

# REWARD STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS' IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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## Abstract

The study examined reward strategies for teachers in Nigerian secondary schools, shedding light on the challenges they face and proposing viable solutions for improvement. Nigeria's educational system plays a critical role in shaping the nation's future, and teachers serve as the cornerstone of this system. However, the current reward mechanisms for teachers in secondary schools often fall short of addressing their varied needs and motivations. The research begins by examining the existing reward structures, encompassing financial incentives, professional development opportunities, and recognition programs. It scrutinizes the disparities in compensation among educators and the impact of these discrepancies on morale and performance. Furthermore, the study delves into the challenges faced by teachers, including inadequate resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and limited career advancement opportunities. In proposing the way forward, the researcher advocates for a holistic approach that involves collaboration among educational policymakers, school administrators, and teachers themselves. This includes advocating for fair and competitive salaries, implementing targeted professional development initiatives, and creating a supportive work environment that recognizes and celebrates teachers' contributions.

**Keywords:** Education, Reward Strategies, Secondary Schools, Challenges, Way Forward

## Introduction

Education is the bedrock of national development, and teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the future of any nation. Recognizing the significance of their contributions, it becomes imperative to explore and optimize reward strategies for teachers in secondary schools. Effective reward systems not only contribute to the motivation and job satisfaction of educators but also have a direct impact on the quality of education imparted to students. As countries strive for educational excellence and sustainable development, understanding and refining the mechanisms by which teachers are rewarded is crucial for fostering a conducive learning environment. The dynamics of education systems vary widely, influenced by cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Different nations employ various approaches to incentivize and recognize their teachers. While some prioritize financial incentives, others focus on professional development opportunities or non-monetary recognition. The multifaceted nature of these reward strategies necessitates a serious examination to discern the best practices and adapt them to the specific needs of each educational context (Sakwa et al., 2023). One common challenge faced by teachers universally is the need for adequate remuneration. In many regions, educators are confronted with disparities in salaries and benefits, hindering their professional growth and job satisfaction. The quest for fair and competitive compensation is a global concern, requiring a thoughtful exploration of the economic aspects that influence teachers' livelihoods and their commitment to the teaching profession. Furthermore, the advent of the 21st century has introduced new dimensions to education, demanding continuous professional development for teachers to stay abreast of evolving pedagogical methods and technological advancements. The globalized nature of information and the interconnectedness of societies emphasize the necessity for on-going training and up skilling. Reward strategies must, therefore, incorporate avenues for professional growth to ensure teachers are well-equipped to meet the challenges of contemporary education (Elrayah & Semlali, 2023).

There is a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive and tailored reward strategies that consider the unique contexts of different educational systems. Cultivating a supportive and empowering environment for teachers is not only beneficial to individual educators but also has far-reaching implications for the overall quality of education provided to students. As countries seek to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to education, refining reward strategies for teachers emerges as a critical component of the global educational agenda. In Nigeria, where secondary education holds immense significance, the effectiveness and motivation of teachers become paramount. By understanding the intricacies of the current systems, we can identify challenges and propose informed solutions to enhance the professional satisfaction and performance of teachers (Førland & Roxå, 2023). Based on the foregoing the current study examined reward strategies for teachers' in Nigerian secondary schools challenges and way forward.

### **Concept of Education**

According to Suleiman (2021), education is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that shape individuals into informed and capable members of society. At its core, education is the systematic and intentional imparting of information, often facilitated by teachers or educational institutions, to foster intellectual, emotional, and social development. It extends beyond traditional classroom settings, encompassing both formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's life. The primary purpose of education is to empower individuals with the tools they need to understand the world around them and to engage meaningfully in it. This includes the cultivation of critical thinking skills, the ability to solve problems, and the development of a well-rounded worldview. Education is not solely about memorizing facts but involves encouraging curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning. It is a dynamic process that adapts to the evolving needs of individuals and society, preparing individuals for the challenges and opportunities they may encounter (Ravi, 2022).

Education is a vehicle for personal and societal transformation. It plays a pivotal role in promoting social mobility by providing equal opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds. A key aspect is the promotion of ethical and moral values, fostering responsible citizenship and contributing to the development of a just and equitable society. Moreover, education serves as a cornerstone for economic progress, innovation, and cultural enrichment, serving as the foundation for the growth and prosperity of nations. While formal education is institutionalized and structured, informal education occurs through various life experiences, interactions, and self-directed learning. Both forms are interconnected, contributing to a holistic educational experience. In essence, education is a lifelong journey that transcends the boundaries of age, fostering personal growth, and contributing to the collective advancement of humanity. It is a powerful catalyst for change, driving progress, fostering inclusivity, and shaping the future of individuals and societies alike (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021).

