

# Classroom Attendance Register and Teachers Awareness of the Legal Implications as A Statutory Record in Schools

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## Abstract

The study investigated teachers' awareness of legal implication of the classroom attendance register as statutory school record. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population was drawn from public and private secondary schools. Two thousand and four hundred Teachers made up the study sample. The instrument was the questionnaire validated by experts in the relevant education field and had reliability statistic index of 0.86. Based on the data obtained and analyzed, descriptive statistics were used for the research questions while t.test and pearson correlation were use for testing the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that teachers had moderate level of awareness of the legal implication of the classroom attendance register. Also training and years of teaching experience predicted higher awareness on the legal implications of the attendance register. Based on the findings, it was recommended that curriculum for teacher education in tertiary institutions should include courses on record keeping in schools. There should be professional development for teachers in service. Again regular supervision by Education authorities and head of schools on the accurate and proper record keeping should be encouraged.

**Keywords:** classroom; attendance register; teachers; awareness; legal implications, statutory record.

**DOI:** 10.7176/JEP/17-4-04

**Publication date:** April 30<sup>th</sup> 2026

## Introduction

Records keeping in schools are the documentary backbone of education administration. These records are many and varied in purposes and importance as education documents kept in schools. One of the most fundamental documents in educational institutions especially at the secondary school education level is the classroom Attendance Register. The classroom attendance register is a statutory record with legal and administrative implications. The classroom attendance register plays multiple roles: routine monitoring of students, punctuality and presence. This record is used for planning decisions and funding, safe guarding child welfare, and serving as documentary evidence of school operations.

In Nigeria, the classroom attendance register is listed among statutory records that schools are required to keep with regards to national regulations and sector instruments. The classroom attendance register is mandated statutory record in Educational jurisdictions under compulsory education law (Department for education. DFE,(2019) and Federal Ministry of Education (2020).)

**Concept of classroom Register:** Classroom attendance register also referred to as school Register or Class register is one of the most important records kept in schools and colleges both public and private institutions. As opined by Ajudeonu (2015) an attendance register is a book in which the presence and absence of a pupil is recorded on daily basis. This record is kept on individual class basis with the class teacher or form teacher as the custodian of this record.

The importance of attendance register is enshrined in the Nigeria education law of the Federal Ministry of Education (2020) According to Ajudeonu (2015) attendance register has the following features illustrating it's

importance: Providing necessary data that may be requested from time to time for use by researchers, education planner and ministry officials. Attendance register gives information on identifying sick students, truants, absences and students who attend school regularly and help for decision making on the students, interest and problems.

The classroom attendance register could have three broad areas of functions, as academic and pedagogical functions, administrative and funding functions and statutory functions.

- Academic and pedagogical functions: The attendance registers serves as a management tool for tracking not only students presence/ absence but also students participation in classroom activities which in turns influence their academic performance. As reported by Gohfried (2014) there's a strong correlation between a student consistent attendance and academic achievement. It could be said also that a learner who is always absent from school could perform poorly in academic achievement.

- Administrative and Funding functions school registers it the basis for calculating numbers of students in schools. This serves as basis for resource allocation and influence the funding of the schools. In several countries including Nigeria funding allocations rely on attendance register records.(National center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2019) Other administrative functions of class register include providing data source for educational planning, monitoring enrollment trends and policy evaluation.

**Statutory functions:** Attendance register is a statutory record and a compulsory record under education law and it has official compliance. The attendance register can protect the school against the law of negligence as documented in Education law (Noun Edu412) when cases involve accidents or incidents during school hours. In cases regarding this incidents Court may request the attendance register to determine the student's present or absent at the time of the incidents (UNESCO, 2017) classroom attendance register fundamental records are for enforcing compulsory education laws and investigation of cases for child's protection (Ofsted, 2022) .

