

Managing Youth Mobility and Safeguarding the Future of the Teaching Profession in Nigeria

Veronica Egonekwu Mogboh, Ph.D.¹ & Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi²

¹ *Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu State, Nigeria.*

² *Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu State, Nigeria.*

¹ nekwuvero@yahoo.ca; 08034001816

² chinemeremiloanwusi@gmail.com; 07062395436

Abstract

Research Objectives: This study examines the growing phenomenon of youth mobility and its implications for teacher recruitment, retention, and professional identity in Nigeria's education sector, with particular attention to private school contexts.

Methodology: Drawing from qualitative and empirical sources, the research explores how socio-economic pressures, digital exposure, and institutional shortcomings shape undergraduate perceptions of the teaching profession and fuel attrition among early-career teachers.

Findings: Teaching is increasingly perceived by Nigerian youth as a temporary, low-value occupation, often accepted out of necessity rather than vocational interest. This perception is exacerbated by inadequate incentives, poor management practices, and the absence of structured professional development in many private schools.

Recommendations: The study proposes the Theory of Professional Value Alignment (PVA), conceptualized by Veronica Mogboh, which argues that sustained engagement in teaching is contingent upon the alignment between an individual's personal values and the profession's symbolic, structural, and developmental affordances. The PVA framework identifies four core pillars—value congruence, perceived career trajectory, social image and narrative capital, and institutional agency—as critical to transforming teaching into an aspirational, respected, and sustainable career path. The study concludes by recommending targeted interventions in teacher education curricula, institutional leadership models, and policy design to realign the values of a new generation of educators with the evolving demands of the 21st-century classroom.

Key words: *Youth mobility, Teacher retention, Professional value alignment, Educational management, Nigeria.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession in Nigeria is facing a silent crisis as youth continue to migrate from the classroom to more financially rewarding sectors. Many young teachers are abandoning their roles for better-paying internships, corporate jobs, and entrepreneurial ventures, leaving a vacuum that endangers the future of basic education. Teaching, once a revered profession, is now often seen as a last resort, lacking both prestige and economic stability (Eze, 2023). As this mobility trend grows, concerns mount over the sustainability of teacher supply in Nigerian schools. More troubling is the fact that these departures are not being matched by incoming interest in the profession among undergraduates.

School owners and administrators continue to launch private institutions at an increasing rate, particularly in urban centers like Enugu, with the hope of offering quality education. Yet, these efforts are frequently undermined by the difficulty of attracting and retaining vibrant, young educators (Iroanya & Okoroafor, 2021). The private education boom has thus paradoxically coincided with a significant teacher quality and availability crisis. Many of these schools resort to employing unqualified or underqualified personnel, which in turn affects learning outcomes. This situation has generated serious concerns about the long-term viability of Nigeria's educational goals, especially as captured in the SDG-4 framework.

The exit of young professionals from teaching can be traced to systemic issues such as poor salary structures, lack of professional growth opportunities, inadequate teaching resources, and minimal institutional respect for the profession (Eze & Ali, 2020; Onu, 2022). For instance, it is not uncommon for private school teachers to earn below the national minimum wage, with limited or no benefits. The absence of pension structures and job security further discourages graduates from venturing into education. This stands in stark contrast to other professions offering clear paths of progression and job satisfaction.

Things become more worrying as Nigerian undergraduates, including students in colleges of education, view teaching in a more unfavorable light. Many students who consider teaching do not have a passion for it, as they want to secure their spots after realizing they lack the skills to enter other fields (Obasi et al., 2022). This development worries people because it suggests that many future teachers view teaching as a temporary job. Despite this, both policy documents and teacher courses rarely consider these perceptions, although they are very important for the country's classrooms.

If policies are to address the problems that arise from youth mobility and the participation of more students in private schools, they need to consider teacher retention. The nation requires more schools as its population keeps increasing. Still, these schools cannot accomplish their objectives unless the teachers are fully committed. Because of this contradiction, we ought to

look deeper into how teacher departure is influenced by management, institutions, and society's values (Okeke, 2021).

It is important to know what youth think about teaching to generate sustainable answers. Careers in teaching appeal to many youths because of the environment they witness, respect from the community, and bright prospects up the ladder. Being enthusiastic about tech companies, big international organizations, and online entrepreneurship usually makes them less interested in traditional fields like teaching (Chukwuma et al., 2023). So, policies can't rely only on financial means to deal with problems of dignity, identity, and innovation in education.

