

HEAD TEACHERS' MOTIVATIONAL PRACTICES AND TEACHERS' WORK ATTITUDE: A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR METROPOLIS, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The importance of primary education in equipping children with foundational literacy, numeracy, and life skills, while preparing them for higher levels of learning, cannot be overstated. Since teacher motivation is central to achieving primary education goals, this study investigated headteachers' motivational practices and teachers' work attitudes in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, which adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 598 teachers across 24 public primary schools in Calabar Municipality. Using simple random sampling through the 'Hat and Draw' method, 239 teachers, representing 40% of the population, were selected. Data were collected using an 18-item questionnaire titled Headteachers' Motivational Practices and

Teachers' Work Attitude Questionnaire (HMPTWAQ), structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Section A of the instrument obtained demographic data, while Section B focused on the study variables. The instrument was validated by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, University of Calabar. Its reliability, determined through Cronbach Alpha, yielded coefficients of .78 and .81. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at a .05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant relationship between in-service training, fringe benefits, and teachers' work attitudes in public primary schools. It was concluded that headteachers' motivational practices are significantly linked to teachers' attitudes to work. The implication is that adequate motivation through continuous in-service training and welfare packages enhances teachers' commitment, job satisfaction, and productivity. Conversely, inadequate motivation contributes to low morale, absenteeism, and teacher attrition. The study therefore recommends that headteachers strengthen support for in-service training and welfare initiatives to improve teachers' effectiveness.

Keywords: Head Teachers' Motivational Practices, Teachers' Work Attitude, In-Service Training, Fringe Benefits, Calabar Metropolis

Introduction

The Nigeria's educational system is structured into different tiers, namely: early childhood/pre-primary, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, tertiary, adult and non-formal education (Obona, 2025; Iyaji et al., 2024). Primary tier of education which is the focus of this study represents the initial and foundation stage of formal learning aimed at equipping children with fundamental literacy, numeracy, and preparing students for secondary education (Iwogbe et al., 2025; Difoni et al., 2025). Moreso, primary education aims to instill values, civic responsibility, and a sense of national identity, fostering an early interest in learning, problem-solving, and critical thinking. The attainment of these goals is largely dependent on teachers. Teachers translates educational objectives into knowledge and skill and transfers them to students in the classroom, thus, are the key elements in influencing learning in any educational process (Geraldine, 2021; Ukpog & Uchendu cited in Nwogbo & Ugwuoke, 2021). This means that the teacher must exhibit the right attitude in other for school goals to be attained.

In this study, teachers' work attitude refers to the mindset, disposition, and behavioural tendencies teachers display toward their professional duties, colleagues, learners, and the school environment. It reflects their enthusiasm, commitment, punctuality, sense of responsibility, and readiness to go beyond basic requirements in both instructional and non-instructional roles. Nwogbo and Ugwuoke (2021) describe it as the mental preparedness of teachers to engage learners effectively, thereby enhancing the teaching-learning process. Teachers' work attitudes, whether positive or negative, significantly influence student motivation, academic success, teaching quality, the learning atmosphere, and overall school effectiveness.

A positive attitude is evident in dedication to lesson preparation, active classroom engagement, collaboration with peers, adherence to policies, and genuine concern for students' academic and personal development. Ekperi (2018) emphasizes the need for teachers to demonstrate empathy, identify the causes of antisocial behaviour, and support students in improving their personality. Similarly, Shittu and Oanite (2015) highlight that competent teachers integrate deep knowledge and skills, maintain respectful relationships, manage behaviour proactively, consider individual differences, align assessments with instruction, and encourage task completion. Importantly, teachers' work attitude shapes not only academic outcomes but also students' character and aspirations, as a passionate and dedicated approach fosters curiosity, respect, resilience, and a positive school culture.