The classroom attendance register statutory roles serves some major functions. Attendance register according to UNESCO 2021 is a compulsory records of compliance with Education Acts and must be kept by every school. Another function is that school register is a legal evidence. As opined by Okeke (2017) school register becomes a legal evidence in cases of truancy, custody disputes or incidents during school. Attendance register plays the statutory role of accountability and funding ( .U.S Department of Education 2020) Apart from United States, in several countries including Nigeria funding allocation is tied to attendance register of schools.

#### **Teachers and the legal implications of the classroom attendance Register.**

The classroom attendance register is kept by a class teacher referred to as the class form teacher in secondary schools in Nigeria. Teachers are the custodians of the attendance registers in their area/class jurisdiction; for some of the teachers the attendance register is a normal book for marking present or absent.

But the classroom attendance register is more than the daily ritual offered by teachers. The teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) emphasized the importance of the classroom attendance register in placing responsibility on teachers and heads of school to ensure proper record maintenance of the classroom attendance register (TRCN 2021). The failure of accurate maintenance of the register attracts penalties for schools and sanctions from Education authorities (Yakubu & Suleman, 2022). Some serious issues are also linked to neglect of the proper keeping of records such as abuse, child trafficking (Sercombe, 2015).

Therefore teachers are encouraged to comply with Education law demanding accurate keeping of the attendance register to prevent being found guilty of negligence of their duties. This could have some legal implications.

#### **Statement of problem**

The classroom attendance register is for more than a daily ritual. Attendance register is a statutory documents that offers academic monitoring, administrative function and legal role in school and education spheres. In practice, the classroom attendance register provides evidence of students enrollment, attendance trends and can be tendered in administrative or judicial proceedings especially in employment dispute or child related cases.

Despite this clear legal and administrative roles/importance of the classroom attendance register, many secondary school teachers do not fully comprehend its statutory status and legal implications and consequences of the classroom attendance register. Some teachers have laxity on the accurate marking of the classroom attendance register.

There are compromises of the importance of classroom attendance register, with instance of falsification of records, irregularity and in some cases the classroom attendance register are given to the class prefect or captains to handle.

Although education inspectors and authorities often emphasize accurate record keeping of the classroom attendance, register, there seems to be limited awareness among teachers who are the custodians of this record on the legal implication which results in administrative sanctions, disciplinary measures or legal proceedings for negligence of the proper procedures for such a statutory record.

The problem, therefore could be that there are lack of awareness among teachers and ignorance of the legal implications attached to classroom attendance register as a statutory School record. This study therefore examine the extent of teachers awareness of the classroom attendance register as a statutory school record and it's accurate and obligatory maintenance and the legal implications of poor record keeping for the teachers.

### **Research objectives**

Specifically, the study aims to assess the level of awareness of teachers regarding the keeping of classroom attendance register as a statutory school record and the implication of non-compliance for school record keeping with it legal implications.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To extent the teachers level of awareness of the classroom attendance register as a statutory record in schools.
2. To ascertain the determinante or factors that predict teachers awareness of the classroom attendance registers
3. To recommend strategies for improving teachers understanding and management of classroom attendance registers as legal and administrative documents

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

1. What is the level of teachers awareness of the legal implications of classroom attendance registers?
2. Which teacher and school factors (training in record keeping, years of experience, gender school type) predict higher awareness.
3. What are the challenges of keeping classroom attendance registers as a statutory record in secondary schools?

### **Hypotheses**

Ho1: There is no significant difference in awareness between trained and untrained teachers on the legal implications of the classroom attendance register.

Ho2: There is no correlation between years of teaching experience and awareness of legal implications of classroom attendance register.

### **Review of Related Literature**

In schools, record keeping is imperative because Education Law stipulates that such records should be kept. The Federal government compendium of education sectors laws (2022) listed certain documents as mandatory for basic and secondary school and the classroom attendance register is one of them. The classroom attendance register also referred to as class register or school register is a statutory record book. This statutory classification means that register are records whose absence or alteration can attract administrative sanctions and affect legal proceedings (Federal Ministry of Education (2022).)

Despite the popularity of the classroom attendance register in schools there is limited direct empirical research carried out on teachers awareness of the legal implications. Also there are few recent research that documents actually legal cases or sanctions in Nigeria.