### **Concept of Secondary School Education**

Secondary school education is a crucial stage in the formal education system, typically catering for students in the age range of 11 to 18 years old, depending on the educational structure of a particular country. Also known as high school, junior high school, or simply secondary education, this phase serves as a bridge between primary (elementary) education and higher education, preparing students for the challenges of tertiary-level studies or entry into the workforce. Secondary school education is the seamless progression and development of students' learning from the foundation laid in primary (elementary) education. It encapsulates the idea that secondary education is a natural and progressive extension of the educational journey, building upon the fundamental knowledge and skills acquired during the earlier stages of schooling. It is designed to build upon the fundamental concepts, literacy, and numeracy skills acquired during primary education. It takes these foundational elements and introduces more advanced and specialized content. The curriculum in secondary schools is structured to provide a logical progression in various subject areas. Students are exposed to a wider range of subjects, often with increased complexity, depth, and specialization. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of academic disciplines (Campbell-Phillips, 2020; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021).

Secondary education acknowledges the developmental continuum of students. It recognizes that learners are at a stage where they are capable of engaging with more abstract concepts, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning, and it tailors the curriculum to meet these developmental needs. It often introduces subject specialization or elective courses. This enables students to explore specific areas of interest or aptitude, fostering a deeper understanding of subjects that may align with their future career aspirations. A significant aspect of educational continuation in secondary education is the preparation for higher education. The curriculum and learning experiences are structured to equip students with the academic and cognitive skills necessary for success in tertiary-level studies (Aulls & Shore, 2023). Secondary education plays a vital role in preparing students for the challenges and responsibilities of adulthood. Beyond academic knowledge, it focuses on the development of critical life skills, independent learning, and decision-making – all of which are essential for success in higher education and later stages of life. The overall educational experience in secondary schools is designed to be cohesive and interconnected. Concepts and skills learned in different subjects often complement each other, providing students with a holistic understanding of the world and their place in it. Assessment methods in secondary education are aligned with the progressive nature of learning. Students are evaluated not only on their mastery of content but also on their ability to apply knowledge, think critically, and solve complex problems, reflecting the evolving nature of their educational journey (Iawal et al., 2020).

In addition, secondary school education is to equip students with the academic, cognitive, and interpersonal skills necessary for success in tertiary-level studies. This goal reflects the acknowledgment that a significant portion of students will pursue further education beyond the secondary level, whether at a college, university, or other post-secondary institutions. Secondary education introduces a more advanced and specialized curriculum compared to primary education. The subjects become more in-depth, challenging students to think critically, analyse information, and synthesize knowledge. The aim is to foster a strong academic foundation that will serve students well in the more specialized fields of study at the higher education level. Secondary schools often emphasize core subjects such as mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies (Pollard et al., 2023). Mastery of these foundational subjects is crucial for success in various academic disciplines at the higher education level. A solid understanding of these subjects is often a prerequisite for many college and university programs. Many secondary schools offer college preparatory courses or advanced placement (AP) programs. These courses provide students with an opportunity to engage in more challenging coursework and, in some cases, earn college credit while still in high school. The intention is to better prepare students for the academic demands of higher education (Jacob et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Secondary education places a strong emphasis on developing critical thinking and research skills. Students are encouraged to question information, analyse data, and conduct independent research. These skills are essential for success in higher education, where students are expected to engage in more independent and advanced academic pursuits. Standardized tests, such as the SAT or ACT, are often an integral part of the college admissions process. Secondary schools often include test preparation as part of their curriculum to help students perform well on these exams, which can significantly impact their college admissions prospects. Secondary schools typically provide guidance counselling services to help students navigate the college application process. Counsellors assist with college selection, application submission, and financial aid information. They also provide support in exploring career paths and choosing a major for higher education. Participation in extracurricular activities, such as clubs, sports, and leadership roles, is encouraged in secondary schools. These activities not only contribute to personal development but also enhance a student's college application by showcasing a well-rounded profile. Many secondary schools incorporate college and career planning into their curriculum. This includes information on different academic pathways, career options, and the skills required for success in various fields. Students are guided in making informed decisions about their future educational and career pursuits (Birabil et al., 2020; Olugbenga & Oiu, 2020).

