

INFLUENCE OF CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS ATTENDED ON ECONOMICS TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of attending conferences and workshops on the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The research employed an evaluation survey design. The study population consisted of 3,557 Economics teachers from 637 senior secondary schools across the 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Nasarawa State. A sample of 198 respondents' was selected from three LGAs using multi-stage random sampling. Specifically, purposive random sampling was used to select 12 senior secondary schools and Economics teachers were randomly selected from each school using simple random sampling. The process of purposive random sampling involved writing the names of schools and LGAs on pieces of paper, randomly selecting the papers to determine the sampled schools and LGAs. The researchers developed a single instrument for data collection titled "Secondary School Economics Teachers Professional Growth (SSETEPREG)." The construct validity of the SSETEPREG instrument was ensured through expert judgment by specialists in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and Economics from Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The instrument achieved a construct validity index of 0.89 based on experts' ratings. Completed questionnaires were collected and subjected to descriptive statistical analysis, including means and standard deviations, to summarize the data characteristics related to Economics teachers' professional growth. Hypotheses were tested using a t-test at a

significance level of 0.05. The findings of the study underscore that conferences and workshops significantly influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa State. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Nasarawa State Government establish long-term funding mechanisms to enable Economics teachers to participate in conferences and workshops. Additionally, the formation of localized professional learning communities for Economics teachers within the state should be supported.

Keywords: Conferences, growth, professional, teachers, workshops

Introduction

In this twenty first century, education plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of any nation. In Nigeria, as in many countries globally, the quality of education is dependent on the effectiveness of teachers. Teachers are not only responsible for imparting knowledge but also for shaping students' attitudes, skills, and competencies. Therefore, continuous professional development (CPD) is essential to ensure that teachers remain current with educational trends, subject matter knowledge, and pedagogical approaches. Quality of educational output in Nigerian secondary schools has become a serious concern to the society. A decline in Economics results of students has generated so much uproar among stakeholders in the educational sector. The difficulty of being a teacher lies in the fact that teachers work in unique situations in the past as well as the present (disregarding time, social or political circumstances) in comparison with other occupations whilst influencing their students through their qualities, actions and behaviour. Deshach (2017) states that teaching is difficult because performing in accordance with prearranged rules (according to the best of one's beliefs and conscience) is not enough since there are very few situations in the everyday practice of a teacher are similar. Most situations vary in essence. What is accepted in one occasion need not be in another where other individuals are contributing in similar circumstances. There are just a few professions which require the full involvement and where there is need to be aware of the ethical and moral consequences that may be brought out by the teacher's actions and behavior (Deshach, 2017).

In Nasarawa State, like other states in Nigeria, economics holds particular significance due to its role in preparing students for understanding economic principles, critical thinking, and decision-making in various real-world contexts. The effectiveness of economics teachers in delivering this education is crucial for the state's educational outcomes and the future of its students. Now, as in the past, high demands are placed on the teaching profession, but cannot avoid the fact that teachers live in a society where the representatives of the political, cultural and intellectual elites follow designated codes and represent a model to those whom they are to lead and represent. Capli (2015) pointed out that there is no point setting maximum moral demands and requirements for teachers, as high ethical and moral criteria do not hold for most members of society. This is especially true if the society is not able to appreciate them. Many people judge and consider the work of teachers. This is understandable because a teacher intervenes in the lives of students, parents and usually other relatives and society as well. The teaching profession is different to other professions because anybody can make judgments on it—often those who are not authorized to do so and who disregard the moral qualities of teacher and do not care about the difficulties of performing the job (Deshach, 2017).

