

English Language Teachers' Effectiveness and the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Abia State

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Abstract Language is known to be an in-depth and indispensable part of nation building and English is one of the languages. This paper therefore investigates English language teachers' effectiveness and its effects on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Abia State, Nigeria, using a sample of 280 from 288 Government secondary schools in Abia State. It was discovered that only 280 secondary schools have qualified English teachers as at the time of the study, hence the selection of one teacher per school which gave a population of 280 respondents which include male and female teachers. The comparative research design was used. A structured questionnaire was also used based on modification of four point's likert scale with strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The instrument was administered to gather relevant data from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed with the use of chi-square statistical tool. The study among other findings revealed that effectiveness of English Language teachers influence the general academic performance of students to a great extent. Some suggestions were then made on ways to improve the academic performance of secondary school students using student-centered approach in order to ultimately, enhance the general literacy level in Nigeria.

Keywords English language, Teachers effectiveness, Academic performance, Secondary school

1. Introduction

Over the years, many Nigerians have been aware of, and have been complaining about the mass failure of students in Nigerian secondary schools. This is so because nobody has been able to specifically unravel the reason or reasons for the mass failure. Some scholars are of the view that it could be traced to lack of qualified professional and dedicated teachers. Others think that it could be traced to poor teaching facilities, poor working conditions of teachers, poor teaching and learning environments. Others blame the students for lack of interest in learning, instead diverting to trading and other sundry wealth pursuit. Others indict lack of discipline among students especially in public schools.

However the poor academic performances of students in both internal and external examinations are generally attributed to the qualities of teachers, their attitudes to academic work and school environment. Many researchers have stressed that teachers have important influence on student's academic achievement and they (teachers) also

play important roles in educational attainment because it is the responsibility of the teachers to translate the educational policies and principles into action based on practical interaction with the students. Afe, (2001).

Both teaching and learning depend on teachers hence, Adetokunbo (2012) blamed students' high failure rate on lack of mastery of English language which according to him has affected other subjects. This is because every other course, except vernacular languages, is taught in English, and when a student could not interpret or understand the English language being used, it becomes difficult to perform well in it.

Since school instruction is done in English language in Nigerian schools, though National Policy on Education has indicated the contrary, the English language teachers should be motivated adequately in order to bring out their best. Lack of proper knowledge of English language by the English language teachers will affect the academic performance of secondary school students. Therefore there is need to have English teachers who are effective in the teaching field. It therefore, behooves on the Nigerian government to ensure the availability and retention of English language teachers through adequate motivation.

Apart from the fact that Government should ensure that only teachers that studied English language in the tertiary

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institution with educational qualification teach English, it should also have good motivational packages which can ginger language teachers to perform effectively.

For instance the authorities must adhere to the prompt payment of teachers' salaries, improve teachers salary structure (TSS), institute in-service training for language teachers, ensure delivery of conducive working environment and payment of language teachers' allowances. Finally materials that will motivate the English language teacher should be supplied because a teacher working without the right materials is usually frustrated and may not put in his or her best. The implication of all these is that poor motivation of English language teachers has led to so many other problems within the primary and secondary school system in Abia State ranging from widespread and high rate of examination malpractice to poor learning achievements, high rate of students indiscipline, cultism, low teacher morale and production of passive students Obaegbulam, (2004).

Incompetent teachers and lack of motivational packages for English language teachers in Abia State have become a matter of great concern to educationists. This paper therefore assesses the effectiveness of English language teachers and its effect on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Abia State.

2. Literature Review

The relationship between teacher effectiveness and student academic performance in English language classes has been the subject of much research. Darling-Hammond (1997) emphasized the importance of high-quality teaching in improving student learning outcomes.

Ross (2010) investigated the impact of teacher immediacy on student learning in secondary classrooms and found a positive relationship between teacher behavior and student achievement.

Evers and Tillema (2010) reviewed the literature on effective teaching behaviors, teacher characteristics, and classroom management, and found that effective teachers possess strong subject knowledge, clear teaching goals, and a positive attitude towards students.

Freeman (2006) discussed the importance of engaging students in the classroom through student-centered teaching methods and hands-on learning activities.

Marzano (2003) reviewed the research on what works in schools and found that effective instruction and assessment are critical to student success.

