

**CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AMONG TEACHERS FOR  
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND  
PROSPECTS**

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**Abstract**

The challenges teachers face when attending a conference for educational development in Nigeria can be numerous and complex. The country faces various socio-economic issues that directly impact the educational sector making it challenging for educators to attend conferences and continue their professional development. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Two research questions guided the study. The population of the study was 2,385 academic staff from the three public universities in Imo State consisting of the Imo State University Owerri 1238, the Federal University of Technology Owerri 717, and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri 430. A sample of 102 academic staff representing 4% of the population was drawn using stratified random sampling technique. Twenty-item researcher-designed questionnaires titled Challenges of Attending Conferences and its Prospect (CACP) were used to elicit responses from the respondents using four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). A test of internal consistency was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the reliability of the instrument and a coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that Conference attendance is a powerful tool for the professional development of Nigerian teachers but financial, institutional, visa, and travel restrictions, logical and security, and limited access to information constraints are essential to maximize its impact on educational development. The study recommended that Government and educational institutions should establish dedicated funds or grants to support teachers that are attending

conferences. This financial assistance can cover registration fees, travel costs, accommodation, and other associated expenses.

**Keywords:** Conference, teachers, Educational development and challenges and prospect

## **Introduction**

Teaching is a profession and only individuals with a clear understanding of what teaching entails should be recruited into the profession. This is because teaching is a serious business and must be treated with a sense of responsibility and integrity. Any person who is forced into teaching is likely to abandon the profession after training or will not be able to cope with its demands. Obi (2019) asserts that teaching must be seen as a profession and the professional teacher must have the calling, be well-trained and retrained to be abreast with current trends, as well as adequately motivated to remain in the profession to enhance productivity. The reason is that no formal education can be successfully implemented without the input of a trained teacher.

Teachers need to have an understanding of the value of students under their tutelage to the future economic, technological, social, and industrial growth of Nigeria and that failure to groom them properly has serious damaging consequences on the future of the nation. Esu (2017) reports that teachers mean a lot to students in the process of acquiring relevant information in the school. Learners expect the teacher to teach them, mold their character, and be friendly with them. As a facilitator of knowledge and skills, they expect teachers to help them acquire such to be useful to themselves and the society at large. They also expect their teachers to be more knowledgeable than them to render the needed support and show them the light. These demands place a lot of responsibility on the teacher to deliver quality teaching toward the attainment of educational goals and objectives. A productive teacher will ensure that he/she acquires the relevant knowledge and skills required to develop quality manpower through effective learning experiences. The level of productivity attained by a teacher can be

measured through the quality of learning outcomes and learners produced through his inputs over a while and when they teachers fail to take over their responsibility, the reverse is the case.

In an academic or professional context, a conference refers to a formal gathering or event where experts, scholars, and professionals meet to discuss their research, findings, and developments in a particular field or industry. Conferences often involve presentations, lectures, panel discussions, and workshops that allow participants to share knowledge and network with others in their discipline (Adamu & Yakasai, 2021). An academic conference is an event for researchers to present and discuss their works (Allen, 2015). Conferences usually encompass various presentations. They tend to be concise with a period of about 10 to 30 minutes. Presentations are usually followed by a discussion. The work may be bundled in written form as academic papers and published as conference proceedings. Usually, a conference will include keynote speakers (often scholars of some standing but sometimes individuals from outside academia). The keynote lecture is often longer, lasting sometimes up to an hour and a half, particularly if there are several keynote speakers on a panel (Ogundane, 2019). In addition to presentations, conferences also feature panel discussions round tables on various issues, poster sessions, and workshops. Some conferences take more interactive formats than others. Conference ideally suggests discussion among persons of similar experiential exposure to the topic of discussion to reach agreements on controversial issues (Obi, 2019). In practice, however, lead papers are often presented by persons of knowledgeable profound exposure to a subject and discussions follow the presentation. It is found that proper conference organization can bring about high productivity in the education industry (Obi, 2019). The essence of the conference is to keep the teacher up-to-date on the latest development in the field, or ensure the promotion of professional growth, help to improve pedagogical skills, keep teachers abreast with new knowledge, and meet particular needs, such as curriculum development and orientation, help in

leadership responsibility, help to improve mutual respect among teachers and recognized the need for modern teaching methods. Obi (2019) noted that teachers' development programs improve them both academically and professionally and apart from helping them to update their knowledge, it serves as a motivating factor for teacher efficiency.