Professional growth development refers to the ongoing process of learning and skill enhancement that educators engage in to improve their knowledge, abilities, and effectiveness in their profession. It encompasses various activities aimed at enhancing teaching practices, educational leadership, and overall professional growth. Professional growth is crucial for maintaining high standards in education and adapting to evolving educational practices. It involves structured activities such as workshops, seminars, conferences, courses, and

collaborative learning experiences designed to address specific educational challenges and foster continuous improvement (Schifter, 2024). Professional growth also emphasizes the importance of reflective practice, where economics educators critically analyze their teaching methods and outcomes to refine their approach and achieve better learning outcomes for students (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2024). Moreover, the impact of effective professional development extends beyond individual educators to positively influence school culture, student achievement, and overall educational outcomes (Guskey, 2024).

Economics teachers' professional growth is essential for educators to stay current, improve their instructional practices, and ultimately contribute to the continuous improvement of the educational system. Economics teachers' professional growth refers to the ongoing development and improvement of their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and effectiveness as educators in the field of economics (Guskey, 2024). It encompasses various aspects that contribute to their professional competence and advancement throughout their careers. Economics teachers' professional growth is multifaceted, involving both personal development and contributions to the broader educational community. It aims to enhance teaching effectiveness, student learning outcomes, and the overall quality of economics education provided to students. The following are some key elements of secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth:

- i. **Content Knowledge:** secondary school Economics teachers continuously deepen their grasp of economic theories, principles, concepts, and contemporary issues. This involves staying updated on new research, economic trends, and global developments.
- ii. **Pedagogical Skills:** Effective teaching in Economics necessitates a diverse set of instructional skills tailored to this discipline. Educators develop strategies to engage students actively, deliver content with clarity, foster critical thinking and analytical skills, and demonstrate practical applications of economic concepts.
- iii. **Curriculum Development:** secondary school Economics teachers contribute to designing and adapting curriculum materials that adhere to educational standards and cater to diverse student needs. They incorporate new methodologies, technologies, and resources to enhance their teaching approaches.
- iv. **Assessment and Evaluation:** secondary school Economics teachers cultivate skills in designing fair and effective assessments to gauge student learning. This includes creating exams, projects, and other evaluative methods that assess comprehension of economic concepts and skills.
- v. **Professional Collaboration:** Engaging with peers, attending conferences, participating in workshops, and collaborating with fellow educators are pivotal for professional growth. These interactions facilitate the exchange of ideas, sharing of best practices, and learning from each other's experiences.
- vi. **Technology Integration:** In modern classrooms, economics teachers often integrate technological tools and resources to enrich the learning experience. Professional development includes acquiring proficiency in new technologies and utilizing them effectively in economics education.
- vii. **Reflective Practice:** Reflecting on teaching experiences, seeking feedback from peers and mentors, and engaging in self-assessment are integral components of professional growth. Teachers analyze their methods, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes to enhance their teaching effectiveness.
- viii. **Leadership and Advocacy:** Experienced economics educators may assume leadership roles within educational institutions, districts, or professional organizations. They advocate for policies and practices that enhance the quality of economics education and mentor new teachers entering the field.

- ix. **Lifelong Learning:** Professional growth is a continuous journey throughout a teacher's career. Economics educators engage in lifelong learning by pursuing further education, attending professional development programs, and keeping abreast of research and trends in economics education.

Secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth is conceived as the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by the teacher in a compelling learning environment under conditions of complexity and dynamic change (Fullan, 2005). According to Fullan (2005), a common underpinning assertion of the above definitions is continuing learning process, by which serving teachers acquire the knowledge, skills and values to sustain the desired spark of intellectual vitality, which will improve the quality of teaching and students' academic performance. Akinwale (2009) identified approaches to professional development such as: seminars, induction courses, workshops, conferences and symposia's in educational matters. In the same vein, Usoro (2010) agreed that in-service training, seminars, workshops and conferences enable employees to bridge the gap between the skills learnt and the one they are expected to perform. This gives help to boost their job performance as well as enhance students' academic achievement in school. Conversely, Banjo (2007) asserted that adequate training of teachers in the latest methodology, to a large extent, determines how the learner learns during instructional activities. In the opinions of Maduekwe and Ajibola (2007), in spite of the fact that most of the teachers have teaching qualifications, many of them do not have adequate knowledge of some concepts and they end up imparting the wrong knowledge to their students. Ayeni (2010) posited that in Nigeria, teachers are expected to have sound knowledge of their subject areas to be able to select appropriate and adequate facts for planning their lesson notes, effective delivery of lessons, proper monitoring and evaluation of their students' performance, providing regular feedback on their students' performance, improvisation of instructional materials, adequate keeping of records and appropriate discipline of their students. Professional development affects students' achievement through three steps. First, professional development enhances teacher knowledge, skills, and motivation. Second, better knowledge, skills, and motivation improve classroom teaching. Third, improved teaching raises student interest (Yoon,

