities of teaching more classes have been

identified as factors contributing to teacher shortages in rural regions. Hendricks (2014) has argued that, to assist in addressing the low numbers of teachers who choose to work in rural schools, teachers need to be initiated into teaching and living in a rural community before they graduate. In line above position, the Niger State Government has recently created Teacher Training Institute with the aim of training teachers who will be willing to render their selfless service in the teaching profession and who are also willing to work at every nook and cranny of the State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A report has shown that over 65% of teachers working in Chanchaga Local Government Area living in the cities, while the remaining 35% are in the rural areas and there are more schools in the rural areas than in the cities (Niger State Secondary Education Board 2015). This problem of teachers not willing to teach in the rural areas is seriously affecting the standard of education not only in the local government but the entire state. A visit to ten selected rural schools showed that, all the schools are without adequate teaching staff and the facilities are completely inadequate, the few number of classrooms are either without roof or floor. There is the need to conduct this kind of study so as to unveil the factors that are affecting teachers not willing to stay and teach in the rural schools. The facts remain that, if this kind of study is not conducted the problem will continue to manifest and even the few teachers working at the rural schools may be willing to move to schools in the cities, which will seriously affect students at the rural areas and affect the standard of education in the state.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To determine the factors contributing to teachers' unwillingness to teach in rural areas.

To identify strategies to retain teachers in schools of rural areas.

### **Research Questions**

What are the factors contributing to teacher's unwillingness to teach in rural areas?

What strategies can be adopted to retain teachers in schools of rural areas?

### **Literature review**

Rural schools experience difficulties in retaining teachers. Research on teacher retention in rural areas tends to assume that teachers will leave their positions for other places like schools in the urban cities because they feel isolated (McClure & Reeves, 2010). Leaving rural areas to other areas seeking for another job or leaving the teaching entirely may be attributed to so many factors. In rural British Columbia, a survey of teachers' mobility was conducted among 94 teachers which comprises of both serving and those teachers that left the profession. The outcome revealed; distance from larger communities and family, whether geographical isolation and inadequate shopping were reasons given by teachers for leaving community schools (Murphy & Angelski, 2010). This survey added that those teachers who do stay in rural communities stay either because of administrative support from the school principal or because of spousal employment in the community. Another reason why

teachers always reject rural posting or tend to quit the teaching profession is that most of the rural schools' lack resources. In fact, in Nigeria even the urban schools are battling with shortage of resources not to talk of the rural schools. Nachtigal, (2010) added that, there are limited resources in rural schools and teachers have no option rather than to manage what is meant available for them, or on the alternative improvise.

Young beginning teachers have difficulties in coping with rural lifestyle, many of them may have few or no peers to interact with and this may affect their decision in staying at rural schools (Cross & Frankcombe, 2004). Majority of those recruited as teachers attend schools in the cities because most of the institutions are cited in the cities. It will be difficult after experiencing life in the city interacting with peers and benefitting from social amenities, to cope with the rural life and these may even result to leaving the teaching profession (Aminu, 2014).

Another problem associated with rural schools is that, once employed and posted to rural schools, the community will have high expectations on the teacher whether newly employed or experienced. In addition, Howley and Howley, (2005), believed that cultural knowledge and understanding of rural lifestyle is important for teachers posted to rural schools, this will add to their professional experience on how to leave peacefully with the community. Professional development and teacher education programs places less emphasis in understanding the "cultural" demands of teaching and its lifestyle, and teachers may encounter problems for being unfamiliar with communities' customs and traditions which may lead to problems in either rural or urban schools (Theobald & Howley, 2008). In Niger state, there are more than 25 different ethnic groups each having different cultural backgrounds, (Bawa & Salahu, 2012). So as a teacher if you are posted to a rural school where the community is having different cultural lifestyle, you then must adjust or else you cannot leave in peace with the people in the community, because of that, you will realize those kinds of teachers that cannot adjust are facing a lot of problems.

Most schools in rural areas lack specialized teachers in some subject areas, therefore, rural school teachers must prepare to teach different lessons in numerous subject areas, be ready to teach students at different level/age and supervise extra-curricular activities, adjust to the life style of people in the community. All these demands tend to make rural teachers less experience, less trained, and have higher attrition rates than those in urban schools, (De Young, 2015).

While studies revealed the factors that may attribute teacher's problems as regards to rural posting. Another study also suggested that to retain teachers in rural school's certain things need to be done. Ingersoll (2010), surveyed 86 special education teachers in rural states in the United States. They concluded that "staying seemed to be a matter of having roots in the community". In other words, teachers tend to remain in rural school if they also came from rural areas. So, it is important if teachers are recruited from those rural areas and should be posted there.

Gibson (2010) conducted a structured interview with newly appointed teachers in two regions of Queensland in Australia and contrasted their perception with those of major stake holders providing educational services. One of his findings was that, teachers

felt ill-prepared to deal effectively with rural situation and especially their role in the community as teachers.