Primary education is a vital tier of Nigeria's education system. However, despite its significance, scholars have lamented about poor teachers' job performance, low teacher commitment, persistent teacher lateness, high absenteeism rate, truancy, missed lessons, not engaging students in meaningful learning activities, poor classroom management, and lack of professionalism (Obona et al., 2025; Egbo et al., 2025; Difoni et al., 2025; Nwogbo & Ugwuoke, 2021; Uzu et al., 2025; Ayang et al., 2025; Madukwe et al., 2024). From the researcher's observation in several public primary schools across Calabar Metropolis, it is evident that teachers' work attitude has become a pressing challenge affecting the overall quality of education. In many cases, teachers arrive late to school, show minimal enthusiasm for lesson delivery, rush through instructional activities, and display limited engagement with pupils beyond the classroom routine. Some are frequently absent or spend considerable time on personal matters during school hours, while others approach teaching as a mere formality rather than a vocation.

This lack of commitment creates an uninspiring learning atmosphere, and has led to poor pupil participation, declining academic performance, and a gradual erosion of discipline and moral values among learners. The situation has also strained school management efforts, as headteachers are left to deal with low productivity, reduced teamwork, and a widening gap between educational goals and actual outcomes. This may be because teachers do not derive the much needed motivation and satisfaction from their jobs. Urgent intervention is therefore necessary to restore teachers' sense of purpose and responsibility. One potential approach is the deliberate use of headteachers' motivational practices. These strategies can inspire teachers to develop a positive work attitude, reignite their passion for teaching, and improve both pupil achievement and the effectiveness of public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis.

In an educational context, motivational practices by headteachers refer to the strategies, actions, and initiatives employed to inspire and encourage staff both teaching and non-teaching to perform optimally. Motivation as a concept which comes from the word "movere" meaning "motive" is the inner state that energizes behavior, activities, directs and channels behaviors towards the stated goals (Belelson, 1999 as cited in Nairuba, 2004). Gupta (2009) explained a motive as an inner state that energizes, activates or moves and that directs or channels behaviour towards certain goals. Motivation is fundamental to teaching and learning because

it assists to sustain behaviours that focus on improvement. According to Mohammed and Abdullahi (2011), it is the inner drive that pushes individuals to act or perform as expected.

Motivational practices adopted by head teachers are geared towards inspiring the staff to carry out their primary and administrative duties effectively and efficiently. Northouse (2016) states that when school head teachers exercise their leadership roles by motivating teachers, non-teachers, and students to realize their set goals, teachers feel motivated to teach and students feel motivated and encouraged to learn. Thus, head teachers' motivational practices are carried out to support, assist and direct the activities of staff for improved job performance. Motivational practices by headteachers may include recognition of achievements, professional development opportunities, and effective communication to enhance the motivation and job satisfaction of teachers and staff. The motivational practices examined in this study included: teachers' in-service training and fringe benefits.

Literature Review

In-service Training and Teachers' Work Attitude

Teachers' in-service training, often referred to as professional development, is a continuous process that provides practicing educators with opportunities to update their knowledge, refine skills, and enhance professional competence. It serves as a vital mechanism for lifelong learning, ensuring that teachers remain current with new concepts, methodologies, and research in education (Nakpodia, 2008 as cited in Abazie, 2020). Scholars affirm that in-service training has long been a catalyst for innovation in teaching and learning, equipping teachers to meet the ever-changing demands of the classroom and ultimately improving their effectiveness (Abazie, 2020).

Empirical evidence consistently highlights the positive influence of in-service training on teachers' performance and commitment. Abazie (2020) noted that such programmes improve lesson delivery, class management, subject mastery, and the use of instructional resources, thereby boosting both teacher morale and job dedication. In the same vein, Akinbode (2006) observed that teachers with initially low levels of commitment developed stronger dedication after participating in in-service training. Studies by Kazmi et al. (2011), as well as Ekpoh et al. (2013), further corroborated that in-service training enhances teachers' systematic approach to teaching, student evaluation, and classroom control, while Jahangir et al. (2012) emphasized its pivotal role in overall teacher performance.

