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Teachers' Teaching Experience and Students' Learning Outcomes in Secondary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcomes in the secondary schools in Ondo State Nigeria. As a correlational survey, the study population comprised all the 257 secondary schools in the State. This population is made up of 147 rural schools and 110 urban schools. It was also made up of 12 single sex schools and 245 mixed schools. Out of the population, a sample of 180 schools was drawn through the process of stratified random sampling technique. An inventory and a semi-structured interview schedule were the instruments used to collect information for the study. The data collected were analysed using the chi square test, correlation analysis and t-test. The semi-structured interview was conducted with selected principals and education officers. Their responses were analysed through content analysis. The findings revealed that teachers' teaching experience was significant with students' learning outcomes as measured by their performance in the SSC examinations. Schools having more teachers with 5 years and above teaching experience achieved better results than schools having more teachers with less than 5 years teaching experience. Considering the findings, it was recommended that government should encourage experienced teachers to stay on the job by providing them with more incentives and better promotional prospects. The condition of service of teachers should also been improved.

Key words: Teachers, teaching, experience, students, learning, outcomes

INTRODUCTION

The importance of experienced teachers in schools has been highlighted by many researchers (Akinleye, 2001; Ogundare, 2001; Commeyras, 2003). Researchers have also given different opinions about teaching experience and students' learning outcomes in schools (Al-methen, 1983; Schuler, 1984; Waiching, 1994; Ijaiya, 2000). Their arguments centred on the fact that experience improves teaching skills while pupils learn better at the hands of teachers who have taught them continuously over a period of years (Ijaiya, 2000). In investigating possible differences in teaching strategies, Schuler (1984) grouped teachers into three levels of teaching experience (3-6; 7-10 and more than 10 years). His findings revealed that experienced teachers' perception of their teaching objectives was significantly more subject-oriented than was that of first-year teachers. Hence, effective teaching could be measured by the level of a teacher's subject matter competence which Mullens (1993) regarded as a prime predictor of student's learning. However, teachers' theories about teaching are being guided by their previous experience as learners and as teachers (Waiching, 1994).

The importance of experienced teachers in schools has been argued as being necessary for school effectiveness (Zaku, 1983). This suggests that many experienced teachers might have left the school system probably as a result of better job prospects in other sectors of the economy. However, the desire by government to engage more teachers of long years standing is perhaps hampered by the high cost of education. Hence, Adeyemi (1998) exclaimed that the more experienced teachers in a school system, the higher would be the recurrent cost of education. As such, Charles (2002) suggested the need to involve retired teachers because of their long years of teaching experience to teach in Nigerian schools.

In terms of students' learning outcomes, Blaug (1970) argued that there are positive associations between personal earnings and schooling. He reported that the extension of education tends to raise the earnings of those who benefited from it Blaug (1983). Schultz (1963) classified the outcomes of education into two categories from the economic point of view. These are consumption and investment. Cohn (1975) referred to the consumption aspect as that related to the benefits derived by students, their families and the society as a whole. He regarded the

investment component as including a variety of outputs related to the enhancement of an individual's or society's productive skills and future well being. In this regard, Simkins (1981) reported that output represents the immediate results of the system's activities. According to him, the main outputs in education are expressed in terms of learning, that is, changes in the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals as a result of their experiences.

Tsang (1988) supported this view and regarded inputs to education as the various ingredients used in producing outputs. He remarked that the output of education consists of educational effects such as cognitive and non-cognitive skills that are learned by students. Hence, Sheehan (1973) remarked that education yields benefits which are 'consumed' over a long period (the life-time of the educated person). As such, education is an end in itself irrespective of any future benefits. Lord (1984) supported these views and enumerated four major areas of measuring output in education. These include the assessment by the teacher; standard examinations as a measure of educational output; other standardised tests for national and local monitoring and market research techniques.

In recognition of this, Thias and Carnoy (1972) examined the influence of school factors on the quality of schools' output in Kenya. According to them the quality of output is equated with students' examination performance. They argued that if the average examination performance in one school is higher than in another, the quality of output of the first is considered to be higher than that of the second. Akangbou (1985) too, calculated the 'academic index' of output in Nigeria and remarked that the simplest measure of output of the Nigerian secondary education system is the number of school leavers.