2008). This implied that if one link is weak or missing, better students learning may be affected. Yoon, (2008) submitted further that, if a teacher fails to apply new ideas from professional development to classroom instruction, students will not benefit from the teacher's professional development.

A conference is a formal gathering where individuals with shared interests convene to exchange ideas and develop policies that can advance their field of study. It also serves as a forum where diverse participants, united by common interests, come together to discuss issues relevant to their field and propose solutions. Another definition of a conference includes its role as a formal meeting involving two or more states or political groups, specifically to address differences or establish mutual policies. According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA 2014), a conference is an interactive gathering designed for discussions, fact-finding, problem-solving, and consultations among attendees. Unlike a congress, conferences are typically smaller and more exclusive, fostering a conducive environment for the exchange of information and insights. A conference is commonly understood as a gathering of academic professionals to discuss a specific topic or present research findings, often including workshops. Keynote speakers, typically distinguished figures in their fields, are often invited to attract attendees. Conferences also serve as professional development opportunities for teachers, allowing them to acquire new skills and experiences in teaching and learning activities. According to Okecha (2018), funding is crucial to enhance academic staff skills and knowledge, yet there is often insufficient support in Nigerian secondary schools for sponsoring staff to attend

conferences. Adequate funding enables academic staff to participate in conferences, where they can gain exposure to the latest skills, research findings, and innovative teaching methods, thereby enhancing their professional development. Conferences also facilitate networking among academic colleagues, experts, and professionals, fostering collaborations and creating opportunities for future research partnerships.

A workshop is a form of staff development program that emphasizes interactive training activities over passive lecture-style learning. It aims to enhance qualifications and update knowledge and skills among participants. According to Al-Talib (2015), effective workshops are practical and relevant to the needs of learners, focusing on acquiring new skills and behaviors necessary for their professional roles. University funding for workshops enables academic staff to conduct sessions regularly, improving their knowledge and performance within their disciplines. Workshops concentrate on practical exercises that apply theoretical knowledge to research and teaching contexts, fostering experiential learning and enhancing practical competencies. Tailored to participants' specific needs, well-funded workshops address current challenges and developments in academia, directly contributing to improved job performance among academic staff.

Peterson (2015) defines workshops as interactive group exercises designed to reinforce concepts and techniques through practical implementation. Their primary objective is to equip participants with hands-on skills, such as using equipment or machines effectively. Hamby (2014) notes that workshops are typically smaller and more intensive than seminars, often involving participants in trying out new skills under expert guidance. Academic workshops focus on achieving mastery of subjects through lectures, demonstrations, and interactive sessions using visual aids and demonstrations. These workshops facilitate the exchange of information among educators, keeping them informed about developments in their fields. In secondary schools, professionals from both within and outside the institution frequently conduct workshops, which can span from a few hours to several weeks. For instance, when new technologies like computerized machines are introduced, workshops are organized to train teachers in their use, exposing them to skills they may not have acquired otherwise within the school setting. Harwell (2014) indicated that, he will describe the characteristics of high quality professional development and make a case for an unconventional approach to professional development that, unlike one shot workshop and in-service days allow teachers to acquire and practice new skills overtime. Workshop can assist teachers acquire skills in various aspect of teaching and learning. Harwell (2014) affirmed that, form of any educators, staff development is synonymous with training, workshops, courses, and large group presentations. They are unaware that teachers and administrators learning can occur through such means as diverse as collaborative lesson design, the examination of student work, curriculum development, and immersion in the work of mathematics and scientists, case studies, action research, study groups, and professional networks, to name a few such processes.

