

Influence of Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies on Junior Secondary School Students' Performance in Social Studies in Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This empirical paper emphasizes on pedagogical competence of teachers which means teacher's understanding of learning materials, design and implementation of learning, evaluation of learning outcomes, and the development of learners to actualize different potentials and in turn enhance their students' performance in social studies. Descriptive survey research designed was used. The population of this study consists of 771 teachers in public junior secondary schools in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria. The simple random sampling technique was adopted. The sample size stood at 263. A questionnaire: Influence of Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies on Junior Secondary School Students' Performance in Social Studies (ITPCJSSSPSS) was used for data collection. Two research questions were answered and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics while hypothesis was tested using chi-square. The finding reveals that teachers' pedagogical competencies in lesson plan and classroom competence; including students' performance are very closely related and important concepts for teachers to improve their performance. However, several factors can limit teachers' pedagogical competencies such as teacher factor, societal factor and poor school resource utilization. This paper provide recommendation for training and retraining of teachers, this will enable them develop their lesson plan competence and classroom assessment competence and in turn enhance students' performance in subjects matters especially in social studies*

Keywords: teachers' pedagogical competence, students' performance, lesson plan competence and class assessment competence

INTRODUCTION

Education is seen as the backbone of development in any nation. It improves the quality of life of a society through refinement of its potentials. Education further enhances the application of man's achievement towards improvement of his environment. In every known great nation, therefore, national development was preceded and accomplished by educational advancement. Today, there is an increasing faith in the casual relationship between education and economic development especially in the developing countries like Nigeria. Education has been seen as a vehicle for economic, social-cultural and political development of nations and individual (Obayan, 2014).

The success or failure of any educational system, whether in developed or developing nations of the world, depends to a large extent on the teachers. Teachers are the hub of the educational system and it has been generally agreed that "No education system can rise above the level of its teachers" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013:2). The teacher is a critical element in the teaching-learning situation. What he does or does not do affects learning in a proud way. According to Farland (2011), research has shown that the quality of teaching makes a considerable difference in students' learning and performance. This implies that the teacher is the key factor in whether a child learns well or not.

Rusillo and Arias (2004) opined that: the teacher is basically saddled with the responsibility of transferring knowledge, skills, attitudes and techniques to his pupils. The teacher makes an attempt to help people to acquire some skills, attitudes, knowledge, ideas and applications. Thus, the teacher's task is to influence or create desirable changes in behaviour in his or her own pupils. The teacher often guides the pupils through a series of planned activities so that his pupils may acquire the highest learning possible from their experiences. According to Farland (2011) the planned activities of the teacher involves classroom instructions, preparation of lesson notes and lesson plan, evaluation of students performance, discipline of the children were necessary, helping in the formulation of the moral values and character of the students, etc, while the students respond positively and contribute meaningfully to the instructions receive through classroom participation of answering questions and asking questions. However, the performance of teachers is highly dependent on his pedagogical competence.

Ani (2008) rightly observed that pedagogical competence deals with the teacher's understanding of learning materials, design and implementation of learning, evaluation of learning outcomes, and the development of learners to actualize different potentials. The author outlined teachers' pedagogical competence to include the following sub-components: lesson planning, interaction competence, classroom assessment competence, knowledge of classroom arrangement and interaction competence to be very important in the teaching learning process. This in turn leads to the achievement of set objectives and the consequent interest of the learners to continue in the learning process.

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Pedagogical competence is an underlying characteristic of a person related to the effectiveness of teachers' performance. Pedagogical competence is the basis of the teachers' personal characteristic that is the deciding factor in the success or failure of the job they perform (McClelland, 2003). The reason is that, if teachers properly design the learning process according to the needs of the students and implement the learning process by using various methods/learning strategies, competence will be attained and students' academic excellence/ academic performance will be achieved. Moeheriono (2009) disclosed that pedagogical competences are decisive tools used to predict the success of a teacher in the classroom. The competence of a teacher in teaching plays an important role in facilitating academic excellence among students. This implies that a teacher who displays good pedagogical competence in teaching will teach the learners correctly. In other words, a better understanding of pedagogical competence by the teacher may foster learning on the part of the teacher which will further enhance students' performance in Social Studies.

The objectives of the secondary school Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria include: to develop in students positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and curricular cooperation towards a healthy nation through the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice; to enable the students contribute to the development of the nation; to create awareness that discipline is essential for an orderly society (NERDC, 2012). Most teachers need a reasonable mastering of the course to teach the students effectively. Besides, Social Studies instructions aim at inculcating the desired norms and values of the society in the learners' behaviours. This of course is largely dependent on the teachers' ability as the facilitator of knowledge, the material used and the method to be adopted in order to pass across the relevant knowledge required.

Looking at the percentage performance failure rate from the field survey of the Upper Basic students I and II in Social Studies in Kontagora Local Government Area (LGA), between 2013 to 2017, there are indications of geometric increases in the percentages of failure in their terminal examinations, thus: In 2013 the failure rate was 61.55%, in 2014 it increased to 63.49%, in 2015 the percentage of failure rose to 73.73%, which also increased to 74.48% in 2016 and 80.56% in 2017 accordingly. It is worrisome to note that students at this level have continued to perform below expectation as a result of persistent decline in their performance in Social Studies. It will be a calamity on their overall performance when they write Junior School Certificate Examinations.