### **Objectives of Secondary School Education in Nigeria**

According to National Policy on Education, (2013), the objectives of secondary school education in Nigeria are to provide students with a well-rounded and comprehensive foundation for personal, academic, and social development. Specifically, the purposes include:

- 1. Cognitive Development:** To develop the intellectual capabilities of students through the acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and analytical skills.
- 2. Character Development:** To instil moral and ethical values, discipline, and a sense of responsibility in students, promoting good citizenship and positive social behaviour.
- 3. National Unity:** To foster a sense of national identity, patriotism, and unity among students, regardless of their cultural, religious, or ethnic backgrounds.
- 4. Skills Acquisition:** To equip students with practical and vocational skills that are relevant to the needs of the society, preparing them for future employment and entrepreneurship.
- 5. Social and Emotional Development:** To promote the emotional and social well-being of students, encouraging self-confidence, teamwork, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence.
- 6. Physical and Health Education:** To enhance the physical fitness and health of students through sports and physical education activities, promoting a healthy lifestyle.
- 7. Creativity and Innovation:** To encourage creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship among students, preparing them to contribute to economic development and societal progress.
- 8. Cultural Values:** To preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Nigeria by integrating cultural studies into the curriculum, fostering an appreciation for diversity and cultural understanding.
- 9. Preparation for Higher Education:** To prepare students for higher education by providing a strong academic foundation and the necessary skills for advanced learning.
- 10. Adaptability:** To equip students with the ability to adapt to changes in technology, society, and the global economy, ensuring their relevance in an ever-changing world.

### **Concept of Reward Strategies**

In line with Noorazim et al. (2021), reward strategies are a set of systematic approaches designed to recognize, acknowledge, and incentivize the efforts and achievements of educators within the educational system. These strategies aim to enhance job satisfaction, motivation, and overall performance among teachers, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes. The implementation of effective reward strategies is crucial for creating a positive and supportive work environment, fostering professional development, and retaining talented educators.

A reward strategy is contingent upon achieving specific performance targets, such as student test scores, classroom engagement levels, or other measurable indicators of educational success. A strategy focused on acknowledging and appreciating teachers for their dedication and hard work through verbal praise, certificates, or public recognition, fostering a positive and motivating work environment. It offering teachers access to workshops, conferences, and advanced training programs, aimed at enhancing their professional skills, knowledge, and effectiveness in the classroom. It provides teachers with flexibility in their work schedules or alternative work arrangements, recognizing the importance of achieving work-life balance and accommodating individual needs (Kang & Lee, 2021). A strategy encourages collaboration among teachers through team-based incentives, where collective achievements, such as improved school-wide performance, lead to rewards for the entire teaching staff. A reward strategy involves the provision of cutting-edge teaching tools, technology, and resources to create dynamic and engaging learning environments, fostering creativity and innovation in the classroom (Shikalepo, 2020; Ho & Man, 2022).

A strategy bestowing titles or professional designations upon teachers based on their achievements, expertise, or contributions to the educational community, providing a sense of accomplishment and

prestige. It promotes the well-being of teachers through wellness programs, fitness memberships, or health-related benefits, recognizing the importance of a healthy and balanced lifestyle. It encourages teachers to actively engage with the local community by offering rewards for participation in community service, outreach programs, or partnerships with local organizations to enhance the school-community relationship. Reward strategy acknowledging and celebrating the dedication and longevity of teachers in the education field, with milestones marked by special recognitions, ceremonies, or benefits for their years of service (Tumi et al., 2022).

### **Dimensions of Reward Strategies**

In the opinions of Riener and Wagner, (2022) Filmer, et al., (2023) and Elrayah and Semlali, (2023), the role of teachers is paramount in shaping the future of generations to come. Recognizing the significance of their contributions, educational institutions are increasingly focusing on developing effective reward strategies to motivate and retain talented educators. These strategies go beyond traditional approaches, encompassing a range of incentives designed to acknowledge and appreciate the dedication and hard work of teachers. In this exploration of reward strategies for teachers, we delve into various approaches that institutions can adopt to create a positive and empowering environment. From financial incentives to professional development opportunities and recognition programs, these strategies aim to not only attract skilled educators but also foster a culture of continuous improvement and job satisfaction. As we navigate through the financial and non-financial rewards, it becomes evident that a thoughtful and well-rounded approach is essential to support the growth and well-being of our educational professionals. The key dimensions of reward strategies for teachers are:

**1. Financial Reward:** financial rewards play a significant role in motivating and retaining talented educators. It can take various forms, including salary increases, bonuses, and performance-based incentives, contributing to the overall reward strategy for teachers. Salary structure is a fundamental element of the financial reward system for teachers, encompassing the overall design and organization of their compensation. A well-crafted salary structure takes into account various factors such as educational qualifications, years of experience, and additional responsibilities within the teaching profession. Typically, teachers with higher degrees or specialized certifications receive higher base salaries, reflecting their enhanced qualifications and expertise. Additionally, the structure may include incremental increases based on the number of years a teacher has been in service, recognizing and rewarding their dedication and accumulated experience. The transparent and equitable design of a salary structure ensures that educators are compensated fairly and provides a clear framework for career progression, motivating them to pursue continuous professional development and contribute effectively to the educational institution. A robust salary structure is essential for attracting and retaining skilled teachers in a competitive job market. Schools and educational institutions that offer competitive base salaries and clear advancement pathways signal their commitment to valuing and investing in their teaching staff. This not only aids in recruitment efforts by attracting top talent but also contributes to teacher retention by providing a stable and predictable financial environment. A well-structured salary system, when coupled with performance-based incentives and recognition for additional responsibilities, forms a holistic financial reward strategy that acknowledges the diverse contributions of teachers and fosters a sense of professional satisfaction and security within the education sector (Bawalla & Omolawa, (2022).