The classroom register as standing record in schools related literature is reviewed on these dimensions:-

Classroom attendance register as a statutory record in schools: As mentioned already there may not be direct documents on attendance register and legal implication for teachers but some studies are on education laws. In a research study of Nwabueze & Iheoma 2023, they reported that principals and teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria are unaware of the legal liabilities relating to documents falsification and misconduct and the enforcement is weak in schools. Also in a related study conducted by Nkechi & Momoh (2023) they examined the educational laws in Nigeria: implications for educational managers and planners. The study revealed that many educational managers are not fully aware or informed of the legal implication of education laws. This revelation also include teachers especially the class teacher or form teacher handling the classroom attendance register and his duties These studies suggest that the classroom attendance register like other statutory record expected to be kept in schools are just regarded as routine administrative tool but it's administrator and teachers enforcement and obligation are irregular and unsteady.

Another study by Ayeerun & Unachukwu (2019) on the awareness of education laws and school effectiveness in Ondo State, Nigeria, the study revealed that teachers and principal awareness of education laws positively correlates with perceived school effectiveness, though not specific on classroom register. Ezeaku and Obikeze (2020) investigated teachers knowledge of Education Laws and their implementation in secondary schools in Anambra State. The study reported that teachers were not reliable in record keeping and lacked understanding of legal obligations for official records.

In the empirical work by Dahuru and Yahaya (2023), they reported that many schools maintained the attendance register as a record kept by teachers but it was revealed that the legal awareness among staff varied from school to school. This emphasizes the level of the awareness of the legal implication of the classroom attendance register. Though teachers in the secondary school understand the importance of the attendance register but mark the register daily as a routine record as opined by Ayayi (2008) few appreciate it's legal implications

The legal implications of the classroom attendance register is very crucial and all teachers must be aware of it. National industrial court of Nigeria based in Abuja Nigeria have record of cases where attendance register were tendered as evidence. Example of such cases include: Mr Chukwruneye Iwuchukwruneye Mbele verses post primary school, (Imo State) and Mrs Edith Ogedengbe v.post-primary education board (Edo State). The attendance registers were used as documentary exhibit by the national industrial court and administrative tribunal in the dispute procedures ([nicad.gov.ng](http://nicad.gov.ng)/[ngnicnadr.gov.ng](http://ngnicnadr.gov.ng)). It should be noted that where registers are used in dispute procedures this could lead to termination of appointment, suspension, interdiction and other punishments as stated in education laws for teachers misconduct (Peretimode ) most of this disputes could be as results of unplanned attractions, and incompetencies in record keeping with the attendance registers.

Outside Nigeria in Kenya as reported by new Kenyan law (2019) in case of Republic Cabinets Secretarial Ministry of Education science and technology and for other ex-partre Floppeeze secondary schools, it was established that during inspection at the examination centre, there where discrepancies in the attendance register and the students who were present on ground. Attendance register of the students in the school differed from students in the examination Centre which was standard as an exhibit ([new.kenyaaw.org](http://new.kenyaaw.org))

The classroom attendance register is a mandatory and statutory school record (FRN, 2022) as the Federal government of Nigeria's compendium of education sector laws upholds the importance of the attendance register Added to this, is the responsibility and trust by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) demanding that teachers and heads of schools should ensure that school records are proper and accurately kept in schools. (TRCN, 2021). As reported by Okon and Odu (2020) improper and inaccurate keeping of the attendance register attract disciplinary sanction. In some cases, the classroom attendance register become an evidence to be tendered in court in dispute for example Mbele past primary school Board (2017) and agedengbe v.post primary Education Board in Edo State (2019).

