

# Loose Ends Arising From Teacher Recruitment of Primary School Teachers in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The paper identified different fashion of problems that emerge either before or after and during recruitment of primary school teachers in Nigeria. It called the issues 'loose ends' which implies that the problem of primary school teachers' recruitment are almost unmanageable. It defined teacher recruitment, as the process of selecting and engaging qualified teachers to fill existing vacancies for the purpose attaining educational goals. It argued that the goals of education cannot be achieved with the myriads of loose ends which it identified some as recruitment of persons without education background, interference during recruitment by the political/rich class, prolong delay in recruitment of teachers, services of the schools boards and other recruitment agencies are ignored, not knowing the manpower needs of most schools. The paper consequently suggested among others that the National Union of Teachers (NUT) should consider it as a primary responsibility to dialogue with the Board and government to recruit teachers based on the provisions of the law and post them according to the needs of the various schools; the boards and other administrative agencies for teacher recruitment need to engage the mass media to enlighten the political and rich class to desist from interfering with teacher recruitment exercise and that the legislative houses, need to make laws that would statutorily determine the duration or intervals when teachers shall be recruited.*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of western education in Nigeria, the issue of teacher recruitment has been a problem. Often times, educators and stake holders have expressed dissatisfaction with the recruitment process and the quality of teachers who are employed to serve in both public and private primary schools in Nigeria. Teacher recruitment problems in the school system may not be traced to any particular problem. None identification of the problems makes the recruitment of teachers to attract complicated problems. Recruitment of teachers in Nigerian schools is known to be the responsibility of designated agencies and ministry of education. The private school proprietors, are the solely in-charge of recruiting those who serve as teachers in their schools. This is to say that the recruitment process rest on the shoulders of either the government recognized agencies or the proprietors who man their schools. Interpretatively, it means that the problems that arise from the teacher recruitment process of primary school teachers may be traced to designated recruitment officers.

There are abundant facts to buttress that the problems arising from the recruitment done by government agencies may be traced to the neglect of the provisions of National Policy on Education, the disposition of government in power, interference from both the political and rich class, neglect of the government recruitment agencies by government, docile nature of the National Union of Teachers (NUT). The identification, explanation and proffer of solutions to the loose ends shall constitute the bases of this paper. In the bid to do so, the following shall provide the frame work of the discussions:

1. What is recruitment?
2. Who are recruitment agents and recruitment guidelines?
3. The loose ends synonymous with recruitment of primary school teachers in Nigeria
4. Ways of over-coming the loose ends synonymous with the recruitment of primary school teachers in Nigeria
5. Suggestions and conclusions

## What is recruitment?

The concept 'recruitment' may mean almost the same thing to different people. Central to the ideas expressed, is what Schooley (2022) explained as the procedure for seeking, inviting, examining, questioning and selecting the right persons to occupy positions in an organization for the purpose of attaining organizational goals. Defining recruitment, Okafor (2022) has it that recruitment is the process of actively seeking, finding and hiring persons for a specific position or job. It deals with the entire hiring process. It encompasses from advertisement of job opportunity to integration or employment of an individual into organization. From the angle of Human resources, Althaus et al (2007) has it that it deals with the process of searching candidates for employment and stimulating them to apply for jobs in the organization. Similarly, Smriti (2019) contends that, it is a means of seeking for prospective employees and stimulating or encouraging them to apply for existing job vacancies in an organization. From the foregoing, recruitment simply means all the processes an organization adopts in selecting the right persons to carry out roles in

existing vacancies in an organization for the purpose of attaining the goals of the organization. Teacher recruitment, therefore is the process of selecting and engaging qualified teachers to fill existing vacancies for the purpose of attaining educational goals.