At the same time, meeting with school managers provides answers about how these matters look in practice. Such stakeholders come across the difficulties of inspiring and keeping young teachers. What they have to say plays an important role in creating a picture of youth mobility among teachers. Yet, their voices are often underrepresented in academic research and policy formulations (Nwodo & Ibrahim, 2023).

This study aims to fill that gap by eliciting data from two key groups: school managers and undergraduate students. The former provide context, strategies, and challenges from the management side, while the latter offer perceptions, intentions, and attitudes toward the profession. Together, they provide a dual-sector lens that helps capture the full picture of how youth mobility affects the future of education in Nigeria. This mixed focus strengthens the study's relevance to both educational management and youth development policy.

The study is situated in Enugu State, which provides a typical representation of Nigeria's education dynamics—high private school density, diverse student population, and shifting employment patterns. Enugu's blend of urban and semi-urban communities makes it a valuable case for analyzing educational challenges in Nigeria's Southeast (Obioma & Chinedu, 2021). The focus on 300-level undergraduates at Godfrey Okoye University ensures that data are drawn from students already nearing career decision points.

By adopting a survey research design and generating data from both school authorities and university students, this paper contributes to national debates on educational sustainability, workforce planning, and youth employment. It also offers recommendations for policy-makers, educational leaders, and curriculum designers seeking to revitalize the teaching profession in Nigeria. Most importantly, it reimagines teaching not just as a job, but as a viable and noble career path deserving of structural and societal investment (Eze et al., 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The increasing mobility of Nigerian youth away from the teaching profession, driven by economic pressures, negative social perceptions, and better opportunities in other sectors, poses a

critical threat to the future of education in the country. This challenge is compounded by the expansion of private schools that are unable to recruit and retain quality teachers, thereby undermining learning outcomes. While various policies have been proposed to address teacher shortages, few studies have investigated the intersection between youth perceptions of teaching and the managerial experiences of school administrators who struggle with staffing. Without understanding both the supply and demand sides of teacher dynamics, interventions will remain superficial. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore how youth mobility can be managed strategically to safeguard the teaching profession and ensure quality education delivery in Nigeria.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the perceptions of undergraduate students regarding the teaching profession in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the challenges faced by school managers in recruiting and retaining young teachers.
3. To identify strategic educational management approaches that can make the teaching profession more attractive to Nigerian youth.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of undergraduate students toward the teaching profession in Nigeria?
2. What challenges do school managers face in retaining young teachers in private schools?
3. What strategies can be adopted to make teaching more appealing to Nigerian youth?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth Mobility and Career Migration in Nigeria

Youth mobility refers to the tendency of young people to shift from one career path to another, often in pursuit of higher income, career satisfaction, or social prestige. In Nigeria, this phenomenon has intensified in recent years as graduates increasingly opt for jobs in sectors such as fintech, telecommunications, and media rather than traditional professions like teaching (Iroanya & Okoroafor, 2021). Economic pressures, globalization, and digital transformation have redefined career expectations among Nigerian youth. The gig economy, remote work options, and entrepreneurial culture have widened the employment field. The result is a youth population that is highly mobile, career-conscious, and less tied to conventional employment models. Youth mobility, while a sign of adaptability, becomes problematic when it drains critical sectors like education of human capital.

The Nigerian education sector is particularly vulnerable to this trend due to the poor reputation and unattractive conditions associated with teaching. According to Chukwuma et al. (2023), youth increasingly view teaching as a ‘stop-gap’ occupation—something to do while awaiting better opportunities. This perception is reinforced by stories of teacher exploitation, delayed salaries, and the absence of clear promotion paths. Many young teachers exit the profession within their first five years, often citing burnout and lack of motivation. Job migration is more intense among graduates of non-education faculties who reluctantly accept teaching jobs out of necessity. These individuals tend to leave as soon as higher-paying jobs arise in the private sector, contributing to instability within the education system.

Studies have found that career migration among Nigerian youth is often influenced more by external socio-economic conditions than internal motivation or job interest (Omoju et al., 2023). In a society where income disparity is pronounced and cost of living is rising, youth are under pressure to make financially strategic decisions. The perception that teaching lacks "value" is further driven by how society treats teachers—viewing them as overworked and underpaid, rather than as nation-builders. As a result, many young people see teaching as a failure, not a career. This disillusionment is magnified by the visible affluence of peers in other sectors, especially tech, banking, and entertainment.

Research by Okeke (2021) also highlights that youth mobility is linked to the erosion of institutional loyalty. In contrast to past generations who committed long-term to their professions, today’s youth are more transactional in their career choices. They are more likely to leave employers that do not offer professional development, recognition, or benefits. This outlook affects private school owners, who struggle to retain quality teachers for more than a year or two. Some schools have resorted to bonding teachers through contracts or withholding certificates—a practice that raises ethical concerns and further deters prospective teachers from applying.

