

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TEACHERS' WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the strategies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo State. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, and population of the study consisted of 276 public senior secondary school principals in Edo-State. A sample of 110 principals was randomly selected using a stratified proportionate sampling technique. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled: Strategies for Improving Teachers' Work-Life Balance in Secondary Schools Questionnaire (SITWLBSQ). Mean and rank order statistics were used to analyze the research questions, while Z-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Findings revealed that leave policies and work-life benefits are strategies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo State. The study recommended that additional benefits should be implemented to attract intelligent people into the profession and encourage those who are already teaching to raise up their heads anywhere with pride.

Keywords: Strategies, Teachers' Work-Life Balance, Secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education is an important factor to be considered in order to achieve the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria and overall development of the nation whether scientifically, politically, technologically and otherwise. Teachers are the key determinants of educational standard; hence the improvement in the conduct and condition of teachers will translate into a higher level of job satisfaction, which will result to improved work-life balance. Nwogu and Kaegon (2013) defined work-life balance as the provision of opportunities for employees to balance actual work conditions with the responsibilities and interests which they hold for themselves outside work schedule. Work-life balance does not mean an equal balance between work and life. It involves proper prioritizing between work and family development. Work-life balance is essential to combat stress and ensuring the success of both teachers and the school. The stress associated with unbalanced lifestyles is costly; it damages productivity and increases teachers' health risk. Teachers with improved work-life balance are happier, healthier and more productive. When teachers' work and family life are out of balance, stress level is likely to soar. Maintaining work-life balance is no simple task. Poor work-life balance can lead to stress, mental illness, low productivity and high blood pressure.

Work-life balance is a practice that is concerned with providing scope for teachers to balance their work with the responsibilities and interests they have outside work. It enables them to reconcile the competing claims of work and home by meeting their own needs as well as the school. One way of improving teachers' work-life balance is through leave policies. Leave is granted to teachers' with the good intention of providing rest, recuperation of health, study and a balance between work and family life. The general aim of leave policies is to strike a balance between employment and domestic commitments that is equitable and beneficial to both the teachers and schools. Specialized leave policies include; maternal leave, paternal leave, parental leave, annual leave, study leave, casual leave and emergency leave. Maternity leave is gender-specific, and it is generally available to mothers only (except in a few cases where part of the leave can be transferred to other careers under certain circumstances). Maternity leave refers to the period of time when a woman takes time off from work to have and take care of her baby. When a working mother is pregnant, she is entitled to a maternity leave, and school administrators cannot legally deny a woman maternity leave, however, different schools have different requirements as far as how long a teacher must legally be allowed for maternity leave. Frans, Mortelmans and Masquillier (2011) opined that maternity leave is a health and welfare measure, intended to protect the health of the mother and newborn child, to be taken just before, during and immediately after childbirth. The research on maternity leave is rare because the entitlement is so well established and widely accepted. Paternity leave is generally available to fathers only, usually to be taken soon after the birth of a child, and intended to enable the father to spend time with his partner, new child and older children. Paternity leave is an entitlement for working fathers, and it enables them to take a short period of leave immediately following the birth of a child, often associated with providing help and support to the mother. In this review, Paternity leave is narrowly defined as a short period immediately after the birth of a child and it is only available to fathers. McKay and Doucet (2010) defined annual leave as paid time off work granted by employers to employees to be used for whatever the employee wishes. Annual leave can also be seen as the amount of leave that an employer grants an employee on an annual basis. Annual leave is an establishing entitlement for employees. This policy should recognize the difficulties teachers face because they do not have the same flexibility to take annual leave as other employees. School administrators can then use their discretion to grant additional unpaid or paid leave.

