

Staff Development Practices and Teacher Performance in Missionary Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

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Abstract

This study critically examined staff development practices and teacher performance in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Staff development and teacher performance in Bayelsa missionary secondary schools are crucial. These elements greatly influence students' educational experiences and results. Staff development exercises improve instructors' knowledge, skills, and capacities. Missionary secondary schools may keep its teachers current on teaching methods, topic knowledge, and educational trends by investing in continual professional development. This study was a correlational survey of the ex-post-facto design. The population of the study consisted of two hundred and eighty-seven school administrators and teachers in Bayelsa State missionary schools. All the population were used for the study since it was a manageable size, thus no sample was done. Instrument named Staff Development Practices and Teachers Performance Questionnaire was used to obtain information. The instrument was subjected to test to determine its reliability using missionary schools in Delta State and a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained revealing a high reliability index. Data obtained were coded and analysed using mean rating and SD to answer research questions while Pearson r was used to test hypothesis at a significance level of 0.05. Finding revealed that current staff development practices in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State include; professional conferences, job rotation among others. The study also revealed that staff development practices impact teacher performance since it fosters collaboration, address current challenges in teaching, contributed to teachers ability to meet the diverse needs of students. The study further revealed that staff development practices is significantly related to teacher performance. It was recommended that schools management should Recognize and celebrate teachers' accomplishments and milestones as a way to motivate and inspire them to continue their professional development efforts, among others. Other researchers could consider conducting similar study in private and public schools for holistic generalization.

Keywords: Staff Development Practices, Teacher Performance, Missionary, Secondary Schools, Bayelsa State.

Introduction

Missionary secondary schools have played a crucial role in the educational system of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. During the colonial period in Nigeria, these schools were established with the primary objective of providing education to the people of the state (Smith, 2009). Various Christian denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, and Presbyterian Church, among others, were responsible for setting up these schools (Johnson, 2012). The impact of these missionary schools on education in Bayelsa State cannot be overstated. They have significantly contributed to the growth and development of the educational sector in the state (Okafor, 2015). By offering quality education, these schools have produced numerous notable individuals who have made substantial contributions to both the state and Nigeria as a whole (Adeleke, 2018). For example, Saint Jude's Girls Secondary School, Amarata, established by the Catholic Church, has produced many successful women who have contributed significantly to the growth and development of Nigeria. Notable alumni of the school include Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the first female Minister of Finance in Nigeria and the first female Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Another notable alumna is Diezani Alison-Madueke, the first female Minister of Petroleum in Nigeria. Similarly, Bishop Crowther Memorial Girls' School, Elenwo, established by the Anglican Church, has also produced many successful women who have made significant contributions to the growth and development of Nigeria. Notable alumni of the school include Joy Ogwu, a former Nigerian Ambassador to the United Nations, and Alagoa Morris, a historian and author. However, to achieve its stated aims, the missionary schools need teachers who are ready to perform at their best.

Teacher performance is a critical component of the quality of education delivered in schools. With the growing emphasis on student learning outcomes, there is a need to identify and measure effective teaching practices. Classroom observations are a widely used method of assessing teacher performance. A number of studies have investigated the reliability and validity of classroom observation protocols, including the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Pianta et al (2008), the Framework for Teaching (FFT) (Danielson, 2007), and the Mathematical Quality of Instruction (MQI) (Gibbons et al., 2012). These protocols measure various aspects of teacher practice, including classroom management, instruction, and student engagement. Student achievement is another commonly used index of teacher performance. Standardized tests, such as state assessments and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), are often used to measure student achievement. It has been discovered that a positive correlation between teacher quality and student achievement (Hanushek et al., 2005). Teacher evaluations conducted by school administrators and peers are another index of teacher performance. Research has shown that teacher evaluations are positively associated with student achievement (Taylor & Tyler, 2012) and that teacher evaluations can predict teacher retention (Kane et al., 2013). Self-evaluation is a method of assessing teacher performance that involves teachers reflecting on their own teaching practices. Several studies have found that self-evaluation can improve teacher performance (e.g., Van Veen et al., 2010; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). To make teachers performance a reality, the need for participation in staff development practices becomes essential.