Hattie (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of over 800 studies on student achievement and concluded that teacher effectiveness has a significant impact on student learning outcomes.

Black and Wiliam (1998) discussed the importance of aligning assessment and instruction to improve student learning. Brophy (2004) emphasized the need to motivate students to learn.

Slavin (1995) described the benefits of cooperative

learning.

Johnson and Johnson (1999) reviewed the research on cooperative learning and found that it can be an effective teaching strategy when implemented properly.

Pekrun (2006) introduced the control-value theory of achievement emotions, which suggests that students' emotions play a role in their motivation and learning.

Elliot and Dweck (2006) discussed the importance of promoting a growth mindset in students to enhance their motivation and learning.

Baumeister and Leary (1995) argued that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation.

Ryan and Deci (2000) described the self-determination theory of motivation, which suggests that students are more motivated when they have a sense of autonomy and competence.

Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation and found that rewards can undermine motivation when they are perceived as controlling.

Harmer (2001) discussed the practice of English language teaching and emphasized the importance of providing a communicative language-rich environment. Thornbury (2002) reviewed the teaching of grammar in English language classes and emphasized the need to make grammar instruction relevant to students' communicative needs.

Willis and Willis (2007) described the task-based approach to teaching English, which involves using real-life tasks to engage students in language learning.

Scrivener (2005) provided a comprehensive guide to English language teaching, emphasizing the importance of teacher knowledge, skills, and professional development.

3. Statement of the Problem

Over the years both the Abia State Government and students have been faced with poor performance in language related examinations and the inability of the students to express themselves well in language skills such as reading, writing and speaking. Most of these problems have been attributed to lack of qualified English teachers and lack of commitment by a number of teachers. The nonchalant attitude of some teachers can be traced to lack of adequate instructional materials in public schools, poor working conditions of teachers, teachers not promptly paid, promotions not given as and when due, etc. These have influenced the academic performance of students thereby necessitating this research.

Purpose of Study:

The study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between teachers' qualification and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Abia State.
2. To ascertain the extent to which the use of proper

instructional materials has affected the academic performance of the students.

3. To establish the extent that teachers are motivated to perform their duties and how it affects the academic performance of the students.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has the English language teachers' effectiveness affected the academic performance of secondary school students in Abia State?
2. To what extent has adequate motivation of English language teachers affected the academic performance of secondary school students in Abia State?
3. To what extent has the use of the right instructional materials affected the performance of secondary schools' students in Abia State?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between English language effectiveness and the academic performance of students.
2. There is no relationship between adequate motivation of English language teachers and the academic performance of students in Abia State.
3. There is no significant relationship between the use of instructional materials and the students' academic performance.

4. Research Methodology

The comparative research design was used in carrying out the study. This design enabled the researchers to collect detailed and factual information that helped in carefully

assessing academic performance of students in the 288 public secondary schools in Abia State. The comparative research design will ascertain whether there is a relationship between teachers' effectiveness and the academic performance of students of secondary school students in Abia State.

The target population of the study was made up of English language teachers in Abia State. There are 288 secondary schools in Abia state which have a total of 3500 teachers in the seventeen LGA of the state. There are only 280 secondary schools out of 288 that had English language teachers as at the time of this research work. One in every 280 secondary school that had English language teacher was selected. The use of this technique was to achieve an equal and fair representation of the population.

The researcher used structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on the modification of four (4) points likert scale as SA = strongly agree, 4 points; A = agree, 3 points; D = disagree, 2 points and SD = strongly disagree, 1 point. The respondents will be expected to tick good (✓) on the options that best appeal to them.

A total of 280 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents with 100% return of the questionnaires. Three research questions were analyzed using frequencies and mean. Any mean score of 2.50 and above will be accepted while any mean from 2.49 and below will be rejected. The three hypotheses were analyzed using the chi-square (χ^2) test with 3df and 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One

To what extent has the English language teachers' effectiveness affected the academic performance of students?