Secondary Schools are increasingly expanding and diversifying their work-life benefit programmes in an attempt to help teachers' improve their work and non-work demands facing them. Kossek and Lambert (2005) defined work-life benefits as the explicit support policies and procedures provided by organizations in helping teachers achieve a better work-life. Also, it plays an important role in the level of work-life balance experienced by teachers. Work-benefit programs involve a variety of practices that help teachers' to balance the demand of work and personal life, by assisting teachers to deal with family obligations and issues. Work-life benefit programmes can be interpreted as a signal that the school cares about the wellbeing of its teachers, thereby strengthening the employer-employee bond. Work-life benefits will enable teachers' combine work with their personal commitments and interests. Lambert (2000) opined that the provision of childcare can be viewed as a remedy or positive initiative for three different reasons: firstly, it would enhance gender balance in workplace by relieving women of the burden of childcare; second, it would provide educationally beneficial circumstances for the development of the child through educative care; and third, it would relieve the pressure on working parents by providing facilities that match their employment responsibilities. The provision of such benefits promotes teachers' obligation and interest in schools by serving as symbols of special treatment and

organizational concern for workers. Igwe (2004) reiterated that an improvement in teachers' welfare will help halt the brain drain phenomenon in the school, which has put secondary education in Nigeria in jeopardy. Good work-life benefit programme is an essential factor in teachers' effectiveness and satisfaction, which in turn leads to quality secondary education. It is therefore, in the interest of school administrators to adopt policies that allow teachers to balance their working lives with their personal needs, interests, and caring responsibilities. Poor work-life benefits can lead to stress and absenteeism, and low output. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) stated that commitment and performance serve as means for employees to reciprocate favourable treatment from their employer. The use of work-life benefits satisfies teachers' needs, contributing to their well-being and therefore can positively influence the teacher-principal relationship and contribute to teachers positively evaluating their commitment and attachment to the school. Teachers can reciprocate the benefits they have utilized with greater psychological attachment to the school. Medical service for teachers is also an important factor in work-life benefits. It is an indisputable fact that without sound health, teaching will be greatly impaired. A healthy teacher is the one who looks and feels well, has no illness or disease and has energy for his/her daily work and play (Arikewuyo, 2006). Arikewuyo and Adegbesan (2009) corroborates some of the benefits that could be provided by an organization to safe guard its workers as including childcare, medical service for teachers and their dependants, a crèche or nursery school for staff children, official cars, end of year bonus, and so on. Effective work-life benefits encourage teachers to work harder and discourage them from quitting their jobs. School principals should improve their work-life benefits and communicate them to teachers.

Leave policies and work-life benefits eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, promotes equality of opportunity between men and women, provides opportunities for male and female teachers to balance their work with other aspects of their life, and will help reduce the disadvantage experienced by women working within the teaching profession and it improves outcomes of students where classroom teachers are not affected by ill health absence. When teachers receive support from school, they tend to perceive that their school is concerned about their work-life issues, and ultimately affect their work related attitudes. Helping teachers achieve work-life balance is integral to their general health and well being, increasing their work satisfaction and motivation. Teachers are likely to be more committed, more flexible and more responsive to their job. Leave policies and work-life benefits should be implemented to attract intelligent people into the profession and encourage those who are already teaching to raise up their heads anywhere with pride.

Statement of problem

Teachers are flooded with work such as writing of lesson notes, filling of school diary, marking scripts and classroom management. They wind up the day without the work being done and go home where there are various pending domestic chores to be completed. Besides, they have children and elderly parents to look over in many cases. Balancing time for work, parents, children, spouse, friends, health and spiritual development is a great challenge teachers are faced with. Hence, sacrificing family time has long been regarded as a major pitfall of professional success. Women-teachers are disadvantaged to a greater degree because women cite workload in teaching as incompatible with raising their family as they struggle to discharge caring responsibilities. In the light of the above, the statement of problem put in question form is: How can leave polices and work-life benefits help in improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo State?

Purpose of the study

1. Investigate the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.
2. Highlight the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.

Research questions

1. What are the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State?
2. What are the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State?