Oluwole, John and Yaro (2017) findings indicated that teachers' attendance to conference and workshop has significant influence on students' academic achievement in secondary school in Benue and Nasarawa State. It was recommended among others that government should endeavour to provide adequate funds for sponsorship of teachers on workshops and seminars so as to enhance students' better academic achievement in schools. Oluwole, Idikwu, Yaro and Owobu (2017) findings indicated that teachers' attendance to conference and workshop has significant influence on students' academic achievement in secondary school in Benue and Nasarawa State. It was recommended among others that government should endeavour to provide adequate funds for sponsorship of teachers on workshops and seminars so as to enhance students' better academic achievement in schools. Musa, Bello, and Bala (2023) found a significant correlation between conference attendance and

lecturers' performance at SSCOEE, Sokoto. Chukwu (2017) also discovered that attending conferences positively impacts job performance, enhancing the ability of educators to tackle job challenges more confidently. Conversely, Okai (2020) concluded that there is no notable difference between Federal and State Universities in terms of the impact of funding staff development programs on productivity. However, the study revealed that such programs serve as effective tools to boost staff productivity. The research utilized a questionnaire and Z-test for data analysis, focusing on academic staff from both Federal and State Universities in Rivers State. In contrast, the present study employed two questionnaires and a one-sample t-test for data analysis. Ahmed (2023) found that attending pedagogical workshops annually significantly enhances teachers' skills in developing lesson plans compared to occasional attendees by 26%. Teachers in the Sabon Tasha Educational zone who participate annually also demonstrate superior classroom management skills compared to those who attend sporadically. Conversely, teachers who infrequently attend these workshops show lower proficiency in utilizing basic instructional materials. Moreover, those attending annually achieve higher scores and performance levels in instructional delivery. Overall, there is a notable difference in performance between teachers who regularly attend pedagogical workshops and those who do not. Ahmed concluded that pedagogical workshops are crucial for improving teacher performance, aiding in achieving educational goals, building professional capacities, and acquiring new knowledge and skills essential for effective classroom management, modern teaching methods, and addressing the needs of 21st-century students.

This study draws upon Human Capital Theory developed by economist Gary S. Becker (1992), which underscores that investments in education, training, and skill development enhance economic productivity and societal success. Becker's theory emphasizes human capital as comprising individuals' knowledge, skills, abilities, and health—a resource that, like physical capital, can be improved through investment. Human Capital Theory asserts that education plays a central role in enhancing human capital, enabling individuals and societies to achieve higher productivity, wages, and job opportunities. It advocates for investments in both formal education (e.g., schooling, higher education) and informal learning experiences to maximize these benefits over the long term. The application of Human Capital Theory to understand the influence of conferences and workshops attended on economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, provides a robust framework as follows:

- i. **Investment in Education and Training:** Human Capital Theory emphasizes that investments in education, training, and skill development contribute significantly to economic productivity and individual success. By attending conferences and workshops, Economics teachers acquire new knowledge, skills, and perspectives that enhance their professional capabilities. This aligns with the theory's premise that enhancing human capital through education and training leads to improved productivity and performance.
- ii. **Enhanced Skills and Knowledge:** Conferences and workshops provide platforms for economics teachers to update their knowledge on economic theories, principles, and pedagogical techniques. According to Human Capital Theory, acquiring new skills and knowledge through such professional development activities enhances an individual's human capital, making them more effective in their roles as educators.
- iii. **Improved Job Performance:** Human Capital Theory posits that investments in human capital result in higher productivity and better job performance. Research has shown that attending conferences and workshops can positively impact job performance by equipping teachers with up-to-date information and innovative teaching methodologies. This is crucial in improving teaching effectiveness and ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

