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Teachers' Competence: A Great Index of Students Achievement in Social Studies in Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper focused on teachers' competence as correlate of students' academic achievement in social studies. The quality of Social Studies Education to students depends upon the competence, dedication and quality of the teacher. This is because the quality of any teaching programme cannot rise above the quality of her teachers. Teaching is a highly individualized activity and the student-teacher interaction is an intense human relationship that encompasses a broad range of personalities. A competent teacher is an efficient, reliable and courteously equipped with professionalism, creative in imagination, bustling ingenuity and depth of experience necessary for optimal performance and the performance of goals. The teacher as a good manager of instruction should be able to utilize appropriate techniques to gain and maintain the attention of students and should display requisite pedagogical insight and professional qualities and utilize same to guide the teaching and learning process to the point of achieving stated educational objectives. Teachers are the most important factor and constitute most essential fabric upon which the success of the school, its administration and the entire education system rest upon In order to achieve these therefore, the paper recommends among other things that government at all levels with a meaningful and purposive collaboration with the organized private sector should periodically provide windows of opportunities like learned workshops, seminars and in-service trainings for Social Studies teachers to equip and improve their knowledge of

teaching, Social studies teachers should look for opportunities to improve themselves because knowledge is dynamic so also the teaching and learning of Social Studies, Faculties, institutes and colleges of education in Nigeria should as a matter of importance familiarize student teachers with relevant components of reflective practice in their teacher education programme, if the purpose of graduating quality teachers that will in turn promote students' performance is to be realized, Criteria for recruiting new social studies teachers and other subject teachers should henceforth, include possession of adequate pedagogical skills and the ability to enhance students' performance through reflective practice by the prospective teacher seeking to be employed as social studies teacher, The promotion of teachers and other incentives to be given them should from now on be tied to how well the teacher influences the performances of his students, There should also be continuous supervision and monitoring of teachers by the inspectorate division of State and Federal ministries of education. This will no doubt, improve the quality of teaching and learning and by extension, students' achievement.

Keywords: Social Studies education, competent Teachers, students' academic achievement

Introduction

Social Studies is a new subject adopted into educational programme for the benefit of mankind. The National Philosophy of Education in Nigeria (NPE) commend the need for Social Studies Education in building the desired social orientation needed after independence in mobilizing the young citizens for national development (Uche in Akubue, 2019). The authors contend that Social Studies ensure acquisition of relevant body of knowledge which can develop in students' positive values, attitude and skills. In supporting this assertion, Mezieobi (2017) defines Social Studies as a programme of study which a society uses to instill in students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with one another, their world and themselves. From the foregoing definition, it is evidently clear that one of the foremost philosophical foundations of Social Studies is citizenship.

However, the quality of any teaching programme cannot rise above the quality of her teachers. Teaching is a highly individualized activity and the student-teacher interaction is an intense human

relationship that encompasses a broad range of personalities and behaviours (Okolie, 2014). Based on the above assertion, the quality of Social Studies education to students and the achievement of noble objectives depend upon the competence, dedication and quality of the teacher. Adegbile (2018) describes a competence teacher as efficient, reliable and courteously equipped with professionalism, creative in imagination, bustling ingenuity and depth of experience necessary for optimal achievement and the achievement of goals. The teacher as a good manager of instruction should be able to utilize appropriate techniques to gain and maintain the attention of students. A competence teacher should display requisite pedagogical insight and professional qualities and utilize same to guide the teaching and learning process to the point of achieving stated educational objectives.

Ekeke (2018) stress that teacher's competence is the right way of conveying units of knowledge of content, process, methods and means of conveying content. A competent Social Studies teacher should ideally possess a well-grounded body of knowledge which should be beyond the grasp of a layman. This distinct knowledge base is usually determined by the training standards that made the Social Studies teachers" expertise and separates him/her from the general public.