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean response of experienced and less experienced principals on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean response of rural and urban principals on the available work-life benefit for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of this study consisted of 276 public senior secondary schools in Edo State and their serving principals respectively. A sample size of 110 representing 40% served as study participants. This sample size was drawn using stratified proportionate sampling. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled: The instrument consisted of 16 items and was structured using a rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree(A), Disagree(D) and Strongly Disagree(SD) and their scale was rated as follows: SA=4 points, A=3 points, D=2points and SD=1 point respectively. Crombach Alpha statistics was used to get the reliability coefficient of 0.73. Cronbach Alpha was used because the questionnaire was multi-chotomously scored. The data collected were analyzed using mean and rank order statistics to answer the two research questions and z-test statistics to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. All items with the criterion mean of 2.50 and above were accepted while items below the criterion mean were rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State?

Table 1: Weighted mean and rank order scores on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance.

S/N	Statement	Experienced Principals N = 73		Less Experienced Principals N = 37		Mean Set \bar{X}_1 \bar{X}_2 $X \frac{1}{2}$	Rank	Decision
		\bar{X}_1	Rank	\bar{X}_2	Rank			
1	Granting of maternity leave	2.97	1 st	3.08	1 st	3.03	1 st	Agreed
2	Granting of paternity leave	2.41	6 th	2.51	6 th	2.46	6 th	Disagreed
3	Granting of parental leave	2.33	7 th	2.19	7 th	2.26	7 th	Disagreed
4	Granting of annual leave	2.77	3 rd	3.00	2 nd	2.89	3 rd	Agreed
5	Granting of sick leave	2.90	2 nd	2.92	4 th	2.91	2 nd	Agreed
6	Granting of study leave	2.70	5 th	2.73	5 th	2.72	5 th	Agreed
7	Granting two or three days leave of absence.	2.74	4 th	2.96	3 rd	2.85	4 th	Agreed
	Aggregate mean	18.82		19.39		19.12		
		2.69		2.77		2.73		

Table 1 indicated that items 19, 22-25, had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, and thus, were agreed as the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. Conversely, items 20-21 had weighted mean scores below the criterion mean of 2.50 and thus were disagreed as the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State

Research Question 2: What are the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State?

Table 2: Weighted mean and rank order scores on the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance.

S/N	Items	Rural Principals N = 65		Urban Principals N = 45		Mean Set \bar{X}_1 \bar{X}_2 $X \frac{1}{2}$	Rank	Decision
		\bar{X}_1	Rank	\bar{X}_2	Rank			
8	Provision of child care	2.95	3 rd	3.16	1 st	3.06	1 st	Agreed
9	Providing a well furnished common room for teacher-relaxation	2.86	6 th	2.50	6 th	2.68	6 th	Agreed
10	Providing a canteen facility where teachers can feed from at least once in a day.	1.94	9 th	2.04	7 th	1.99	9 th	Disagreed
11	Provision of pension scheme	2.90	5 th	2.71	5 th	2.81	5 th	Agreed
12	Provision of free medical services for teachers and their dependents.	3.08	1 st	2.87	3 rd	3.00	3 rd	Agreed

13	Providing teachers with official car	2.14	8 th	1.93	8 th	2.04	7 th	Disagreed
14	Payment of teachers' bonuses	2.95	3 rd	2.82	4 th	2.89	4 th	Agreed
15	Prompt payment of salaries	2.98	2 nd	3.10	2 nd	3.04	2 nd	Agreed
16	Allowing at least one child of a teacher to enroll in the school and learn for free.	2.20	7 th	1.82	9 th	2.01	8 th	Disagreed
	Aggregate mean	24.0		22.95		23.52		
		2.67		2.55		2.61		

Table 2 indicated that items 26-27, 29-30 and 32-33 had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, and thus were agreed as the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. Conversely, items 28, 31 and 34 had weighted mean below the criterion mean of 2.50 and thus, were disagreed as the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean response of experienced and less experienced principals on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.

Table 3: Weighted mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean response of experienced and less experienced principals on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance.