### Who are recruitment agents and recruitment guidelines?

In Nigeria, primary school recruitment agencies are known to respectively be in the hands of the Boards and Commissions at the State and Federal government levels. At the Local Government levels they are at the Education Authorities. Since this discussion is not targeted at spelling out the various ways the agencies play the roles in recruiting primary school teachers, there may be no need to articulate their functions. It is also important to point out that the Ministries at both the State and Federal governments play supervisory roles in the recruitment of teachers. They indeed do not have any guideline or policy they follow. The failure of the recruitment agencies to abide with the recruitment policies and procedures account for what this paper calls loose ends.

It is important to point out that the entire discussion does not rest on the identification of recruitment agencies because those who recruit ought to be guided by the recruitment policies. The implementation of the recruitment policies are indeed guided by recruitment guidelines. Recruitment therefore is a serious exercise because failure to keep to the guidelines tantamount to several forms of irregularities in the education system. This is to say that recruitment is a sensitive aspect of every organization because the persons recruited into an organization determines what the organization can achieve. If those who recruit in an organization, has the intention to achieve organizational or educational goals as in the case of primary school goals, the recruitment agencies can achieve it by religiously keeping to stipulated guidelines. In Nigeria, the guideline that is publicly known by almost all, is the fact that those who must serve as teachers must possess a minimum of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). This position is declared in section 92B of the National Policy on Education of Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) and it says that ‘the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)’.

The question at this juncture should be, has the recruitment agencies in Nigeria complied with this policy? Sincerely speaking, the answer is on the negative response. This response stem from the fact that there are lots of people teaching in public service who do not possess any educational academic qualification or an NCE certificate. The consequences of recruiting people without the requisite qualification are grave to mention. One that can quickly come to mind, is the alarming rate with which people who do not undertake education courses or trainings before they become teachers become good teachers quit the job at will. In this light, Anero (2013) observed that teachers within such category leave the profession more than those who underwent teacher training courses. Anero’s view was earlier stated by Darling-Hammond and Docommun (2011) by explaining that teachers without student teaching experience or preparation in curriculum, teaching methods, child development among others leave the job twice the rate as teachers who had teacher training. The views expressed by Anero and Darling-Hammond and Docommun if real or reflects in the true teaching situation, one can confidently say that there is something wrong in the teacher recruitment process into our primary school system.

On the other hand, the primary school teachers are not only those found in the public primary schools, but those in the private primary schools are also not properly recruited because they do not only negate the provisions of the National Policy on Education but they ignore recruitment procedures. Some standard procedures for any recruitment process would involve identification of the areas of needs, create a recruitment plan, draft job description, advertise the job opportunities, determine the number of candidates to be employed, interview the candidates and close the recruitment process (Schooley, 2022). Judging by the conditions spelt out by Schooley and the National Policy on Education, it is obvious that both the public and private are guilty of the offence. Both of them indiscriminately employ teachers negating the policy and following recruitment guidelines which would make it impossible to achieve educational goals.

### The loose ends synonymous with recruitment of primary school teachers in Nigeria

The concept ‘loosed ends’ is used in this paper to refer to issues that arise either before, after or may lead to poor teacher recruitment. To a large extent, some of the problems associated with the recruitment of public primary school teachers may not be the same with all the schools. Central to the problems associated with teacher recruitment and the primary school system can be summed and discussed as:

1. **Number of public primary schools:** Ideally, the numbers of teachers to be recruited depend upon the number of public schools in the state. The states with greater number of schools require more teachers at regular intervals while states with small public schools may not regularly recruit teachers. This is to say that the number of public schools will affect the process of recruitment but in some cases, the recruitment are done to suit the actual needs of the schools.
2. **Employment Conditions:** The employment conditions in an economy greatly affect recruitment process. In under-developed economies like that of our country Nigeria, employment opportunities are limited and there is no dearth of prospective candidates. The situation result to where all applicants apply for the few job vacancies that may be available leading the qualified and unqualified to be recruited. In this context, if the availability of persons who are qualified as teachers following the policy guidelines are more, then the selection from large number of teachers becomes easy. On the other hand, if there is a shortage of qualified teachers, then it will be difficult to locate suitable persons.
3. **Salary Structure and Working Conditions:** The wages offered and working conditions prevalent among primary school teachers greatly influence the willingness of those with teaching qualification to apply to be recruited as teachers. If the wages paid to primary school teachers are enticing, the school will not face any difficulty in making recruitments. An organization