Concepts Clarification

Social Studies Education

Social Studies is a new subject adopted into educational programme for benefit of mankind. The national philosophy of education in Nigeria commend the need for Social Studies Education in building the desired social orientation needed after independence in mobilizing the young citizens for national development (Uche in Akubue, 2019). This implies that Social Studies is a subject that emphasizes the needs for integration and cooperation with one another in a society. Social Studies is the study of people in relation to each other and to their world. It is an issue focused and inquiry-based interdisciplinary subject that draws upon History, Geography, Anthropology, Economics, Law, Philosophy, Political Science and other Social Science disciplines.

Bulya and Nongo (2018) assert that Social Studies represent an eclectic distillation of many disciplines including history, political science, geography, anthropology, psychology and economics. This distillation calls for a meaningful clarification of the inter-relationships and an understanding of the human chemistry that stems from the interaction of the various social sciences while giving the reason for the eclectic distillation of the social sciences. The definition by Bulya and Nongo captures clearly the inter-disciplinary nature of Social Studies. The implication of this definition is that

the “topics”, “issues”, “problems”, “concerns” and “aspiration” that usually come under the probing light of Social Studies must be inter-disciplinary in nature.

According to Kadiri (2019: 241) defines Social Studies as “an integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. It implies that within the school programmes, social studies provides coordinate, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, economics, geography, history, law, political science, religion, etc. as well as appropriate content from the Humanities, mathematics and natural science. The purpose of Social Studies is to help young people the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world

Despite the divergent views of different scholars' concerning what Social Studies is or what they feel about Social Studies, there are some other areas of agreement: that Social Studies is concerned with man and his relationship with the society in which he live. The centrality of all these definitions is that man in the scheme of things, in the understanding of his various environments, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to assist the individual who knows his role in society and is equipped and prepared and willing to play it.

Competence and Competent Teacher

The term "competence" according to Irmiya (2016) can be seen as a combination of knowledge, skills and behaviour used to improve achievement. It is the state or quality of being adequately qualified as well as having the ability to perform a specific role. This implies that regardless of the training that one (teachers) receives, there is the need for them to develop competence. The competence is generally expected to grow over time through experience. This means that the process of acquiring competence is a lifelong series of doing activities aside personal development, professional training and knowledge creation (Irimiya, 2016).

Being a competent teacher is to be a change agent to transform the ideas into ideals and ideals into institution which may spread the light of knowledge and wisdom into eternity. Competent teacher’s refers to the ability of the teachers to help, guide and counsel his or her student to achieve high grade. According to Ciechanowska (2019), a competent teacher is the one who possesses rich knowledge and teaching skills, is reflective, factual, informed, open, creative and communicative A competent teacher is one who is able to communicate effectively with the learners, and is equally eager to involve him/herself with other colleagues and has respect for positive human relations.

Concept of Competent Social Studies Teacher

A competent Social Studies teacher is known by the demonstration of his/her ability to affect the learner positively and intentionally promote good human relationship in and outside the classroom environment. A competent teacher is the one who has mastery of Social Studies content and concepts, uses effective questioning and communication skills and can plan good lessons. The act of doing these shows that the teacher is well informed and exposed to a body of knowledge which is beyond the grasp of the layman (Irimiya, 2016).

However, the distinct knowledge base of a competent Social Studies teacher is determined by the training standards, courses and minimum requirement which establish the teacher's expertise and separates him/her from the general public (Irimiya, 2016).. This implies that teachers' competence is a state where a teacher is absolutely full of the content of his specialization and beyond the suspicion of inadequacies by his learners and others who can be colleagues in the work place Irimiya further Contended that to become a competent Social Studies teacher would require continual upgrade of one's self in lesson planning, content coverage, questioning skill and language of communication. This upgrading would in turn be well articulated in the teaching of Social Studies concepts and generalizations. Furthermore, the teacher would need to know how to ensure classroom discipline, use effective instructional methods and to teach effectively. When the Social Studies teacher is competent in these areas, he would be a pleasing companion to the learners, colleagues and the community at large. Competent teachers need to be versed in the application of requisite methods of teaching Social Studies in their professional career development.

