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Article

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FOSTERING A POSITIVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT: A DUAL DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO ENHANCING TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Secondary schools in Nigeria face fragmented workplace environments that undermine teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. This study addressed the problem of inadequate support systems for teachers and examined workplace indicators that enhance instructional quality. Using a literature review methodology, the study contextualized Taylor and Thion's (2023) dual-dimensional framework of teaching effectiveness—educator-focused inputs and student-focused outcomes—within the Nigerian education system. Findings identified eight critical workplace indicators: adequacy of facilities, professional development, lesson note preparation, instructional autonomy, collaborative work culture, clear communication, teacher-student relationships, and feedback mechanisms. These factors collectively foster trust, collaboration, and reflective practice, thereby improving teaching effectiveness. The implications highlight the need for systemic reforms, capacity building, and inclusive leadership to create supportive environments where teachers can thrive. Recommendations include infrastructural audits, institutionalized professional development, digital communication platforms, empowerment of teachers through autonomy, and structured feedback systems integrated into school improvement plans. The paper concludes that fostering a positive workplace environment requires sustained commitment to professional growth, inclusivity, and responsive leadership. Implementing these strategies will enable Nigerian secondary schools to strengthen teaching effectiveness and promote meaningful student learning outcomes.

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Keywords: Educator-Focused Inputs, Positive Workplace Environment, Professional Development, Student-Focused Outcomes, Teaching Effectiveness.

Introduction

The teaching profession occupies a pivotal role in shaping national development through secondary schools, where educators influence the intellectual, emotional, and civic growth of learners. Teachers are not merely conveyors of curriculum equipped with pedagogical skills to impart knowledge; they are facilitators of learning, mentors, and agents of transformation (Ayantunji, Olatoye, & Ileuma, 2024; Cahyono & Rusiadi, 2025). They ensure the optimal achievement of educational goals and objectives at all levels. To transform the learners, teachers must be effective in their roles (Ezemba, Okeke, & Ogbuanya, 2023). Their effectiveness is the ability to produce demonstrable improvements in student learning outcomes and academic achievement (Tomaszewski, Xiang, Huang, Western, McCourt, & McCarthy, 2022). Thus, the students must demonstrate adequate knowledge of the content taught in class discussions, quizzes, tests and overall student assessment and grading (Adeyinka, Paulley, & Agih, 2019). Teaching effectiveness, therefore, centres on teacher behaviours and classroom processes that drive measurable student outcomes (Tomaszewski et al., 2022). However, given the evolving nature of teaching effectiveness, fostering a positive workplace environment is crucial for equipping teachers with the support, resources, and professional growth opportunities necessary to improve instructional quality in secondary schools, especially within the Nigerian educational landscape. A positive workplace environment, in turn, ensures that teachers are well-positioned to enhance their instructional practices and foster meaningful student learning. Through the examination of recent studies, this paper identifies environmental factors that shape instructional quality and workplace conditions, and proposes actionable strategies to address fragmented and unsupportive environments. Hence, this review positions the workplace environment as a cornerstone of teaching effectiveness, offering a holistic framework that links educator-focused inputs to student-focused outcomes.

Additionally, previous researchers explored the relationship between individual workplace factors (leadership styles, facility management, and infrastructure) and teaching effectiveness (Mingyua, Abdullah, & Shin, 2025; Gardiner, 2023; Moses & Umar, 2024). Another study examines the nexus between teachers' attitudes and teaching effectiveness (Bizimana, 2022). Osiesi, Ayanwale, Akomolafe, Olayiwola-Adedola, Olatunbosun & Ariyo (2024) focused solely on professional development and teaching effectiveness. However, this review goes beyond the scrutiny of individual elements. Focusing on one specific measure of effectiveness alone cuts off other critical dimensions of teaching effectiveness. Also, many studies fail to provide an integrated analysis of how multiple indicators interact to shape the environment, particularly in under-resourced or policy-fragmented secondary school environments in Nigeria. (Adeyinka et al., 2019). Furthermore, some literature focuses on student outcomes without examining how workplace conditions indirectly, albeit powerfully, shape those outcomes (Ezemba, Okeke, & Ogbuanya, 2023). More importantly, there is scant empirical evidence linking educator-focused input factors and student-focused output factors to teaching effectiveness in the local context. To address this gap, this study contextualizes an international framework, posited by Taylor and Thion (2023), within the Nigerian education system and proposes practical strategies for policymakers and school leaders based on these workplace dimensions. Thus, the paper aims to combine insights from reviewed literature with contextualized strategies to improve the educational

workplace environment, all underpinned by a recognized theoretical model that promotes teaching effectiveness.