Efforts so far made at addressing the seemingly poor performance of students in Social Studies does not seem to provide the desired result. From past efforts that the problems have not been either correctly diagnosed, or the solutions provided have not been adequate enough to ameliorate the situation. The problem of dwindling performance of Upper Basic students in Social Studies has continued to be a central problem to stakeholders in the academic environment. This has a negative overall effect on the economy. Students' poor performance in Social Studies in Kontagora Local Government Area may have been affected by lack of competent teachers of Social Studies

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK in terms of lesson planning, instructional media, classroom assessment competence, classroom arrangement and classroom interaction. However, this paper will focus on two (2) possible factors – competency of teachers in lesson planning and classroom assessment.

Lesson planning is a special skill that is learned in much the same way as other competence. It is one thing to surf the internet to retrieve lesson plans from other sites and adapt them to your needs. It is quite another thing to have the skill to develop your own lesson plans. When a teacher is able to adequately plan a lesson, it means the teacher has taken a giant step towards "owning" the content expected to be taught and the methods used in teaching. It takes thinking and practice to have the skill, and it will not happen overnight, but it is a skill that will help to define a professional teacher. Knowing "how to" is far more important than knowing "about" when it comes to lesson plans, and it is one of the important markers along the way to becoming a professional teacher. Teachers prepare instructions to suit whatever they may want to teach in the classroom. Carter and Nunan (2001) believed that almost all lesson plans developed by teachers contain students learning objectives, instructional procedures, the required materials, and some written description of how the students will be evaluated. Many experienced teachers often reduce lesson plans to a mental map or short outline. New teachers, however, usually find detailed lesson plans to be indispensable, it is a skill that will serve teachers in the teaching/learning process.

Classroom assessment and evaluation are highly concerned with qualitative judgments that are used to improve students' knowledge and learning. Assessment and evaluation also give teachers useful information about the ways of improving teaching methods. Through the use of appropriate classroom assessment strategies and techniques, teachers can increase the students' motivation and show them how well they have learned the language. Evaluation goes beyond students' achievements and language assessments it also considers all aspects of teaching and learning and to look at how educational decisions can be informed by the results of alternative forms of assessment and evaluation. From the foregoing, it is obvious to say that the basic role of the teacher in the classroom is to develop, administer and analyze the lesson to the understanding of the students. Therefore, assessment provides feedback on the effectiveness of instruction in Social Studies which is a necessary measure of academic progress. Classroom assessment and evaluation under the active management of Social Studies teachers can also serve as an important professional development purpose since the information resulting from such evaluations provides teachers with valuable feedback about their instructional effectiveness that they can use to develop and improve their professional competence.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this research work is to examine influence of teachers' pedagogical competencies on junior secondary school students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine how teachers' lesson plan competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

2. To ascertain how teachers' classroom assessment competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. How does teachers' lesson plan competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria?
2. How does teachers' classroom assessment competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria?

Statement of Hypothesis

Based on the objectives of the study and the stated research questions, two (2) null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

HO1: There is no significant influence of teachers' lesson plan competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

HO2: There is no significant influence of teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research to examine influence of teachers' pedagogical competencies on junior secondary school students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria. A Population of 771 teachers in public junior secondary schools in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria, was used. Simple random sampling procedure was used in determining the sample. Taro Yamene formulae (1973: 723) was used in determining the sample size of the study. Applying the equation to a population of 771 teachers at a 5% (0.05) level of significance, the sample size is therefore 263. The level of significance indicates the confidence the researcher has on the sample that the subjects drawn, has all the characteristics of the population. The level of significance in management and social sciences is arbitrarily fixed at 5%, this means that we are 95% confident that the sample members have all the essential characteristics of the population.

A 10 – item researchers made questionnaire with four- point modified Likert rating scale of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A) and Disagreed (D) strongly disagreed (SD) was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated through Peers review and the reliability co –efficient of 0.81 was derived by administering the questionnaire twice at two weeks interval to ten teachers outside the zone of the study, using Split Half reliability estimate.

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The instrument was personally administered to the teachers. Descriptive statistics in mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. Chi-square was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results of the findings are presented in tables 1 and 2.

The data collated from research question one was analyzed in the table below using descriptive statistics (Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation).