Staff development practices play a significant role in the overall performance of teachers in schools (Johnson, 2010). The importance of staff development practices in enhancing teacher performance in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized (Rutherford, 2012). Studies have shown that effective staff development practices have a positive impact on student outcomes Guskey & Yoon (2009) and can significantly enhance teacher effectiveness

(Desimone, 2011). Moreover, staff development practices contribute to fostering a positive school culture (Louis & Kruse, 2012). Staff development refers to a process of improving the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of teachers and other school personnel through various activities and programs (Wei et al., 2010). According to Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), effective professional development for teachers is critical for improving student outcomes. The authors emphasize the importance of ongoing and job-embedded professional development to support teacher growth and learning. Staff development is an ongoing process of training, education, and support that is provided to employees in order to enhance their skills, knowledge, and abilities (Peters, 2014). This process is essential in order to keep employees up-to-date with the latest advancements in their field, and to ensure that they are able to perform their job duties effectively (Hirsh, 2010). By investing in staff development, schools can create a learning community that supports continuous improvement and positively impacts student achievement (Hord, 2013).

Staff development practices are critical for teacher performance in any educational setting. According to Siti and Binti (2019), staff development programs provide teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to deliver quality education. The authors further argue that staff development practices are essential in enhancing teacher performance and student achievement. In a study conducted by Oluwatosin, Adeoye, and Adeyemo (2020), the authors found that staff development practices have a positive impact on teacher performance. The study revealed that teachers who participated in staff development programs demonstrated an improvement in their teaching skills and knowledge. Similarly, a study conducted by Olawuni, et al (2021) found that staff development practices had a positive impact on teacher performance in Nigerian secondary schools. The authors argued that staff development programs enhanced teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Abdulmajid and Abdulmajid (2021), the authors found that staff development practices were essential in enhancing teacher performance in Nigerian secondary schools. The study revealed that staff development programs increased teacher knowledge and skills, leading to improved student performance. Research has found that high-quality professional development can improve teacher practice and student achievement (de Vries et al., 2022).

Statement of the Problem

The education landscape in Bayelsa State has experienced notable transformations in recent years. Missionary secondary schools in the area encounter a particular challenge, which revolves around the necessity of cultivating and sustaining their staff to enhance the educational standards offered to students. The development of staff is crucial to teachers' performance within the classroom, directly impacting the quality of education provided to students. Unfortunately, missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State seem to lack sufficient practices for staff development, resulting in inadequate teacher performance. This deficiency adversely affects teachers' ability to meet their students' needs and ultimately hampers the overall academic achievement of the students. Several factors contribute to this problem, including insufficient funding, inadequate facilities, and a lack of institutional support for staff development. Insufficient funding makes it challenging for schools to organize training programs and provide necessary resources for teachers to enhance their skills. Moreover, poor facilities hinder the effectiveness of training sessions and workshops. Another significant factor is the absence of a coherent staff development policy. Without a clear policy in place, schools struggle to implement effective staff development practices, often deviating from

best practices in the education sector. The issue of inadequate staff development practices and poor teacher performance has a detrimental impact on the future prospects of students in Bayelsa State. Since students are the primary beneficiaries of education, their success depends heavily on the quality of education they receive. Hence, it is imperative for missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State to prioritize staff development practices to enhance the quality of education provided to students.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to critically examine staff development practices and teacher performance in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State. In specific, the study examined the current staff development practices, the extent staff development practices impact teacher performance and how staff development practices can be improved to enhance teacher performance in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised

1. What are the current staff development practices in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent do staff development practices impact teacher performance?
3. How can staff development practices be improved to enhance teacher performance?

Hypothesis

The following was formulated and tested at a 0.05 significance level:

1. Staff development practices is not significantly related to teacher performance.

Methodology

This study is a correlational survey of the ex-post-facto design. The population of the study consisted of two hundred and eighty-seven school administrators and teachers in Bayelsa State missionary schools. All the population were used for the study since it was a manageable size, thus no sample was done. Instrument named Staff Development Practices and Teachers Performance Questionnaire was used to obtain information. The instrument contained forty items measuring current staff development practices in missionary secondary schools, staff development practices impact on teacher performance, ways staff development practices can be improved to enhance teacher performance and indices of teachers performance. On the instrument, respondents were requested to rate on four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. The instrument was subjected to test to determine its reliability using missionary schools in Delta State and a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained revealing a high reliability index. Data obtained were coded and analysed using mean rating and SD to answer research questions while Pearson r was used to test hypothesis at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the current staff development practices in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 1

