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FACTORS EFFECTING TEACHER QUALITY PRACTICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN AWKA EDUCATIONAL ZONE, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study examines the factors effecting teacher quality practices in public primary schools in Awka Educational Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria. The study aims to ascertain the factors that constitute, effect, as well as improve teachers' quality practices. Three research questions were developed for the study. The study sample consisted of 120 primary school teachers in Awka Education Zone. Based on the data collected via a questionnaire, the analysis resulted in the following findings that teacher quality practices include: delivering high quality student-centered instruction, promoting high levels of student engagement, clear assessment strategies for students learning, using positive behavior management strategies, and evidence of student learning. The study also revealed factors that mitigate against teacher quality practices are unconducive environment for teaching and learning, insufficient classrooms for students, delay in paying teacher salaries, inadequate facilities to help achieve instructional objectives, poor teacher preparation and qualifications. Suggestions were made by respondents and additional recommendations were suggested by the researchers to ensure and improve teachers' quality practices.

Keywords: Teacher Quality Practice, Teacher Education, Nigeria Primary Education.

Introduction

A teacher is a person whose occupation is teaching others especially children. A teacher is also someone who instructs others or provides activities, materials and guidance that facilitate learning in either formal or informal situation. Per Ighohiro (2012), teachers are those who mold student character, personality and show students the right direction to success. Ryan and Cooper (1998) explain that a teacher must demonstrate a repertoire of teaching skills that are believed to facilitate students learning and must display attitudes that foster learning and genuine human relationship. They emphasize that teachers are required to make many decisions as they plan for instruction, implement teaching strategies, and evaluate outcome of their planning and strategies.

Teachers are the main determinants of quality in education and are expected to be effective and committed. Hanushek and Rivkin, (2004) describe effective teachers as consistently obtaining good results from students, while ineffective teachers produce low learning growth. Therefore, according to Richard (2002), a quality teacher is said to be an effective teacher. Studies, such as Richard (2002) and Ferguson (1991) focused on investigating total teacher effectiveness revealed that in a single school year, students who were assigned to an effective teacher could gain a full grade level more than those students who were assigned to an ineffective teacher. Therefore, their studies' observations defined quality teachers in a way that is of most interest to student achievement gain which is the main aim of education. This is also affirmed in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2006) that no educational system can rise above the quality of the teachers in the system. In other words, the quality of teachers in an educational system determines the quality of the system because teachers are policy implementers.

Education in Nigeria is faced with poor levels of teaching and learning and prevalent moral decadence in the society. These conditions lead to high level of examination malpractices, high school dropout, kidnapping, cultism, and other vices as indicated in a 2006 report by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME). Ogunsaju (2004) stated that the academic standard in all Nigeria educational institutions fell considerably below societal expectations. Blumende (2001) corroborated this view when he reported that the decline in the quality of education in Nigeria cannot be ignored by anyone who is aware of the significant role of education as an instrument of societal transformation and development.

Several education and government authorities have observed that the present educational opportunities offered to learners at primary school level lack quality in terms of teaching and learning. That is why Lassa (2000) reflected that education cannot be provided by just anybody, it requires a teacher who plans and delivers the lessons of instruction in such a way that the objectives of the lesson can be achieved. An uncertified teacher cannot prepare students for common entrance examination because it is unlikely that they could provide quality instruction to lead the students to successful completion of these exams.

Furthermore, Adebayo (2009) reported that casual visits to most public schools in Nigeria would reveal the extent to which educational institutions have decayed in the recent years. Adebayo further reported that educational facilities at all levels are in a terrible shape; schools are littered with dilapidated structures, and worn out equipment. These schools suffer from inadequate manpower both in quality and quantity and staff morale is very low due to poor pay and poor working conditions.

Good teaching is at the heart of good schooling. Therefore, the quality of teacher preparation is crucial to helping students reach high academic standards. Yet many enter the profession unprepared, having received poor quality training. Some teachers, who are working without a regular teaching license, may never have received any training. To provide quality education for all students, teacher quality practices in schools should be of high standard as teachers are the key to quality education. It is necessary therefore to examine the factors effecting the quality practices of teachers in public primary schools as the finding of the study can help to improve quality education in primary schools.

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be of benefit to educational policy makers, school proprietors, teachers, and pupils. The findings of this study hope to help make improved decisions that foster teacher quality practices and student achievement gains. As a result, students may be offered better learning opportunities once teacher quality is improved.

The purpose of this study is to examine the quality practices of teachers in public primary schools in Awka Educational Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Determine the factors that constitute teacher quality practices;
- Determine the factors that effect teacher quality practices; and
- Identify strategies that would improve teacher quality.