As a measure of students' learning outcomes, examination occupies an important position in the Nigerian educational system as a measure of quality. Although, the SSC examinations has replaced the WASC and GCE examinations in Nigeria, it still uses the GCE 'O' and 'A' level standards as its norms since it was pitched between the 'O' and 'A' level standards (Salami, 1992). The pattern of grading candidates' scores in the examinations was such that the distinction grade was represented by A1 to B3. The credit grade was represented by C4 to C6. The ordinary pass grade was represented by D7 and E8 while the failure grade was represented by F9. It needs to be mentioned however, that the distinction and credit grades are the only requisite qualifications for admissions into universities in Nigeria and candidates must have at least 5 credits in 5 subjects including English Language in order to qualify for admission (Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, JAMB, 2002).

Several studies have found a positive effect of experience on teachers' effectiveness; specifically, the learning by doing" effect is most obvious in the early years of teaching (Dunkin, 1997; Rice, 2004; Bauer, 2005). In measuring teachers' effectiveness, Stiggins and Duke (1990) suggested 3 parallel evaluation systems. These include an induction system for novice teachers with a focus on meeting performance standards; a remediation system for experienced teachers in need of remediation to correct deficiencies in performance and a professional development system for competent, experienced teachers pursuing excellence in particular areas of teaching. Notwithstanding, Medley and Shannon (1994) expressed doubts about using measures of student achievement to judge teacher effectiveness while Darling-Hammond *et al.* (1995) found certain deficiencies in the attempts to obtain performance measures of teachers. These deficiencies include the fact that the assessment systems do not evaluate candidates in similar job settings and performance situations.

Considering the foregoing, the objective of this study was to examine teachers' teaching experience in secondary schools in Ondo state, Nigeria and determine whether teaching experience had any relationship with students' learning outcomes.

Statement of the problem: A common observation of the school system in Ondo State, Nigeria would show a large number of young teachers with few years of teaching experience. Many of these teachers seem to lack the much needed experience that could bring about effective teaching and learning in schools in terms of teaching methodology (Ondo State Ministry of Education, 2002). Hence teaching tends to be done in abstract while learning is perhaps by rote memory. The issue of whether or not a relationship existed between teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria constituted the problem of this study.

Research questions: In addressing this problem, the following research questions were raised:

- How are teachers distributed on the basis of teaching experience to urban and rural secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria?
- What is the level of students' learning outcomes in schools?

Research hypotheses: In order to further examine the problem of the study, the following research hypotheses were raised.

Ho 1: There was no significant relationship between teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcomes as measured by their performance in SSC examinations in the State?

Ho 2: There was no significant difference in the achievement of students in SSC examinations in schools that have more teachers with above twelve years teaching experience and schools that have more teachers with twelve years and less than twelve years teaching experience in Ondo State, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was designed as a correlational survey. Gay (1996) described a correlational survey as a study that involves the collection of data in order to determine whether and to what degree, a relationship exists between 2 or more quantifiable variables. Anderson and Arsenaut (1998) regarded correlational research as involving the calculation of a correlation coefficient which is a measure of the extent to which variables vary in the same way. In this regard, the study population comprised all the 257 secondary schools in Ondo State of Nigeria. This population was made up of 110 urban schools and 147 rural schools. Twelve of the schools were single sex schools while 245 were mixed schools. The sample for the study consisted of 180 schools (70% of the study population) drawn through the process of stratified random sampling technique and taking into consideration the urban and rural location of the schools and school-sex.

The instrument used to collect data was an inventory titled 'secondary schools teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcomes inventory' and a semi-structured interview schedule titled 'teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcomes interview schedule'. The inventory consisted eight items. Items 1-6 elicited information on the name of the school, its location (whether urban or rural), school type, students' enrolment, number of classes and number of years of teaching experience of teachers. Item 7 requested for data on students' grades in 4 subjects in the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) examinations for three years 1997, 1998 and 1999. Item 8 requested for data on students' grades in 5 other subjects namely English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology in the 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 SSC examinations. The data collected were analysed with the use of percentages, chi-square test, correlation coefficient and t-test. The semi-structured interview was conducted with 36 principals and 36 education officers randomly selected from a population of 257 principals and 351 education officers in the State Ministry of Education. The proportion of the number of responses was computed through the content analysis technique based on a maximum obtainable score of 100% (Easterby-Smit *et al*., 1996).

RESULTS

Research question 1: How are teachers distributed on the basis of teaching experience to urban and rural secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria?

In responding to this question, data on the number of schools having teachers with varying numbers of years of teaching experience were collected and analysed with the use of percentages. The findings are presented in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, 13 urban schools (56.5 %) out of the 23 schools had more teachers with above 10 years teaching experience, while 10 rural schools (43.5%) had above 10 years teaching experience. On the other hand, 35 urban schools (64.8%) out of the 54 schools had more teachers with below 5 years teaching experience, while only 19 rural schools (35.2%) had more teachers with below 5 years teaching experience. As such, urban schools had relatively more teachers with longer years teaching experience than rural schools. The chi square analysis shows significant relationship between school location and teaching experience.

