

TEACHERS' PERSONALITY INDICES AS CORRELATES OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated teachers' personality indices (professional status, experience and career interest) as correlates of students' academic achievement in Senior Secondary School core subjects in Ijebu-Ode area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The aim was to identify teacher personality indices in order to re-focus attention on such indices especially as they relate to students' academic achievement in public secondary schools. Four null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data collection was done using the 'Teacher Personality Index Questionnaire' ($r = .92$) and 'Core Subjects Achievement Test' ($r = .86$) constructed by the researchers. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings inferred from the results revealed significant correlation between teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement ($r = .83$; $p < .05$); teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement ($r = .78$; $p < .05$); and teachers' job experience and students' academic achievement ($r = .74$; $p < .05$). Therefore, it was recommended that teachers should be encouraged and given incentives to raise their professional status and career interest while the less experienced teachers should be encouraged to learn from the more experienced ones through a period of mentorship.

Keywords: teachers' professional status, job commitment and students' academic achievement.

Background of the Study

The central concern of schools and societies funding them is students' academic achievement. Thus, the rising rate of students' academic under-achievement especially in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations in

Nigeria for almost a decade now continues to pose a lot of challenges to students' future aspirations and development and portends some grave dangers to national development. For many years, researchers have debated which school variables influence students' academic performance, some schools of thought suggested that schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context (Hammond, 2000).

At the heart of the school system is the teacher and this is why whenever there is mass failure of students especially in public examinations, people tend to see such failure as an indictment on the teachers. The tendency is to presume that when students failed to make basic academic achievements, their teachers are at fault. Definitely, the teachers are not the sole determinants of students' academic achievement; many other variables interplay some of which have to do with the learners, government, society, and the level of exposure in life (Ebele & Olofu, 2017). However, the present study focuses on some personality factors that have to do with the teacher and how these correlate with students' academic achievement.

Teachers' Job Experience and Students' Academic Achievement

Experience is an attribute that comes with repeated performance and with variable results over a period of time. Experience is also a positive attribute, since repeated performance has an element of learning mistakes made are noted and when correlations are made, knowledge of why mistakes were made as well as learning of better ways of achieving correct results are learnt. In the same vein success achieved at first attempt, brings positive learning (Akiri, 2013).

Thus, a teacher with many years of experience in a school system is very likely to utilize resources better and bring about enhanced academic achievement than a "Sophomore" or a relatively inexperienced teacher. Sembering and Livingstone (1981) in a study conducted using 124 secondary schools in Indonesia found a strong positive relationship between teachers' experience and students' academic performance. In another study, the magnitude of this factor was comparative only to the influence of expenditures per pupil in a simple model that included just seven other school factors. Each of these two predictions achievements was stronger than the student social class background Otufale (2006).

Gbadamosi (2001) described teacher's personality as "the traits or qualities possessed by individual teacher". This could be otherwise called teacher's factor. They include pedagogical skill, leadership qualities initiation, creativity, humour, integrity, maturity and the host of others. As their duty involves character building, they must at all times serve as models to their student, this is because students attach much worth to any information they get from their teachers even more than those ones from their parents.

Teachers' Professional Status and Students' Academic Achievement

Ajayi (1992), observed that teacher education is the key to any educational development, for without adequately trained teachers, no country can hope to expand her educational facilities. The government being aware of teachers' vital role in the educational system, indicated in the policy document on education that no education system can equate the quality of its teacher and as such, teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all the government educational planning. Manson (1991) opined that the quality of the teacher is an important input in effective learning, since the quality output demands quality input. Taiwo (1993), pointed out that teachers are very vital in any educational system as they are the ones who interpret the aims and the goals of education; he advised that this important work force should be available in sufficient number so as to be able to cope with the constant increase in students' enrolment.

Mandlem (1994), acknowledges the importance of teacher, equipment and other servicing factors in any educational development. In his word "Educational system is a rather complex mechanized production system. The basic raw materials proceed through the educational system for specific length of time. From one level to another they are transformed by the action of teachers; equipment and other servicing factor into educated or partially educated people.

In the secondary education system according to Adjai (1990) the teacher's role is to help his pupils to acquire knowledge and skills in his subject area. The teacher's task is two folds: to offer knowledge and skills in his subject discipline and also to use various ways and means to aid his pupils to learn how to employ their own talent to acquire the skills that the teacher teaches them. The teacher thereby becomes the presenter of organized materials to be learnt.