- iv. **Long-Term Career Growth:** By participating in conferences and workshops, economics teachers not only enhance their immediate skills but also invest in their long-term career growth. Human Capital Theory advocates for continuous learning and skill development throughout one's career, as these investments yield returns in terms of career advancement and opportunities.
- v. **Economic and Social Benefits:** Human Capital Theory underscores that enhancing individuals' human capital benefits both the individual and society as a whole. Economics teachers who improve their skills through conferences and workshops contribute to the overall educational quality in Nasarawa State. This, in turn, supports economic development by producing better-prepared students who are equipped to contribute effectively to the

Applying Human Capital Theory to the influence of conferences and workshops attended on economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa State provides a theoretical foundation that highlights the importance of continuous education, skill development, and their impact on job performance and societal outcomes. It underscores the value of investing in teachers' professional development as a means to enhance educational quality and contribute to broader economic and social goals. Despite the recognized importance of professional development for educators, including participation in conferences and workshops, there is limited empirical research specifically examining how these activities influence the job performance of economics teachers in Nasarawa State. Understanding this influence is crucial for designing effective professional development programs that can enhance teaching effectiveness and ultimately improve student learning outcomes in Economics.

Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of conferences and workshops attended on secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Examine how conferences attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria
- ii. Evaluate how workshops attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were guided the study:

- i. How conferences do attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does workshops attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- i. Conferences attended has no significant influence on secondary school Economics teachers professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria
- ii. Workshops attended has no significant influence on secondary school Economics teachers professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria

Methodology

The research design for this study was an evaluation survey. Evaluative research design refers to a systematic approach used to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of programmes,

policies, interventions, or practices. An evaluation survey research design involves designing and conducting studies to determine whether a particular program or intervention achieves its intended goals and objectives (Fanfuwa, 2018). The primary aim of this design is to provide evidence-based insights into the success or failure of a program and to inform decision-making and future planning. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought to evaluate the influence of conferences and workshops on the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers in Nasarawa State.

The population for this study comprised 3,557 secondary school Economics teachers from all 637 senior secondary schools across the 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. These LGAs include Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keana, Kokona, Lafia, Keffi, Nasarawa, NasarawaEggon, Obi, Toto, and Wamba. The sample for the study consisted of 198 respondents selected from three LGAs using multi-stage random sampling techniques. At the first stage, two LGAs were selected using simple random sampling. At the second stage, two secondary schools were purposively sampled from each of the six LGAs, making a total of 12 senior secondary schools. At the third stage, Economics teachers were randomly selected from each school using simple random sampling. The process and rationale for purposive simple random sampling involved the researchers writing the names of schools and LGAs on pieces of paper. These papers were randomly selected, and the schools and LGAs corresponding to the selected papers formed the sampled population.

The researchers developed one instrument for data collection, titled “Secondary School Economics Teachers Professional Growth (SSETEPROG).” The instrument was subjected to expert judgment for construct validity. Experts in Educational Measurement, Evaluation, and Economics from Nasarawa State University, Keffi, were requested to rate the instrument in terms of focus, ease of understanding, and relevance. The mean score of the experts' ratings translated into a logical validity index of 0.89, establishing the construct validity of the instrument. Descriptive statistics, including measures such as means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data collected from secondary school Economics teachers regarding their professional growth. Additionally, t-test statistics were used to test the formulated hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

Research question 1: How do conferences attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria?