Research question 2: What is the level of students' learning outcomes in schools?

Students' learning outcomes was examined in this study in terms of the performance level of students in the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) and the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) examinations. In determining the level of students' learning outcomes in the schools, performance in the two terminal level examinations (JSC and SSC examinations) was computed. Thus, the frequency counts of the number of students who obtained grades 1-6 (credit grades) in each subject in the examinations were transformed from discrete data into continuous data through secondary

Table 1: Number of teachers with years of teaching experience by location

	Schools having more teachers with varying number of teaching experience						
Location	Above 12 years	9-12 years	5-8 years	Below 5 years	Total	Chi square (Pearson)	Signif.
Rural	10	12	21	19	62	13.2	0.00
Urban	13	23	47	35	118		
Total	23	35	68	54	180		

Table 2: Performance level of students in the JSC examinations in Ondo State, Nigeria

Years	English language (%)	Mathematics (%)	Integrated science (%)	Social studies (%)
1997	45.7	37.2	43.5	46.4
1998	46.3	39.6	47.7	49.1
1999	49.1	58.5	51.2	52.9

Table 3: Performance in the SSC Examinations in Ondo State, Nigeria

Years	English language (%)	Mathematics (%)	Physics (%)	Chemistry (%)	Biology (%)
2000	4	10	8	23	10
2001	5	12	11	25	16
2002	8	15	18	27	24

analysis. The weighted average performance is computed using the formula:

$$P = \frac{n_1A_1 + n_2A_2 + n_3A_3 + n_4C_4 + n_5C_5 + n_6C_6}{N}$$

Where:

P = Performance.
$n_1, n_2 \ldots n_6$ = Number of times each grade occurs.
$A_1, A_2 \ldots C_6$ = Numeric weights of each grade.

The level of students' learning outcomes was determined in two stages. The first stage was the determination of the level of performance of students in the core subjects in the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) examinations, while the second stage was the determination of the level of performance of students in the core subjects in the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) examinations. The grades obtained by students in the JSC and SSC examinations in the various subjects were collected from the State Ministry of Education. Table 2 shows the performance level of the students in the core subjects in the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) examinations.

As indicated in Table 2, the performance level of students in each of the four subjects in the junior secondary certificate examinations was low. In the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) examinations, low-level results were also obtained in the State. Table 3 shows the findings.

As shown in Table 3 the performance level of students was also low in each of the subjects in the SSC examinations for the three years. This tends to confirm the low level of students' learning outcomes in the schools.

Testing of hypotheses:

Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcomes as measured by their performance in SSC examinations in the State?

In testing this hypotheses, data on teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcome using the inventory. The correlation matrix was used to test the relationship between each pear of variables. The findings are shown in Table 4.

In Table 4, the correlation matrix shows the correlation coefficients between each pair of variables and their respective probability 'p' which was less than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there was a significant relationship between each pair of variables. It further shows a significant relationship between teachers' teaching experience and students' learning outcomes as measured by their performance in SSC examinations in the State.

Ho 2: There was no significant difference in the achievement of students in SSC examinations in schools that have more teachers with above twelve years teaching experience and schools that have more teachers with twelve years and less than twelve years teaching experience in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Testing this hypothesis, data on the SSC results in English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology for years 2001-2003 were used. The schools were classified into two groups. Since it is norm in the State school system that teachers who spent above twelve years in the teaching profession are classified as experienced teacher (Ondo State Ministry of Education 2000), the first group consisted of schools having more teachers with above twelve years teaching experience while the second group contained schools having more teachers with twelve years and less than twelve years teaching experience. The results are indicated in Table 5-8.

As indicated in Table 5-8, the calculated t- value was greater than the table t-value in each subjects in each of the years. The probability 'p' was less than 0.05 in all the subjects. This indicates a significant difference in the achievement of students between schools having more teachers with above twelve years teaching experience and

Table 4: Correlation matrix in respect of each pair of variables

Variables	Credit scores SSC 2003	School location	Exp. english	Exp. math.	Exp. physics	Exp. chemistry	Exp. biology
Credit scores SSC 2003.	1.00						
School location	0.41*	1.00					
Exp. english.	0.28*	0.39*	1.00				
Exp. math.	0.25*	0.34*	0.32*	1.00			
Exp. physics.	0.27*	0.29*	0.24*	0.42*	1.00		
Exp. chemistry.	0.34*	0.36*	0.32*	0.38*	0.41*	1.00	
Exp. Biology.	0.38*	0.35*	0.43*	0.38*	0.26*	0.43*	1.00