Table 1. Mean Rating Showing Teachers' Effectiveness and the Academic Performance of Students

S/N	ITEM	Total Score	Mean (x) Score	Decision	Total score	Mean (x) score	Decision
1.	Many teachers do not have the right teaching qualification.	433	2.89	Accepted	3.36	1.82	Rejected
2.	Most teachers shout at pupils with impatience	259	1.73	Accepted	220	1.69	Rejected
3.	Most teachers do not use instructional materials while teaching.	412	2.75	Accepted	331	2.55	Rejected
4.	Most teachers teach all the subjects on the time table every day.	258	1.72	Rejected	346	2.66	Accepted
5.	Most teachers prepare their lesson notes regularly.	258	1.27	Rejected	346	2.66	Accepted
6.	Most teachers are regularly absent from school.	425	2.83	Accepted	264	2.03	Rejected
7.	Most teachers relax in the classroom during lesson periods.	[470	3.13	Accepted	252	1.94	Rejected
8.	Most teachers are lazy in teaching their subject.	444	2.9	Accepted	160	1.23	Rejected

Questionnaire items 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8 on the part of English language teachers' effectiveness had the means of 2.89, 1.73, 2.75, 1.72, 1.72, 1.72, 2.83, 3.13 and 2.96

respectively while on the part of student' performance the items had the means of 1.82, 1.69, 2.55, 2.66, 2.0, 1.94 and 1.2.23 respectively.

Decision Range

All means from 2.50 and above are regarded as positive and the questionnaire items accepted while means that are 2.49 and below are negative and items rejected.

Analysis of the Result of Table 1

From the result of the mean score above in table 1, 2.89 agreed that teachers do not have the right qualification while 1.82 rejected that. In no 2 item, 1.73 accepted that most teachers shout at pupils with impatience while 1.69 rejected it. 2.75 of the respondents were of the view that most teachers do not use the right instructional materials when they are teaching while 2.55 disagreed. On item 4 on the table, 2.66 agreed that most teachers teach all the subjects on

the time-table everyday while 1.72 rejected the motion. On the preparation of item 5, 2.66 respondents were of the view that teachers prepare their lesson notes regularly while 1.277 disagreed. In the same vein, 2.83 accepted that most teachers are regularly absent from school while 2.03 rejected that. On item no 7, 3.13 agreed that most teachers relax in the classroom during lesson periods while 1.94 disagreed. Finally, 2.9 respondents agreed that most teachers are lazy in teaching their subjects while 1.23 rejected it.

Research Question Two:

What is the significant relationship between English language teachers' motivation and students' academic performance?

Table 2. Mean rating showing the relationship between motivation of teachers and students' academic performance

S/N	ITEM	Total Score	Mean (x) Score	Decision	Total score	Mean (x) score	Decision
9.	Teachers are not regularly paid their salaries.	283	1.89	Rejected	346	2.66	Accepted
10.	There is no delivery of conducive environments for teaching	258	1.72	Rejected	331	2.55	Accepted
11.	Teachers are not properly graded alongside civil-servants.	470	3.13	Accepted	220	1.69	Rejected
12.	Teachers are not promoted as and when due.	444	3.32	Accepted	236	1.82	Rejected
13.	There is job security for teachers.	498	2.75	Accepted	236	1.82	Rejected
14.	There is no room for in-service training with or without pay.	412	2.7	Accepted	252	1.94	Rejected
15.	Teachers do not carry out their duties beyond the official time.	259	1.73	Rejected	354	2.72	Accepted
16.	Teachers embark on general strike actions when demanding their rights as motivational factors.	564	3.76	Accepted	149	1.15	Rejected

Questionnaire items 1 to 16 on the part of the motivation of teachers had the means of 1.89, 1.27, 3.13, 2.96, 3.32, 2.75, 1.73 and 3.76 respectively while on the part of students academic performance, the items had the means of 2.66, 2.66, 1.69, 1.82, 1.23, 1.94, 2.27 and 1.15 respectively.

Decision Range: All means from 2.50 and above are regarded as positive and the questionnaires accepted, while means that are 2.49 and below are negative and items rejected.