Understanding Teaching Effectiveness in Context

Teaching effectiveness remains a central concern in educational discourse, particularly in secondary schools where the quality of instruction directly influences student achievement, engagement, and long-term outcomes. Onyejiuwa and Eke (2023), Okoye (2023), and Bizimana (2022) view teaching effectiveness as a teacher's ability to employ purposeful instructional strategies that lead to meaningful student learning. It encompasses the use of appropriate pedagogical methods, mastery of subject content, and the capacity to communicate effectively and engage learners through well-prepared lessons and interpersonal relationships. These scholars collectively emphasize that effective teaching is not only about the outcomes achieved by students but also about the deliberate instructional inputs and professional competencies demonstrated by the educator. As a multidimensional construct, teaching effectiveness encompasses lesson note preparation, teacher-student relationship, instructional quality, classroom management, clear communication, evaluation and feedback, professional growth, healthy learning environment, and so on (Adeleke, Adesua, & Jimola, 2021).

Contextually, teaching effectiveness refers to a teacher's ability to facilitate significant student learning and achieve educational goals. Teaching effectiveness takes place through intentional instructional practices, subject mastery, and strategies that positively impact student outcomes. Thus, the definition balances the measurable student outcomes in terms of progress with the deliberate efforts and competencies of the teacher (educator-inputs). It also recognizes that effective teaching is not just about what students know at the end but also how the teacher assists to ensure that learning is possible. In the Nigerian context, teaching effectiveness is often assessed through classroom performance, examination, student feedback, and administrative evaluations (Onyejiuwa & Eke, 2023).

However, recent literature indicates that the concept has evolved beyond simplistic metrics such as test scores and students' grades (Mulhern & Oppen, 2022). Given the limitations of test scores as sole indicators, teaching effectiveness now encompasses a multidimensional framework that includes two interrelated dimensions: the student-focused dimension, which emphasizes measurable learning gains (leading to student-focused outcomes), and the educator-focused dimension, otherwise known as educator-focused inputs, which include aspects like professional competencies, reflective practice, and peer collaboration (Taylor & Thion, 2023). Zhao, & Cheng, (2023) further identified indicators such as content knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management, student engagement, feedback and assessment, professional development, teacher-student relationships, cultural competence and collaborative practices as vital aspects of teaching effectiveness. Ultimately, understanding teaching effectiveness requires a contextual lens that accounts for the multidimensionality of the individual elements necessary for fostering a positive workplace environment and enhancing instructional success. Hence, the present literature review positions a positive workplace environment as a cornerstone of teaching effectiveness.

Conceptual Model

The Conceptual Model of Measuring Teaching Effectiveness (CMMTE) adapted from Taylor and Thion's (2023) is shown below as an illustration that mapped out workplace indicators to teaching effectiveness.

