



## Career Plateau and Teacher Productivity in Rivers State Secondary Schools

### KEYWORDS

Career plateau, teacher performance and productivity, Rivers State (Nigeria)

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### ABSTRACT

The study was designed to identify the causes and influence of career plateau on teachers in Rivers State secondary schools. The population was 8480 teachers from 257 government secondary schools in Rivers State, a sample of 1698 representing 20% of the total population was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The research design was descriptive survey and a self-structured questionnaire titled 'Managing Career Plateau for Quality Administration' (MCPQA) was used as the instrument for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument at 0.84. Data collected were analyzed descriptively using mean and rank order for the research questions and z- test for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that career plateau could be caused by lack of skills and ability, change in technology, stress and burnout, lack of motivation and incentives. We recommended among others that different types of reward system, sensitization programs, honest feedback, training, mentoring programs be provided to enhance effective performance of teachers in Rivers State secondary schools.

### INTRODUCTION

In many organizations the school inclusive, the workforce is one of the most significant contributors to the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization, the school as a social organization of people and each individual has different interest and is assigned with different roles within the organization. In the educational system, it is an indisputable fact that the teachers hold the key to the success of any educational programme; hence Nigeria 1969 curriculum conference described the teachers as the 'key man' in Nigeria's Educational Industry. However, plateauing among the secondary school teachers may pose formidable obstacles to the realization of educational the goals and objectives of the secondary education.

Career plateau is immobility of one's career in an organization. It is a situation where an employee remains in one job grade for a long period due to one reason or the other. This in some cases, could be as a result of lack of skills and ability, lack of career advancement opportunities caused by implementation of downsizing and restructuring. Feldman and Weitz (1988) argued that individuals who continue to stay in an organization with limited career advancement first plateau and eventually becomes disengaged with their efforts and less compelled to exert efforts and show concern for their customers. In essence, when secondary school teachers experiences career plateau, they show less concern to the students and their productivity in terms of impacting knowledge and discipline to the students' drops. No wonder Jelinek (2006) stated that employees who face this ugly phenomenon often exhibit various non-productive mental states and behaviors which can impact upon their effectiveness. These conditions include high degree of stress, (Messmer, 2002) role conflict (kickull & Posig 2001), low self- esteem and mental exhausting (Moore, 2000) lack of ability to cope with change (Judge, Thorsen, Pucik & Welbourne, 1999), small level of job involvement (Allen et al 1999) reduced job satisfaction (Books, 1994; Lee 2003), inadequate job performance, ini-

tiative and morale (McCleese & Eby, 2006) and excessive absenteeism and tardiness (Schisks, 1991). This paper focuses on the causes & effects of the concept of career plateau.

### Definition of Career Plateau

Career plateau is defined as the condition in which the likelihood of receiving further assignment of increased responsibility in low (Feldman and Weitz ,1988). For Ference, Stoner, and Warren (1977) career plateau is defined as the point or time in a career when hierarchical advancement is unlikely to occur. Also, in the same vein Harvey and Schultz (1987) distinct plateauing as the career point at which an employee is unlikely to receive promotion, unless the individual changes organization. For Veiga, (1981), career plateau is seen as a point in which further career mobility including both upward and lateral moves are in reasonable doubt because the length of time in the present position is unduly prolonged. This implies that if a secondary school teacher remains in a job grade more than necessary, career plateau set in.

### Types of Career Plateau

Bardwick (1986) described three types of career plateau found in organization as thus:

1. Content Plateau - happens when an employee becomes saturated with all available job - related information and consequently lacks further challenges to expand vocational expertise.
2. Structural Plateau - which results from the combined effects of the original structure and birthrate fluctuations and is largely beyond the control of the employee.
3. Personal Plateau - centers on an employee's personal life and often corresponds to a period in one's life stage development.