Data on how conferences attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth were collected from the sampled areas and presented in table 1

Table 1:Mean and Standard Deviation of Conferences Attended and Economics Teachers' Professional Growth

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	S.D
Attending conferences has improved my knowledge of current trends in Economics	41	38	77	42	3.39	0.04
Conferences have enhanced my teaching methods and strategies in Economics.	130	16	43	9	3.35	0.97

I have gained new insights into curriculum development through attending conferences.	130	16	42	10	3.34	0.98
Conferences have provided networking opportunities with other Economics educators	130	16	40	12	3.33	0.99
Conferences have improved my ability to integrate technology into economics teaching.	129	16	3	50	3.13	0.29
I have implemented new ideas learned from conferences into my Economics lessons.	41	38	77	42	3.39	0.04
I feel more confident in discussing and presenting Economics concepts after attending conferences.	130	16	43	9	3.35	0.97
Conferences have expanded my understanding of assessment techniques in Economics	130	16	42	10	3.34	0.98
Attending conferences has positively influenced my career advancement opportunities as an Economics teacher.	130	16	40	12	3.33	0.99
Attending conferences has positively influenced my Methodology of teaching Economics	129	16	3	50	3.13	0.29
Mean of means					16.54	3.27

The data in Table 1 indicate the average mean rating of 16.54 suggests an overall perception of the influence of conferences attended on secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth. The standard deviation (S.D) of 3.27 indicates some variability in responses reflecting differing perspectives among respondents regarding the extent of conferences attended influence economics teachers professional growth.

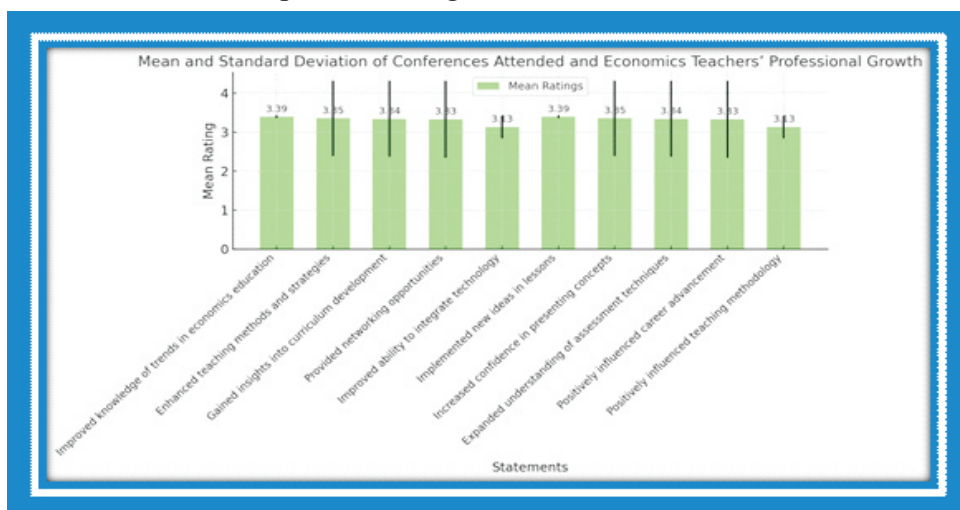


Figure 1: Bar chart representing the mean ratings and standard deviations for conferences attended and their influence on Economics teachers' professional growth.

Bar chart representing the mean ratings and standard deviations for conferences attended and their influence on Economics teachers' professional growth. Each bar corresponds to a statement, with error bars illustrating the variability (standard deviation) in responses.

Research Question 2: To what extent does workshops attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria. Data on the extent in which workshops attended influence secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth were collected from the sampled areas and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean And Standard Deviation of Workshops Attended and Economics Teachers' Professional Growth

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	S.D	Decision
Workshops have enhanced my understanding of new teaching methodologies in Economics	130	19	41	8	3.37	0.95	Agreed
I have gained practical skills from workshops that have improved my classroom instruction in Economics	130	20	40	8	3.37	0.94	Agreed
Workshops have broadened my knowledge of educational resources available for teaching Economics	130	21	39	8	3.38	0.94	Agreed
Attending workshops has increased my confidence in addressing challenging topics in Economics	130	20	40	8	3.37	0.94	Agreed
Workshops have improved my ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners in Economics	130	19	2	47	3.17	1.3	Agreed
I have developed new assessment techniques for Economics through workshops	130	14	43	11	3.33	0.99	
Workshops have enhanced my collaboration with colleagues in developing effective teaching strategies for Economics	132	14	42	10	3.35	0.98	
I have integrated innovative technologies into my Economics teaching as a result of attending workshops	132	13	41	12	3.34	1.00	