Several scholars argue that youth mobility must not be seen solely as a threat, but also as an opportunity to reform education (Oballum et al., 2024). If well-managed, it can be used to introduce innovation, competitiveness, and accountability into teaching. For example, digital-savvy youth who temporarily enter teaching bring with them new methods, technologies, and skills. However, for this potential to be fully realized, school systems must create an enabling environment—one that supports teacher growth and accommodates flexibility. Institutional rigidity, lack of mentoring systems, and weak management practices must be addressed to reduce avoidable attrition.

The management of youth mobility in education requires intentional policy design. As Eze (2023) notes, countries that have successfully retained young teachers often combine incentives with recognition and status enhancement. This includes teacher housing, structured mentorship,

performance-based bonuses, and fast-tracked career paths. Nigerian educational managers must therefore look beyond salary as the only motivating factor. Holistic reforms that touch on teacher welfare, professional dignity, and modern tools are critical. Without these, youth will continue to exit the system, leaving a leadership and knowledge gap in classrooms.

In sum, youth mobility is a multi-dimensional issue influenced by economics, perception, and institutional behavior. While it threatens the sustainability of the teaching profession in Nigeria, it also offers a mirror for reflection. If Nigeria can manage this mobility constructively, it can rebrand teaching as an innovative, desirable, and future-proof career path. That will require commitment from government, private school owners, and teacher education institutions. Most importantly, the voices of youth must be heard in redesigning what teaching should mean and how it should evolve in the 21st century.

Perceptions of the Teaching Profession Among Undergraduates

Undergraduate perceptions of teaching significantly influence who enters and remains in the profession. Studies across Nigerian universities reveal that many education students did not initially choose teaching but found themselves placed in education-related programs due to low UTME scores or poor admission options (Obasi et al., 2022). This lack of intrinsic motivation has implications for teacher quality and long-term commitment. When teaching is viewed as a fallback rather than a calling, the profession suffers from half-hearted service delivery. Perceptions are formed early and shaped by cultural narratives, observed experiences, and peer influences. Unfortunately, most undergraduates associate teaching with hardship, not empowerment.

Research by Onwuneme (2023) shows that undergraduates tend to value professions associated with visibility, financial success, and social prestige—traits they rarely associate with teaching. Professions like law, medicine, ICT, and business are seen as aspirational because they offer pathways to success and recognition. By contrast, teaching is often associated with suffering, "managing," and stagnation. This perception has grown worse in the digital age, where the youth are more exposed to global role models and career influencers. Platforms like YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram project images of success that teaching in its current Nigerian form struggles to match.

A deeper issue lies in how teacher education is structured and delivered. Several faculties of education have outdated curricula that fail to reflect the dynamic demands of modern classrooms (Eze & Ali, 2020). Many education students report boredom, lack of engagement, and absence of mentorship. There is minimal use of ICT, little exposure to real-world teaching experiences, and almost no career counseling services tailored toward education careers. Without innovation in

curriculum and pedagogy, faculties of education may continue to produce graduates who are unexcited about becoming teachers.

Peer and familial influence also plays a major role. Students often share how their parents advised them to use teaching as a stepping stone until “better jobs come along.” This mindset undermines professional identity and builds a culture of exit rather than commitment (Iroanya & Okoroafor, 2021). Even education students who might have developed a passion for teaching find it hard to sustain that enthusiasm when constantly bombarded by narratives of failure and poverty associated with the profession. The absence of success stories among teachers contributes to this negative cycle.

Several scholars have proposed intervention strategies that target undergraduate perceptions. These include internship programs in model schools, direct interaction with excellent teachers, and teacher-influencer campaigns using social media (Okeke, 2021). By showcasing teaching as a leadership role, and not just a service role, young people may begin to change their attitudes. Furthermore, collaborations between faculties of education and private schools can create hybrid training experiences that link theory with modern teaching practice.

Another critical factor is the lack of institutional incentives for choosing teaching. While STEM students often get scholarships, and medical students receive bursaries, teacher education students receive little or no support. According to Onu (2022), this imbalance communicates societal disregard for teaching and demoralizes education students. Government and school administrators must reverse this trend by introducing financial aid, recognition programs, and targeted career-building activities for future teachers. If these are not implemented, the pipeline for committed teachers will continue to shrink.