In view of this, Burke and Mikelsen (2006) distinguished plateau into three types namely;

1. Structural plateau results from the end of promotion due to pyramidal structures of the organization.
2. Content Plateau - occurs when individual knows their jobs too well and becomes bored.
3. Life Plateau - occurs when committed individuals begin to feel unsuccessful in their work and this spreads feelings of plateau and trapped in life.

For Yamamoto (2006) career plateau is of two types namely:

1. Successful career plateau and unsuccessful career plateau.

Successful career plateaus occur when individuals are performing their jobs at a successful level while unsuccessful career plateaus are individuals that are not performing their jobs at a satisfactory level.

Career plateau among secondary school teachers have great implication on the individual teachers since it leads to high job turnover, burnout and stress and these have effect on the secondary school students in external & internal examination. No wonder Jelinek (2006) put it that individuals that pass through this phase in their career usually have negativity in the work place in form of being absent from work and have lower satisfaction than their non-plateaued peers (Near 1980). However, Levinson (1986) asserts that careers plateau will not always be detrimental to individual effectiveness however, the period of career plateau can be regarded as a period of stability which allows individuals to master work skills, pursue a predictable family / personal life and gather psychic energy. Thus, career plateau may be functional for individuals both personally and professionally.

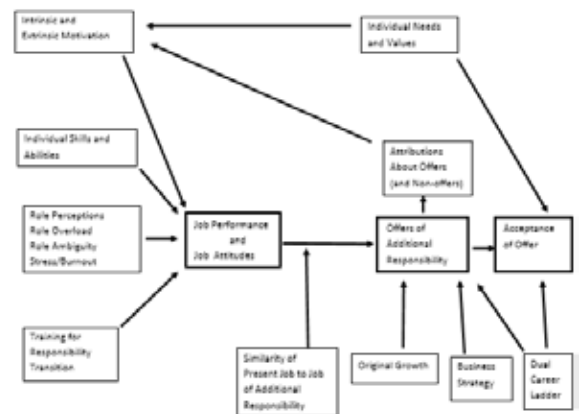
#### Causes of Plateau among Teachers in Secondary Schools

Various factors may contribute to teachers becoming plateaued, Tremblay and Rogers (1993) mentioned the causes of career plateau as; individual and familial factors on one hand and organizational factors on the other hand. Individual factors according to them are linked to the specific situation of an individual. These according to them, include; lack of skills of will of ambition or because of certain external constraints. The organizational factors on the other hand have little to do with the individual per se: These are contextual or structural factors that effectively block the chances for advancement and are reflected by a lack of job openings in higher levels.

However, Feldman & Weitz (1988) proposed a model describing the factors causing career plateau as thus:

1. An employee's performance is deficient so that offers of responsibility are not forthcoming.
2. There are few opportunities in the organization for promotion or position of increased responsibility, so that even a potentially excellent performer can plateau.
3. Due to personal preference or situational constraints, employee do not accept offers of job with additional responsibility even when they are offered. This can be illustrated in the diagram below.

Fig-1 Model of Plateauing



Source: Feldman, D.C & Weitz, B.A (1988). *Journal of personal selling & Sales Management* 9:23-32.

Bardwick (1983) is of the view that career plateau is influenced by personal organizational and cultural factors. People want to be at the top but nearly all will reach a career plateau before they reach retirement. Bardwick (1983) further put it that organizational downsizing and the decline of the corporate growth are also the major causes of career plateau, personal causes of plateauism include; the desire to spend more time with family, aversion to additional duties and responsibilities and unwillingness to relocate to a different locations, management generated plateaus result from a feeling that their subordinates are not skilled enough.

#### Effects of Plateauism on Secondary School Teacher

Mayasari (2008) opined that the effects of career plateau on individual are many and varied. Mayasari (2008) further mentioned the effect of career plateau as thus: It leads to depressive state, refusal of job involvement, low performance, and work conflict, lack of commitment to job, low job satisfaction and interaction to quit. In line with this, researchers such as (Near, 1980; Chao, 1990; Lee, 2003; Burke, 2006) suggested that plateauing is associated with negative consequences including absenteeism and turnover. Burke (2006) claimed that plateaued employees reported greater work alternation, less job satisfaction and greater intention to leave. For Nachbager & Riedl (2002) career immobility affects performance, satisfaction and commitment.