Conference attendance can significantly impact the professional development of educators and researchers in Nigeria. This is manifested in the following areas:

**Enhancement of Research Skills and Knowledge:** Academic conferences often feature workshops, seminars, and presentations on cutting-edge research methods. These sessions equip lecturers with the latest tools and techniques that can enhance the quality and rigor of their research. Conferences expose lecturers to the latest trends and developments in their fields, enabling them to stay current with global research advancements (Ajayi & Arogundale, 2020).

**Publication Opportunities:** Conferences provide a platform for lecturers to present their research findings to a wider academic audience, which can lead to publication opportunities in peer-reviewed journals or conference proceedings. Presenting at conferences allows lecturers to receive valuable feedback from colleagues and experts, which can improve the quality of their research before submitting it for publication (Oredein, 2016).

**Facilitating Collaborative Research:** Altbach (2015) stated that conferences bring together academics from various disciplines, providing opportunities for cross-disciplinary research collaborations. These collaborations can result in innovative research projects that draw on diverse perspectives and expertise. For conferences with international participants, Nigerian lecturers can establish collaborations with scholars from other countries, expanding their research networks beyond national borders.

**Networking and Career Advancement:** In the words of Ajayi & Arogundale (2020), conferences are essential for networking with peers, senior academics,

and potential mentors. These interactions can lead to future collaborations, mentorship opportunities, and invitations to other conferences or academic events. Active participation in conferences (e.g., presenting papers, and chairing sessions) increases the visibility of lecturers within their academic community, which can enhance their professional reputation and open doors for career advancement.

**Knowledge Transfer and Pedagogical Improvement:** By learning about new research and pedagogical strategies at conferences, lecturers can bring back valuable insights that improve their teaching methods and classroom engagement. Exposure to the latest academic developments can inform curriculum updates, ensuring that courses offered by Nigerian universities remain relevant and aligned with global standards (Desimone, 2009).

Despite the potential benefits, many lecturers face financial barriers that limit their ability to attend conferences, particularly those held internationally. This constraint can prevent them from accessing valuable research and networking opportunities. A lack of institutional support, such as funding or time off, can further hinder lecturers' ability to participate in conferences, reducing the overall impact on their research and professional development (Adeoye & Adeniran (2011). However, the challenges facing the effectiveness of educators in developing their knowledge and skills can be attributed to low attendance at conferences. According to Allen (2015), educators tend to suffer from instructional planning and delivery as a result of poor attendance at conferences. The school head on the other sides does not encourage educators to participate in workshops for quality instructional delivery in universities (Adamu & Yakasai,2021). The teacher's productive capacity has been compounded by problems such as inadequate teaching skills/techniques, a harsh environment for effective learning, poor socioeconomic background statuses of students, particularly in universities, and lack of motivation, among many other factors. Educators also have the opportunity to participate in academic conferences. There

was a surge in conference attendance, particularly as Nigerian academics sought to present papers at international conferences. Many universities began providing more support for conference travel, although funding remained a challenge for many. The problem of conference attendance is shaped by several unique factors that impact Nigerian academics and professionals world: Attending conferences can be expensive due to registration fees, travel, accommodation, and other related costs. Limited funding opportunities from universities and research bodies further exacerbate the issue (Oloruntoba & Ajayi,2006).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to investigate conference attendance for educational development in Nigeria: problems and prospects. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent of conference attendance on the professional development of educators in Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the level of challenges Nigerian educators face when attending international conferences.
3. Determine the educational conferences contribution to bridging the gap between research and classroom practice in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions.

1. What is the extent of conference attendance on the professional development of educators in Nigeria?
2. What level of challenges does Nigerian educators face when attending conferences?
3. How effective does educational conferences contribute to bridging the gap between research and classroom practice in Nigeria?