Ultimately, reshaping undergraduate perceptions about teaching requires a multi-pronged approach that combines curriculum reform, media engagement, institutional support, and policy rebranding. Teaching must be portrayed not just as a job, but as a transformational and innovative profession that can compete with others in dignity and value. Only then can a new generation of passionate, qualified, and committed teachers be produced. This generation holds the key to transforming Nigerian classrooms and ensuring educational equity.

Educational Management and Teacher Retention in Private Schools

Educational management plays a central role in shaping teacher motivation, engagement, and retention. In Nigeria’s private schools, managers and proprietors often struggle to balance financial constraints with the need for quality staff. The lack of structured human resource systems in many private schools leads to arbitrary recruitment, unclear roles, and minimal support for staff development (Chukwuma et al., 2023). This environment can quickly

demotivate young teachers, especially those who expect professional growth and stability. Unlike public schools with structured promotions, private schools often lack such frameworks. The implication is a high turnover rate, particularly among younger, more ambitious teachers.

Research indicates that most private schools in Nigeria do not provide long-term career paths for their staff. Teachers are often hired on temporary or annual contracts without health insurance, pension schemes, or promotion structures (Nwodo & Ibrahim, 2023). This precarious employment condition discourages retention, especially among youth who are starting to think about financial security. Furthermore, many teachers report toxic workplace environments where respect is lacking, workloads are high, and managerial support is minimal. These factors push them to seek alternative employment or entrepreneurship.

Effective educational management requires clear policies on staff welfare, continuous professional development, and reward systems. According to Eze et al. (2021), when teachers feel valued and supported, they are more likely to remain committed. Some progressive private schools in Lagos and Abuja are experimenting with innovative teacher leadership models, staff recognition schemes, and collaborative teaching approaches. These strategies have shown promising results in reducing attrition and enhancing performance. However, they remain exceptions rather than the rule in most of the country.

Leadership style is another critical determinant of teacher retention. School managers who adopt participatory leadership—where teachers are involved in decision-making—tend to foster higher loyalty (Onwuneme, 2023). Autocratic or top-down management styles, by contrast, breed resentment and disengagement. Young teachers especially value autonomy, recognition, and the chance to contribute creatively. Where school management stifles such contributions, the result is often high staff turnover and declining morale.

Training and mentorship opportunities also impact retention. Teachers who are mentored, coached, and professionally guided tend to develop stronger institutional loyalty (Oballum et al., 2024). Unfortunately, very few private schools invest in such systems, largely due to cost and time constraints. Yet these investments could save money in the long run by reducing recruitment costs and building stronger school cultures. Educational managers must therefore view professional development not as an expense but as a strategic retention tool.

Many private school managers cite financial limitations as the reason for poor staff support, but this often stems from a failure to prioritize human capital. Effective resource management can accommodate teacher support schemes if managerial vision aligns with long-term school quality goals (Ogunyemi & Adeniji, 2023). Budgeting for teacher welfare, training, and recognition can significantly impact student outcomes and parent satisfaction. Schools that manage this balance successfully tend to attract better talent and maintain reputational integrity.

In conclusion, the role of educational management in teacher retention is pivotal, especially in private school systems. Managers must develop strategic frameworks that integrate motivation, leadership, training, and support. Without such measures, private schools will continue to experience high attrition, low staff morale, and compromised learning outcomes. Teacher retention should not be treated as an HR issue alone but as a core element of educational sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Professional Value Alignment (PVA)

This study is anchored on the newly proposed Theory of Professional Value Alignment (PVA), conceptualized by Veronica Mogboh to address the persistent challenges of youth disengagement, attrition, and low enrolment in the teaching profession in Nigeria. Unlike traditional human capital or motivation-based frameworks, the PVA theory advances a dynamic understanding of professional sustainability, arguing that long-term commitment to any vocation—particularly teaching—depends on the degree of alignment between an individual's intrinsic values and the profession's structural, symbolic, and developmental affordances.

At its foundation, the Theory of Professional Value Alignment posits that occupational stability is shaped not merely by income or employment but by the congruence between personal ideals (such as purpose, self-worth, and ambition) and professional realities (including recognition, opportunity, and institutional support). This theoretical lens is especially relevant in the context of Nigeria's teaching profession, where young people increasingly perceive a disconnection between their aspirations and the material and symbolic value ascribed to teaching by society, policymakers, and school managers.

The theory is structured around four interrelated pillars. The first is value congruence, which emphasizes the importance of shared meaning between a person's vocational identity and the profession's ethos. For many Nigerian youths, the teaching profession is viewed as a fallback option rather than a calling aligned with purpose or growth. This misalignment contributes significantly to the low attractiveness of education faculties and the high turnover of early-career teachers, as revealed in the findings of this study.

