

Teachers' Professional Attitudes and Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State

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Abstract

Teachers are the main driver of quality outputs in secondary schools. The professional attitudes displayed by teacher matters a lot in the educational process. This study investigated teachers' professional attitudes and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State. The survey research design was found suitable for this study. The population of the study consisted of all the secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis. Two instruments Teachers' Professional Attitudes Questionnaire (TPAQ) and Students' Academic Performance Proforma (SAPP) were developed and used for data collection. Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was used to test all the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed a significant relationship between all the sub-variables of the independent variables and students' academic performance. Recommendations were made that teachers should adopt effective verbal communication attitudes, classroom management attitudes and pedagogical attitudes.

Keywords: Teachers' Professional Attitudes, Students' Academic Performance, Communication Attitudes, Subject Mastery Attitudes, Pedagogical Attitude

Introduction

The quality of output produced by any nation is dependent on the quality of its teachers. It is important to say that teachers play a very significant role in determining the quality of education that children receive. The teachers are great determinant in ensuring good academic performance in public examinations. No wonder that it is often said that teacher is a very important resource in any educational system. According to Aina, Ogundele and Olanipekun (2013), of all the resources in the educational system, the most vital educational resources are the teacher. Obadara (2005) opined that teachers are highly essential for the successful operation of the educational system and serves as a key to the educational development.

According to Adedeji (1998), students' performance is a major indices by which the effectiveness and success of any educational institution could be ascertained. A lot of scholars and researchers are of the view that the poor academic performance at the secondary schools is a product of the teacher factor, school factor, home factor, institutional factor and so on. There is a consensus among educationists and researchers such as (Owoeye, 2000; Ajayi, 1998) about secondary school students' poor performance in public examination such as West African Examination council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) in Nigeria. In line with the earlier statement, opinion leaders, commentators, professionals and educationist are always in agreement as to the fact that indeed there is a decline in the academic performance of secondary students in public examinations in Nigeria.

Based on the statement above, some blame the students for this apparent decline in the academic performance. Majority blame the teachers for the problems in our schools. Teachers in turn blame parents and the children. They also blame government for unattractive condition of service and poor physical facilities in some parts of the educational system. However, it should be noted that the students' academic performance is dependent on a number of factors among which is the teachers' professional attitudes. The professional attitudes of a teacher go a long way in bringing about effective performance of students.

The issue of teacher professionalism has to do with teachers adhering to the code of conducts guiding the teaching profession. Nabukenya (2007) opined that teacher professionalism affects the role of the teacher and his or her pedagogy, which in turn affects the students' ability to learn effectively. In the opinion of Odunusi (1999), teachers with right professional attitudes are the hubs of any educational system because it is them the quality and effectiveness of all educational arrangement rests. Teachers are seen as essential pillars of education. No matter how grandiose a school system and its curricula may be, the implementation of its programmes will be fruitless unless competent and effective teachers handle them.

According to Fehintola (2014), in a typical classroom setting, a professional teacher must demonstrate excellence attitudes in his teaching. It shows that teachers must put forth an attitude that will help to transform the learners' positively in the three domains of learning i.e cognitive, affective and psychomotor areas. A professional teacher must demonstrate sound attitudes such as intelligence, neatness and desirable traits. Teacher professional development has influence on a lot of variables such as student motivation, teaching methodologies, communication skills, organization of content and planning of lessons, students' participation during lessons, teacher confidence and knowledge of subject matter (Maende, 2012).

Attitude is the way people reason or acts and most of the times can either make or mar an individual performance while carrying out their tasks and responsibilities. It is often said that attitude may be positive or negative. Negative attitudes displayed in the school by teachers may result in negative performance while positive attitudes put forth by teachers in the school may result into a positive performance. The attitude of a teacher, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly affects students' academic performance. It had been established by scholars such as Shittu and Oanite (2015) that teachers' attitudes highly influence students' interest in learning. Teachers' professional attitude in the areas of communication, classroom management and pedagogy may be a strong factor that could influence students' academic performance in schools. Positive professional attitudes of teachers with

respects to their teaching job will go a long way in bringing about positive performance of the students while negative attitudes demonstrated by teachers in the discharge of their responsibilities may mar students' academic performance.