#### Strategies for Managing Career Plateau

Mayasari (2008) mentioned the following as the strategies for managing career plateau employees:

1. Organization must set good orientation programme to enhance career management for employees.
2. Adequate compensation program should be made in which workers who achieve the highest level of performance receive the highest percentage raises.
3. Organization can improve workers career by offering greater job security.
4. Workers or employees should be allowed to be more involved in decision making or by giving the employee additional responsibilities.
5. Counseling program for employees into the mainstream of the organization.
6. Assessment, personality test, assessment center, benchmark, and job experience, mentoring, coaching and self - assessment of workers should be encouraged. In support of this, Ongori and Agolla (2009)

stated the following as the strategies for managing employees who experience career plateau. They are as thus;

- Employees should be appraised objectively with a feedback mechanism.
- Job rotation should be evaluated in the organization so that employees will broaden their skills and reduce the degree of boredom.
- Management should practice flatter structure than tall structure system.
- Management should create an avenue where teachers are allowed to further their education.
- Counseling and outplacement services should be provided to the employees by the management.
- Management should be in position to identify symptoms of career plateau at early stage.
- Mentoring programme should be enshrined into the school system.

**Statement Of The Problem**

Students under performance in secondary schools have become an issue of high concern to stakeholders of secondary education. However adequate attention have not being drawn to the feeling of frustration and psychological feebleness that employees tend to experience following a temporary or permanent halt in the advancement of their career. Thus when high-achiever teachers feel demoralized about the condition, they lose their zeal, sparkle, passion and they become disenchanted and frustrated. Over time, their morale and productivity decline.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the causes and effect of career plateau among secondary school teachers in Rivers State.

**Research Question**

What are the causes of career plateau among secondary school teachers in Rivers state?  
How does career plateau influence the secondary school teachers in Rivers State?

**Hypotheses**

1. There is no significance difference between the mean rating of urban and rural teachers on the causes of career plateau among teachers in Rivers State secondary schools.

2. There is no significance difference between the mean rating of experienced and less experienced teachers on the influence of career plateau on the behaviours of the teachers in Rives State secondary schools.

**Significance of the study**

It is hoped that the result of these study will serve as a medium for quality control, standardization, and excellence for secondary school administrators in providing qualitative education through the provision of motivation of their workforce for high professional development. It will provide relevant information on the need for schools to employ diverse strategies and appropriate interventions to manage employee who faces career plateau.

**Method**

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive design. The population was 8480 teachers from government secondary schools in Rivers State, a sample of 1698 representing 20% of the total population was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used to collect data for the study was a self-

structured questionnaire titled 'Managing Career Plateau for Quality Administration' (MCPQA) while Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument at 0.84. Data collected were analyzed descriptively using mean and rank order for the research questions and z- test for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance

**Result**

Results obtained in this study was presented and analyzed in tables.

**Research Questions 1:** What are the causes of career plateau among teachers in public senior secondary schools?

**Table 1: Mean score and rank order on the causes of career plateau among teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