Teachers' Career Interest and Students' Academic Achievement

Low academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria has been ascribed to teachers' low career interest as reflected in their teaching tasks, poor attitude to work and inability to sufficiently cater for the needs of their learners (Akiri, 2013). Teachers whose interest in the teaching profession is high are always eager to have their students learn effectively and excel in examinations. However, those whose interest in the job is low tend to neglect most of their professional responsibilities. It has been observed that for students to succeed in their studies, they must be taught by teachers who showed adequate interest in their career and are committed to ensuring that effective learning takes place anytime they have to teach their learners (Ebele & Olofu, 2017).

Academic Achievement:

The fact that effective learning and adequate performance of the pupils in the school system is the ultimate goal of any educational system, therefore there are many things that are responsible for the academic performance in secondary schools generally. Performance, according to Porter and Lawrence (1998), is that variable that refers to how much successful role achievement is accomplished. Various disciplines have different connotations to the concept of performance. Economics is concerned with actual physical units or qualities of output; Industries are concerned with the amount of work done or level of estimate target that was achieved. Sociologists are concerned with how well a thing was done while Educationists are concerned with effective learning (Oni, 1990).

In recent times, reports of large scale educational failure among Nigerian school going adolescents has raised more attention and greater concerns among stakeholders in Nigerian education. Isangedighi (1999) observed that indiscipline, drug addiction, poor socio-economic background of the parents, inadequate motivation on the part of students, lack of information coupled with teachers' nonchalant attitude to work and students' negative self-concept have often resulted into students' inconsistent and poor academic performances. Yoloye (1999) submitted that theories of educational disadvantages and socio-cultural pathology have been most prominent in the explanation of this failure. A growing number of scholars, however, have rejected this latter view and have suggested that many of the problems of learning are the artifacts of discontinuities which are brought about by the separation of learning from real life functions and situations (Fagbemi, 2001) and by the exclusion of the child's language, values and mode of cognition from the school environment (Ugodulunwa, 2007). It seems that the causes of low academic achievement are diverse and cannot be limited to only a single major factor. For instance, proponents of self-concept have found that self-concept with its variables may be a paramount factor in academic failure. Causes of fluctuating performances among students have also been attributed to teacher-student interactions, (Adamu, 1998), intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, (Tukur and Musa, 2001) and classroom behaviour, (Abba, 1997) and other extraneous variables. However, it has been observed that studies on the relationship between teachers' professional status, experience, career interest and students' academic achievement in Nigeria cannot be said to be exhaustive (Ugodulunwa, 2007). Hence, this study focuses on the contributions of teachers' professional status, experience and career interest to students' academic achievement at the senior secondary school level in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Most often, teachers are regarded as the heart of the education system because their quality often determines the overall quality of the education system and by extension students' level of achievement. Thus, this study is designed to investigate some indices of teacher personality specifically teachers' professional status, job experience and career interest as they relate to students' academic achievement at the senior secondary school level.

Purpose of the Study

The objectives of the study are;

- i. To find out the relationship between teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement.
- ii. To determine the relationship between teachers' experience and students' academic achievement.
- iii. To determine the relationship between teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated for testing;

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers' experience and students' academic achievement.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study will not only expand the frontier of knowledge on the topic but inform policies that will help to further enhance the personality of teachers and in the long run improve students' academic achievement. Practising teachers would be able to identify and pay greater attention to those personality indices influencing their students' achievement. It would also help teacher-trainers to integrate such indices into their curriculum in order to assist upcoming teachers in their efforts to become successful teachers.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive research design in form of a survey. The study is concerned with finding out the relationship between teachers' personality indices (professional status, career interest and experience) and students' academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools. The survey approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to reach a sizeable proportion of the

target population using questionnaires as instrument of data collection. The survey approach is useful in eliminating bias and enhancing cost effectiveness in terms of length of study and transportation cost.

Population

The population of this study comprised public senior secondary school teachers of about 1756 in Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The simple random sampling technique was used to select 250 teachers from ten senior secondary schools across the local government area. Participation was completely voluntary as teachers were free to participate or opt out of the project. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses by stating that the responses would be used for research purpose only. At the end 213 copies of the instrument were retrieved and found properly filled to be used for data analysis.

Instrumentation

Data collection was done using the 'Teacher Personality Index Questionnaire (TPIQ)' developed by the researcher. The TPIQ is a 15-item instrument designed to measure teachers' personality indices. Responses were required on a 4-point scale ranging from 'Very true of me' to 'Never true of me'. It was trial tested on a normative sample consisting of secondary school teachers from Odogbolu local government area. Analysis of the responses yielded 0.79 Cronbach alpha indicating high internal consistency. Using the test re-test reliability approach, repeated measures of the TPIQ using the same normative sample yielded 0.82 index of reliability. The current average scores of the students in core subjects (English language, Mathematics, Biology and Civic Education) taught by the respondents were also collected as measures of academic achievement.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researchers along with two research assistants administered the instruments. Permission was obtained from school principals to conduct the study. The respondents were also briefed about the objectives of the study and they were assured that the results would be used for the research purposes only. To further guarantee confidentiality, anonymity of responses was allowed. On the whole, the administration of the instrument took an average of 15 minutes.