Although there are limited direct researches specifically on the attendance register and teachers awareness on the legal implications but the attendance register is more than an administrative tool. The empirical studies revealed limited teachers awareness of the attendance register as a legal tender/exhibit in dispute proceedings which has implications for teachers in accordance with education law.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is based on the Record Management Theory of Ricks (1993). Ricks (1993) in his book of information and image management; a record system approach emphasized the importance ensuring effective record management. He imprudently noted that keeping of records should possess qualities of authenticity, accuracy

and accessibility as long as the records existed. Adapting this theory to the keeping of classroom attendance register as a statutory school record and also administrative handbook, the classroom attendance register always give evidence of students attendance to school and absence from school. Teachers are labeled as form teachers or class teachers who are custodians of the attendance register. Teachers in charge of these attendance register are solely responsible for the preservation, accurate keeping and kept with confidentiality, knowing that there is accountability to education authorities.

Another theory is the Accountability Theory of Bovens (2007) which states that individuals or institutions with responsibilities of being answerable for their actions and decisions to the appropriate authorities. Relating this theory to classroom attendance register therefore mean that in a school setting, a class teacher who handles the classroom attendance register is a person who is in charge of the students in his class and capable for their welfare and as the same time acting as the sole person accountable to parents of the student, school and education authorities. The teachers has the obligations to be transparent, diligence in keeping the attendance register. At the same time, the teacher must avoid errors of falsification and negligence of duty which could constitutes professional misconduct leading to legal consequences in essence. The accountability theory provides platform for teachers to be aware of his position as a custodian of a record which has legal implications and has the duty to the commitment of keeping the classroom attendance with all sincerity and dedication to duty.

These two theories prepares the teacher knowledge of the awareness of the legal implications of the classroom attendance and prepared for the adherence to accurate and transparency in keeping classroom attendance register as a statutory record in school.

### Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, using a cross-sectional survey design. The population consisted of secondary school teachers drawn from the North senatorial district of Delta state comprising of nine local government areas. Both public and private secondary schools, were used for the study. The sample comprised of 2400 teachers drawn via stratified convenience sampling across Urban and rural secondary schools (public and private). The instrument was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was developed in four parts (1) demographic and gender, years of teaching experience, school type; (2) training exposure; (iii) classroom attendance register practice items and (iv) legal awareness scale items. Pre-service were administered to obtain reliability coefficient and the scale demonstrated good internal constituency which yielded cronbach's a = 0.86.

Questionnaire where administered by the researcher with the assistants of the vice principals Administration in the selected schools. The questionnaire was purposefully administered on form/ class teachers who handled the classroom attendance register.

Analysis of data included descriptive, statistics, reliability testing (cronbach's) logistic regression while t-test and Pearson correlation where used for testing the hypotheses. Statistical significance threshold set at  $p < 0.5$

### Data presentation/analysis

**Table 1:** Demographic characteristics of Respondents

N=2400

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CAL%
Gender	Male	1080	45	100
	Female		55	
Type of school	Public	140	58.3	100
	Private	100	41.7	
Training in record keeping	Yes	1360	56.7	100
	No	1040	43.3	
Yes of teaching experience	1-5 years	560	23.3	100
	6-10 years	900	37.5	
	Above 10 years	940	39.1	

Source: field survey 2025

The demographic analysis on the respondents n=2400. Gender male: 1080 (45%) and female 1320(55%). School type public school 140 (58.3%) and private school – 100 (41.7%)

Teachers who had training on record keeping in schools 1360 (56.7%) and 1040 (43.3%) had no training.

Years of teaching experience 1-5 years 560(23.3%) 6-10 years 900 (37.5%) and above 10 years 940(39.1%)

**Research question 1:** What is the level of teachers awareness of the legal implications of the classroom attendance register?

**Table 2:** Level of teachers awareness of the legal implications of the classroom attendance registers

<i>Awareness level</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very low	200	8.3
Low	360	15.0
Moderate	720	30.0
High	780	32.5
Very high	340	14.2
Total	2400	100

Mean  $x^2 = 3.30$  (SD = 1.08)

From the table to on the teachers level of awareness of the legal implications of classroom attendance register, majority of teachers (1840:76.7%) had more treats to very high awareness however a proportion of (560;23.3%) reported very low and very low awareness of the legal implications of the classroom attendance register. These suggest that some teachers may not fully understand the legal responsibilities died to attendance register in cases of absenteeism safety or audits. The mean score ( $x=3.30$ , SD = 1.08 shows that teachers generally have a moderate to high level of awareness and about 66.7% (high and very high) of the teachers are well informed about the legal implications; while 23.3%(low and very low) show limited understanding of the legal implications of the classroom attendance registers.