Mean rating and SD on current staff development practices

S/N	Current Development Practices	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Professional conferences	3.64	.59	Agree
2.	Cross-functional projects.	2.43	.58	Disagree
3.	Job rotation	3.34	.70	Agree
4.	Online learning platforms	3.27	.66	Agree
5.	Further study	3.31	.79	Agree
6.	Continuing education	3.15	.85	Agree
7.	Staff networking events	2.15	.88	Disagree
8.	Team-building activities	2.46	.77	Disagree
9.	Employee empowerment	2.36	.82	Disagree
10.	Individual development plans	3.39	.78	Agree

Table 1 revealed mean rating and SD on current staff development practices. The result showed that respondents agree on professional conferences with mean rating of 3.64, job rotation with mean rating of 3.34, online learning platform with mean rating of 3.27, further study with mean rating of 3.31, continuing education with mean rating of 3.15, and individual development plan with mean rating of 3.39. However, respondents disagree on cross-functional project with mean rating of 2.43, staff networking events with mean rating of 2.15, team-building activities with mean rating of 2.46 and employee empowerment with mean rating of 2.36. Conclusively, current staff development practices in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State include; professional conferences, job rotation, online learning platforms, further study, continuing education and individual development plans.

Research Question 2: To what extent do staff development practices impact teacher performance?

Table 2

Mean rating and SD on extent staff development practices impact teacher performance

S/N	Staff development practices impact teacher performance	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Staff development practices foster collaboration	3.44	.67	Agree
2.	Staff development practices address current challenges in teaching	3.40	.71	Agree
3.	Staff development practices have contributed to teachers ability to meet the diverse needs of students	3.55	.55	Agree
4.	Staff development practices incorporate innovative teaching strategies	3.50	.55	Agree
5.	Staff development practices foster knowledge sharing among teachers	3.37	.74	Agree
6.	Necessary materials are obtained during staff development	3.40	.69	Agree
7.	Staff development practices helped teachers stay updated	3.31	.73	Agree
8.	Staff development practices facilitate the integration of technology into teaching practice	3.37	.74	Agree
9.	Knowledge acquired during staff development is impacted in classroom	3.34	.71	Agree
10.	Staff development practices contribute to your professional growth	3.58	.87	Agree

Table 2 revealed mean rating and SD on extent staff development practices impact teacher performance. The result showed that respondents agree on all items with mean rating above 2.50. Consequently respondents agree with mean rating of 3.44, 3.40, 3.55, 3.50, 3.37, 3.40, 3.31, 3.37, 3.34 and 3.58 on staff development practices foster collaboration, staff development practices address current challenges in teaching, staff development practices have contributed to teachers ability to meet the diverse needs of students, staff development practices incorporate innovative teaching strategies, staff development practices foster knowledge sharing among teachers, necessary materials are obtained during staff development, staff development practices helped teachers stay updated, staff development practices facilitate the integration of technology into your teaching practice, knowledge acquired during staff development is impacted in classroom and staff development practices contribute to professional growth respectively. Conclusively, staff development practices impact teacher performance since it fosters collaboration, address current challenges in teaching, contributed to teachers ability to meet the diverse needs of students, incorporate innovative teaching strategies, foster knowledge sharing among teachers, necessary materials are obtained, helped teachers stay updated, facilitate the integration of technology into teaching practice, knowledge acquired during staff development is impacted in classroom and contribute to your professional growth.

Research Question 3: How can staff development practices be improved to enhance teacher performance?

Table 3

Mean rating and SD on how staff development practices can be improved to enhance teacher performance

S/N	How staff development practices be improved to enhance teacher performance	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Celebrate achievements	3.05	.89	Agree
2.	Engage external experts	2.35	.86	Agree
3.	Help teachers create long-term professional development plans	3.47	.71	Agree
4.	Provide ongoing support after professional development sessions	3.23	.75	Agree
5.	Engage instructors in hands-on activities.	3.64	.60	Agree
6.	Utilize technology to enhance staff development	3.64	.60	Agree
7.	Evaluate professional development programmes regularly	3.47	.87	Agree
8.	Give instructors personalised professional development	3.41	.71	Agree
9.	Encourage collaboration among teachers	3.35	.70	Agree
10.	Facilitating frequent teacher exchanges	3.58	.87	Agree