Analysis of the Result of Table 2

From the result of mean score in table 2 in item no 9, 2.66 respondents accepted that teachers are not paid regularly while 1.89 disagreed on that. In item no 10, 2.55 agreed that there is no adequate delivery of conducive environment for teaching while 1.72 disagreed with that. On the next item, 3.13 accepted that teachers are not properly graded alongside

civil-servants while 1.69 disagreed. Item no 12 has 3.13 respondents that agreed that teachers are not promoted as and when due while 1.82 disagreed. On job security, 2.75 accepted that there is job security for teachers while 1.82 disagreed. The item no 14 on the table has 2.7 respondents as the number that agreed that there is no room for in-service training for teachers while 1.94 disagreed. On their own, 2.72 accepted that teachers do not carry out their duties beyond the office time while 1.73 disagreed. Lastly, item 16 on the table has 3.76 respondents that agreed that teachers embark on general strike actions when demanding their rights as motivational factors.

Research question three

To what extent is there a significant relationship between the right instructional materials by the teachers and the academic performance of students.

Table 3. Mean rating showing the right instructional materials in teaching and the academic performance of the students

S/N	Items	Total score	Mean score	decision	Total score	Mean score(x)	Decision
Teachers make use of the following:							
17	Chalkboards	507	3.38	Accepted	507	3.38	Accepted
18	Charts	457	3.05	Rejected	438	1.37	Accepted
19	Models	319	2.13	Accepted	331	2.56	Rejected
20	Maps	283	1.89	Accepted	264	2.03	Rejected
21	Pictures	259	1.73	Accepted	346	2.66	Rejected
22	Tape recorder	209	1.39	Accepted	199	1.53	Rejected
23	Radio sets	179	1.17	Accepted	179	1.38	Rejected
24	Television sets	283	1.89	Accepted	331	2.55	Rejected

Questionnaires items 17-24 on the part of the right instructional material in teaching had the means of 3.38, 3.05, 2.13, 1.89, 1.73, 1.39, 1.17 and 1.89 respectively.

Decision range

All means from 2.50 and above are regarded as positive and the questionnaires accepted while means that are 2.49 and below are negative and items rejected.

Analysis of the Result of Table 3

In table 3, the mean score result had 100% respondents that agreed on the use of chalkboard in teaching as it concerns item 17. In item 18 on the table, 1.37 accepted the use of charts in instructing the students while 3.05 disagreed. As it concerns item 19, 2.13 agreed that models are used

while 2.56 disagreed. On the use of maps as instructional material, 1.89 agreed while 2.03 disagreed. On item 21 as instructional material, 1.73 accepted the use of pictures while 2.66 disagreed. Item 22 had 1.39 respondents that agreed on the use of tape recorder in classroom while 1.53 disagreed. Item 23 also had 1.17 that accepted the use of radio set in teaching students while 1.38 disagreed. On item 24, 1.89 accepted the use of television sets in teaching students while 2.55 rejected that.

Hypothesis 1

(1) There is no significant relationship between the English language teachers' effectiveness and the academic performance of students.

Table 4. Table Showing the Relationship between the English Language Teachers Effectiveness and the Academic Performance of Students

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Total
	0-E	0-E	0-E	0-E	
English language teachers' effectiveness	13 9.11	51 58.9	50 41.8	36 40.2	150
Students' academic performance	4.79	59. 59.1	28 36.2	39 34.8	130
Total	17	110	78	75	280

Chi-square (χ^2) calculated value = 10.29

Df = 3

Critical value = 7.815

The chi-square test (χ^2) for the data above yielded a value of 10.29 at 0.05 level of significance with 3df, the critical value of 7.815 was obtained. This showed that the critical value of 10.29 is greater than the critical value of 7.815.

The null hypothesis 1 is therefore rejected. So there is a significant relationship between English language teachers' motivation and students' academic performance.

Table 5. Table Showing The Relationship between the Motivation of Teachers and Students' Academic Performance

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Total
	0-E	0-E	0-E	0-E	
English language teachers' motivation	17 11.8	50 41.8	51 58.9	32 . 37.5	150
Students' academic performance	5 10.2	28 36.2	59 51.1	38 32.5	130
Total	22	78	110	70	280

Chi-square (χ^2) calculate value = 12.43

Df = 3

Critical table value = 7.815

The critical (χ^2) test for data above yielded a value of 12.43 at 0.05 level of significance with 3df, the critical (table) value of 7.815 was obtained. Decision rate calculated value of 12.43 is greater than the critical value of 7.815, null hypothesis 2 is therefore rejected. So there is a significant relationship between the English teachers' proper motivation

and the students' academic performance.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between the use of proper instructional materials by teachers and its effect on the academic performance of students.