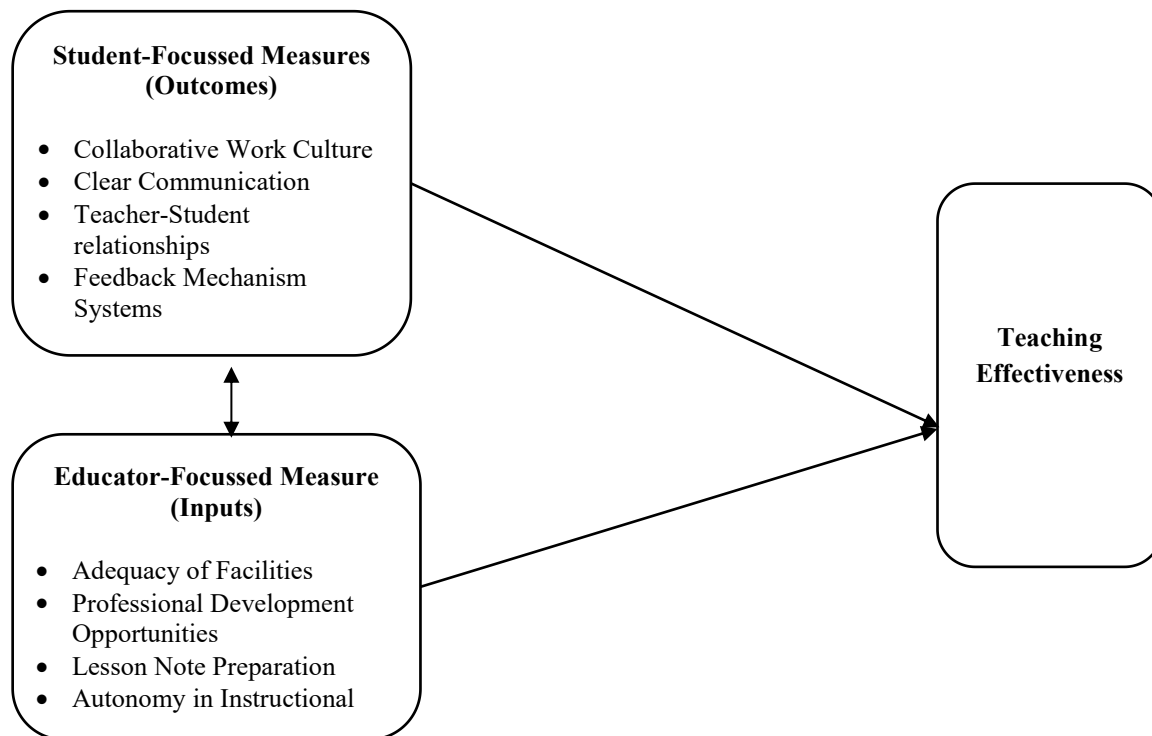


Figure 1: Conceptual Model linking Workplace Environment Indicators to Teaching Effectiveness (Adapted from Taylor and Thion, 2023).

The above model illustrates how educator-focused inputs and student-focused outcomes interact within the school workplace environment to shape overall teaching effectiveness. The metrics for evaluating teaching effectiveness vary across regions and institutions. UNESCO (2018) reports that teaching quality in sub-Saharan Africa is often compromised by limited training opportunities and inconsistent evaluation standards, which hinders the development of robust performance indicators. Despite these challenges, there is advocacy for holistic assessment models that integrate educator-achievement and student-achievement data with qualitative measures such as peer review, self-assessment, and professional development engagement (Nwokeocha, 2017; Taylor and Thion, 2023).

Taylor and Thion (2023) developed a dual-dimensional model for conceptualizing teacher effectiveness. This framework is beyond simple measures of performance, offering a holistic lens to enhance the assessment of teaching quality. Conceptually, Taylor and Thion (2023) viewed teacher effectiveness through two dimensions: student-focused outcomes and educator-focused inputs. The student-focused outcome dimension promotes measurable learning gains, often assessed through student evaluations and objective performance indicators (test scores, student grades, graduation rates, dropout rates), while the educator-focused input dimension includes professional competencies, reflective practice, and peer assessments. This dual framework offers a more holistic and contemporary understanding of what it means to be an effective teacher in today's diverse educational landscape. Drawing on the framework posited by Taylor and Thion (2023), it is possible to understand teacher effectiveness through both student-focused outcomes and

educator-focused inputs. This dual perspective provides a good foundation for examining eight workplace environment indicators that promote teaching effectiveness in secondary schools. For instance, adequate physical facilities, professional development opportunities, lesson note preparation, and autonomy in instructional decisions are essential educator-focused inputs. Simultaneously, a collaborative work culture, clear communication, healthy teacher-student relationships and feedback mechanisms are student-focused outcomes. Together, they enhance teaching effectiveness. Adopting this framework, the present review focuses on eight indicators of a positive workplace environment that reflect both dimensions and are central to enhancing teaching effectiveness.

Indicators of a Positive Workplace Environment in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Building on the conceptual framework adapted from Taylor and Thion's (2023), this section identifies eight key indicators that impact a positive workplace environment and directly influence teaching effectiveness. These indicators are categorized as educator-focused inputs, which shape the internal conditions for professional practice, thereby serving as the foundational pillar for teaching effectiveness, and student-focused outcomes, which reflect the external impact on learners.

Educator-Focused Inputs

- i. **Adequacy of Facilities:** Access to functional classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and digital tools is essential for effective teaching and learning. Physical infrastructure plays a crucial role in shaping the teaching environment by influencing both instructional delivery and quality. In Nigerian secondary schools, infrastructural deficits often hinder lesson preparation, reduce engagement, and increase teacher stress (Olujuwon et al., 2021). Conversely, well-equipped schools enable educators to manage classrooms efficiently, deliver content effectively, and engage students in different learning activities.
- ii. **Professional Development Opportunities:** Professional development is a cornerstone of teacher effectiveness, equipping educators with updated pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and reflective practices. In Nigeria, limited access to structured training programmes often hinders instructional innovation and reflective practice (Osiesi et al., 2024). When schools invest in workshops, mentoring, and continuous learning, teachers develop classroom management skills and become more confident, adaptive and responsive to students' needs. These opportunities also foster a culture of lifelong learning, which directly enhances classroom delivery and student engagement.
- iii. **Lesson Note Preparation:** Lesson note preparation reflects a teacher's readiness, planning, and instructional clarity. It serves as a blueprint for classroom delivery while ensuring alignment with curriculum standards. In Nigerian schools, where monitoring of lesson notes is common, well-prepared notes enhance lesson structure, time management, and student comprehension (Adeyinka et al., 2019).
- iv. **Autonomy in Instructional Decisions:** Instructional autonomy empowers teachers to tailor lessons, select teaching methods, and adapt curricula to meet the needs of students. In rigid systems, lack of freedom can stifle creativity and reduce teacher engagement. Nigerian educators often face prescriptive teaching mandates, which limit their ability to respond to classroom dynamics (Onyejiuwa & Eke, 2023). When teachers are trusted to make pedagogical decisions, they become more interested in student outcomes.