### **Method**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Three research questions guided the study. The population of the study was 2,385 academic staff

from the three public universities in Imo State consisting of the Imo State University Owerri 1238, the Federal University of Technology Owerri 717, and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri 430. A sample of 102 academic staff representing 4% of the population was drawn using stratified random sampling technique. Twenty-item researcher-designed questionnaires titled Challenges of Attending Conference and its Prospect (CACP) were used to elicit responses from the respondents using four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). A test of internal consistency was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the reliability of the instrument and it was 0.85. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

## Results

**Research Question One:** What is the extent of conference attendance on the professional development of educators in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Teachers' mean responses on the extent of conference attendance on the professional development of educators in Nigeria**

S/ N	Statement	A	B	C	D	EFX	Mean	SD
1	To what extent has conference attendance improved your teaching skills?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	332	83.0	85.9
2	How relevant do you find the conferences you attend to the professional development?	Not relevant	Slightly relevant	Moderately relevant	Highly relevant	317	79.3	62.9
3	How has conference attendance enhanced your knowledge of current trends in education?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	337	84.3	106.1
4	How important is conference attendance in expanding professional network or collaboration opportunities?	Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	342	85.5	92.3
5	How often do you implement the knowledge or skills acquired at conference in your teaching activities?	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	327	81.8	84.5
6	How has attending conferences affected professional recognition	No effect	Minor effect	Moderate effect	Significant effect	322	80.5	78.2



	or opportunities for career advancement?							
7	How much has conference attendance contributed to your research output or academic publications?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	359	89.8	107.1
8	To what extent has conference attendance influence your involvement in research activities?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	322	80.5	87.0
9	Has conference attendance exposed you to educational policies or reforms that influence your work?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	282	70.5	46.1
10	Have you experienced any improvement in your career progression as result of attending conference?(promotion, recognition, leadership roles)	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	347	86.8	97.0
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>82.20</b>	<b>18.8</b>	

Table 1 revealed that all items on the extent of conference attendance on the professional development of educators in Nigeria had their mean values ranging from 70.5 to 89.8, indicating that their mean values were above the cut-off point of mean 2.50 which represent high extent. The grand mean value of 82.20 indicates that conference attendance impacts the professional development of educators in Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:** What level of challenges do Nigerian educators face when attending conference?

**Table 2: Teachers mean responses on the level of challenges Nigerian educators face when attending conferences**

S/N	Statement	A	B	C	D	Efx	Mean	SD
1	How much of a challenge are financial constraints (e.g. travel, accommodation,	Not challenge	Slight challenge	Moderate challenge	Significant challenge	327	81.8	84.5



	conference fees) in attending international conferences?							
2	How often do Visa issues or other Travel Logistics affect your ability to attend international conferences?	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	342	85.5	130
3	How significant is the challenge of balancing family responsibilities with attending international conferences?	Not challenge	Slight challenge	Moderate challenge	Major challenge	377	94.3	151.7
4	How challenging is it to manage your teaching and research responsibilities when attending international conferences?	Not challenging	Slightly challenge	Moderately challenge	Very challenging	322	80.5	87.0

5	To what extent do language differences pose a challenge during international conferences?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	347	86.8	97.0
6	How often do you find that the content of international conference is not directly relevant to the educational context in Nigeria?	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	322	80.5	87.0
7	How much do cultural differences at international conferences affect your ability to participate and engage fully?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	322	80.5	87.0
8	How significantly do these challenges (e.g, financial, logistical, cultural) impact your overall	No impact	Minor impact	Moderate impact	Significant impact	317	79.3	62.9

	profession al growth as an educator?							
9	How challengin g is it for you to access informatio n conference s relevant to your field?	Not challenging	Slightly challenging	Moderately challenging	Very challenging	337	84.3	106. 1
10	After attending an internation al conference , how challengin g is it to implement what you have learned in your local educationa l context?	Not challenging	Slightly challenging	Moderately challenging	Very challenging	333	83.3	90.5
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>26.0</b>	<b>83.7</b>

Table 2 revealed that all items on the level of challenges Nigerian educators faced. Their mean values ranged from 79.5 to 94.3, indicating that their mean values were above the cut-off point of mean 2.50, which represent a high level. The grand mean value of 83.7 indicates the level of challenges Nigerian educators face when attending international conference.

**Research Question Three:** How effective does educational conferences contribute in bridging the gap between research and classroom practice in Nigeria?