In a similar research conducted by Ciscell, (2008), the author surveyed education majors and tenured teachers to discover influence of geographical preference on the location of preferred teaching position. Participants were asked to characterize their former high school by size and by geographical location: rural, suburban, or urban. Majority of the participants about 58% of the tenured teachers who attended rural high school stated that they preferred teaching at rural school. Likewise, the undergraduates from the rural high schools indicated their interest to begin their teaching career in rural schools. Only few, about 7% of the tenured teachers or education major from suburban or urban high schools expressed that they will prefer rural schools. This is a clear indication that teachers from rural setting may fit in rural posting. As supported by Aidan, (2007), who opined that teachers should be recruited and posted based on their locations.

### **Methodology**

The aim of this study was to determine the perceived factors contributing to Teachers unwillingness to teach in rural areas of Chanchaga local government area in Niger State and the strategies to retain them. Population of the study comprises of all Teachers in public secondary schools of Chanchaga local government area. According to NSSEB (2019), the local government has 24 public secondary schools and a total of 1,299 teachers. A sample of 118 teachers with teaching experience of about ten years who once taught or currently teaching in rural schools were randomly selected. A questionnaire was used to obtain information from the respondents. To ascertain the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, experts of research methodology from Niger state College of Education and Federal University of Technology Minna were consulted, and few printed questionnaire were administered to 15 teachers in 2 selected secondary schools of Bosso Local government area. After all the necessary corrections and adjustment on the questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher with the help of few research assistants. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and facilitated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Findings of the study**

Objective one: To identify personal factors that affect Teachers unwillingness to teach in rural area.

Table 1: Personal factors affecting Teachers to teach in rural areas

n=118

Factor	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	P-value
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)			
Never lived in rural area all my life.	19(16.1)	48(40.7)	35(29.7)	16(13.5)	2.42	0.92	0.170
Standard of life in rural area is poor.	76(64.4)	24(20.3)	17(14.4.)	1(0.8)	3.04	0.62	0.199
Housing policy for rural workers is poor	54(45.7)	36(30 .5)	25 (21.2)	3 (2.5)	2.85	0.78	0.919
To work in the rural area is stressful.	61(51.7)	35(29.7)	11(9.3)	11(9.3)	2.61	0.78	0.177
My family prefers living in urban area.	24(20.3)	85(72.0)	4(3.4)	5(4.2)	1.92	0.63	0.000
It is difficult to train children in rural area.	9(7.6)	17(14.4)	65(55.0)	27(22.9)	2.94	0.82	0.000

The table above indicated that 48 (40.7%) of the respondents agreed that having never lived in the rural area all their life will affect their decision to stay and teach in the rural areas, 19 (16.1%) strongly agreed that it is not easy to teach in the rural area particularly when you have never lived in all your life, 35 (29.7%) disagreed while 16 (13.5%) strongly disagreed in considering that having never lived in the rural will have an effect on someone's decision to teach in the rural area with a mean value of 2.42 (P= 0.170).

It was also revealed by the table that 76 (64.4 %) and 24 (20.3%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that standard of life in rural area is poor and can greatly affect their decision to teach in the rural area, while a minimal figure of 17 (14.4%) and 1 (0.8%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that the poor kind of life in the rural area can affect their decision to teach in the rural area with a mean value of 3.04 (P= 0.199)

With regards to Housing policy and stressful nature of teaching in the rural area, 54 (45.7%) and 36 (30.5%) strongly agreed and agreed that housing policy is poor in the rural area, 25 (21.2%) and 3 (2.5%) disagreed and strongly disagreed to that, while 61(51.7%) and 35(29.7%) indicated that it is very stressful teaching in the rural area, 11 (9.3%) disagreed respectively with mean value of 2.61 (P= 0.177).

For family preference to live in urban area and difficulty in training children in the rural area, 24(20.3%) and 85(72.0%) strongly agreed and agreed that their families prefer living in the urban area, as for training children in the rural area, majority of the respondent 65(55.0%) and 27(22.9%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that it is difficult to train children in the rural area.

Objective Two: To identify strategies to retain teachers in rural areas

Table 2: strategies to retain teachers in rural areas

n=118

Factor	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	P-value
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)			
Special salary scale for teachers in rural areas.	32(27.1)	78(66.10)	6(5.1)	2(1.7)	2.42	0.92	0.170
Additional allowances to teachers in rural areas.	33(27.9)	54(45.8)	20(16.9)	11(9.3)	3.04	0.62	0.199
Adequate facilities for rural teachers.	54(45.8)	27(22.9)	26 (22.0)	11(9.3)	2.85	0.78	0.919
Scholarship for children of rural teachers.	60(50.8)	31(26.3)	19(16.10)	8(6.8)	2.61	0.78	0.177
Adequate security in schools of rural areas.	81(68.6)	28(23.7)	8(6.8)	1(0.8)	1.92	0.63	0.000
More opportunities for career development.	34(28.8)	71(60.2)	6(5.1)	7(5.9)	1.89	0.76	0.004

The table above showed that 32 (27.1%) and 78 (66.10%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that special salary scale for teachers in rural areas can make them stay and teach in those areas, while only 6 (5.1%) and 2 (1.7%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that special salary scale can make an impact on their decision to stay and teach in the rural areas with mean of 2.42 (P=0.170).