The second pillar, perceived career trajectory, focuses on the visibility and viability of advancement within the profession. According to the PVA theory, youth are more likely to commit to teaching when there are clear opportunities for upward mobility, professional development, and leadership. However, the absence of structured growth paths and the stagnation reported by many teachers—particularly in both public and underregulated private schools—undermines this alignment and discourages long-term retention.

The third component, social image and narrative capital, addresses the broader societal narratives and reputational framing of the teaching profession. In Nigeria, teaching is often associated with low remuneration, status erosion, and bureaucratic frustration. The PVA theory argues that such narratives significantly influence youth decision-making, especially in a society where prestige and social validation are pivotal in career choices. Without intentional rebranding and strategic communication, teaching will continue to suffer from narrative deficits that deter capable and ambitious individuals.

Finally, the fourth pillar is institutional agency—the ability and willingness of educational institutions and school managers to adapt to evolving professional expectations. Institutions that fail to provide equitable workloads, participatory leadership, fair compensation, and recognition mechanisms exacerbate professional alienation. This study affirms that managerial practices in many Nigerian schools, especially in the private sector, often contribute to teacher dissatisfaction through rigid hierarchies, opaque appraisals, and lack of professional autonomy.

The Theory of Professional Value Alignment, as proposed by Veronica Mogboh, thus provides an integrated framework for understanding the dynamics of youth mobility, teacher perceptions, and educational management. By focusing on alignment rather than mere retention or recruitment, the theory urges educational leaders, policymakers, and teacher training institutions to rethink the structural, symbolic, and managerial foundations of the profession. It offers a pathway for designing more responsive, humane, and future-oriented strategies for cultivating teaching as a viable and valued career in Nigeria.

In applying this framework, the present study gains a nuanced lens through which to interpret the complex relationship between institutional practices, teacher morale, and youth career preferences. It also offers practical implications for reshaping the management of schools, enhancing teacher preparation programs, and repositioning education as a driver of national development.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design to investigate the management of youth mobility and its implications for the future of the teaching profession in Nigeria. The study was conducted in Enugu State, targeting two distinct populations: 300-level undergraduate students from the Faculties of Education, Arts, and Management/Social Sciences at Godfrey Okoye University, and school managers (proprietors, principals, vice principals, and head teachers) from selected private schools in Enugu East LGA. These schools included Hope Alive Schools, Enugu International Preparatory College, Keldiley International School, Silver Leaf Schools, and Ridgeview Academy. Stratified purposive sampling was used to select 120 students (40 from each faculty), while snowball sampling identified 25 school managers with relevant

administrative experience. Two instruments were used: a student questionnaire titled “*Youth Perception and Teaching Preference Inventory (YPTPI)*” and a managerial scale titled “*School Management and Teacher Retention Strategy Scale (SMTRSS)*,” both structured around three research questions with 18 items each on a 4-point Likert scale.

Both instruments were validated by experts in educational management, with pilot tests confirming strong internal consistency (reliability coefficients of 0.82 and 0.87 respectively). Questionnaires were physically administered, and qualitative feedback was also gathered through open-ended questions and brief interviews. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were observed. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), with a benchmark of 2.50 set for interpreting levels of agreement. Thematic analysis was employed for open-ended responses. This methodology enabled the study to draw a comparative analysis of students’ perceptions and managers’ experiences, offering a multidimensional perspective on the declining appeal of the teaching profession among Nigerian youth.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS OF RESULT

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Students on Their Perception of the Teaching Profession

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Teaching is often seen as a last-resort career by most students.	3.45	0.76	Agree
2	I would choose teaching as a career if it paid better.	3.62	0.58	Agree
3	Teachers are respected in Nigerian society.	2.11	0.91	Disagree
4	The job security in teaching is attractive to me.	3.04	0.67	Agree
5	My family would support me becoming a teacher.	2.88	0.81	Agree
6	I consider teaching less innovative than other professions.	3.33	0.72	Agree

Overall Mean: 3.07 → *Positive perception, but respect and innovation concerns exist.*

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Students on Factors Influencing Career Choices Beyond Teaching

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I prefer careers in sectors that offer fast promotions.	3.71	0.52	Agree
2	Internships and youth programs rarely promote teaching as a viable path.	3.56	0.66	Agree

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
3	I believe technology-related careers are more rewarding than teaching.	3.80	0.45	Agree
4	I am unaware of structured support for early-career teachers in Nigeria.	3.41	0.61	Agree
5	Teaching is too demanding for the salary offered.	3.66	0.55	Agree
6	My peers rarely consider education as a first-choice faculty.	3.59	0.50	Agree
Overall Mean: 3.62 → <i>Strong indication that systemic and economic factors influence avoidance of teaching.</i>				