Beyond improving instructional delivery, in-service training has also been shown to influence student learning outcomes. Ajani et al. (2018), in their study of Lagos State public schools, found that professional development empowered teachers with competence in instructional tasks, which in turn translated into better student achievement. Similarly, Abazie's (2020) study in Enugu State involving 619 teachers revealed that participation in workshops, orientations, and conferences was significantly and positively correlated with teacher job performance, underscoring the central role of in-service training in achieving educational goals. In addition, other evidence points to the impact of in-service training on teachers' attitudes. Shalini and

Abha (2023), in a study involving 400 elementary teachers in Vaishali district, reported that participation in training programmes significantly improved teachers' dispositions towards teaching, fostering more positive attitudes that enhance their effectiveness.

Fringe Benefits and Teachers' Work Attitude

Fringe benefits are non-monetary compensations provided by employers in addition to salaries or wages, and they play a vital role in employee motivation, satisfaction, and retention. They include incentives such as free medical services, sick allowances, vehicle loans, paid vacations, retirement and pension schemes, insurance, bonuses, and transport or housing allowances (Roeloeofsen, 2002; Henderson, 2014). These benefits enhance employees' quality of life, instill a sense of security, improve loyalty, and boost morale. For teachers, the quality of fringe benefits often determines whether they remain in the school system or leave for better opportunities elsewhere. Attractive benefit packages can help retain highly skilled and talented educators, while poor or inadequate provisions may result in the loss of competent staff. Thus, fringe benefits serve not only as motivational tools but also as strategic measures for building a committed and productive workforce.

Several studies have consistently highlighted the role of fringe benefits in influencing teachers' effectiveness, retention, and overall job performance. Hamza (2007), in a study conducted in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, established that fringe benefits significantly affect teaching effectiveness among secondary school teachers. Similarly, Ocho (2008) found that motivational variables, particularly fringe benefits, have a strong influence on Physics teachers' attrition tendencies in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. These findings underscore the importance of incentives in retaining qualified educators within the school system. Murname and Olsen (2014) revealed through correlation analysis that teachers' wage increases and attractive benefits directly determine how long teachers remain in the profession. They argued that offering new entrants competitive benefits is essential for reducing turnover rates. Reinforcing this, Ayodele et al. (2015) discovered in Ekiti State that teachers' awareness of available fringe benefits strongly correlates with their performance, with 95% of respondents affirming that adequate motivation enhances zeal and productivity.

In another study, Adamu (2019) examined the relationship between fringe benefits, professional development, and job performance in Adamawa State. The study concluded that both fringe benefits and professional development are significant correlates of teachers' performance, suggesting that compensation alone may be insufficient without opportunities for continuous growth. Prosenjit et al. (2021) found that fringe benefits such as insurance, retirement packages, paid leave, professional development opportunities, and flexible working hours significantly enhanced employee loyalty among university teachers in Bangladesh, with flexible hours making the most notable contribution.

The review of both theoretical and empirical literatures in this section revealed much studies has been done in line with the sub-variables of the present study viz: in-service training and fringe benefits. These studies indicate that in-service training and fringe benefits not only

improves teachers' skills and classroom practices but also strengthens their attitudes, commitment, and the quality of services delivered. However, although numerous studies have been done already, they still exist some gaps in the literature that this present study filled. For instance, majority of the reviewed studies were carried out in other states. Still, some studies were situated in foreign countries. Hence, their results might not be applicable to Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State in particular. Additionally, despite the fact that many studies have been done on the topic already, none has been discovered which used the same sub-variables as those of the present study. Therefore, the researcher sees the need to carry out the study so as to fill the gap in literature, and to add more knowledge to the existing knowledge bank.