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Respondents on how teachers lesson plan competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1.	Teachers' lesson plan competence in the planning of social studies cognitive learning will enhance students' performance	120	100	23	20	3.35	0.68	Agree
2.	Teachers' lesson plan competence in the planning of social studies affective learning will enhance students' performance	100	105	30	28	3.44	0.57	Agree
3.	Teachers' lesson plan competence in the planning of social studies psychomotor learning will enhance students' performance	110	115	20	18	3.37	0.68	Agree
4.	Teachers' lesson plan competence in the planning of social studies summative evaluation will enhance students' performance	115	110	21	17	3.33	0.69	Agree
5.	Teachers' lesson plan competence in the planning of social studies formative evaluation will enhance students' performance	105	100	31	27	3.23	0.79	Agree
Cluster Mean						3.34		Agree

Source: Field Study 2024

Table 1 shows that items 1-5 had mean scores of 3.35, 3.44, 3.37, 3.33 and 3.23 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.68, 0.57, 0.68, 0.69 and 0.79 respectively. Based on the criteria for

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK decision making, it means that all the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.34 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviation scores of the respondents are small signifying homogeneity for the items raised. This implies that teachers lesson plan competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria.

The data collated from research question two was analyzed in the table below using descriptive statistics (Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation).

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Respondents on how teachers' classroom assessment competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
6.	Teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' cognitive learning in social studies will help in improving their performance	110	115	20	18	3.55	0.62	Strongly Agree
7.	Teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' affective learning in social studies will help in improving their performance	115	110	21	17	3.40	0.66	Agree
8.	Teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' psychomotor learning in social studies will help in improving their performance	105	100	31	27	3.37	0.71	Agree
9.	Teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' summative evaluation in social studies will help in improving their performance	120	100	23	20	3.43	0.64	Agree
10.	Teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' formative evaluation in social studies will help in improving their performance	100	115	20	18	3.64	0.57	Strongly Agree
Cluster Mean						3.48		Agree

Source: Field Study 2024

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Table 2 shows that items 6-10 had mean scores of 3.55, 3.40, 3.37, 3.43 and 3.64 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.62, 0.66, 0.71, 0.64 and 0.57 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that all the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.48 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviation scores of the respondents are small signifying homogeneity for the items raised. This implies that teachers' classroom assessment competence influence students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Test of Hypothesis

The statement of hypothesis is tested using chi-square at 0.05 significance level.

HO1: There is no significant influence of teachers' lesson plan competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Table 3:

Chi-square test on influence of teachers' lesson plan competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	Df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	20	226.5	-221.5	0.05	3	650.26	0.00	Sig.
D	23	226.5	-159.5					
A	100	226.5	200.5					
SA	120	226.5	180.5					

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 226.5

Table 3 revealed that χ^2 -cal = 650.26, at df = 3 and p = 0.00. Since p-value of 0.00 < 0.05 at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of teachers' lesson plan competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria was therefore, rejected. This implies that there is significant influence of teachers' lesson plan competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria.

HO2: There is no significant influence of teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Table 4:

Chi-square test on influence of teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	Df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	17	226.5	-209.5	0.05	3	728.50	0.00	Sig.
D	21	226.5	-195.5					
A	110	226.5	181.5					
SA	115	226.5	223.5					

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 226.5.

Table 4 revealed that χ^2 -cal = 728.50, df = 3 and p = 0.00. Since p-value of 0.00 < 0.05 at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria was therefore, rejected. This means that there is significant influence of teachers' classroom assessment competence on students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study which sets out to ascertain influence of teachers' pedagogical competencies on junior secondary school students' performance in social studies in Kontagora LGA, Niger state, Nigeria revealed that, teachers pedagogical competencies in lesson plan and classroom competence; including students performance are very closely related and important concepts for teachers to improve their performance, pedagogical competence is a basic demand that must be met by teachers who intend to become professional teachers in carrying out their teaching activities, To become a professional teacher, one is required to have the competence and ability of transferring knowledge efficiently and effectively. However, several factors can limit teachers' pedagogical competencies such as teacher factor, societal factor and poor school resource utilization. Teacher factor has to do with uncooperativeness of teachers in following the direction of innovative teaching methods, societal factor deals with the need for societal employment opportunities which then leads to recruitment of unprofessional teachers with poor educational background who can hardly implements various teaching methods in ensuring innovative teaching and learning, poor school resource utilization involves the inability of teachers' to make use of the available resources in the school to guide students into academic performance in subjects matters especially in social studies.

CONCLUSION

Good teachers are recognized for their passion for “subject knowledge” they teach and their support and encouragement in helping students to achieve their best, and perhaps above all, their wholesome personality. Competence is one of the leadership qualities needed in professional development to produce teachers who are change-agents. The change in students’ performance in Social Studies could be said to have a strong relationship with the teachers’ pedagogical competencies such as; lesson planning competence and classroom assessment competence. It is imperative to make sure that secondary school teachers have the essential competencies they require in order to be effective in the classroom this could be key in raising levels of students’ attainment; encouraging teachers to continue developing and extending their competencies is vital in a fast-changing world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) Teachers should intensify efforts in developing their knowledge of subject matter through the attendance of seminars and workshops; this will enable them develop their lesson plan competence and in turn enhance students’ performance in subjects matters especially in social studies
- 2) Teachers should intensify efforts in developing their knowledge of subject matter through the attendance of conferences and in-service trainings; this will enable them develop their classroom assessment competence and in turn enhance students’ performance in subjects matters especially in social studies

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