Students Achievement

Achievement refers to the completion and attainment of a certain level that a student can achieve after a series of education or training, while achievement refers to the result of an examination in a subject or a whole course (Lamas, 2018). However, some scholars consider achievement to be equivalent to grades, and it is on the basis of the different understandings of achievement and grades that scholars have differed in their definitions of academic achievement (Brookhart et al., 2019).

Students' achievement implies the extent to which a student, teachers or institutions has attained their short or long term educational goals. Completion of educational bench marks such as senior secondary school; diplomas and bachelor degree represent academic achievement. Academic achievement is commonly measure through examination or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is

best evaluated or which aspects are most important, procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts (Annie, 2020).

Students' achievement comprises cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain. Cognitive domain aims to develop the mental skills and the acquisition of knowledge of the individual. The cognitive domain encompasses of six categories which include knowledge: comprehension: application: analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Knowledge includes the ability of the learner to recall data or information. This is followed with comprehension which assesses the ability of the learner to understand the meaning of what is known. This is the case where a student is able to explain an existing theory on his or her own words (Anderson, Krathwohl, Airansian, Cruikshank, Mayer, Pintrich, Raths and Wittrock, 2020). This is followed by application which shows the ability of the student to use the abstract knowledge in a new situation. The analysis category shows the ability to integrate different elements or concepts in order to form a sound pattern or structure to help establish a new meaning. The category of evaluation shows the ability to come up with judgements about the importance of concepts. The cognitive domain reflects academic achievement of students.

It is a reflection of the learning outcomes achieved during the schooling period, and it is also a goal to be achieved by the student in learning education. For teachers, academic achievement enables them to identify their own shortcomings in the teaching process, to improve the quality of their teaching, to improve their teaching methods, and to make appropriate adjustments to their teaching methods (Stabback & Philip, 2019). From the above definitions one will deduced that students' achievement refers to the measured achievement of students through examinations at a certain study stage.

Social Studies Teachers Competence Indicators

According to Irimiya (2016), Social Studies teacher's competence can be judged by the following indicators: **Teachers' lesson planning:** This is the crafting of a masterpiece of instruction, where every brushstroke represents a thoughtful decision to engage, inspire, and educate students. It's a detailed blueprint for a learning experience that unfolds like a symphony, with each element harmonizing to create a beautiful whole. This masterpiece of lesson planning comes alive in the classroom, where teachers skillfully conduct the learning process, and students become the enthusiastic artists, creating their own understanding and knowledge. The result is a breathtaking work of art, where every student's learning journey is a unique and beautiful contribution to the canvas of education knowledge and achievement. Teachers' lesson planning is the meticulous preparation and organization of

instructional content, activities, and assessments to maximize students' learning and achievement. It's like crafting a detailed blueprint for a successful learning journey.

Content knowledge/subject matter: To talk about content knowledge or subject matter without looking at who is to teach would be out of place. For it is the pedagogical content that was the basis of effective teaching. A teacher should understand what is to be learned and how well to teach it. Thus, content coverage is largely dependent on students' learning outcomes. Research works reveal that teachers' academic skills have a positive correlation to students' achievement (Irimiya, 2016). The implication is that the ability of the teacher to acquire understanding and skill of his subject matter would have effect on the quality of his/her students' learning outcome.

A teacher's amount of knowledge acquired on a particular subject area would determine content or topic coverage. If teaching entails helping others learn, then understanding what is to be taught is a central requirement of teaching. Social Studies teachers who are competent must be capable of designing lesson plans to meet student needs and cover the standards. This requires knowing how to choose and create instructional materials to accommodate students at different levels. The myriad tasks of teaching, such as selecting worthwhile learning activities, giving helpful explanations, asking productive questions, and evaluating students' learning, all depend on the teacher's understanding of what it is that students are to learn.