In addition, Performance-based bonuses constitute a targeted and incentive-driven approach to financial rewards for teachers, aligning compensation with the measurable impact of their teaching efforts. These bonuses are typically tied to specific performance indicators, such as student achievement, classroom innovation, or other measurable criteria that reflect a teacher's effectiveness. By establishing clear, objective benchmarks, schools can reward educators who go above and beyond in fostering student success and educational excellence. Performance-based bonuses not only serve as a tangible acknowledgment of outstanding contributions but also act as a powerful motivator for continuous improvement. Teachers are encouraged to invest in professional development, implement innovative teaching strategies, and actively contribute to the overall advancement of the educational institution, creating a culture of excellence and

accountability (Comighud & Arevalo, (2021). The implementation of performance-based bonuses enhances the meritocratic nature of teacher compensation, ensuring that rewards are directly proportional to the quality and impact of teaching. This approach promotes a sense of fairness among educators, fostering healthy competition and a commitment to achieving higher standards. Furthermore, by linking financial incentives to specific performance metrics, schools can strategically channel resources towards areas that directly contribute to enhanced student learning outcomes. Overall, performance-based bonuses serve as a dynamic and results-oriented element within the broader financial reward strategy for teachers, promoting a culture of excellence, accountability, and continual professional growth (Sakwa, et al., 2023).

Another financial reward strategy for teachers is professional development stipends, providing them with dedicated funds to pursue on-going learning opportunities and enhance their skills. These stipends enable educators to attend workshops, conferences, and training sessions, or even pursue advanced degrees, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. By allocating financial resources specifically for professional development, schools acknowledge the importance of investing in their teachers' growth and expertise. This not only empowers educators to stay abreast of the latest educational trends and methodologies but also demonstrates the institution's commitment to supporting the lifelong learning journey of its teaching staff, ultimately benefiting the overall quality of education provided to students (Elrayah and Semlali, 2023). Furthermore, retention bonuses are a specific form of financial reward designed to encourage teacher longevity and loyalty within an educational institution. These bonuses are typically offered as a financial incentive to experienced educators who commit to staying with the school or district for a predetermined period. The objective is to curb teacher turnover, which can disrupt the continuity of education and impede the establishment of strong teacher-student relationships. Retention bonuses are often structured to provide incremental pay-outs at specific milestones in a teacher's career, such as after completing a certain number of years of service. By offering these bonuses, schools aim to recognize and retain their seasoned educators, acknowledging their valuable contributions to the school community and fostering a sense of stability within the teaching staff (Baig, et al., 2022). Promoting teacher retention, retention bonuses contribute to a more stable and experienced teaching workforce. This stability benefits both teachers and students, as educators gain a deeper understanding of the school culture, curriculum, and student needs over time. Furthermore, the financial acknowledgment of loyalty and commitment can enhance job satisfaction and motivation, creating a positive work environment that ultimately improves the overall quality of education. Retention bonuses, when integrated into a comprehensive teacher reward strategy, play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of teacher turnover and promoting a sustainable educational system (Tarigan, et al., 2022).

**2. Non-Financial Reward:** non-financial rewards play a significant role in acknowledging teachers' efforts, promoting job satisfaction, and enhancing overall job performance. Non-financial rewards entail different intangible incentives that contribute to the holistic well-being and professional development of educators. Professional development opportunities represent a crucial category of non-financial rewards for teachers, playing a key role in enhancing their skills, knowledge, and overall effectiveness in the classroom. These opportunities involved activities, including workshops, seminars, conferences, and online courses, all aimed at keeping educators abreast of the latest educational trends, teaching methodologies, and technological advancements. By investing in continuous professional development, schools not only empower teachers to refine their instructional techniques but also demonstrate a commitment to their on-going growth and success. These initiatives provide a platform for teachers to exchange ideas, collaborate with peers, and stay inspired, fostering a dynamic and intellectually stimulating environment within the educational institution (Shah, et al., 2021). It contributes significantly to teacher job satisfaction and retention. When educators feel supported in their quest for continuous learning and skill enhancement, they are more likely to experience a sense of professional fulfilment. This, in turn, translates into increased motivation, enthusiasm, and dedication to their roles. As teachers acquire new insights and approaches, they become better equipped to address the evolving needs of their students, promoting a positive feedback loop that benefits both educators and the overall educational community. In essence, professional development

opportunities serve as a cornerstone of non-financial rewards, nurturing a culture of lifelong learning and professional growth among teachers (Anifowoshe & Mohammed, 2023).