Table 3 revealed mean rating and SD on how staff development practices can be improved to enhance teacher performance. The result showed that respondents agree on all items with mean rating above 2.50. Accordingly respondents agree with mean rating of 3.05, 2.35, 3.47, 3.23, 3.64, 3.64, 3.47, 3.41, 3.35, 3.58 on celebrate achievements, engage external experts, help teachers create long-term professional development plans, provide ongoing support after professional development sessions, Engage instructors in hands-on activities., utilize technology to enhance staff development, Evaluate professional development programmes regularly, Give instructors personalised professional development, encourage collaboration among teachers and facilitating frequent teacher exchanges respectively. Thus, staff development practices can be improved to enhance teacher performance through; celebrating achievements, engaging external experts, helping teachers create long-term professional development plans, providing ongoing support after professional development sessions, encouraging teachers to participate in hands-on activities, utilizing technology to enhance staff development, regularly assessing the effectiveness of professional development programs, providing opportunities for teachers to engage in personalized professional development, encouraging collaboration among teachers and facilitating frequent teacher exchanges.

Hypothesis 1: Staff development practices is not significantly related to teacher performance.

Table 4

Pearson r on staff development practices and teachers performance

		Staff development practices	Teacher performance
Staff development practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.737*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.402
	N	287	287
Teacher performance	Pearson Correlation	.737*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.402	
	N	287	287

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 4 above, the relationship between staff development practices and teacher performance showed positive relationship with r-value of .737 and significance p-value of .402. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that staff development practices is not significantly related to teacher performance was rejected. Thus, staff development practices is significantly related to teacher performance.

Discussion of Results

Finding revealed that current staff development practices in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State include; professional conferences, job rotation, online learning platforms, further study, continuing education and individual development plans. Ngala and Odebero (2010) found that higher education, in-service courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences are the most popular staff development programmes. The study agrees with Singh (2011) whose results indicate that staff development in the 30 schools takes place sporadically and in an unstructured manner. Kritsonis (2007), staff development practices include workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service training, while informal staff development practices include mentoring, coaching, and peer observation. This finding agrees with Mohamad et al (2019) who found that recruitment policy carried out by the school begins with the prospective teacher to send a letter of application along with other files to the school in the administration section, then the administration section will submit them to the principal. This finding also agrees with Ejumudo (2011) found that teacher recruitment procedures include providing vital information to potential employees in good faith about the job details and conditions of services, processing all applications with utmost efficiency and courtesy, seeking candidates based on their qualifications for the advertised vacancy, and ensuring that invited applicants for interview are given fair and a level playing field.

Finding revealed that staff development practices impact teacher performance since it fosters collaboration, address current challenges in teaching, contributed to teachers ability to meet the diverse needs of students, incorporate innovative teaching strategies, foster knowledge sharing among teachers, necessary materials are obtained, helped teachers stay updated, facilitate the integration of technology into teaching practice, knowledge acquired during staff development is impacted in classroom and contribute to your professional growth. Darling-Hammond et al (2009) found that teachers who participated in professional

development programs showed significant improvement in their instructional practices, which resulted in better student outcomes. Guskey and Yoon (2009) found that staff development programs that focus on specific teaching strategies and techniques can improve teacher performance and increase student achievement. Moreover, staff development practices can help teachers develop new skills and knowledge that can positively impact their classroom practices. Darling-Hammond (2017), professional development programs that focus on pedagogical content knowledge can improve teacher performance by enhancing their understanding of subject matter and teaching methods. A study by Knight (2007) found that coaching was effective in improving teacher performance and student achievement. Feedback is another critical staff development practice that has been found to improve teacher performance. According to a study by Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback provides teachers with information about their teaching practices, which helps them identify areas for improvement. The authors argue that effective feedback should be specific, timely, and focused on the intended learning outcomes.

Finding showed that staff development practices can be improved to enhance teacher performance through; celebrating achievements, engaging external experts, helping teachers create long-term professional development plans, providing ongoing support after professional development sessions, encouraging teachers to participate in hands-on activities, utilizing technology to enhance staff development, regularly assessing the effectiveness of professional development programs, providing opportunities for teachers to engage in personalized professional development, encouraging collaboration among teachers and facilitating frequent teacher exchanges. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), effective staff development practices should be tailored to meet the specific needs of teachers. The authors argue that generic professional development programs do not meet the individual needs of teachers and are, therefore, less effective in enhancing teacher performance. A study by Vescio et al (2008) found that teacher collaboration is an effective staff development practice that enhances teacher performance in secondary schools. The study found that teachers who collaborated with their peers were more likely to try new instructional strategies and implement them effectively. Vescio et al (2008) found that staff development practices can be enhanced by encouraging collaboration among teachers through communities of practice, professional learning communities, and peer mentoring programs. These platforms foster a culture of shared learning and support. Mouza (2011) suggested incorporate technology into staff development to support innovative teaching practices and enhance digital literacy skills among teachers.