Classroom management skills: Classroom management is very important in the teaching of Social Studies. Competent teacher would create classroom conditions and climate, which are conducive for student learning. Zeiger, (2021) argued that teachers must set high expectations for student achievement and behaviour, all rules must be enforced consistently and fairly, students should not have to worry about being bullied in the classroom and should feel comfortable when speaking. Jennings & Greenberg (2019) supported that Social Studies competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioural guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation, coaching students through conflict situations, encouraging cooperation among students, and acting as a role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibitions of prosaically behaviour. This implies that Social Studies teachers who fail to manage classroom well are likely not to implement curriculum very effectively, this can contribute to student failure in exam. **Teachers Evaluation skills:** Evaluation performs significant roles in any educational programmes. It is equally aimed at identifying the strength and weakness of the implementation of the programme with the zeal to making useful suggestions and recommendations that will enhance it and

make it more relevant to the needs of the learners and the society. Evaluation could be used to redesign or modify existing curriculum to meet expectation. Competence in classroom management, knowledge of subject matter, teachers' qualification, etc. are vital to good teaching, but if learning cannot be effectively evaluated to ascertain the achievement of the set goals and objectives, then nothing has been done.

Appropriateness use of teaching methods: Teaching is a dynamic process that requires an array of methods to meet the diverse learning needs of students. With so many different teaching methods available, it can be challenging for educators to choose the most effective one for their class. Teaching methods, including different types of teaching methods, are the strategies and techniques that educators use to facilitate learning and instruction in the classroom (Olawale, 2019). These methods are specifically designed to help students engage with the material, develop critical thinking skills, and ultimately retain and apply the knowledge they acquire.

By utilizing a variety of methods, educators can engage different learning styles and accommodate the diverse needs and abilities of their students. For instance, some students may learn best through visual aids, while others may benefit more from hands-on activities or group projects. By using a combination of these teaching methods, educators can create a comprehensive learning environment for their students.

Appropriateness use of instructional materials: Instructional materials are materials which the teacher uses in supplementing his teachings (Adeniyi, 2019). Teachers are considered as the major implementing factors of effective materials utilizations in any teaching-learning process. The term appropriateness use of instructional materials refers to the usage degree of a given material in the execution of a given task (Uzuegbu, Mbadiwe & Anulobi, 2018). Appropriateness use of instructional materials to a large extent judges the value of instructional materials by the degree in which it singly or collectively satisfies the derived instructional needs.

The ability of the competent Social Studies teacher to effectively utilize the available instructional materials optimizes the attainments of instructional situation; this varies with the level of utilization. A situation where a competent Social Studies teacher pays "lip service" to activity-oriented instructional methods and resources that could enhance creative thinking in the learners negates the objectives of Social Studies education at the secondary school. Where a competent Social Studies teacher makes appropriateness use of instructional materials it will provide students with practical experiences in Social Studies instruction.

Teacher- Student Relationship: A student-teacher relationship in the classroom is a positive relationship between the teacher and the student in efforts to gain trust and respect from each other. This relationship may consist of getting to know your students

better, providing choice and encouraging the students to become stronger learners every day. The strong relationships between students and their teachers are essential to the development of all students in schools (Sanders, 2018). The positive student-teacher relationships are a valuable resource for students. Roeser and Urdan (2019) suggest that having a positive relationship count on their teacher if problems arise– that the teacher will recognize and respond to the problem when a teacher allows students to be able to work on their own because they know they can help. As children enter formal school settings, relationships with teachers provide the foundation for successful adjustment to the social and academic environment. Osterman (2018) opined that "forming strong and supportive relationships with teachers allows students to feel safer and more secure in the school setting, feel more competent, make more positive connections with peers, and make greater academic gains. From the above one will say that teachers' personal interactions with his or her students can make a significant difference for students. Teaching is in the service of students, which creates the expectation that teachers will be able to come to understand how students learn and what students need if they are to learn effectively and that exactly they will incorporate into their teachings.