Primary education is designed to provide children with a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills, while also fostering holistic development across cognitive, emotional, social, and physical domains. The goal at this level is to adequately prepare learners for subsequent stages of education. Among the various factors that determine educational outcomes, teachers' attitudes remain one of the most critical. Achieving the objectives of primary education therefore requires teachers who are enthusiastic and demonstrate a positive attitude toward their work.

Unfortunately, in many public primary schools within Calabar Metropolis, teachers are increasingly failing to discharge their duties in line with the ethics of the teaching profession. Reports from parents, pupils, and the general public point to recurring issues such as misconduct, lateness, idleness, neglect of duty, and conflicts between teachers and school management. In some schools, teachers no longer uphold the professional character and practices once associated with the profession. Stakeholders have expressed concern that if this negative trend persists, it could severely affect both the academic achievement and moral development of young learners.

Despite government efforts in recent years to improve teachers' working conditions—through the provision of facilities, renovation of schools, recruitment of new teachers, and enhanced supervision—teachers' attitudes to work appear to remain poor. In fact, there seems to be an inverse relationship between these improvements and the actual work attitudes of teachers. This unusual situation raises an important question: What is the relationship between headteachers' motivational practices and teachers' work attitudes? Addressing this question provided the rationale for the present study.

This study examined headteachers' motivational practices and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to examine the relationship between:

1. In-service training and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis.
2. Fringe benefits teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis.

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. In-service training does not significantly relate to teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis.
2. There is no significant relationship between fringe benefits and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. Galadanci and Mukhtar (2017) describes a correlational survey design as the design that is used to show the magnitude and level of relationship between variables of interest. Correlation survey design was considered appropriate for this study because it sought to investigate the relationship between head teachers' motivational practices and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis. The population of this study comprised 598 teachers in 24 public primary school in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State. The simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 239 teachers representing 40% of the total population of teachers through the 'Hat' & 'Drawn' method. The instrument used for data collection was a 18-items questionnaire designed on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), titled "Head teachers' Motivational Practices and Teachers' Work Attitude Questionnaire (HMPTWAQ). A questionnaire letter that explained the need for the study preceded the main questionnaire. The instrument was divided into two sections – Section A and B. Section A was designed to capture information on demographic data such as sex, age, marital and educational status of respondents. Section B was designed to elicit information on respondents based on the variables under investigation.

Before administering the instrument, it was submitted for vetting by three research experts in Educational Management, and in Measurement and Evaluation, faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. The bad items were either dropped or modified by the experts to suit the study. The reliability was determined through Cronbach Alpha and yielded coefficients of .78 and .81. The researcher visited and administered the questionnaire to the teachers in each secondary schools in the study area supported by 5 trained research assistants. After some time, the questionnaire copies were retrieved back from the respondents and all copies were correctly filled. The questionnaire was then organized in the order of the variables they were designed to measure. Positively worded items were scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4point, Agree (A) = 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1point. But the pattern was reversed for all the negatively worded items. The scores of respondents on the respective sub-scales were summed and transferred to appropriate statistical packages for analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis one

In-service training does not significantly relate to teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis. The two variables in this hypothesis are in-service training and teachers' work attitude. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. Table 1 showed the correlation coefficients between in-service training and teachers' work attitude. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers' work attitude ($r = .52$, $p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of teachers' work attitude. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically significant relationship between in-service training and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis Cross River State.

Table 1: Summary of correlation between in-service training and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis. (N=239)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	R	Sig.
In-service training	15.05	2.92		
Teachers' work attitude	14.56	2.46	.52*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ $df=237$

Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between fringe benefits and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis. The two variables in this hypothesis are fringe benefits and teachers' work attitude. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 2. Table 2 showed the correlation coefficients between fringe benefits and teachers' work attitude. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers' work attitude ($r = .71$, $p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of teachers' work attitude. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically significant relationship between fringe benefits and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis Cross River State.