**Research question 2:** Which teacher and school factors (training in record keeping, years of teaching experience, gender and school type) predict higher awareness?

**Table 3:** Teacher and school factors of training in record keeping, years of teaching experience, gender and school type as predictors of higher awareness

Logistic regression coefficient table

<i>Predictor variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.p</i>	<i>Exp B Odds Ratio</i>
Constant	-1.230	0.320	14.79	1	0.006	-
Training in keeping of records	0.812	0.172	22.25	1	0.000	2.25
Yes of teaching experience	0.395	0.166	6.08	1	0.014	1.48
Yes of teaching experience > 10 years	0.623	0.181	11.84	1	0.001	1.86
Gender male	0.128	0.150	0.73	1	0.393	1.14
School type public	0.356	0.171	4.34	1	0.37	1.43

**Table 3** revealed that training in record keeping has the strongest positive influence ( $B=0.813$   $p<0.00$ ) showing that teachers who received training were significantly more aware of the legal implications of classroom attendance register.

Years of teaching experience also contributed positively 0-10 years ( $B<395$ ,  $p<0.037$ )

School type showed that public school is mild but significant predictor  $B= 0.356$ ,  $P< 0.037$

Gender is not statistically significant  $B = 0.128$ ,  $p< 393$

**Research question 3:** What are the challenges encountered by teachers in the practice of keeping classroom attendance register as a statutory record in secondary schools?

**Table 4:** Challenges encountered by teachers in the practice of keeping classroom attendance register as a statutory record in secondary schools

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Frequency</i> <i>N=2400</i>	<i>Percentages</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	Insufficient monitoring of attendance registered by school authorities	1206	50.25	Accepted
2	Teachers workload make it difficult to consistently maintain accurate records of attendance registers	1118	46.58	Not accepted
3	Marking of classroom attendance register are neglected by teachers	1216	50.66	Accepted
4	In schools, classroom attendance registers are not provided by school administrators	982	40.91	Not accepted
5	Lack of knowledge of weekly summary of the attendance register make some teachers to mark all students present to obtain (100%) percent attendance	1228	51.16	Accepted

The result of data analysis in table 4 reviewed the challenges teachers faced or encountered in the practice of maintaining classroom attendance register as a statutory record in secondary schools.

It shows that insufficient monitoring of attendance registers, neglect of the making of attendance register by teachers and lack of knowledge of weekly summary of the attendance register makes some teachers to Mark all students present to obtain 100% percent attendance where the major challenges with frequencies of 1206 (50.25%) 1216(52.66%) and 1228(51.16%) respectively where accepted as the major challenges. The scores above average of 50%. However, teachers workload as difficulty in maintaining accurate attendance register records 1118(46.58%) and the non-provision of classroom attendance registers by school administrators 982 (40.91%) were not accepted it as challenges because they were below the average school of 50%

## Hypothesis

### Hypothesis 1

Ho1: There is no significant difference between trained teachers and untrained teachers in record keeping on the legal implications on the classroom attendance register.

**Table 5:** Independent t-test analysis of significant difference between trained and untrain teachers in keeping classroom attendance register

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN(X)</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>T.CRITICAL</b>	<b>P.VAL</b>
Trained teachers	1360	76.45	8.50	11.86	2260	1.96	001
Untrained teachers	1040	72.10	9.20				

From the t-test analysis the  $x_{cal.t} = 11.86, t_{1=90} (a=0.05)$  - two tailed  $P < 0.001$ . the calculated t- value is greater than the critical t- value, therefore the hypothesis Ho is rejected.

Therefore, it is concluded that there is a significant difference between trained and untrained teachers in their awareness of the legal implications of classroom attendance registers.