*p<0.05, Key: Exp= Experience, SSC= Senior Secondary Certificate

Table 5: t- test Analysis of Scores for year 2000

Subjects	Schools having teachers with years of teaching experience.	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated- t	Table- t.
English	> 12 Years	118	0.21	0.20	178	4.42	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.12	0.11			
Mathematics	> 12 Years	118	0.20	0.21	178	5.18	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.10	0.09			
Physics	> 12 Years	118	0.22	0.21	178	6.24	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.11	0.10			
Chemistry	> 12 Years	118	0.23	0.21	178	6.05	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.12	0.11			
Biology	> 12 Years	118	0.28	0.27	178	6.51	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.14	0.13			

p<0.05

Table 6: t- test Analysis of Scores for 2001

Subjects	Schools having teachers with years of teaching experience.	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated- t	Table- t.
English	> 12 Years	118	0.23	0.21	178	4.75	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.11	0.10			
Mathematics	> 12 Years	118	0.20	0.21	178	4.92	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.11	0.09			
Physics	> 12 Years	118	0.22	0.21	178	5.71	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.11	0.10			
Chemistry	> 12 Years	118	0.24	0.22	178	6.23	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.12	0.11			
Biology	> 12 Years	118	0.28	0.27	178	7.46	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.15	0.14			

p<0.05

Table 7: t- test Analysis of Scores for year 2002

Subjects	Schools having teachers with years of teaching experience.	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated- t	Table- t.
English	> 12 Years	118	0.23	0.22	178	4.81	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.14	0.13			
Mathematics	> 12 Years	118	0.21	0.20	178	5.27	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.11	0.09			
Physics	> 12 Years	118	0.21	0.20	178	5.83	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.12	0.11			
Chemistry	> 12 Years	118	0.25	0.23	178	6.78	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.14	0.13			
Biology	> 12 Years	118	0.28	0.26	178	7.35	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.14	0.13			

p<0.05

Table 8: t- test Analysis of Scores for year 2003

Subjects	Schools having teachers with years of Teaching Experience.	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated- t	Table- t.
English	> 12 Years	118	0.24	0.23	178	5.24	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.12	0.11			
Mathematics	> 12 Years	118	0.22	0.21	178	5.76	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.10	0.09			
Physics	> 12 Years	118	0.23	0.22	178	6.44	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.12	0.10			
Chemistry	> 12 Years	118	0.27	0.25	178	7.21	1.96
	< 12 Years	62	0.14	0.13			
Biology	> 12 Years	118	0.29	0.28	178	7.85	1.96
	<12 Years	62	0.15	0.14			

p<0.05

schools having more teachers with twelve years and less than twelve years teaching experience in the subjects in each of the years. Schools having more teachers with above 12 years teaching experience achieved better results than schools having teachers with 12 years and less than twelve years teaching experience. The mean scores were higher in schools having more teachers with above twelve years teaching experience than in schools having more teachers with 12 years and less than 12 years of teaching experience.

RESULTS

The use of the interview to supplement questionnaires has been emphasised by many researchers (Warwick and Lininger, 1975; Weisberg and Bowen, 1977). Warwick and Lininger (1975) for instance, remarked that a survey interview is a form of verbal interaction designed to obtain information about a study. Weisberg and Bowen (1977) too, reported that the interview is an instrument designed to assist in getting candid answers from respondents. They argued that personal interviews can be used to obtain large amounts of information. In selecting the 36 principals, therefore, consideration was given to the urban and rural locations of the schools as well as the principals to be interviewed. Hence, 2 principals were selected from each of the 18 local government areas in the State thereby making a total of 36 principals in the sample. Two education officers were also selected from each of the 18 local government areas thereby making a total of 36 education officers. Considering the suggestions made by Oppenheim (1992) that the interview should be natural, maintaining the fiction of an interesting conversation, the researcher itemized the topics on which questions would be raised. At the end of the interviews, the responses were analysed using the content analysis technique which involved counting the number of responses per question and finding the proportion of the number of respondents who made the responses. The findings are as follows:

Question 1: Do you think that there were enough teachers having long years of teaching experience in secondary schools in the State?

Responding to this question, 19 of the principals (95%) and 16 of the education officers were of the opinion that there was inadequacy in the number of experienced teachers in secondary schools in the State. These interviewees claimed that a visit to most schools would reveal that most of the experienced teachers in the various subjects had either retired or left the teaching profession for other lucrative jobs thereby making the turnover rate among secondary school teachers to be somehow high in the State.