Table 2: Summary of correlation between fringe benefits and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis Cross River State. (N=239)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	R	Sig.
Fringe benefits	14.99	2.67		
Teachers' work attitude	14.56	2.46	.71*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ $df=237$

Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed a significant relationship between in-service training and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. This finding suggests that teachers who are exposed to continuous training opportunities tend to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward their work. The result is consistent with the view that professional development enhances teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence, which in turn translates into higher levels of commitment and productivity.

This outcome aligns with the submission of Akinbode (2006), who reported that teachers with initially low commitment to the teaching profession became highly committed after participating in in-service training. In-service training thus serves as a catalyst for improving teachers' effectiveness. Similarly, Abazie (2020) observed that teacher retraining programs enhance teaching methods, classroom management, supervision of students, subject mastery, and the use of instructional materials—all of which contribute to teaching effectiveness and quality outcomes. In line with this, Ekpoh, Oswald, and Victoria (2013) found that teachers who attended in-service training performed better in terms of subject knowledge, classroom management, teaching methods, and student evaluation. Jahangir et al. (2012) also concluded that in-service training plays a major role in improving teachers' performance by updating their skills and preparing them to face emerging challenges in the education sector. The implication of these findings is that in-service training should remain a central feature of teacher development policies. When teachers are regularly trained and retrained, they are better equipped to cope with the dynamic challenges of the profession and to deliver quality education. Conversely, neglecting continuous professional development may result in poor work attitudes, reduced motivation, and declining academic outcomes among pupils.

The result of hypothesis two revealed a significant relationship between fringe benefits and teachers' work attitude in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. This finding may be attributed to the fact that teachers are often provided with compensation packages such as free medical services, sick allowances, vehicle loans, retirement and pension benefits, bonuses, as well as transport and housing allowances. These benefits enable employees to live improved lifestyles, meet family and community obligations, and maintain a greater sense of job satisfaction.

This outcome aligns with Henderson (2014), who concluded that fringe benefits instill in employees a sense of security, improve loyalty, and heighten workers' morale. It also supports the findings of Hamza (2007), who examined the effect of fringe benefits on teaching effectiveness among secondary school teachers in Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State. Using an ex-post facto design and Chi-square analysis, Hamza established that teachers' fringe benefits significantly enhanced their teaching effectiveness. Similarly, Murname and Olsen (2014), through Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, found that wage increases and attractive benefits influenced teacher retention, particularly for newly employed teachers, thereby extending their stay in the profession. The implication of this finding is that when teachers are adequately motivated through attractive fringe benefits, they

not only demonstrate improved attitudes toward work but also contribute to enhanced student learning outcomes. Conversely, schools with poor or inadequate benefit packages risk losing highly qualified and talented teachers to alternative employment opportunities with better compensation. Hence, ensuring competitive fringe benefits is a critical strategy for sustaining teacher motivation, loyalty, and long-term retention in the education system.

Conclusion

This study investigated headteachers' motivational practices and primary school teachers' attitudes to work in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. Specifically, it examined the relationship between in-service training, fringe benefits, and teachers' work attitudes. The findings revealed a significant relationship between in-service training, fringe benefits, and teachers' work attitudes in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis. Based on these findings, the study concluded that headteachers' motivational practices have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' work attitudes in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Therefore, when teachers are motivated through regular in-service training and adequate welfare packages, their level of commitment, job satisfaction, and productivity will improve. Conversely, poor motivation can lead to low morale, absenteeism, and attrition of competent teachers.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- xxviii. Headteachers should provide support for teachers to engage in continuous in-service training opportunities to help them update their knowledge and improve their professional skills.
- xxix. Government should ensure that adequate fringe benefits such as housing, transport, medical allowances, and retirement benefits are consistently provided to enhance teachers' job satisfaction and loyalty.
- xxx. Headteachers should adopt motivational practices that recognize and reward teachers' efforts to foster a positive work culture.
- xxxi. Policy makers should prioritize teachers' welfare in budgetary allocations to ensure sustainable improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.

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