It has been indicated in table 2 above that 54 (45.8%) requires additional allowances for them to be willing to teach in rural areas in the local government, while 11 (9.3%) strongly disagree with the idea of additional allowances for teachers in rural areas to enable them stay and teach. For adequate facilities, 54 (45.8%) strongly agreed, 27 (22.9) agreed that additional facilities in rural areas can attract and affect the decision of teacher on willing to stay and teach in the rural areas. 26 (22.0%) disagreed, 11 (9.3%) strongly disagreed that facilities may have influence over teacher's willingness to teach in rural areas.

It is glaring that 60 (50.8%), 81 (68.6%), 34 (28.8%) strongly agreed that scholarship, adequate security and more opportunities for career development can play a great role on teacher's willingness to teach in rural areas. On the other side, 8 (6.8), 1 (0.8) and 7 (5.9) strongly disagreed with scholarship, adequate security and opportunities as factors that can influence teachers to teach in rural areas with a mean.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings of the study as indicated in Table one above revealed that 64.4% strongly agreed and 20.3% agreed, which is more than 80% of the respondents concurred with the fact that standard of life in rural areas is poor compared to the standard in the urban cities. There are some rural areas for instances where there is no electricity, no good drinking water and no medical facilities. Living in these kinds of areas will be difficult for teachers particularly those that were born and trained in the cities. This is line with findings of Ingersoll (2010) who observed that attrition among teachers in rural areas is likely to be high because of inadequate social amenities. It has also been revealed in Table one that majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that working in the rural areas is stressful. This could be associated with inadequate facilities and shortage of teachers in the rural areas, so the few ones that are posted there may find the job stressful because they need to cover all classes and need to improvise teaching aids for the learning of their students. The researcher personally visited some selected rural schools and discovered that there are schools with only two teachers and there are about four classroom blocks, while some are without specialized teachers particularly in the areas of Mathematics and English. Nachtigal (2010) similarly identified shortage of learning resources commonly at rural schools.

Preference of teacher's family to live in the urban cities and difficulties to train children in rural areas was another factor identified in findings of this study. Majority of the respondents agreed that they prefer to live in urban cities where they will have access to all the required social amenities. But surprisingly, majority of the teachers disagreed that it is difficult to train children in the rural areas. To them, training children depends on parents, it does not matter whether they are living in the cities or rural. If parents are disciplined, they can train their children positively in respective of the environment they live.

Special salary scale was identified by majority of the respondents as cited in Table two. To the respondents, having special salary scale for teachers in rural areas will go a long way in retaining them and even those at the urban schools may be willing to teach in those rural areas. This has been identified by Arikewuyo, (2016) that increasing salary package or having special salary scale for teachers can influence their decision in the teaching profession particularly those at the rural areas. This also in line with the findings of Paul (2014) who suggested that, most of the teachers posted to rural areas may not be willing to stay, so there is the need for them to be given some additional incentives particularly special salary scale in order to retain them.

Another major issue raised by respondents in Table two, was the issue of adequate facilities in the rural schools. Over 70% of the respondents indicated adequate facilities as a factor that will make teachers be willing to teach in the rural areas, these facilities will make learning easy to both teachers and the students and will reduce the stress of instructions. Several authors have testified to the fact that adequate facilities can help in retaining teachers in schools. For instance, Shim (2010) in his analysis on the role of school climate in relation to teacher attrition, has pointed out the role of adequate facilities as a factor that can influence teacher's decision on teaching profession. Anthony (2011) reported a similar finding in his work on leadership role on teacher attrition, the author has indicated that good leadership alone without other components like adequate facilities, good learning environment cannot retain teachers in the teaching profession.

## **Conclusion**

The study examined factors contributing to teachers' unwillingness to teach in rural areas, and strategies to retain them. A total of 118 teachers were selected in 10 different secondary schools of Chanchaga local government area in Niger state. Findings of the study reveals that, certain factors such as; poor housing policy, stressful nature of working in the rural areas and poor social amenities as factors contributing to teachers' unwillingness to teach in rural areas. It has also been discovered that, if teachers' welfare can be improved and other packages such as; special allowances for rural posting can be provided, that will retain and even attract teachers to rural schools.

It is important to note that attracting and retaining teachers in rural areas is a complex issue and the most appropriate strategy depends on the State government. The lack of attraction and retention policy affects the students particularly those in rural areas, which is making it difficult to achieve the target of *Education for all*. Government as a custodian for provision of free education in State has a duty to ensure rural populations are served by experienced teachers. This can only be done if factors influencing teachers' choice to teach in remote and rural areas are considered through proper intervention guided by retention policy in the rural areas.

## **Recommendations**

Government should create additional incentives including a special salary scale for teachers posted to rural areas.

There should be adequate facilities in rural schools, this will help in reducing the stress associated with difficulties in the rural areas.

Government should give more opportunities for career development to teachers posted to rural areas.

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