Scoring and Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using appropriate inferential statistics. The null hypotheses in particular were tested for significance at 0.05 level using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Results

The results of the data analysis are presented in table 1;

Table 1: Relationship between teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	R	p
Teachers' professional status	213	62.754	2.51	464	.831**	.000
Students' academic achievement	253	47.621	2.63			

Results on table 1 revealed significant positive relationship between teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement ($r = .831$; $p < .05$). Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected. This means that teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement are positively related. The implication is that if the teachers' professional status is high, students' academic achievement is more likely to be enhanced and where teachers' professional status is low, students' academic achievement is more likely to be very low.

Table 2: Relationship between teachers' job experience and students' academic achievement

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	R	P
Teachers' job experience	213	48.478	2.84	464	.782**	.000
Students' academic achievement	253	47.621	2.63			

Results on table 2 revealed significant positive relationship between teachers' job experience and students' academic achievement ($r = .782$; $p < .05$). Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected. This means that teachers' job experience and students' academic achievement are positively related. The implication is that if the teachers' job experience is high, students' academic achievement is more likely to

be enhanced and where teachers' job experience is low, students' academic achievement is more likely to be very low.

Table 3: Relationship between teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	R	P
Teachers' career interest	213	51.745	3.61	464	.741**	.000
Students' academic achievement	253	47.621	2.63			

Results on table 3 revealed significant positive relationship between teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement ($r = .741$; $p < .05$). Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected. This means that teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement are positively related. The implication is that if the teachers' career interest is high, students' academic achievement is more likely to be enhanced and where teachers' career interest is low, students' academic achievement is more likely to be very low.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed significant positive relationship between teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement. Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected. This means that teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement are positively related. This finding further reiterate the clamour for professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. It is worrisome that up till now several people find themselves in classrooms without professional qualifications in teaching. An observation of high positive correlation between teachers' professional status and students' academic achievement indicates that to redress students' academic underachievement, teachers must be professionally qualified and certified. This finding supports Adjai (1990) who also reported that students who were taught by professional teachers performed better in Mathematics in their Senior School Certificate examinations than those who were taught by non-professional teachers. The finding also corroborates Hammond (2000) who concluded that those who teach without earning professional teaching qualifications destroyed students' interest in learning instead of arousing and sustaining it. Thus, to improve students' academic achievement, teachers' professional status must be properly assured through professional training.

The finding of significant positive relationship between teachers' job experience and students' academic achievement is also of considerable importance. The implication is that if the teachers' job experience is high, students' academic achievement is more likely to be enhanced and where teachers' job experience is low, students' academic achievement is more likely to be very low. This is plausible because it has been stated that teaching is both an art and a science; the more one does it, the more he / she becomes better on it (Harmond, 2000). This finding agrees with Akiri (2013) who concluded that highly experienced teachers are more efficient in the classroom than the less experienced teachers. It also lends credence to Ebele and Olofu (2017) who asserted that job experience is essential if teachers must perform well in the classroom.

Furthermore, the finding showed significant positive relationship between teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement ($r = .741$; $p < .05$). Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected. This means that teachers' career interest and students' academic achievement are positively related. The implication is that if the teachers' career interest is high, students' academic achievement is more likely to be enhanced and where teachers' career interest is low, students' academic achievement is more likely to be very low. This finding corroborates Ebele and Olofu (2017) who found that students who were taught by highly satisfied teacher performed better than those whose teachers were found to be less satisfied with teaching as a profession.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study found that teachers' professional status, job experience and career interest among other factors significantly correlated with students' academic achievement. This suggest that for improved students' achievement, efforts must be made to ensure that teachers are professionally qualified and certified; they must have sound teaching experiences and their interest in teaching as a career must be very strong. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should be encouraged and given incentives to raise their professional status and career interest while the less experienced teachers should be encouraged to learn from the more experienced ones through a period of internship. School teachers must acquire necessary professional qualifications in order to raise their professional status. They should be encouraged to acquire sufficient teaching experiences by attending teachers' professional meetings, conferences, workshops and seminars. Enrolment into the teaching profession must be done with due consideration of the career interest of prospective teachers. It is high time the country's best brains are attracted to teaching as profession by improving teachers' conditions of service and professional status in the society.

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