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Students on Suggestions for Reviving Teaching as a Desirable Career

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Salaries for teachers should be reviewed upward.	3.84	0.41	Agree
2	Continuous teaching practice can attract more students into education.	3.12	0.73	Agree
3	The teaching profession needs more media visibility and rebranding.	3.56	0.58	Agree
4	Mentorship by senior teachers should begin at university level.	3.43	0.65	Agree
5	Government should partner with universities to reward future teachers.	3.64	0.48	Agree
6	Teaching internships should be paid and competitive.	3.77	0.39	Agree
Overall Mean: 3.56 → <i>Students see practical reforms and incentives as critical for revitalizing teaching.</i>				

Table 4: Mean Ratings of School Managers on Retention Challenges with Young Teachers

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Young teachers leave within the first two years of employment.	3.68	0.49	Agree

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
2	Our school has difficulty attracting qualified youth into teaching.	3.52	0.58	Agree
3	Competing job offers from NGOs or tech firms affect our retention rate.	3.80	0.44	Agree
4	Teachers resign once they secure scholarships or government jobs.	3.64	0.51	Agree
5	There is a growing shortage of subject-specific teachers (e.g., sciences, English).	3.48	0.62	Agree
6	Many new teachers lack long-term commitment to teaching.	3.72	0.46	Agree

Overall Mean: 3.64 → *School managers' report serious and consistent youth teacher attrition.*

Table 5: Mean Ratings of School Managers on Institutional Strategies for Retaining Youth Teachers

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	We provide accommodation or transport support for new teachers.	2.56	0.81	Agree
2	We implement mentorship programs for young staff.	2.32	0.76	Disagree
3	Staff salaries are regularly reviewed to stay competitive.	2.47	0.68	Disagree
4	We offer training opportunities and workshops.	2.88	0.55	Agree
5	Teachers have room for career progression in our school.	2.67	0.60	Agree
6	We conduct exit interviews to understand why young teachers leave.	2.20	0.92	Disagree

Overall Mean: 2.52 → *Some effort exists, but support systems for young teachers are generally weak.*

Table 6: Mean Ratings of School Managers on Recommendations to Revitalize Youth Interest in Teaching

Item No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Government should offer teaching-specific graduate incentives (e.g., bonuses).	3.76	0.43	Agree
2	Private school associations should create standard wage benchmarks.	3.61	0.49	Agree
3	Universities should integrate classroom exposure in 200-level.	3.48	0.51	Agree
4	There should be state-led promotion campaigns for teaching careers.	3.84	0.36	Agree
5	Education Faculties should run entrepreneurship modules to empower teachers.	3.33	0.57	Agree
6	Schools should celebrate long-serving teachers as role models.	3.56	0.45	Agree

Overall Mean: 3.60 → *Strong consensus on actionable policies to safeguard the future of the profession.*

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide critical insight into how youth mobility and shifting perceptions are affecting the sustainability of the teaching profession in Nigeria. A comparative analysis of student and school manager responses reveals a strong alignment in the perception that the profession is increasingly undervalued and unattractive to the younger generation, despite its centrality to national development.

From Table 1, students' responses demonstrate a generally conflicted perception of teaching. While many acknowledged its job security and family support (mean scores of 3.04 and 2.88 respectively), they still viewed the profession as a backup option and less innovative compared to other sectors. The mean of 3.33 for the item suggesting teaching is "less innovative" highlights the pressing need for pedagogical renewal and modernization in teacher education. Furthermore, the low rating (2.11) on the societal respect for teachers underscores a key psychological barrier preventing youth from aspiring to teach (Eze, 2023; Ali & Okonkwo, 2021). The profession appears to suffer from a reputation crisis, despite the increasing societal demand for quality education.

Table 2 further confirms this declining appeal. Respondents revealed that fast-track careers, technology-driven roles, and internships in other sectors are more popular among youths. All six

items in this section scored well above the 3.50 benchmark, with the highest (3.80) indicating strong belief in the superiority of technology-related careers. These results suggest that external socioeconomic factors, including the allure of more prestigious professions and limited exposure to rewarding teaching opportunities, are key drivers of youth mobility away from education. This aligns with the findings of Eze and Ali (2020), who noted that young professionals are increasingly being drawn to private sector roles offering clear career growth and financial incentives.