Finding revealed that staff development practices is significantly related to teacher performance. The reason for this finding is that staff development practices, such as training sessions, workshops, and professional development programs, are designed to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in their respective domains. When teachers receive training that aligns with their needs and is relevant to their teaching context, they acquire new strategies, techniques, and approaches to improve their instructional practices. This, in turn, positively impacts their performance in the classroom. Another instance, Staff development practices often introduce teachers to updated pedagogical approaches and research-based instructional methods. By staying current with the latest educational research and best practices, teachers can implement effective teaching strategies that are supported by evidence. This enables them to better engage students, cater to diverse learning needs, and facilitate deeper understanding of the subject matter, ultimately improving their performance. This finding aligns with Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that new teachers

who participated in a mentoring program showed significant improvement in their teaching practices. The study also found that the mentoring program had a positive impact on student outcomes. The authors argue that mentoring is an effective way of providing personalized support to new teachers and helping them develop the skills they need to become effective teachers. A study by DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) found that PLCs help teachers collaborate and share best practices. The study also found that PLCs have a positive impact on student outcomes. The authors argue that PLCs create a culture of continuous improvement where teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practices and make changes that improve student learning. Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) found that job-embedded professional development programs that are integrated into teachers' daily work are more effective in enhancing teacher performance than traditional professional development programs. The study found that teachers who participated in job-embedded professional development programs were more likely to implement new instructional strategies and improve their teaching practices. Osakwe and Nkedishu (2017) found that Staff development practices often encourage teachers to engage in reflective teaching, which involves critically analyzing their own teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and student outcomes. By reflecting on their practices and receiving feedback from mentors or colleagues, teachers can identify areas for improvement and make adjustments accordingly, leading to enhanced performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the current staff development practices in missionary secondary schools in Bayelsa State have a positive impact on teacher performance. The implementation of professional conferences, job rotation, online learning platforms, further study, continuing education, and individual development plans has contributed to several benefits for teachers, including enhanced collaboration, addressing teaching challenges, meeting diverse student needs, incorporating innovative teaching strategies, sharing knowledge among teachers, acquiring necessary materials, staying updated, integrating technology into teaching practice, and applying acquired knowledge in the classroom. These practices have shown a significant relationship with teacher performance.

Recommendations

To further enhance teacher performance, the following recommendations can be considered:

1. Celebrate Achievements: Recognize and celebrate teachers' accomplishments and milestones as a way to motivate and inspire them to continue their professional development efforts.
2. Engage External Experts: Invite external experts and professionals to provide specialized training and workshops, bringing fresh perspectives and knowledge to enhance the staff development programs.
3. Long-Term Professional Development Plans: Assist teachers in creating personalized long-term professional development plans that align with their career goals, helping them identify specific areas for growth and improvement.
4. Ongoing Support: Provide continuous support and follow-up after professional development sessions, ensuring that teachers have the resources and guidance they need to apply new knowledge and skills effectively.

5. Hands-on Activities: Engage instructors in hands-on activities., such as classroom demonstrations or workshops, to reinforce learning and provide practical experiences that can be directly applied to their teaching practice.
6. Utilize Technology: Incorporate technology tools and platforms into staff development programs to make learning more accessible, interactive, and engaging for teachers. This can include online courses, webinars, virtual conferences, and collaborative platforms for knowledge sharing.
7. Regular Assessment: Evaluate professional development programmes regularly through feedback surveys, teacher evaluations, and classroom observations. Use this feedback to make necessary improvements and ensure that the programs are meeting the needs of teachers and aligning with their performance goals.
8. Personalized Professional Development: Give instructors personalised professional development, allowing them to pursue specific areas of interest or areas where they require additional support.
9. Foster Collaboration: Encourage collaboration among teachers through activities like peer mentoring, lesson sharing, and collaborative projects. This promotes a culture of shared learning and supports the exchange of best practices.
10. Regular Experience Sharing: Organize regular opportunities for teachers to share their experiences, successes, and challenges, creating a supportive learning community where teachers can learn from one another.

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