S/N	Categories of Principals	N	X	SD	DF	Z-observed	Z-critical	Sig. level	Decision
1.	Experienced principals	73	2.69	1.12					
2.	Less experienced principals	37	2.77	1.05	108	0.37	1.96	0.05	Not significant

Table 3 shows the z-test of difference between the mean response of experienced and less experienced principals on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. The z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypotheses stood at 0.37 while the critical z-value stood at 1.96, using 108 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value, the null hypothesis was therefore not rejected. By implication, there is no significant difference between the mean response of experienced and less experienced principals on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean response of urban and rural principals on the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State

Table 4: Weighted mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean response of urban and rural principals on the available work life benefits for improving teachers work-life balance

S/N	Categories of Principals	N	X	SD	DF	Z-observed	Z-critical	Sig. level	Decision
1.	Urban principals	65	2.67	1.01	108	0.6	1.96	0.05	Not significant
2.	Rural principals	45	2.55	1.03					

Table 4 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean response of urban and rural principals on the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. The z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypothesis stood at 0.6 while the critical z-value stood at 1.96, using 108 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value, the null hypothesis was therefore not rejected. By implication, there is no significant difference between the mean response of urban and rural principals on the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from the results as presented in table 1 identified the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. These include: granting maternity leave, granting sick leave, annual leave, two or three days leave of absence and granting study leave. This finding conforms to the findings of Frans, Mortelmans and Masquiler (2011) who asserted that maternity leave is a health and welfare measure intended to protect the health of the mother and new born child, to be taken just before, during and immediately after childbirth. Others include. In support of the above, Mckay and Doucet (2010) stated that leave policies should recognize the difficulties teachers face because they do not have the same flexibility to take annual leave as other employees. Hence school administrators should use their discretion to grant additional unpaid or paid leave.

Findings from the results as presented in table 2 identified the various available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. They are; provision of childcare, prompt payment of salaries, payment of teachers' bonuses, provision of pension scheme and providing a well furnished common room for teachers' relaxation. This conforms to the findings of Lambert, (2000) who opined that the provision of childcare can be viewed as a remedy or positive initiative for three different reasons: firstly, it would enhance gender balance in workplace by relieving women of the burden of childcare; second, it would provide educationally beneficial circumstances for the development of the child through educative care; and third, it would relieve the pressure on working parents by providing facilities that match their employment responsibilities. The provision of such benefits promotes teachers' obligation and interest in schools by serving as symbols of special treatment and organizational concern for workers. Igwe (2004) reiterated that an improvement in teachers' welfare will help halt the brain drain phenomenon in the school, which has put secondary education in Nigeria in jeopardy. The finding also agrees with the findings of Arikewuyo and Adegbesan (2009) who corroborates some of the benefits that could be provided by an organization to safe guard its workers as including childcare, medical service for teachers and their dependants, a crèche or nursery school for staff children, official cars and end of year bonus.

Findings from the tested hypothesis as revealed in table 3 indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean response of experienced and less experienced principals on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. The reason for the no significant difference could be that these principals do not have divergent but the same views on the available leave policies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. This conforms to the findings of Frans, Mortelmans and Masquiler (2011) and McKay and Doucet (2010) in their independent studies.

Findings from the tested hypothesis as revealed in table 4 revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean response of urban and principals on the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. The reason for the no significant difference could be that these principals do not have divergent but the same views on the available work-life benefits for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo-State. This finding conforms to the findings of Arikewuyo (2006) who asserted that medical service for teachers is also an important factor in work-life benefits. It is an indisputable fact that without sound health, teaching will be greatly impaired.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that leave policies and work-life benefits will improve teachers' work-life balance schools in Edo State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that:

1. Principals should adopt leave policies and work-life benefits as strategies for improving teachers' work-life balance in secondary schools in Edo State.
2. Educational administrators should organize seminars, conferences and workshops for teachers on work-life balance.
3. Additional benefits should be implemented to attract intelligent people into the profession and encourage those who are already teaching to raise up their heads anywhere with pride.

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