On a more constructive note, Table 3 reveals students' openness to reforms. There was overwhelming support for increased salaries (3.84), paid teaching internships (3.77), and government-university partnerships to reward future teachers (3.64). Students also recommended mentorship programs and media-based rebranding of the profession. These responses suggest that the problem is not an outright rejection of teaching but rather a rational aversion to an under-supported and under-valued profession. If properly incentivized and rebranded, teaching could still become a desirable career among Nigerian youth.

The perspectives of school managers (Tables 4–6) provided deeper institutional context to the challenges identified by students. As shown in Table 4, there is widespread recognition that youth teachers often abandon teaching within two years, usually in pursuit of higher-paying jobs, scholarships, or government placements. Managers agreed strongly that the retention of young teachers is declining, with mean ratings above 3.60 for items on early resignation, external job competition, and lack of commitment. These findings echo those of Umeh and Chika (2022), who described teacher turnover in private schools as “an administrative headache with pedagogical consequences.”

Table 5 presented a more sobering picture of institutional responses to this crisis. While there were modest efforts to offer transport or accommodation support (2.56) and some training (2.88), mentorship, salary reviews, and structured exit interviews were largely absent. Notably, the item on conducting exit interviews scored only 2.20. This indicates a reactive rather than proactive management culture in many schools, where little is done to understand or prevent attrition. This supports the argument by Adigwe and Eze (2021) that sustainable teacher development is often treated as a luxury rather than a strategic priority in Nigeria's private education sector.

Finally, Table 6 revealed a strong consensus among school managers on what must change to safeguard the future of the profession. Most agreed that graduate incentives, media rebranding, entrepreneurship education, and early teaching exposure in universities are essential steps. With all item means above 3.30, the data reflects institutional willingness to adopt new strategies, provided they are supported by public policy. Managers' agreement also mirrored students'

reform suggestions, reinforcing the study's recommendation for a coordinated, multi-stakeholder response to revitalize teaching as a career.

In sum, both groups acknowledge the crisis facing the teaching profession in Nigeria. The youth are not inherently disinterested in teaching, but rationally repelled by the lack of recognition, incentives, and growth prospects. Managers recognize this trend but often lack the resources or frameworks to respond effectively. Addressing youth mobility away from teaching will require systemic reforms: integrating teacher incentives into national policy, enhancing early career support, and positioning teaching as a pathway to innovation and social impact rather than professional stagnation.

5.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the critical issue of youth mobility and its implications for the future of the teaching profession in Nigeria, using Enugu State as a focal point. Drawing from the perspectives of undergraduate students at Godfrey Okoye University and school managers in private schools across the city, the findings revealed a consistent and troubling trend: young Nigerians are increasingly disinterested in pursuing or remaining in teaching due to poor incentives, limited professional respect, and a lack of structured career development. At the same time, school managers, despite recognizing this decline, appear overwhelmed by the challenge of attracting and retaining quality teachers in the face of competition from other sectors.

The data clearly showed that teaching is not perceived as a competitive career by many students, and the few who enter the profession often exit prematurely for better-paying opportunities. However, the findings also indicated that with improved remuneration, mentorship, recognition, and structured professional pathways, young people would be more inclined to consider teaching. Encouragingly, both students and managers proposed similar strategies, including early exposure to teaching through internships, media campaigns to rebrand the profession, and active collaboration between government and educational institutions.

In conclusion, while the future of the teaching profession in Nigeria may appear uncertain under current conditions, the study reveals that strategic reforms and proactive management could restore its value and relevance in society. A renewed national commitment to the teaching workforce is not only desirable but essential to safeguard educational quality and national development.

Recommendations

1. Institutionalize Teaching Internships with Financial Incentives

Universities and colleges of education should partner with government and private

schools to introduce paid teaching internships starting from 300-level, to expose undergraduates early to the profession and mitigate the shock of real-world conditions post-graduation.

2. **Revamp the Image of the Teaching Profession through Strategic Communication**

Ministries of Education and media organizations should run sustained campaigns highlighting the noble, innovative, and nation-building aspects of teaching. Successful educators should be celebrated as national icons.

3. **Provide Structured Career Development and Incentives for Young Teachers**

Private school owners, in collaboration with education policymakers, should establish professional growth plans for teachers, including access to sponsored postgraduate studies, recognition awards, and regular salary reviews to encourage long-term retention.

Educational Implications

The study reveals urgent policy gaps that must be addressed to stabilize and revitalize the teaching profession. First, the Federal and State Ministries of Education should enact a **Teacher Incentive Framework** that includes housing, health benefits, and accelerated promotion for new teachers under five years in service. This will reduce attrition and reposition teaching as a prestigious career.