S/N	Causes of Career Plateau	N=421 Urban-Teachers	N=1227 Rural Teachers	Aggregate		
		X <sub>1</sub>	x <sub>2</sub>	x of x <sub>c</sub>	Rank	Remark
1	Lack of opportunity for promotion	3.12	2.42	2.77	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
2	Lack of opportunity for transfer	2.80	2.48	2.64	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
3	Lack of support by management	2.47	2.59	2.53	9 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
4	Not trained for new job requirement	2.32	2.50	2.41	14 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
5	Not motivated to achieve further	2.40	2.25	2.32	17 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
6	Bored with routine duties of the job	2.55	2.34	2.44	13 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
7	Treated unfairly by management	2.46	2.30	2.38	16 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
8	Inappropriate abilities/skills	2.43	2.37	2.41	14 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
9	Reduced promotion opportunities	2.54	2.52	2.53	9 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
10	Lack of recognition	2.56	2.68	2.62	4 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
11	Familiar factors	2.51	2.59	2.55	7 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
12	My perception about my job	2.61	2.90	2.75	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed
13	The work seem repetitious and monotonous	2.29	2.70	2.49	12 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
14	My work seem too stressful for my bad system	2.70	2.44	2.57	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
15	Discrimination due to age	2.57	2.45	2.51	11 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
16	Discrimination due to gender	2.61	2.47	2.54	8 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
17	Discrimination due to race	2.70	2.43	2.56	6 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
	Total	43.64	42.4	43.01		
	Grand mean	2.56	2.49	2.53		Agreed

Table 1 above present the data resulting from urban and rural teachers on the causes of career plateau among teachers in senior secondary schools. From the table, it was revealed that out of 17 items, both respondents had an agreement to 11 of the items since they had mean set above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were accepted as the causes of career plateau among teachers in senior secondary schools. Some of the items which the respondents agreed to include; lack of opportunity for promotion ranked which 1<sup>st</sup> with mean score of 2.77, my perception about the job, lack of opportunity for promotion and lack of recognition ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> with mean scores of 2.75, 2.56 and 2.57 respectively. My work seems too stressful for my system, Discrimination due to race, familial factors and discrimination due to gender ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> with mean scores of 2.57, 2.56, 2.55 and 2.54 respectively. Two items ranked 9<sup>th</sup> with mean score of 2.53 they are; lack of support by the management and reduced promotion opportunities. Discrimination due to age, the work seems repetitions and monotonous, bored with routine duties of the job ranked 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> with mean score of 2.51, 2.49 and 2.44 respectively.

However, 6 items had mean scores less than 2.50 and were rejected as the causes of career plateau. They are: not trained for new job requirement, inappropriate abilities and skill which ranked 14<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 2.41. Being treated unfairly and not motivated to achieve further ranked 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> with mean scores of 2.38 and 2.32 respectively.

In summary, with an aggregate mean set of 2.53, the table showed the respondents agreed that the items in table 1 are the causes of career plateau on secondary school teachers in Rivers state

**Research Question 2:** In what ways can career plateau influence the behavior of teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Mean scores and rank order on the influence of career plateau on the behavior of teachers in rivers state senior secondary school.**

S/N	Statement	N=68	N=96	Aggregate		
		Experienced Teachers	Less Experienced Teachers	x of x <sub>s</sub>	Rank	Remark
18	Refusal of job involvement	2.50	2.84	2.67	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
19	Depressive state	2.75	2.85	2.80	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
20	Loss of motivation	2.71	2.83	2.77	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed
21	Lack of commitment to work	2.28	2.59	2.43	11 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
22	Lower moral among co-workers and students	2.41	2.66	2.53	9 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
23	Increase absenteeism	2.74	2.59	2.66	4 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
24	Am easily angry, bored, frustrated	2.52	2.68	2.60	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed

25	Lower level of job satisfaction	2.33	2.34	2.33	13 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
26	I have negative job attitude	2.09	2.44	2.26	14 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
27	I am ready to change organization in order to have a better chance for promotion.	2.63	2.31	2.47	10 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
28	Feeling nervous as a result of the job	2.58	2.54	2.56	7 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
29	Seeking for outside job opportunity	2.41	2.68	2.54	8 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
30	Never quit the job	2.28	2.59	2.43	11 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
31	It leads to stress	2.77	2.43	2.60	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
	Total	35.0	36.3	35.6		
	Grand mean	2.50	2.59	2.54		Agreed

Table 2 above shows the mean scores and rank order on the influence of career plateau on the behaviors of experienced and less experienced teachers in Rivers state senior secondary schools. The result indicates that out of 14 items on the table, 10 of the items were accepted since they had mean scores higher than 2.50. The item that were accepted include; depressive state which ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with a mean score of 2.80, loss of motivation ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with a mean score of 2.77, refusal of job involvement and increase absenteeism ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> with mean scores of 2.67 and 2.66 respectively. Two items ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. They are: being easily bored, angry and frustrated and it leads to stress with a mean score of 2.60 while feeling nervous as a result of the job, lower moral among co-worker, seeking for outside job opportunity ranked 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> with mean scores of 2.56, 2.54 and 2.53 respectively.