Time Management skills: The usage of time in a productive way is known as **time management.** In today's busy schedule, time management is the basic tool to properly sequence your professional and personal chores. Being busy the whole day does not mean you are effective. With good time management skills, you work smarter, not harder, by completing your task with minimal effort and time (Ancona etal, 2019). Effective time management allows teachers to allocate dedicated time for lesson planning and preparation. By setting aside specific blocks of time for these tasks, teachers can streamline their planning process, organize materials, and develop engaging lesson plans. We know that classroom management is very difficult as the teacher needs to cover so many things in a few hours, but with effective time management skills, a teacher can increase their productivity and provide better education to their students. So, if time management is followed by teachers, they will be stress-free, and there will be greater job satisfaction. It will also increase your effectiveness and efficiency in the classroom. Lastly, it will give you more time to improve the quality of your lessons.

Teachers Competence as Great Index of Students Academic Achievement in Social Studies

Teacher's competence is exhibited in planning of lessons. A teacher who plans his/her lessons well by selecting the right teaching method and instructional material is effective planning and execution not only arouses the interest and attention of the

students but also sustain them. The students participate actively in class and learning becomes attention and active participation in lessons result to expected behavioural change (Njoku, 2015).

Classroom environment and class control do contribute to teacher's competence. The classroom has a strong influence on the personality of the students. We arranged and clean classrooms stand out as good example of cleanliness of the thought and action and it is the foundation to the formation of high moral character. Students are made responsible for the proper handling, keeping and the cleaning of all the things in the classroom to foster responsibilities in them because human beings are born to be responsible and intelligent. Thus, according to Ogundare (2018), a classroom with a conductive environment makes learning lively.

Discipline is another variable that makes for teachers competence. The teacher in the classroom must discipline himself/herself as well as the students. He/she must maintain justice, fair play, truthfulness, sincerity of purpose an action. Through the way the teacher discipline his/her students, justice is dispensed to both the offender and the offended and the way incentives are used in inducing students to master experiences both in skills and morality, enduring good character is developed. These are factors for producing productive healthy, sociable and socially good and worthy citizens. Invariably, unconducive classroom environment, a classroom that lacks discipline and control by the teacher militates against learning, makes learning inactive and non-permanent.

Another variable that makes for teachers competence is motivation. Motivation includes suspense, praise, clap and even punishment. Praise gladdens the heart and softens the mind of the learner toward the teacher. The learner is therefore able to come nearer to the teacher to ask questions and discuss freely with him/her. Through his/her questions and discussions, he/she is able to learn more (Walberg, 1988). On the other hand, when praise is not earned, it makes the child look more inward so that he/she is contented with whatever effort he/she has made. Praise that is not merited by hard work depresses those who work hard and lowers the general standard of the class.

Punishment being an acceptance of adult resentment to failure makes the learner faces the challenges to duty. The fear of punishment generates in the learner the idea of face in the class and he/she works hard. Where punishment is due to prejudice or is not commensurate with the offence the learner turns his/her wrath to the teacher and becomes rebellious. Motivation makes students active and teachers lesson a delight to the students. As a result, the students will always look forward to his/her lessons.

Higher order questioning is also an important skill in teachers' competence. It helps in the development of critical thinking for learners have to analyze and produce reasoned

responses. Invariable, asking lower order questions makes students reproduce what the teacher said and therefore calls for rote learning, which does not last (Ololobou, 2016). There are many questioning skills. These include cognitive, memory, convergent, divergent and evaluative questions. Cognitive is lower order questions where the students are required to recall and define while divergent and evaluative questions are higher order questions.