Recognition and appreciation are integral components of non-financial rewards for teachers, offering powerful means to acknowledge their dedication and contributions to education. Recognition involves the explicit acknowledgment of teachers' accomplishments and milestones, ranging from exemplary classroom practices to years of service. This can take various forms, such as public commendations during staff meetings, personalized notes of appreciation, or spotlight features in newsletters or on school platforms. By highlighting and celebrating teachers' achievements, recognition not only boosts their morale but also communicates to the entire school community the value placed on their hard work. Appreciation, on the other hand, extends beyond specific accomplishments to convey a general sense of gratitude for teachers' on-going efforts. It involves creating a culture where educators feel seen and valued for the daily challenges they navigate and the positive impact they have on students' lives. This can be expressed through gestures like expressing gratitude in person, fostering a supportive work environment, or implementing Teacher Appreciation Week activities. Recognition and appreciation, when woven into the fabric of a school's culture, contribute to a positive and motivating atmosphere, reinforcing teachers' sense of purpose and commitment to their crucial role in shaping the future (Bawalla & omolawal, 2022).

Flexible work arrangements serve as a valuable non-financial reward for teachers, offering a dynamic approach to work-life balance. This type of reward recognizes the different needs and responsibilities teachers often have outside the classroom. By allowing flexibility in work hours or scheduling, teachers can better manage personal and family commitments, leading to reduced stress and improved overall well-being. This approach empowers educators to tailor their work schedules to align with peak productivity periods, fostering a more efficient and satisfying professional experience. Additionally, flexibility in work arrangements can contribute to a positive school culture, demonstrating trust in teachers' ability to manage their responsibilities effectively. Flexible work arrangements extend beyond traditional scheduling constraints, encompassing options such as remote work or telecommuting, when feasible. This flexibility not only accommodates individual preferences but also acknowledges the evolving nature of education and the integration of technology in teaching. Teachers can leverage this flexibility to explore innovative teaching methods, engage in professional development opportunities, and collaborate with peers, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom. Overall, flexible work arrangements as a non-financial reward for teachers contribute to a supportive and adaptable work environment that values both the personal and professional aspects of educators' lives (Riener & Wagner, 2022).

Professional growth opportunities are a crucial facet of non-financial rewards for teachers, offering a pathway for continuous development and advancement in their careers. These opportunities include a variety of initiatives aimed at expanding teachers' knowledge, honing their skills, and fostering a sense of professional achievement. For instance, schools can provide access to workshops, conferences, and training programs that expose educators to innovative teaching methodologies, emerging educational trends, and best practices. Additionally, mentorship programs can pair experienced teachers with those seeking guidance, creating a supportive environment where knowledge and expertise are shared. These initiatives not only contribute to the personal and professional growth of individual teachers but also enrich the overall educational landscape by ensuring that classrooms are led by well-informed and continually evolving educators. Professional growth opportunities extend beyond traditional learning environments to include leadership roles within the school community. Offering teachers opportunities to take on roles such as department heads, curriculum coordinators, or mentors not only acknowledges their expertise but also empowers them to contribute to the educational institution's development. This type of non-financial reward not only enhances job satisfaction but also creates a sustainable model for leadership succession within the school. By investing in the professional growth of teachers, educational institutions foster a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and collaboration, ultimately benefiting the entire learning community (Odigwe & Owan, 2022).

Wellness programs represent a significant facet of non-financial rewards for teachers, aiming to prioritize and enhance educators' physical and mental well-being. These programs encompass different initiatives designed to promote a healthy work-life balance and create a supportive environment for teachers. Wellness programs may include access to fitness facilities, yoga or mindfulness sessions, nutritional guidance, and mental health resources. By offering these opportunities, schools not only demonstrate a commitment to teachers' holistic health but also recognize the demanding nature of the profession and seek to mitigate stressors. Through wellness programs, educators are provided with tools and resources to manage their overall well-being, fostering a positive and sustainable work environment. Wellness programs contribute to increased job satisfaction and productivity among teachers. Teachers who feel supported in maintaining their physical and mental health are likely to experience lower levels of burnout, higher morale, and improved focus on their professional responsibilities. These programs can also strengthen the sense of community among educators, as participating in wellness activities creates opportunities for social interaction and mutual support. Ultimately, by prioritizing the well-being of teachers through wellness programs, educational institutions can cultivate a healthier, more resilient teaching workforce, positively impacting both individual educators and the overall quality of education provided to students (Mwila & Kulwa, 2022).