Train teachers had a higher (Mean = 76.45 which should hire awareness than untrained teachers (Mean 72.10)

Ho2: There is no correlation between years of teaching experience and awareness of legal implications of classroom attendance registers

Pearson correlation coefficient (P) was employed to test the hypothesis

**Table 6:** Relationship between years of teaching experience and awareness of legal implications of classroom attendance registers.

Correlation analysis table

Group	N	Mean (X)	SD	N	T value	df	P. value	Decision $\alpha=0.05$
Less experienced teachers	560	70.20	9.66					
Experienced teachers	1840	76.80	8.90	0.31	15.96	2398	<0.0001	Reject Ho

Since  $P = 0.31$ ,  $t=15.96 > 1.96$  critical value at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. Meaning there was a moderate positive correlation between years of teaching experience and awareness of the record keeping of the classroom attendance registers as statutory record with legal implications.

### Discussion of findings

The findings of this study showed that teachers in secondary schools have moderate level of awareness on the legal implication of the classroom attendance register as statutory record in schools. Some of the teachers had limited understanding of the legal implications of the classroom attendance registers. This is partially in agreement with Nkechi and Momoh (2023) who reported in their study that many education managers are not fully aware or informed of the legal implications of education laws.

The study revealed that teachers who had received training in record keeping were significantly more aware of the legal implications of the classroom attendance register. This study align with Dahuru and Yahaya (2023) in their empirical work where they reported that though teachers kept the attendance registers, but the degree of the legal awareness varied among staff from school to school. This was also buttressed by Ajayi (2018) who asserted that only few teachers appreciated the legal implications of the classroom attendance registers. This recent results reveals the importance of training of teachers on record keeping at the teachers preparation level and as professional development while in service.

From the study, there are reported challenges to the practice of keeping the classroom attendance registers. These include insufficient monitoring by school authorities, lack of knowledge for weekly registered summary by teachers, and negligence of accurate register marking by teachers.

The research showed that trained teachers performed their duties better than on untrained teachers in the knowledge of the legal implications of the classroom attendance registers. While there was a reported moderate positive correlation between years of experience of teachers and awareness of legal implications in the keeping of the attendance registers. This gaps, is in line with the reports of Yakubu and Suleiman (2022) of weak record keeping culture in Nigerian schools. Training on record keeping and experience are necessary tools for professional teachers during service.

### Conclusion

Classroom attendance register is a statutory record maintained in both public and private secondary schools. There was a moderate awareness level of the significance of attendance registers among teachers. Some teachers recognize the attendance register as a routine daily classroom administrative tool but there was limited awareness of the legal implications. Training on record keeping and years of teachers experience in service predicted higher awareness. Therefore training and professional development is necessary to safeguard teachers. Education authorities should step up supervision to raise the legal implications of the attendance register and teachers compliance to the keeping of the attendance register not merely a pedagogical tool but a statutory record with significant status of legal administrative and listed as a mandatory school record in the compendium of Education Sector Laws.

## Recommendation

The study, on the basis of the above results, recommends as follows:

1. The curricula for teacher education should be improved to include courses on record keeping and emphasizes should be on training teachers on the crucial need to adhere to the proper record keeping of the attendance register and its legal responsibilities.
2. For teachers in service, there should be ongoing professional development on training on record keeping in schools. Mandatory documents stipulated by the Federal Ministry of Education (2019) and the Federal government compendium of education sector laws where the attendance register is a mandatory school record (FRN 2022), therefore regular in service training on the attendance register should be given to teachers.
3. The educational authorities also known as education inspectors should carry out regular inspections to ensure compliance by teachers on the accurate and proper keeping of the attendance register
4. The school heads/principles of secondary schools should provide registers to teachers and ensure early supply to avoid irregularities in marking of the attendance register.
5. On school basis, regular supervision should be conducted by headteachers, heads of departments or unit to audit registers. Teachers should submit attendance registers on weekly basis to their head teachers to ensure proper and accurate record keeping.

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