Context and Review of Literature

In a study carried out by Adu and Olatundun (2007), it was discovered that teachers' characteristics influences students' performance in secondary schools. Grieser found out that successful classroom management enhances students questioning and exploration when the learning environment is conducive and suitable for learning. Teachers' professional classroom management is the methods and strategies used by teachers to bring about healthy environments for teaching and learning. Adesoji and Olatunbosun (2008) asserted in their study that student attitude was related to teacher characteristics.

In the work of Wirth and Perkins (2013), it was revealed that teacher's attitude contributed significantly to student attention in classrooms. Mucella, Melis and Ahu (2011) investigated the effects of teachers' attitudes on students' personality and performance in Istanbul Turkey. The finding from their study showed that teachers' positive attitudes have positively influence students' personality as well as their life performances.

A study on the effects of teacher characteristics and attitudes on student achievement in Kcse economics examination was conducted by Kurgat and Gordon (2014). The findings of their study revealed that teachers have a positive attitude towards the subject thus poor performance could be attributed to other factors than teacher attitudes. This therefore meant that teacher's attitude directly affected students' attitude.

A study on the relationship that exists between teachers' characteristics as correlates of students' academic performance among secondary school students in Saki-west local government area of Oyo State was carried out by Fehintola (2014). The findings of the study showed a significant relative contribution between teachers' characteristics to academic performance of the participants. Ojo (2017) carried out a study on teachers' instructional communication abilities as correlates of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egbeda Local Government Area of Oyo State. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between teachers' instructional communication abilities and students' academic performance in secondary schools.

The gap identified by the researcher is that earlier studies did not focus altogether on the two variables of this study. Another noticeable gap that warranted this study is that the locale or area of study of this present study differs considerably from the earlier studies. It is on the basis of this background that this study was conducted to investigate the relationship that exist between teachers' professional attitudes and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The issues of poor students' performance in public examinations in secondary schools have been carried out by a lot of researchers in Nigeria but the results are

inconclusive. The low academic performance of students in Nigeria could be attributed to low quality of teachers employed in schools (Oluremi, 2013). A lot of factors have been adjudged as the causes of poor students' academic performance which are related to teachers' professional attitudes, chief among which are: teachers' poor communication attitudes, poor classroom management attitudes, poor pedagogical attitudes and poor mastery of subject matter by teachers. It is on the basis of these problems that this study was carried out.

Purpose of the Study

This study was carried out to investigate the relationship that exists between teachers' professional attitudes and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State. Specifically, other objectives of this study were to:

- i. examine teachers' professional communication attitudes and students' academic performance;
- ii. investigate teachers' professional classroom management attitudes and students' academic performance;
- iii. examine teachers' professional pedagogical attitudes and students' academic performance and
- iv. investigate teachers' professional mastery of subject matter attitudes and students' academic performance

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated for this study.

- H1:** Teachers' professional communication attitude has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria.
- H2:** Teachers' professional classroom management attitude has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria.
- H3:** Teachers' professional pedagogical attitude has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria.
- H4:** Teachers' professional mastery of subject matter attitudes has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Method

The survey research design was used for this study because this study sought information from a target respondent. There are 42 public senior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis. The target respondents for this study were all the SS3 students in Secondary Schools in Ilorin Metropolis. The reasons for choosing the students as respondents was because they are in the best position to rate the professional attitudes of their teachers in the classroom. The target population of this study was made up of all the senior secondary school (SS3) students in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria. However, for the purpose of this study, random sampling technique was used to select 14 secondary schools and the same technique was used to select 354 students as participants drawn among the senior secondary school three

(SS3). All the 354 students used for this study were students who offered the four core subject as stated in the instrument.

Two instruments were developed by the researcher to collect data for this study and it was titled "Teachers' Professional Attitudes Questionnaire" (TPAQ) and Students' Academic Performance Proforma (SAPP). The instruments were structured along the four-point likert scale of strongly agreed to strongly disagreed. The TPAQ was structured along the four sub-variables of communication, classroom management, pedagogical, mastery of subject matter attitudes while the SAPP was used to collect the students' results in four core subjects area. The two instruments were validated by two lecturers in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin and a pilot test was conducted to ascertain the reliability co-efficient of the instruments. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instruments by administering the questionnaires to 30 secondary school students that was not part of the schools used in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State at an interval of two weeks. The co-efficient value obtained was .63.