An inclusive and collaborative school culture serves as a powerful non-financial reward for teachers, promoting a sense of belonging and shared purpose within the educational community. In an inclusive environment, teachers feel valued for their diverse perspectives and contributions, fostering a climate where differences are celebrated. This inclusivity extends beyond just acknowledging diversity; it involves creating a culture that actively embraces and integrates varied backgrounds, experiences, and teaching styles. When teachers feel a sense of inclusiveness, it positively impacts their job satisfaction and motivation, enhancing their overall well-being and professional fulfilment. The recognition of individual strengths and the encouragement of collaboration contribute to a collective commitment to student success (Sakwa et al., 2023). Collaboration is another integral aspect of a non-financial reward system for teachers. A collaborative school culture emphasizes teamwork, shared decision-making and open communication among educators. By fostering a collaborative environment, teachers are encouraged to exchange ideas, strategies, and resources, ultimately enhancing the quality of education provided. Collaborative efforts also contribute to a supportive network where teachers can learn from each other, share best practices, and collectively address challenges. This type of non-financial reward not only improves the teaching experience but also positively impacts student outcomes by creating a cohesive and innovative educational community.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study's theoretical framework will be based on a few reward strategy theories that are relevant to the subject matter. They are as follows:

### **Expectancy Theory**

Expectancy Theory, developed by Victor H. Vroom in the 1960s, is a psychological framework that seeks to explain individual motivation within organizational settings. At its core, the theory posits that an individual's motivation to engage in a particular behaviour is influenced by three key factors: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy refers to the belief that a certain level of effort will lead to the desired performance outcome. Instrumentality involves the perception that successful performance will result in a specific reward or outcome. Lastly, valence represents the subjective value or attractiveness an individual places on the anticipated reward. Together, these three elements create a formula for predicting and understanding an individual's motivation to exert effort in the workplace (Amali et al., 2023).

The theory has significant implications for organizational management and leadership, as it suggests that employees are motivated when they believe their efforts will lead to desirable outcomes. Managers can



enhance motivation by carefully aligning performance expectations with achievable goals, ensuring that employees perceive a clear link between their efforts and the rewards offered by the organization. By acknowledging the individual differences in valence and addressing the specific needs and preferences of employees, organizations can create a more motivational work environment that fosters increased effort and performance. Expectancy Theory has become a cornerstone in the field of organizational behaviour, guiding practitioners in designing incentive systems and cultivating a workplace culture that supports and enhances individual motivation (Min et al., 2020).

Relevance of the theory to the educational system posits that individuals are motivated to act in a certain way if they believe their efforts will lead to desired outcomes. In the context of teaching, this theory suggests that teachers are more likely to be motivated and put in extra effort when they believe that their teaching strategies will effectively enhance student learning. Teachers who perceive a strong connection between their teaching efforts and positive student outcomes are likely to be more engaged and committed to their roles (Lokman et al., 2022). Expectancy Theory emphasizes the importance of valence, which refers to the subjective value an individual places on the expected outcome. For teachers, this means that they are more likely to be motivated if they find the outcomes of effective teaching personally rewarding. Recognition, student success, and the intrinsic satisfaction derived from facilitating learning experiences can serve as positive valences for educators, reinforcing their commitment to effective teaching practices. Additionally, teachers may be motivated by the belief that their efforts contribute to the broader goals of education and societal development (Shikalepo, 2020). Furthermore, Expectancy Theory underscores the significance of instrumentality, highlighting the perceived link between performance and outcomes. In the educational context, teachers need to perceive that their instructional strategies and efforts are instrumental in influencing student achievement. When teachers believe that implementing specific teaching methods will lead to improved student understanding and success, they are more likely to invest time and energy in refining their instructional approaches. In essence, Expectancy Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the motivational dynamics of teachers, guiding educational leaders in fostering a positive and empowering environment that encourages effective teaching practices (Lizette Neng & Cheo, 2022).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory is a prominent sociological perspective that emerged in the mid-20th century, gaining prominence in the field of social psychology. Rooted in the works of scholars such as George Homans and Peter Blau, this theory seeks to understand social interactions by emphasizing the rational decision-making processes underlying them. The central premise of social exchange theory is the notion that individuals engage in social relationships and interactions based on a cost-benefit analysis. It posits that people are motivated by the pursuit of self-interest and seek to maximize rewards while minimizing costs in their social exchanges. The concept of reciprocity is fundamental to social exchange theory, as it suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in positive social interactions when they anticipate a fair and equitable exchange of resources, whether tangible or intangible (Johnson, 2021; Wallenburg & Handfield, 2022). The theory has been widely applied to various social contexts, including interpersonal relationships, organizations, and communities. In examining relationships, social exchange theory provides insights into how individuals assess the rewards and costs associated with their interactions, shaping the dynamics of relationships over time. Furthermore, the theory has been instrumental in understanding phenomena such as trust, cooperation, and the emergence of social norms. Social exchange theory has found applications beyond sociology, influencing fields like economics and business studies, where the principles of rational decision-making and resource exchange are crucial for understanding human behaviour in social settings (Ahmed et al., 2023).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) holds significant relevance for teachers as it provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of social interactions within the educational context. At its core, SET posits that individuals engage in social relationships based on the expectation of reciprocal benefits. In the teacher-student relationship, this theory underscores the importance of understanding the mutual exchanges that take place. Teachers invest time, effort, and resources in facilitating learning, while students reciprocate by