However, the respondents disagreed with 4 of the items since the items had mean score less than 2.50. The indices where the respondents had disagreement include; being ready to change the organization in order to have a better chance of promotion which ranked 10<sup>th</sup> with mean a score of 2.47. Two items ranked 11<sup>th</sup>. they are; lack of commitment to work and never quite the job. However, lower level of job satisfaction and having negative job attitude ranked 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> with mean scores of 2.33 and 2.26 respectively.

The answer to research question 2 above is that with an aggregate mean score of 2.54, the respondents accepted the items in table 2 as the influence of career plateau on the behavior of teachers in Rivers state senior secondary school.

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural teachers on the causes of career plateau in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Tables 3: z-test of difference on the opinion of respondents on the causes of career plateau.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	z-Cal	z-Critical	Remark
Urban	421	43.7	18.8	1646	1.204	1.96	Not Significant
Rural	1227	42.4	18.7				

The table above shows that the calculated z-value 1.204 is less than the z-critical value 1.96 at 1646 degree of free-

dom and at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the urban and rural teachers on the cause of career plateau in public senior secondary schools.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experienced and less experienced teachers on the influence of career plateau on the secondary school teachers.

**Tables 4. Z-test of analysis on the opinion of respondents on the influence of career plateau.**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	D.F	z-Cal	Z - Critical	Remark
Experienced	685	35.0	15.7	1646	-1.79	1.96	Accepted
Less experienced	963	36.4	15.3				

The table above shows the z-test analysis of experienced and less experienced teachers. The tables reveals that experienced teachers have a mean score and standard deviation of 35.0 and 15.7 while the less experienced teachers have a mean score and standard deviation of 36.4 and 15.3 the table also shows that the z-calculated value -1.79 is less than the z-critical 1.96 at 1646 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the experienced and less experienced teachers on the influence of career plateau in rivers state senior secondary schools.

### Discussion of Findings

From the result above, it is evident that the items listed were accepted as the causes of career plateau since both the urban and rural teachers had grand means scores higher than 2.50. This is in line with Yamamoto, 2006; Choy and Savery, (1998 ) who assert that if the secondary school teacher does not have the necessary skills and abilities to perform the job, lack of training ,lack of job ability ,reduced organizational hierarchies and reduction on promotion abilities career plateau sets Also from the study all the items were accepted as the influence of career plareau on the secondary school teacher since the grand mean was higher than 2.50.This is in line with Mayasari (2008) who assert that the effect of career plateau on an individual include: It leads to depressive state, refusal of job involvement, low performance, work conflict, lack of commitment to job, low job satisfaction and interaction to quit. With However if secondary school management and educators can put in place appropriate interventions and manage career plateau effectively, organizations will benefit in terms of reducing employee turnover, increase job satisfaction, good employee relationship, reduced stress and burnout, increase in employee morale and motivation and above all achievement of the goals and objective of the secondary education.

### Conclusion

The major conclusion of the study is that there are many factor that can cause career plateau in an individual. These factors could result from individual level, job- related level and organizational level and these factors reduces the productivity of the teachers since it leads to burnout , absenteeism. Lack of commitment and other diverse effect on the teacher.

### Recommendations

The managers of secondary schools in Rivers State should provide different types of rewards and recognition for exceptional teacher's performance.

Furthermore, the government should create avenue where teachers can be promoted or new positions created through organizational expansion.

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