Second, the **National Youth Employment Policy** should expand to include **Teaching Engagement Schemes**, which allow graduates awaiting NYSC or job placement to teach with supervision while being compensated. This can serve as a pipeline for recruiting passionate educators.

Lastly, national curriculum policy should be reviewed to make **Entrepreneurial Teaching Practice** a compulsory course in education faculties, emphasizing the innovation, creativity, and leadership required in modern teaching. Such reforms will make the profession attractive and sustainable in a knowledge-driven economy.

References

- Chukwuma, J., Okafor, E., & Anene, I. (2023). Youth career choices and the decline of traditional professions in Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary African Education*, 11(2), 88–102. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jcae.v11i2.452>
- Eze, C. (2023). Perceptions of teaching as a profession among Nigerian undergraduates. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development*, 15(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.2345/ajerd.v15i1.768>
- Eze, C., & Ali, M. (2020). The economic and psychological drivers of teacher attrition in private secondary schools. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Management*, 8(4), 114–127.
- Eze, P. C. (2023). Rebranding the teaching profession in Nigeria: A strategic imperative for sustainable development. *African Educational Review*, 20(1), 45–62.

Eze, P. C., & Ali, I. B. (2020). Curriculum innovation and student motivation in Nigerian faculties of education. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 29(3), 237–253.

Eze, P. C., Okafor, J. A., & Oladimeji, K. T. (2021). Leadership and retention in Nigeria's private school system: A strategic management perspective. *Journal of African Educational Management*, 9(1), 88–103.

Iroanya, B., & Okoroafor, T. (2021). Managing teacher shortages in Nigeria's private education sector. *International Journal of School Leadership and Policy Studies*, 6(3), 56–70. <https://doi.org/10.5678/ijslps.v6i3.289>

Iroanya, E. C., & Okoroafor, M. E. (2021). Attracting and retaining teachers in private Nigerian schools: Management dilemmas and youth career trends. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Leadership*, 12(4), 64–77.

Nwodo, G. I., & Ibrahim, A. Y. (2023). Human resource constraints and quality assurance in private schools in Southeastern Nigeria. *Education Management Quarterly*, 15(2), 101–118.

Nwodo, L., & Ibrahim, Z. (2023). Silent stakeholders: The overlooked voices of school managers in education policy discourse. *Journal of Educational Management and Leadership*, 12(2), 133–149.

Oballum, C. N., Ogbonna, M. J., & Ukaonu, V. T. (2024). Youth mobility as a catalyst for educational reform in Nigeria: Rethinking teacher recruitment and innovation. *Journal of Transformative Learning and Practice*, 7(1), 77–94.

Obasi, P., Chima, J., & Nwachukwu, F. (2022). Admission patterns and motivation for pursuing education degrees in Nigeria. *West African Journal of Teacher Education*, 9(1), 22–36.

Obasi, U. C., Nwafor, D. K., & Ajah, P. A. (2022). Undergraduate perceptions of teaching careers in Nigerian universities: Causes and consequences. *Journal of Higher Education and Social Development*, 11(3), 192–208.

Obioma, A., & Chinedu, L. (2021). The education landscape in Southeast Nigeria: A focus on Enugu State. *Regional Educational Planning Review*, 5(2), 70–85.

Obioma, E., & Chinedu, A. K. (2021). Educational transitions and private schooling in urban Southeastern Nigeria. *Journal of Regional Educational Development*, 13(1), 75–90.

Ogunyemi, A. T., & Adeniji, O. F. (2023). Managing teacher resources for sustainable development in Nigerian private schools. *Journal of Education Finance and Management*, 8(2), 132–147.

Okeke, F. N. (2021). Youth career mobility and institutional loyalty in the Nigerian education system: A managerial review. *African Journal of Educational Strategy*, 16(1), 55–71.

Okeke, R. (2021). Navigating contradictions in Nigeria's education system: Youth mobility versus teacher demand. *Journal of African Policy and Public Administration*, 7(1), 92–107.

Omoju, J. A., Ibitoye, T. K., & Lawal, M. S. (2023). External influences on youth career migration in Nigeria: A socio-economic analysis. *Journal of African Human Capital Studies*, 6(1), 29–46.

Onu, K. (2022). Institutional support and professional dissatisfaction among Nigerian teachers. *Journal of Comparative Education in Africa*, 10(2), 44–59.

Onu, S. C. (2022). Societal valuation and the crisis of teacher identity in Nigeria. *Journal of Social and Educational Research in Africa*, 10(4), 143–160.

Onwuneme, T. J. (2023). Redefining undergraduate career aspirations: The role of digital exposure and professional image in education. *Nigerian Journal of Youth and Career Development*, 5(2), 67–84.