Workshops have provided me with new insights into curriculum design and development in Economics

132 13 41 12 3.34 1.00

Attending workshop s has positively influenced my professional network and connections in the field of Economics

131 58 1 8 3.58 0.71

Mean of means

16.66 5.07

The data in Table 2 show the average mean rating of 16.66 suggests an overall perception of the influence of workshops attended on secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria with a standard deviation (S.D) of 5.07 indicating considerable variability in responses among respondents.

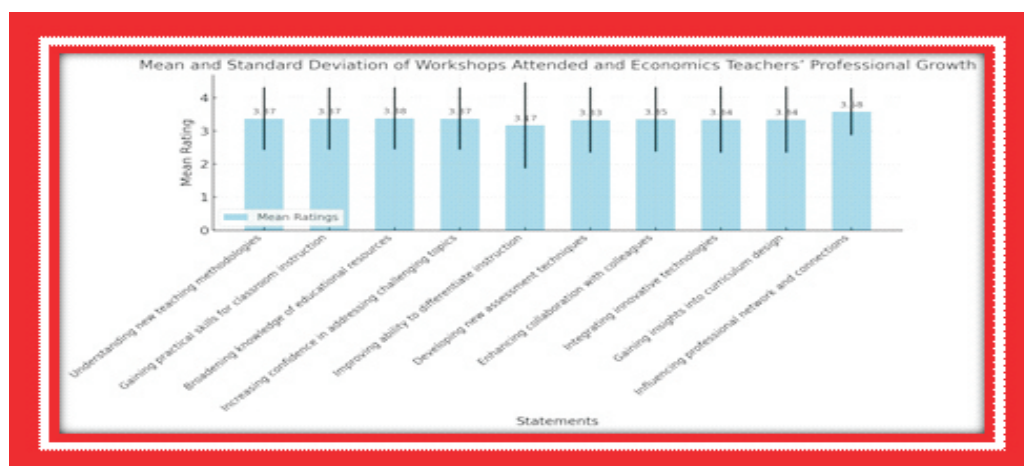


Figure 2: Bar chart representing mean ratings and standard deviations for workshops attended and their influence on secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth

The bar chart displaying the mean ratings and standard deviations for workshops attended and their influence on secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth. Each bar represents a statement, with error bars indicating the variability (standard deviation) in responses.

Testing of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Conferences attended has no significant influence on secondary school Economics teachers professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria

Table 3 Shows The Summary of t-Test Analysis Of Conferences Attended On Economics Teachers Professional Growth.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			Std. Error mean
Conferences	198	3.43	0.99			0.78
One-sample test	Test value		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Conference	(test value = 2.5)		11.73	197	0.000	0.83

The results in Table 3 indicate that conferences attended have a significant influence on the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The one-sample t-test analysis ($t = 11.73$, $df = 197$, $p = 0.000$? $p < 0.05$) showed that the mean score (3.43) was significantly higher than the test value (2.5), with a mean difference of 0.83. This finding agreed that attending conferences positively and significantly influence the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2:Workshops attended has no significant influence on secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

Table 4 Summary of T-Test Analysis of Workshops Attended and Economics Teachers Professional Growth

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Std. Error mean	
Workshop	198	3.49	0.85		0.08	
One-sample test	Test value		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Workshop	(test value = 2.5)		15.61	197	0.000	0.94

The results in Table 4 indicate that workshops attended have a significant influence on the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers. The one-sample t-test analysis ($t = 15.61$, $df = 197$, $p = 0.000$ = $p < 0.05$) showed that the mean score (3.49) was significantly higher than the test value (2.5), with a mean difference of 0.94. This finding agreed that attending workshops positively and significantly influence the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers in Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