offering low wages like teachers are offered, would always face the problem of labour turnover. The working conditions in an enterprise will determine job satisfaction of employees. A school offering good working conditions like proper leave bonuses, extra duty allowance, in-service training and retraining for professional growth among others will always retain quality staff in their numbers.

4. **Losing applicants to competitions:** Recruiting teachers into public schools is highly delayed in almost all the states in Nigeria. Right now, most of the primary and secondary schools do not have sufficient teachers to teach pupils and students because of government delay in recruiting teachers. Non-regular recruitment of teachers into the ever geometric populated schools has made trained teachers opt for a greener pasture. Some of the trained teachers who are opportuned to travel out of the states or country have departed to other places in search of better job or teaching job. In some cases, qualified applicants can later find themselves in private schools or resort to quit the teaching job.
5. **Recruitment without interview experience:** It is not a news that in most states, those who are recruited as teachers are appointed by mere posting the persons to the schools of their choice without interview to find out if the persons so posted are qualified. Indeed, government pronounce recruitment through media and the recruitment agencies receive many applications from the applicants and a good number of people may be employed without interview.
6. **A Delayed Hiring Process:** It is not a news that the state governments do not advertise to recruit teachers until the end of any given administration. Evidence from successive administrations reveal that any government in power delay the hiring or recruitment of primary school teachers until close to the end of tenure of any given administration. Observation indicates that this approach is adopted by almost all state governors in Nigeria and is not a healthy strategy to recruit and retain the caliber of teachers needed in the teaching service within the country.
7. **Multiple Interview Rounds:** Most persons who apply to be recruited as teachers into the primary school apply to be employed or are working in other places. The multiple chances they create do not seem to favour the teaching job because by the end of the day, those recruited into the teaching job are the left-overs from other sectors. As a result of this the best hands may not be hired into the teaching service.
8. **Knowing the number of teachers:** Recruitment decisions should stem from current number of staff. Knowledge of the number of teachers in schools enables the recruitment agency to project how many teachers should be recruited. The exact number of staff in our public schools are not readily available by the agencies concerned. The accusation that recruitment agencies cannot tell the exact number of teachers serving in the states is manifested during researches. Most agencies do not release the number of teachers with ease because they do not have a system of keeping or recalling the exact number of teachers. Inability to tell the exact number of teachers negatively affects the recruitment process.
9. **Reduction of manpower in other sectors:** It is no gossip that those who recruit teachers, do not only recruit those with teaching profession. They engage people from other professions and by so doing, reduce the manpower to serve in those other areas.
10. **None recruitment of people with disabilities:** Observation indicates that people with disabilities are rarely recruited into the teaching service. The feedback that can be gotten from this act is that children with disabilities in the schools may not likely receive the needed attention.

#### **Ways of over-coming the loose ends synonymous with the recruitment of primary school teachers in Nigeria**

From the ongoing discussion, it is obvious that several issues give rise to recruitment problems in Nigerian primary schools. The issues is what this paper identifies as loose ends. The concept loose ends implies that the generated problems do not seem to have solutions that can avert the problems. In the primary school system, so many problems confronting the school system is traceable to the recruitment process. Whether the problems have solution or not, this paper is designed to proffer some pragmatic steps in solving primary school problems that are associated with the recruitment process. Some of the solutions among others are:

1. **Identification of number of teachers in each school:** It is not a bogus statement to state that the Boards, Commissions and other agencies that manage the affairs of primary schools in Nigeria do not seem to know the exact number of teachers serving in the school system much more identify the number of teachers per school. The identification of number of teachers per school is the starting point in planning to recruit or improve the school in whatever sense of it. If the school shall improve its present state of affairs, those who manage the school, must be equipped with the exact number of teachers and arms of the classes in the various schools; so that they shall be well guided in the number of teachers to recruit per school.
2. **Recruitment of teachers who are qualified as specified by law:** One abnormality in the teaching job since the birth of western education in Nigeria is the issue of recruiting people without educational background. The law does not permit it and it has received a wide range of criticism by educational practitioners; yet most states in Nigeria recruit persons from other disciplines into the teaching profession. It is therefore necessary for those who recruit teachers to consider the provisions of the law in any recruitment exercise. The continuous recruitment of persons from other fields of life results to short change of manpower in both teaching and other areas of professional practice. This is so because by the time, an Engineer is employed to teach, he will no more serve as an Engineer and the same time has occupied the space which the teacher would have been engaged. By doing so, most professional areas would be short changed.
3. **Avoid interference by non-recruitment agencies:** It is not a news that most recruitment into any work force in Nigeria in recent time is based on favoritism, ethnicity, brother-hood, God-fatherism and sometimes the principle of higher bidder plays

out where those that have the money buy the job irrespective of the fact that they may not be fit for the job. In most cases, the list of those to be recruited are compiled in government houses and the appointing bodies merely write and issue letters to the persons. This act has not allowed some of those qualified as teachers to be recruited into the teaching service. This situation can therefore account for the recruitment of persons who would serve as teachers without the requisite training and utmost commitment to be recruited into the teaching job.

4. **The role of the inspectorate unit of both the Boards, Commissions and Ministry of Education:** The anomalies noticeable in the teaching profession is traceable to the weak services rendered by the inspectorate units of all recruitment bodies. For the body to achieve its purpose, it ought to stand tall in the implementation of the findings of its field work. One area that its services ought to be felt is in the area of determining how many teachers should be recruited into the various schools. The recommendation should be made based on the outcome of their field experience. Those who write list at government houses for teachers to be recruited into the different schools may not know the manpower needs of the various schools than the inspectorate bodies. This singular reason, makes it important that those to be recruited in terms of number and qualification must be based the recommendation of the inspectorate bodies.
5. **Recruitment intervals:** The school or teacher administrative bodies must as matter of responsibility determine when and how to employ teachers. It is almost open to all that most states in Nigeria recruit teachers and other category of workers at the tail part of their administration so as to avert losing money to pay salaries. The recruitment approval bodies delay the recruitment exercise until there are dearth of staff in the schools. It is therefore important that the recruitment of teachers should be done at intervals that the needs of the schools are met.

## CONCLUSION

From the account of this paper, it is evident that many problems evolve from the way teachers are recruited in Nigeria. This paper calls the problems loosed ends. The emergence of the problems affect other fields of practice outside the teaching service. The problems can be summed to mean:

1. Recruitment of teachers into various schools negates the teacher needs of the various schools
2. Recruitment of persons into the teaching job from other fields of study outside education
3. Interference by the political and rich class during recruitment exercise
4. Recruitment of teachers only when there is dearth of teachers in the schools
5. The services of the boards and other agencies in charge of teachers are grossly ignored by the recruitment approval bodies
6. National Union of Teachers (NUT) as the teacher administrative organ in Nigeria is docile in carrying out its functions which has led to the problem of recruiting teachers without reference to the provisions of the National Policy on Education.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on the conclusions reached in this paper, the following suggestions are made:

1. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) should consider it as a primary responsibility to dialogue with the Board and government to recruit teachers based on the provisions of the law and post them according to the needs of the various schools
2. The Boards and other administrative agencies for teacher recruitment need to engage the mass media to enlighten the political and rich class to desist from interfering with teacher recruitment exercises
3. The legislative houses, need to make laws that would statutorily determine the duration or intervals when teachers shall be recruited by the recruitment agencies.

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