The researcher with two trained research assistants administered all the 354 copies of the questionnaires and only 312 representing (88.13%) were duly retrieved from the respondents and used for data analysis. The data collected from the respondents were tested using Pearson product-moment correlation statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

Ho: Teachers' professional attitudes have no significant relationship with students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 1:

Correlation Matrix of Teachers' Professional Attitudes and Students' Academic Performance

		Students' academic Performance	Teachers' Communication Attitudes	Teachers' Classroom Management Attitude	Teachers' Pedagogical Attitude	Teachers' Subject Mastery
Students' Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.201	.288	.199	.211*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	312	312	312	312	312
Teachers' Communication Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	.201	1	.603**	.593**	.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	312	312	312	312	312
Teachers' Classroom	Pearson Correlation	.288	.603**	1	.586**	.737**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	312	312	312	312	312

Management Attitude	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	312	312	312	312	312
Teachers' Pedagogical Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.199	.593**	.586**	1	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	312	312	312	312	312
Teachers' Subject Mastery	Pearson Correlation	.211*	.612**	.737**	.714**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	312	312	312	312	312

Source: Fieldwork

***P>0.05**

Field Data

There was a strong relationship between teachers' professional attitudes and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis with each of the following: teachers' communication attitude ($r=0.201$), classroom management attitude ($r=0.288$), teachers' pedagogical attitude ($r=0.199$) and teachers' subject mastery ($r=0.211$), at 0.05 significance level. The positive relationship implies that the above sub-variables of professional attitudes have a strong influence on students' academic performance.

Findings

Based on the hypotheses tested in this study, the findings revealed that teachers' professional attitudes have a strong positive relationship with students' academic performance as evidenced in all the sub-variables of the study. The p-value of .000 was less than the significant value of .05 which made all the hypotheses to be rejected. It was found that teachers' communication, classroom management, pedagogical and subject mastery attitude were significantly related with the students' academic performance in Ilorin Metropolis.

Discussion

The finding of this study on table 1 was in agreement with earlier findings by Fehintola (2014) who opined that in a typical classroom setting, a professional teacher must demonstrate excellence attitudes in his teaching. Furthermore, it agreed with the findings of Ojo (2017) which revealed that there was a significant relationship between teachers' instructional communication abilities and students' academic performance in secondary schools. On the hypothesis which was tested on table 2, the finding of this study was similar to the findings of Grieser which revealed that successful classroom management enhances students questioning and exploration when the learning environment is conducive and suitable for learning. It also agreed with the findings of Wirth and Perkins (2013) who revealed that teacher's attitude contributed significantly to student attention in classrooms. Suffix it to say that teachers' professional classroom management attitude focuses on the methods and tactics adopted by teachers to ensure decorum in the classroom and thus create a

healthy and conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning. The finding on table 3 was similar to the findings of Nabukenya (2007), Maende (2012) and Shittu and Oanite (2015) who found that teachers' professionalism in the area of pedagogy affects the students' ability to learn effectively. In line with the result on table 4, the finding was similar to the findings of Maende (2012), Fehintola (2014) and Kurgat and Gordon (2014). Teachers' professional mastery of the subject goes a long way in bringing about improved students' academic performance. It can be said that good mastery of the subject content by teachers affects the students' ability to learn effectively.

Conclusion

This study focused on teachers' professional attitudes. Teachers constitute a major factor in the realization of the goals of secondary education in Nigeria. The study focused on some aspect of professional attitudes expected by a secondary school teacher. Professional attitudes of teachers covered in this study are communication, classroom management, pedagogical and subject mastery. However, other professional attitudes expected of teachers which were not covered by this study can be carried out by future researchers. In the area of methodology, future researchers can expand the sample of study and also used other instrument apart from the questionnaire as a means of collecting data from the respondents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the followings were recommended for improvements

- Teachers should adopt effective verbal communication attitudes while teaching the students in the classroom so as to bring about improved students' performance.
- Classroom management attitudes of teachers should be such that will instill discipline among the students.
- Teachers should develop sound pedagogical attitudes in the three domains of learning so as to enhance the students' performance.
- Teachers should show good mastery of the subject content in their areas of specialization so as to be able to impart the necessary knowledge to their students which will in turn bring about improved students' performance.

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