The results from research question one indicate that the average mean rating of 16.54 suggests an overall positive perception of the influence of conferences on the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers. The standard deviation (S.D) of 3.27 reflects some variability in responses, indicating differing perspectives among respondents regarding the extent to which conferences influence professional growth. The findings from hypothesis one reject the null hypothesis (H0), which stated that conferences do not significantly influence Economics teachers' professional growth. Statistical analysis supports the conclusion that attending conferences has a significant positive impact on teachers' professional growth. This result aligns with Chukwu (2017), who found that attending conferences positively influences job performance among librarians, enhancing their overall task performance. It is also consistent with the findings of Musa, Bello, and Bala (2023), who demonstrated a significant positive relationship between conference attendance and lecturers' performance in the College of Education (COE), Sokoto. Their study highlighted the importance of funding conference attendance to improve the performance of academic staff. Furthermore, this finding corroborates the work of Oluwole, Idikwu, Yaro, and Owobu (2017), who observed that teachers' attendance at conferences and workshops significantly influences students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Benue and Nasarawa States. They recommended increased government funding for teachers' participation in workshops and seminars as a measure to enhance students' academic performance.

The results from research question two indicate that the average mean rating of 16.66 reflects an overall positive perception of the influence of workshops on the professional growth of secondary school Economics teachers in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. However, the standard

deviation (S.D) of 5.07 suggests considerable variability in responses among respondents. Regarding hypothesis two, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that workshops do not significantly influence Economics teachers' professional growth, is also rejected. Statistical analysis supports the conclusion that workshops significantly enhance teachers' professional growth. This finding is consistent with Musa (2016), who explored the impact of funding staff development programs on teachers' performance in secondary schools in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State. Musa emphasized that regular workshops, in-service training, seminars, and mentoring significantly improve teachers' performance. However, this finding contrasts with Okai (2020), who found no significant difference between Federal and State Universities in the impact of staff development programs on productivity. Okai's study suggested that both types of universities equally benefit from development programs, highlighting that the specific impact of such programs may depend on contextual factors.

Additionally, the findings support Ahmed (2023), who discovered that attending pedagogical workshops annually significantly enhances teachers' skills in developing lesson plans compared to occasional attendees, with a difference of 26%. Teachers in the Sabon Tasha Educational Zone who attend workshops annually also demonstrate superior classroom management skills compared to those who attend sporadically. Conversely, teachers who rarely attend workshops show lower proficiency in utilizing basic instructional materials. Annual workshop attendees also achieve higher performance scores in instructional delivery. Ahmed concluded that pedagogical workshops are essential for improving teacher performance, achieving educational goals, building professional capacities, and acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for effective classroom management and modern teaching methods to meet the needs of 21st-century students. These findings underscore the importance of conferences and workshops in enhancing Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa State. They emphasize the need for sustained investment in professional development opportunities to improve teachers' skills, knowledge, and overall effectiveness in the classroom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, conferences and workshops attended by secondary school Economics teachers in Nasarawa State play a crucial role in their professional growth by enhancing knowledge, improving teaching practices, fostering collaboration and boosting motivation. However, addressing logistical challenges and ensuring sustained support for applying newly acquired skills are essential to maximize the impact of these opportunities on teachers and, ultimately, on student learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the influence of conferences and workshops attended on secondary school Economics teachers' professional growth in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The Nasarawa State Government should establish long-term funding mechanisms to enable secondary school Economics teachers to participate in conferences and workshops. This may include allocating budgets from educational institutions, providing government subsidies, or forming partnerships with private organizations focused on education.
- ii. The Nasarawa State Government should support the establishment of localized Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for secondary school Economics teachers within the state. These groups could meet regularly to address challenges, share best practices, and collaborate on the implementation of innovative teaching methods.

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