Student-Focused Outcomes

- i. **Collaborative Work Culture:** A collaborative work culture fosters peer support, shared problem-solving, and collective responsibility for student success. Collaboration is a process in which teachers share knowledge, resources, and responsibilities and jointly create an instructional plan. Schools that promote team teaching and peer observation create a collaborative space where teachers learn from one another and maintain consistency in instructional delivery (Onyia, Welle, & Nwaelehia, 2024).
- ii. **Clear Communication:** Effective communication between teachers, administrators, and students ensures that expectations, feedback, and policies are understood and respected. Poor communication leads to confusion, conflict, and disengagement. In Nigerian schools, where administrative bottlenecks are rife, streamlined communication systems such as digital platforms and regular staff meetings) can improve coordination and instructional planning (Oyedemi, & Lee, 2025).
- iii. **Teacher-Student Relationships:** Positive relationships between teachers and students form the foundation for emotional safety and teaching effectiveness. When students feel respected and supported, they are more likely to participate actively and respond academically. Teachers who build excellent rapport with students also gain deeper insights into their learning needs and challenges (Chikendu, 2022). In Nigerian classrooms, where large class sizes and limited resources can strain interactions, intentional relationship-building becomes even more critical.
- iv. **Feedback Mechanism Systems:** Feedback mechanisms such as student evaluations, peer reviews, and self-assessment tools give insights into continuous improvement, reflective practice, and promote teachers' instructional effectiveness. In Nigeria, formal feedback structures are often underdeveloped. However, they hold immense potential for enhancing teaching quality (Taylor & Thion, 2023). Constructive and actionable feedback empowers teachers to refine their methods to meet the needs of students.

Strategies for Fostering a Positive Workplace Environment in Secondary Schools

Creating a positive workplace environment in Nigerian secondary schools is crucial for improving teaching effectiveness and enhancing student outcomes. Thus, this paper outlines eight interconnected strategies that foster a positive workplace environment. Together, they form a comprehensive framework for promoting teaching effectiveness in secondary schools.

- i. **Adequacy of Facilities:** A foundational step in building a positive workplace is ensuring the adequacy of school facilities. Facilities adequacy requires systemic reform, stakeholder collaboration, and data-driven planning operationalized through periodic infrastructural audits by state education boards and school principals. These will determine the condition and functionality of resources like buildings, convenience, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and ICT equipment. These audits must guide budget allocations and infrastructural priorities while focusing on actual deficits. Research highlights that effective management of physical facilities enhances teaching effectiveness (Dogondaji, Suleiman, Horo, & Mohammed, 2024; Olanrewaju, Elongonye, & Osuji, 2020). Additionally, there should be education policies in place to enforce compliance with minimum facility standards
- ii. **Professional Development:** Building on the foundation of adequate facilities, professional development enhances teaching effectiveness and adaptation within a supportive environment. Professional development should be embedded into daily practice by educational authorities at the national, state and local government levels to promote collaborative and reflective teaching. Creating departments at these governmental levels and saddling them with tiered professional development

programmes will support teachers at different career stages. Establishing digital platforms can also expand access to high-quality, curriculum-aligned content and uniformity. UNICEF Nigeria's Learning Lab model (2024) demonstrated that School-Based Teacher Professional Development (STPD) improves teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes by fostering collaborative and positive learning environments for teachers.