actively participating, demonstrating commitment, and achieving academic success. Recognizing these reciprocal exchanges can help educators' foster positive and effective teaching environments (Atik & Celik, 2020). Moreover, SET highlights the role of perceived fairness in social exchanges. Teachers must be attuned to the perceived equity in their interactions with students, ensuring that the distribution of rewards, such as grades or praise, is perceived as just. Unfair exchanges can lead to dissatisfaction and strained relationships, potentially hindering the learning process. By aligning their teaching practices with the principles of fairness and reciprocity, educators can enhance student engagement and motivation. Additionally, SET offers insights into the formation and maintenance of social bonds. Teachers who establish positive, trust-based relationships with students are more likely to experience reciprocity in terms of student cooperation and effort. The theory encourages teachers to invest in building strong social connections, as this investment can yield benefits in terms of a conducive learning environment and positive student outcomes (Zeb et al., 2023).

### **Challenges Associated with Reward Strategies for Teachers' in Nigerian Secondary Schools**

In line with Bawalla, (2020), Bawalla and Adenugba, (2021) and Gaihre, et al (2022), the implementation of effective reward strategies for teachers' poses a complex challenges in Nigerian secondary schools; among which are:

**1. Financial Constraints:** Financial constraints pose a significant challenge in implementing effective reward strategies for teachers in Nigerian secondary schools. Limited budget allocations for education often restrict the availability of resources for comprehensive and competitive reward programs. This constraint hampers the ability of school authorities to offer competitive salaries, performance-based bonuses, and professional development opportunities for teachers. As a result, the overall motivation and job satisfaction of teachers suffer, impacting the quality of education. Additionally, the financial limitations lead to difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified educators, worsening issues related to teacher shortages and quality of instruction in Nigerian secondary schools.

**2. Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Teachers is often impeded by bureaucratic hurdles that manifest in cumbersome administrative processes and rigid institutional structures. The intricate and time-consuming nature of bureaucratic procedures, such as obtaining approvals for incentive programs or navigating through layers of administrative hierarchy, can hinder the timely execution of rewarding initiatives. The rigid organizational frameworks within the educational system limit the flexibility required to tailor rewards to different needs and achievements of teachers. These bureaucratic challenges not only delay the implementation of well-deserved rewards for educators but also contribute to disconnect between the intended objectives of the reward strategies and their actual realization in the dynamic context of Nigerian secondary schools.

**3. Limited Professional Development Opportunities:** Inadequate access to continuous and meaningful professional development hampers educators' ability to enhance their teaching skills, stay updated on pedagogical advancements, and adapt to evolving educational methodologies. This limitation not only impedes teachers' professional growth but also negatively impacts the overall quality of education. Without sufficient avenues for on-going training and development, teachers may struggle to meet the varied needs of students, hindering the effectiveness of educational initiatives and impeding the establishment of a robust and motivated teaching workforce in Nigerian secondary schools.

**4. Subjectivity in Evaluation:** The subjective nature of assessments can lead to inconsistencies and biases in evaluating teachers' performance, as different individuals may interpret teaching effectiveness differently. Factors such as personal biases, favouritism, and varying standards of judgment among evaluators can influence the outcomes of assessments. This subjectivity can undermine the credibility and fairness of reward systems, potentially hindering teachers' motivation and job satisfaction.

**5. Resistance to Change:** The education system in Nigeria, like many others, often experiences entrenched traditional practices and bureaucratic structures that resist modification. Introducing new reward strategies

may be met with scepticism and opposition from teachers accustomed to existing norms. Factors such as a lack of awareness about the benefits of change, fear of the unknown, and concerns about fairness in the implementation of new reward systems can contribute to resistance. Bureaucratic hurdles and slow decision-making processes within the education system may further impede the successful adoption of innovative reward strategies, hindering the potential for positive outcomes in teacher motivation and performance.