**Table 3: Teachers mean responses on effective educational conferences contribution in bridging the gap between research and classroom practice in Nigeria**

S/N	Statement	A	B	C	D	Eff x	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	How often do the topics discussed at educational conferences align with your classroom needs and challenges.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	342	85.5	96.3	Agreed
2	How often are you able to apply research findings from conferences directly to your teaching practices.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	282	70.5	46.1	Agreed
3	How significantly do educational conferences contribute to your understanding of current research in your subject area?	No contribution	Minor contribution	Moderate contribution	Significant contribution	342	85.5	92.3	Agreed
4	How often do you gain access to innovative teaching strategies or technologies through educational conferences?	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	332	83.0	85.9	Agreed
5	How well do educational conferences support you in implementing new research-	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very well	327	81.8	84.5	Agreed

**Journal of Theoretical and Empirical Studies in Education**  
**Vol. 9 Issue 2 December, 2024**

	based methods in your classroom?								
6	How often do conferences facilitate collaboration with other educators to incorporate research into classroom practice?	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	33 7	84.3	106. 1	Agreed
7	How often do educational conferences offer opportunities for you to receive feedback on how to translate research into your classroom teaching?	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	32 2	80.5	72.3	Agreed
8	To what extent have educational conferences contributed to improving your overall teaching effectiveness by incorporating research findings?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	33 0	82.5	113. 0	Agreed
9	To what extent do educational conferences help you stay informed about current research in education?	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	32 9	82.3	84.2	Agreed
10	How frequently do you apply what you learn from research	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	31 9	79.8	78.9	Agreed

	presented at conferences to your classroom practices?								
	<b>Grand Mean</b>								<b>81.6    18.6</b>

Table 3 revealed that all items were agreed by the respondents as to how effective educational conferences contribute in bridging the gap between research and classroom practice in Nigeria had their mean values ranging from 70.5 to 85.5, indicating that their mean values were above the cut-off point of mean 2.50, which represent a high effective educational conference. The grand mean value of 81.6 indicates that effective educational conferences contribute in bridging the gap between research and classroom practice in Nigeria.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Extent of conference attendance on the professional development of educators in Nigeria**

Conference attendance has been shown to play a pivotal role in the continuous professional development of educators in Nigeria, offering opportunities for skill enhancement, knowledge acquisition, and networking. It serves as platforms for teachers to exchange ideas, explore innovative teaching strategies, and engage with subject matter experts. This fosters professional growth by exposing educators to diverse perspective. This aligns with findings by Olulube (2014), who argued teachers who frequently attend conferences tend to integrate innovative practices into their classrooms, improving student outcomes.

#### **The level of Challenges Nigerian educators face when attending conferences**

Conference attendance significantly contributes to teachers’ educational and professional development in Nigeria. However, Nigerian educators face numerous challenges that affect the frequency and quality of their participation. These challenges are linked to financial, logistical, and institutional barriers, impacting the ability of teachers to fully benefit from these opportunities. The

findings are in line with Nwosu & Onwuka (2019), who indicate that the lack of sponsorship is one of the primary barriers to educators participation in conferences.

**Effective educational conferences contribute to bridging the gap between research and classroom practice in Nigeria.**

Conference attendance among teachers plays a vital role in bridging the gap between educational research and classroom practice in Nigeria by facilitating knowledge transfer, encouraging collaboration, and providing actionable insights for teachers. Enhancing the accessibility and relevance of such conferences will further strengthen their impact on educational outcomes in Nigeria. Effective educational conferences serve as platforms for disseminating research findings, promoting professional dialogue, and encouraging the practical application of innovative teaching strategies in classrooms. The findings is supported by Aina (2017) who shown that teachers who attend research-focused conferences report an increased ability to apply innovative methods in their classrooms.

**Conclusion**

Educational conferences serve as important professional development opportunities, equipping educators with the skills and knowledge needed to integrate research findings into their teaching. Workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions at conferences provide hands-on experience with new teaching tools, techniques, and technologies. Conference attendance is a powerful tool for the professional development of Nigerian teachers but financial, institutional, visa, and travel restrictions, logistical and security, and limited access to information constraints are essential to maximize its impact on educational development. Increased institutional support, access to funding and streamlined administrative processes could make it easier for more teachers to participate in conferences. Moreover, strategic partnerships between educational bodies, government agencies, and international organizations could help reduce the



barriers to participation and ensure that Nigerian educators fully benefit from the professional growth opportunities that conferences offer.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government and educational institutions should establish dedicated funds or grants to support teachers attending conferences. This financial assistance can cover registration fees, travel costs, accommodation, and other associated expenses.
2. The Ministry of Education should collaborate with universities and professional organizations to host more national and regional conferences.
3. Schools and education boards should reward conference participation through promotions or bonuses linked to professional development achievements.

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