Table 6. Table Showing the Relationship between the Use of Instructional Materials and Students' Academic Performance

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
	0-E	0-E	0-E	0-E	
Use of instructional materials by teachers	3.5 28.4	51 53.6	51 58.9	150	
Students' academic performance	18 24.6	4 7.9	49 46.4	59 5.1	130
Total	53	17	100	110	280

Chi-square (χ^2) calculated value = 8.42

Df = 3

Critical value = 7.815

The chi-square test (χ^2) for the data above yielded a value of 8.42 at 0.005 level of significance with 3df, the critical (table) value of 7.817 was obtained. This shows that the calculated value of 8.42 is greater than the critical value of 7.815. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. So there is a significant relationship between the relevance of available instructional materials and the students' academic performance.

5. Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are detailed below:

- (1) Teachers who are rated as ineffective actually produced students of lower academic ability. This agrees with the finding of Olatundun (2007) which reiterates that effective teachers produce high performing students.
- (2) English language teachers are poorly motivated in Abia State and that in turn affects the academic performance of secondary school students in the State.
- (3) Teachers are lazy in evaluating the works of their subjects.
- (4) Many are not punctual in attending to their duties.
- (5) Many teachers who handle English language in many secondary schools are not qualified to do so. The findings also reveal that the majority of teachers in these sampled schools at the time of the study were NCE holders.
- (6) Most English language teachers do not use the right instructional materials. Many do not even use any at all except the normal chalk and black board.

6. Discussion of Findings

Research question 1 was aimed at identifying the extent English language teacher's effectiveness affected the academic performance of secondary school students in Abia state. From the analysis of data in table 1, most of the

respondents were of the opinion that many teachers are not effective thereby resulting in the poor performance of their students. This is because many of them do not have the right academic qualification to teach the classes they are assigned to teach. Others are not diligent in carrying out their duties, while the rest do not use the right instructional materials in teaching the students.

Research question 2 was aimed at identifying the extent that adequate motivation of English language teachers has affected the academic performance of secondary school students in Abia state. From the analysis of data in table 2, most of the respondents were of the opinion that teachers in Abia state are poorly motivated. Many of them are poorly paid, a conducive environment has not been delivered to them to teach and because teachers are not motivated properly, they therefore do not take their work seriously and that has generally, negatively affected the performance of secondary school students.

Research question 3 was aimed at finding out the extent that the use of the right instructional materials has affected the performance of secondary school students in Abia state. From the analysis of the result of table 3, most of the respondents were of the view that many of the teachers do not use the right instructional materials and that has negatively affected the performance of the students.

7. Conclusions

This study has revealed a significant relationship between the teachers' effectiveness and the academic performance of students. It also noted that lack of motivation by teachers is affecting negatively the academic performance of secondary school students in Abia State. Finally, many teachers are not aware of the right instructional materials to use for students. One requires instructional materials in teaching and learning. On this, Eze (2005) re asserts:

Because the pupils are not seeing, touching and handling what they should to understand your teaching, your lesson will be dull, artificial and dry. Your pupils would be bored and fatigued because of your monotonous presentations,

resulting in inactivity. You will find it difficult to explain ideas and concepts which adequate instructional materials would explain very creditably and easily to enhance the needed pupil understanding. Your lesson objectives would hardly be achieved. The pupils will not like staying in your class listening to and observing your poor teaching style..."

8. Recommendations

- (1) Teachers should be paid regularly and all their entitlements given to them as motivational strategies so that they will be in the right mood to teach.
- (2) English language teachers should make good use of relevant instructional materials while teaching. Therefore the principals of the schools should endeavor to provide good teaching and learning materials and deliver a conducive classroom environment to advance students' learning.
- (3) There is need to have school review practices in order to guarantee qualified teachers.
- (4) All English teachers who are yet to undertake a post graduate diploma in Education should be encouraged to do so; this is because non-professionals do more harm than good.
- (5) There is every need to provide the resource materials needed for proper English language teaching.
- (6) Workshops and seminars should be organized for ins-serving teachers for them to be briefed on the latest pragmatic methods of teaching.

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