**6. Public Perception and Criticism:** The effectiveness and fairness of reward systems, such as salary structures and incentive programs, are subject to public scrutiny, influencing the overall perception of the education system. Criticisms often arise when there is a perceived lack of transparency, equity, or alignment between teacher performance and rewards. Public opinion can significantly impact policymakers' decisions regarding teacher compensation, potentially hindering the implementation of effective and motivational reward strategies.

### **The Way Forward on Effective Reward Strategies for teachers' in Nigerian Secondary Schools**

**1. Provision of Fair and Competitive Salary Structure:** Ensuring that teachers receive salaries commensurate with their skills, experience, and responsibilities not only acknowledges their crucial role in shaping the future but also motivates them to perform at their best. A fair and competitive salary structure is pivotal in attracting and retaining high-quality educators, fostering a positive work environment, and ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education. By prioritizing equitable compensation, educational authorities in Nigeria can inspire dedication, professionalism, and a sense of value among teachers, contributing significantly to the advancement of education and the nation's development as a whole.

**2. Implementing Professional Development Initiatives:** By investing in continuous professional growth, schools can enhance the quality of education by ensuring that teachers stay abreast of innovative teaching methods, curriculum advancements, and evolving educational technologies. This not only fosters a dynamic and engaging learning environment but also equips educators with the skills needed to address the various needs of students. Professional development initiatives should be tailored to the specific challenges faced by teachers in Nigeria, addressing issues such as limited resources and large class sizes. Recognizing and rewarding teachers who actively participate and excel in these initiatives, through measures such as promotions, increased remuneration, or acknowledgment, reinforces a culture of lifelong learning and excellence, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

**3. Creating Supportive Work Environment:** cultivating a positive atmosphere that values educators' well-being, recognizes their contributions, and fosters professional growth. This involves providing adequate resources, implementing fair and transparent evaluation systems, and promoting collaboration among educators. Supportive environments also involve addressing challenges such as infrastructure deficiencies and ensuring a healthy work-life balance. By prioritizing a nurturing workplace, schools can enhance teacher morale, job satisfaction, and ultimately contribute to the overall improvement of the education system in Nigeria. This holistic approach to reward strategies goes beyond monetary incentives and recognizes the importance of creating a conducive and encouraging setting for educators to thrive.

**4. Introducing Innovative Reward Systems:** Introducing innovative reward systems requires a shift in mind-set and a departure from the status quo, which can be met with scepticism and reluctance among educators. To navigate this, it is crucial to engage teachers in the process, fostering a collaborative approach that addresses their concerns and aligns with their values. Recognizing and addressing the underlying factors contributing to resistance, such as fear of the unknown or perceived inequities, is essential for the successful implementation of reward strategies that truly motivate and enhance teaching effectiveness in Nigerian secondary schools.

**5. Establishing a culture of appreciation and acknowledgment for teachers' contributions:** By regularly recognizing and valuing the efforts of teachers, schools can create a positive work environment that fosters a sense of pride and commitment. This, in turn, contributes to improved teacher retention rates

and overall job performance. Moreover, acknowledging teachers' contributions not only enhances their professional self-esteem but also serves as a powerful motivator, reinforcing their dedication to providing quality education. This cultural transformation is a crucial step in building a sustainable and supportive educational system that acknowledges the important role teachers play in shaping the future of the nation.

**6. Positive Public Perception:** positive perception of the public can contribute to the acknowledgment of teachers' vital role in shaping the future, fostering a supportive environment for implementing effective reward strategies. However, addressing criticism is equally essential, as negative perceptions may hinder the development of fair and motivating reward systems. Public discourse, informed by constructive criticism and a balanced understanding of educators' challenges and contributions, should guide policymakers in crafting reward strategies that not only recognize and incentivize excellence but also address systemic issues within the education system. Ultimately, a harmonious relationship between public perception, constructive criticism, and strategic policy implementation is germane for advancing effective reward strategies for teachers in Nigerian secondary schools.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on reward strategies for teachers in Nigerian secondary schools sheds light on the significant challenges faced in the current system. The findings underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing these challenges to enhance the overall well-being and job satisfaction of teachers. The identified hurdles, such as inadequate financial incentives, lack of recognition, and limited professional development opportunities, emphasize the need for comprehensive reform in the reward systems for educators. To move forward, it is imperative for education policymakers, school administrators, and relevant stakeholders to collaborate and devise effective strategies that not only address the existing challenges but also promote a positive and motivating work environment for teachers. This may involve re-evaluating salary structures, implementing performance-based incentives, and establishing robust professional development programs. Furthermore, creating a culture of appreciation and acknowledgment for teachers' contributions can go a long way in boosting morale and fostering a sense of value and pride in their profession.

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