Question 2: Do you think that experienced teachers in the various subjects could bring about better performance among students in secondary schools in the State?

In response to this question, all the principals (100%) and 18 of the education officers (90%) reported that considering the common saying that experience is the best teacher, teachers of long years of teaching experience always have better ways of teaching, better strategies or methods to apply at any given situation and better ways of bringing the subject matter being taught to students. According to them, this would inevitably lead to better students' learning outcomes in schools.

Question 3: Do you think that there is any relationship between the availability of teachers with long years of teaching experience s in schools and students' learning outcomes?

In answering this question, all the principals (100%) and education officers (100%) reported that the presence of teachers with long years of teaching experience in schools has much relationship with students' learning outcomes. They claimed that as major input into the school system and the hub of the educational system, teachers are a force to reckon with in schools in terms of effective teaching and better learning outcomes.

Question 4: Do you think that there are more teachers with long years of teaching experience in urban schools at the expense of rural schools?

In response to this question, 17 of the principals (85%) and 19 of the education officers were of the view that experienced teachers are more in urban secondary schools than in rural schools in the State. As many as 19 of the principals (95%) and 18 of the education officers (90%) also claimed that experienced teachers leave rural schools at a high rate because many of them perhaps do not want to work in rural areas thereby making the turnover rate of teachers to be higher in rural schools than in urban schools.

Question 5: Give suggestions that could bring about an improvement?

Responding to this question, all the principals (100%) and 18 of the education officers (90%) suggested that teachers should be given more incentives to make them stay on the job. They also suggested that schools could engage the services of some retired teachers in certain subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology which are core subjects in the secondary school curriculum. This would assist schools in devising better teaching strategies that could lead to better learning outcomes in students and better performance in the senior secondary certificate examinations.

DISCUSSION

In the foregoing, the analysis of data in respect of the relationship between teacher experience and students learning outcome was made. The findings showed a significant relationship between teachers' teaching experience and students' academic achievement in the SSC examinations in Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings which indicate significant differences in the students' achievement in all the subjects were consistent with Al-Methen's (1983) findings in Kuwait who reported that teachers' teaching behaviours were strongly related to pupils' achievement. The findings were in agreement with Razouki's (1987) findings in Iraq which emphasized that teaching experience correlated significantly and positively with academic achievement. They were also in consonance with Kwari's (1989) findings in Sokoto State, Nigeria indicating that teaching experience was significantly related to students' achievement.

The findings were however, in contrast with the findings made by Zaku (1983) who found in the former Gongola State, Nigeria that teaching experience had a non-significant standardized partial regression of - 0.06 and it made little contribution to the explained variance. The findings were also at variance with Dewalt's (1986) findings which showed no significant difference between teachers with teaching experience and teachers without teaching experience on teacher competencies in teaching methodology. The findings were in contrast with that of Schneider (1988) who found no statistical difference between novice and experienced teachers in relation to students' achievement.

The findings were however consistent with those of Sweeney (1989) who reported that schools in Mississippi USA which scored in the lower 10% on the Mathematics portion of the American College Test (ACT) had teachers with more years of teaching experience. The findings were also consistent with those of Jones (1997) who claimed that students tend to achieve better results when taught by teachers with more years of teaching experience.

The responses made by the interviewees to the questions raised at the interview tend to buttress the findings of the study. The interviewees were of the view, however, that the inspection of schools by the State Ministry of Education was not sufficient. Considering the common saying that experience is the best teacher, it is necessary to note that teachers who have been exposed to long years of teaching experience have the opportunity of attending the conference marking of scripts organised by the Examinations Councils thereby familiarising them with the marking schemes in the various subjects and enhancing better teaching strategies. Teachers cannot be ignored, if the views of the interviewees were regarded as complementary to the findings of this study. As a key input into the school system and the hub of the educational system, teachers are a force to reckon with in schools. But it seems that experienced teachers are not in large numbers in schools. Although the interviewees' responses were personal opinions, they cannot be totally ruled out as they tend to supplement the findings of this study.

CONCLUSION

Considering the findings of this study, it was concluded that teaching experience is a critical variable in students' learning outcomes in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Evidence from the findings have led the researcher to conclude that inexperienced teachers formed the bulk of the teaching personnel in secondary schools in the State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the State Government should encourage experienced teachers to stay on the job by providing them with more incentives and fringe benefits. The promotional prospect of the teachers should also be improved. The State Ministry of Education should make more efforts in the inspection and monitoring of schools to ensure that teachers stay on the job.

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