- iii. **Lesson Note Preparation:** Closely tied to professional development is the preparation of lesson notes. Structured support and collaboration are integral to lesson note preparation. Integrating lesson note planning into professional development encourages peer review and promotes curriculum alignment among teachers. Standardized templates and digital tools simplify the process, while targeted training improves lesson planning skills. Ayeni (2022) links effective instructional planning to improved teacher productivity and student outcomes. Houella (2024) further highlights the importance of effective lesson planning in fostering inclusive teaching and learning. Mentorship for new teachers and recognition of exemplary lesson notes will further promote quality preparation and teaching effectiveness. Also, developing and incorporating a contextualized and simulated artificial intelligence-powered lesson planning platform will reduce the workload associated with handwritten lesson notes (Yusuf, 2025).
- iv. **Instructional Autonomy:** As teachers become more confident in their planning and pedagogy, instructional autonomy becomes a vital component of a positive workplace. Empowering teachers as professional decision-makers through flexible policies supports curriculum adaptation and responsive teaching. A balance between autonomy and curriculum fidelity will maintain learning standards. A culture of trust and reflective practice enables teachers to share and refine strategies. Faleye (2025) posited that teachers with high instructional autonomy successfully apply contemporary teaching methods while promoting student-centred instruction. Leadership training should emphasize guidance and pedagogical innovation. Recognizing teacher-led initiatives through awards and peer acknowledgement reinforces autonomy and shifts the system toward creativity and responsiveness.
- v. **Collaborative Work Culture:** A recent study has linked teacher collaboration to improved teaching performance and student outcomes in Delta State (Onyia & Welle, 2024). Instructional autonomy thrives in a collaborative work culture. Nigerian secondary schools must embrace structural and cultural changes that promote teamwork and shared responsibility. Institutionalizing teaching-in-teams, peer observation, and cross-departmental planning fosters instructional alignment. In addition, allocating time for joint lesson planning, engaging in reflective dialogue, and defining the scope of collaboration and desired student outcome strengthen professional learning and consistency.
- vi. **Clear Communication:** Clear and transparent communication is needful to sustain collaboration. Secondary schools in Nigeria should utilize digital platforms for announcements, feedback, and instructional coordination, especially where administrative bottlenecks exist. Regular briefings, assemblies, and structured feedback channels help to clarify expectations and address concerns. Training in communication protocols enhances interpersonal effectiveness and reduces conflict. A transparent communication culture fosters trust and strengthens the school climate. Anya & Ekezie (2019) highlight that effective formal and informal communication enhances teachers' performance and coordination.

- vii. **Teacher-Student Relationships:** A positive workplace environment also depends on the quality of teacher-student relationships. A good teacher-student relationship produces a good environment (Rabo, 2022). Secondary schools in Nigeria should invest in training on socio-emotional learning, trauma-informed pedagogy, and culturally responsive teaching to help educators connect with diverse learners. Mentorship, one-on-one check-ins, and inclusive practices deepen understanding and foster trust, especially in overcrowded classrooms with limited resources. Chikendu (2022) posits that teachers who develop rapport and accord respect to students positively impact learning outcomes. Hence, prioritizing relationship-building motivates students to engage actively and develop positive attitudes toward learning.
- viii. **Feedback Mechanism Systems:** Finally, a culture of feedback completes the cycle of continuous improvement. Neema (2025) posits that schools experience challenges due to ineffective feedback delivery, student disengagement, and a lack of clear tracking methods. Nigerian secondary schools should implement multi-source tools such as student surveys, peer reviews, and self-assessments that are constructive, actionable, and aligned with professional development. Feedback must guide reflection and adaptation. Integrating feedback into appraisal systems and school improvement plans ensures impact and relevance. Neema (2025) shows that structured models, supported by technology, enhance teaching strategies and student engagement.

Conclusion

This paper examined strategies for fostering a positive workplace environment in Nigerian secondary schools, emphasizing the roles of educators, students, and leadership. Eight core strategies—grouped into educator-focused and student-focused dimensions—were identified as critical to teaching effectiveness. Trust, collaboration, and reflective practice emerged as foundational elements of a thriving school environment. Evidence from recent Nigerian studies affirms the relevance of these strategies and their impact on instructional quality. Ultimately, creating a positive workplace is not a one-time intervention but a sustained commitment to professional growth, inclusivity, and responsive leadership. Policymakers and principals must prioritize reforms, invest in capacity building, and institutionalize feedback and collaboration to ensure schools evolve into environments where both teachers and students flourish.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance teaching effectiveness and workplace conditions in Nigerian secondary schools:

- i. Ensure adequacy of school facilities through audits and reforms, while institutionalizing professional development programs at all levels.
- ii. Strengthen lesson note preparation with standardized templates, peer review, and AI-powered tools, while promoting instructional autonomy that empowers teachers to adapt curricula and innovate pedagogically.
- iii. Foster a collaborative work culture through team teaching, peer observation, and joint lesson planning, alongside establishing clear communication systems using digital platforms, structured feedback channels, and training.
- iv. Prioritize teacher-student relationships with socio-emotional learning, mentorship, and inclusive practices, while implementing structured feedback mechanisms such as surveys, peer reviews, and self-assessments integrated into appraisal systems.

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