Method

The study was carried out in Awka Educational Zone, Anambra State. This educational zone has five local government areas (LGA) under it, including: Anaocha LGA, Awka North LGA, Awka South LGA, Dunukofia LGA, and Njikoka LGA. A survey design was used for this study. Survey research is an efficient way of gathering data to help address a research question. The survey design was used because the study involves collecting information from a group of people. The study employed a questionnaire to determine the qualities of teachers in primary schools.

The population of the study included 43 government primary schools in Awka Educational Zone with a population of 2,520 teachers according to the Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) 2014 statistics. The sampling technique used in this research is the systematic sampling technique. Four public primary schools were selected from each of the five local government areas in Awka Educational Zone making a total of 20 selected primary schools. Six teachers were selected from each of the 20 selected primary schools for a total number of 120 respondents.

The instrument for the collection of data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of questions in which the respondents were required to indicate their opinion on teacher quality practices and factors that affect teacher quality. Space was provided on the questionnaire for brief suggestions on how to improve teacher quality practices. The questionnaire used a 5 point Likert scale of Strongly Agree 5, Agree 4, Undecided 3, Disagree 2, and Strongly Disagree 1.

The questionnaire was first validated for clarity, suitability, and relevance to the research questions by two lecturers from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, and one lecturer from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation. All three lecturers were employed at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. To ensure the validity of the instrument, two copies of the questionnaire along with the purpose of study and research question were given to these experts. They were specifically requested to carry out the face validation of the instrument by evaluating the quality of the items in terms of clarity, appropriateness of language, and adequacy of the items. Their comments and contributions were included before the final copy of the instrument was produced. Then 120 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and collected by the researcher. The data was analyzed using mean statistics and any item with a mean score of

3.00 and above was regarded as Agreed, while any item with a mean less than 3.00 was regarded as Disagreed.

Data Analysis

This data presented in tabular form below includes two tables, each designed to address research questions 1 and 2 respectively. Research question 3 has no table as it provides a summary of respondents' suggestions about teacher quality practices.

Research Question 1

What are the factors that constitute teacher quality practices in primary school in Awka Educational Zone, Anambra State?

Table 1.1: Factors Constituting Teacher Quality Practices: Primary Schools, Awka Educational Zone, Anambra State.

S/N		Primary School Teachers	
	Items	Mean	Decision
1	The teacher designs effective, standards-based instruction, i.e. the lesson plan is mapped to state and/or district standards, with clear goal(s) and objectives, and students tasks.	4.30	Agreed
2	The teacher delivers high-quality, student-centered instruction, i.e. instruction and facilitation of learning is clear, well-paced, and utilizes research-based strategies.	4.10	Agreed
3	The teacher promotes high levels of student engagement, i.e. the teacher creates an environment that promotes a high level of student involvement in their learning.	4.25	Agreed
4	The teacher uses assessment for student learning, i.e. the teacher has developed clear assessment strategies for assessing students before, during and after the lesson.	4.00	Agreed
5	The teacher uses a positive behavior management strategy, i.e. expectations of student behavior are clear and the teacher monitors behavior in a manner which is subtle, positive, and preventive.	3.95	Agreed
6	There is clear evidence that students are learning, i.e. evidence of students, learning is explicit and observable.	4.50	Agreed

Table 1.1 shows that all the items have a mean value of 3.0 and above. This shows that the respondents agree that all the items above constitute teacher quality practices in primary schools in Awka Education Zone

Research Question 2

What are the factors that affect teacher quality practices?

Table 1.2: Responses: Factors that Effect Teacher Quality Practices in Primary Schools, Awka Educational Zone.

S/No	Items	Primary School Teachers	
		Mean	Decision
7	Unconducive environment for teaching and learning	4.86	Agreed
8	Irregular supervision of teachers during classes	3.64	Agreed
9	Inadequate facilities to help achieve instructional objectives	3.01	Agreed
10	Insufficient classrooms for pupils	4.08	Agreed
11	Poor teacher preparation and qualification	3.04	Agreed
12	Lack of seminar and workshop opportunities that enhances teaching and discipline of pupils	4.28	Agreed
13	Delay in paying teachers' salary	4.04	Agreed
14	Lack of promotion as and when due	3.36	Agreed
15	Parents interference with the teaching and discipline of pupils	2.70	Disagreed
16	Impositions from school management educational boards and educational offices	2.32	Disagreed

In the Table 1.2 above, the respondents agreed that factors of items 7-9 effect teacher quality practices in public primary schools while items 15 & 16 which are parental interference with the teaching and disciplines of pupil and imposition from school managements, educational boards, and educational offices were not accepted as items that effect teachers' quality practices in public primary schools.

Research Question 3

How can teacher quality practices be improved in primary schools?

The respondents were required to briefly suggest what they think should be done to improve teacher quality. Below is the summary of respondent suggestions on how to improve teacher quality.