For divergent questions the students are expected to give though provoking, original and creative responses. Here the questions are presented to the students in form of problems and they are forced to combine facts and ideas in new ways in order to construct viable solutions. For instance, what do you think would happen top Nigeria if each state establishes trade barrier? If General Abacha did not die do you think his political transition programme could have been actualized? How do you think the situation would be if women are family heads? Evaluative questions, usually force the students to organize their thoughts and knowledge in such a way that their positions on the issue is clear and defendable by them. The questions are related to judgment values and choices. Such questions include, why do you believe that General Yakubu Gowon was a good head of state? What in your opinion would reduce students' involvement in secret cult activities? Do people who involve themselves in examination malpractice while in school succeed later? These types of questions not only help students in analytic reasoning but also in valuable judgment. On the other hand, questions that encourage guess work, not specific, with incorporated answers and two correct answers are to be avoided. For example, Jos is the capital of Plateau State isn't it? Nigeria got her independent in 1960 True/false.

Furthermore, cues and corrective feedback are related to the process of questioning. Through cueing, the teacher provides some help in answering questions. For instance, a teacher picks up a part of the question and asks the students to clarify. The Lander brothers, Richard and John, discovered the River Niger; do you know who sponsored them? Such prompting cues make students to think and search for the answer. Waiting time is another aspect of cueing. It gives students time to think about the question. By providing time and helping students to elaborate and answer, the teachers increase academic achievement and decrease anxiety. Providing corrective feedback is part of teacher's competence. When teachers collect assignments and home works and mark without grading and comments, opportunity for improvement is missed. Graded homework with comments is more effective than ungraded homework (Walberg, 1988).

Time management is another crucial factor of teacher's competence. Time is very important in the process of teaching and learning. How well the teacher plans his/her

lesson, how he/she handles distraction and discipline, affects the students learning. It takes professional competence for the teacher to manage his/her time well right from planning, introduction, presentation and to evaluation. The overall implication therefore is that the more competent a teacher is, the better the students achievement and the more positive the students attitude towards the teacher and the subject. But the less competent a teacher is the poorer the students attitude toward the teacher and the subject.

Conclusion

From the findings in this study, it is found that teachers' pedagogical skills, teachers' reflective practice, teachers' use of instructional materials and teachers' dispositions significantly predict students' performance. It should also be submitted here that the use of instructional materials by the teachers as well as their dispositions significantly predict students' performance in this study, the import of instructional materials and teachers' dispositions in the classroom situation should not be disregarded. The conclusion, however, is that social studies teachers should take the issue of enhancing and updating their pedagogical skills seriously, and they should consistently engaged themselves in reflective practice. That is if they hope to up and better the performance of students in social studies.

Recommendations

The following are useful recommendations and suggestions for implementation.

a. The government at all levels with a meaningful and purposive collaboration with the organized private sector should periodically provide windows of opportunities like learned workshops, seminars and in-service trainings for Social Studies teachers to equip and improve their knowledge of teaching.
b. Social studies teachers should look for opportunities to improve themselves because knowledge is dynamic so also the teaching and learning of social studies.
c. Faculties, institutes and colleges of education in Nigeria should as a matter of importance familiarize student teachers with relevant components of reflective practice in their teacher education programme, if the purpose of graduating quality teachers that will in turn promote students' performance is to be realized.
d. Criteria for recruiting new social studies teachers and other subject teachers should henceforth, include possession of adequate pedagogical skills and the

ability to enhance students' performance through reflective practice by the prospective teacher seeking to be employed as social studies teacher.

e. The promotion of teachers and other incentives to be given them should from now on be tied to how well the teacher influences the performances of his students.
f. There should also be continuous supervision and monitoring of teachers by the inspectorate division of State and Federal ministries of education. This will no doubt, improve the quality of teaching and learning and by extension, students' achievement.
g. Lastly Government should institute Teachers Award (i.e. Local, State and National) system whereby teachers whose students performed excellently in internal and external exams are recognized and rewarded accordingly. With such award system in place teachers at all levels would always strive to positively influence the achievement of their students

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