Most of the respondent suggested that teacher salary should be increased, instructional materials and teaching facilities should be made available to the teachers, more classrooms should be provided, and teachers should be properly interviewed before being employed. Few respondents suggested that teachers who are under qualified should be laid off and comfortable offices should also be provided for teachers. Proper supervision of teachers' progress during class and frequent evaluation of teachers' notes were also suggested.

Discussion of Findings

From the three research questions in this study, the finding in Table 1.1 shows that the public primary school teachers agreed with the essential practices of high quality teaching and learning outlined in Table 1.1 as what constitutes teacher quality practices. This finding agrees with Ryan and Cooper (1998), who observed that teachers are the main personnel that ensure the

achievement of curriculum objectives and school goals as they have more frequent contact and relationships with the public than any other staff in the school. Therefore, accordingly they should be given opportunities to participate fully in school planning development. This finding also agreed with Hanushek and Rivkin (2004) who observed that improving teacher quality practices, requires knowledge of subject matter content, child development, methods of assessing student progress, and pedagogy. Furthermore, they also observed that teacher preparation demands that a wide variety of professional learning opportunities be made available to teachers and schools and if teaching practice is to be improved, professional learning opportunities need to be more consisted, in-depth, and coherent.

Table 1.2 showed that certain factors effect teacher quality practices and effectiveness in public primary schools. These factors include inadequate facilities to help achieve instructional objectives and unconducive learning environments for teaching. Other factors are irregular evaluation of notes and lesson plans by the school management, late salary payment, and delayed promotions. These finding agreed with Adebayo (2009) that observed that insufficient classroom for pupils and irregular supervision of teachers effects teacher quality in public primary schools. Accordingly, Adebayo noted insufficient classrooms for pupils will definitely result to an unconducive learning environment. It could also impede teachers' effective control of the classroom, as the teacher may not have enough space to move around the classroom due to overpopulation.

However, the teachers disagreed that parent interference and impositions from school management effected their quality practices. This outcome did not agree with Nnachi (2010) who observed that some teachers, especially in private schools, give pupils good grades so as to gain parents support.

Suggestions made by the respondents from research question 3 show that increased teacher salaries, availability of instructional materials, adequate classrooms, proper supervision of teachers during classes, and frequent evaluation of teachers' notes would improve quality teaching in all schools. This finding was in line with Nnachi (2010) who observed that teacher salaries should be paid on time. The respondents also suggested that before a person is employed as a teacher, he/she should be adequately interviewed to ensure that the person is competent enough to teach. This finding agrees with Igwe (2000) who observed that competence, adequate teacher preparation, motivation, and appropriate practice should be ensured for teacher quality success.

Conclusion

The study's aim was to ascertain the factors that constitute, effect, as well as improve teachers' quality practices. The study revealed that what constitutes teacher quality practices includes, among other factors: delivering high quality student-centered instruction, promoting high levels of student engagement, clear assessment strategies for students learning, using positive behavior management strategies, and evidence of students learning. The study also revealed that factors that mitigate against teacher quality practices are unconducive environment for teaching and learning, insufficient classrooms for pupils, unconducive environment for teaching and learning, delayed payment of teachers' salaries, inadequate facilities to help achieve instructional objectives, poor teacher preparation, and inadequate qualifications of teachers. Finally,

respondents' suggestions for improving quality teaching included: selecting competent teachers, increasing teachers' salaries, availability of instructional materials, adequate classrooms, proper supervision of teachers during classes, and frequent evaluation of teachers' notes to improve quality practices in all schools.

Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, the researcher identified several recommendations for improvement of and maintenance of teachers' quality practice in primary education. First is the that to improve teacher quality practices requires that teachers should be conversant with knowledge of subject matter content, child development, methods of assessing student progress and pedagogy. This requires maintenance of high quality teacher education programs. Next teacher preparation demands that a wide variety of professional learning opportunities be made available to teachers and schools through ongoing in-service or continuing education support from colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities. Related to this continuing education, these offerings must include professional learning opportunities with more consistent, in-depth, and coherent programs of study. Physical and resource supports need to be of quality to provide conducive school environments so teachers may focus on quality teaching. This means that sufficient instructional facilities are provided and maintained in every school and adequate classrooms and office are provided for pupils and teachers respectively.

In relation to in-service training, seminars, and workshops, these must be regularly organized and consistently offered for teachers to improve their knowledge and therefore their performance in the classroom. Next regular supervision and mentoring by supervisors should be provided to evaluate teachers' classroom progress and provide the necessary input for improvement. Related to this supervision process, teachers should receive their promotions as scheduled and their salaries should be increased to better reflect their value to education and the wider society. The measures will increase their confidence and their dedication to their teaching career. Hardworking and effective teachers should be periodically recognized and awarded based on their merits at the end of each term. This will encourage healthy competition that would improve teacher effectiveness. Finally, schools must be located in appropriate and safe environments for the wellbeing of teachers and students.

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