

Challenges Facing Public Primary School Teachers in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the challenges facing the primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. This study aimed to ascertain the factors that constitute, affect, as well as improve teachers' quality practices. Three research questions were developed for the study. The study sample consisted of 1500, but the population of the study was 120 primary school teachers in Aba Local Government Area. Based on the data collected via a questionnaire, the analysis resulted in the following findings that teacher quality practices include: delivering highly quality pupil-centered instruction, promoting high level of pupil engagement, clear assessment strategies for students learning, using positive behaviour management strategies, and evidence of students learning. The study also revealed factors that mitigate against teacher quality practices as unconducive environment for teaching and learning, insufficient classroom for students, delay in paying teacher salaries, inadequate facilities to help achieve instructional objectives, poor teacher preparation and qualifications. The researcher recommended that teachers should be conversant with knowledge of subject matter content, child development, methods of assessing student progress and pedagogy, and that in-service training, seminars, and workshops must be regularly organized and consistently offered for teachers to improve their knowledge and their performance in the classroom.

Keywords: Teacher, 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, material and guidance that facilitate learning either in formal or informal situations. Per Ighohiro (2012) explained that 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 determinant 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 (2012), a quality teacher is said to be an effective teacher. Studies such as Richard (2012) 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 ineffective teachers. Therefore, their studies' observation defined quality teachers in a way that is of most interest to student achievement gain which is the main aim of education. This also was affirmed in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2014) to 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 leads 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 Nigerian educational institutions fell considerable below society 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 educational and government authorities have observed that the present educational opportunities offered to learners at the 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 lesson 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. Nnachi (2010) is of the view if teachers in public schools are paid regularly, promoted as when due they will be motivated to bring out their best in imparting knowledge to our children. But where teachers are denied this privilege, their moral are slow, no interest in putting in their best. Nnachi (2010) observed that most teachers in private schools allot marks to their children as to gain the support of parents and to project their school. Furthermore, Adebayo (2009) reported that casual visits to most 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 woe 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's preparation is crucial to helping students reach high academic standards. Yet many enter the profession unprepared. Having received poor quality training may not perform very well in class. Some teachers, who are working with a regular teaching license, may never have received any training. To provide quality education for all students, teacher quality practices in school should be of high standard as teachers are the key to quality education. It is necessary therefore, to examine the factors affecting the challenges facing the primary school teachers 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 make improved decisions that foster teacher quality practices and student achievement gains. As a result, student may be offered better learning opportunities once teacher quality is improved.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In Nigeria, teachers have complained of government inability to satisfy their needs. Teachers are not adequately taken care of, with regards to normal and on time payment of their salaries and other entitlements. In fact, the primary schools teachers are the least motivated human resources. Their salaries are not paid when months ends, their promotion is delayed and when implemented the financial benefits are not paid from the time promotion took place. Teachers cannot perform their duties of implementation of the curriculum to realize the quality education to the primary school pupils. These challenges which face the primary school teachers are also observed in Abia State. These challenges make many of the primary schools pupils in Nigeria to fail to realize the philosophy of education for all of 1995 and Dakar education framework for action (EFA) (2000); which hold that education is the right of every individual and it should be accessed by all costs and the education provided should be of quality to produce the graduates who are will developed in terms of cognitive skills (academic achievements), creative, royal and innovative.

To address the challenges that the primary school teacher faces in their teaching career in Abia State, there is need for undertaking research to identify the specific challenges facing the teacher in their teaching career and to suggest the strategies to improve the teaching condition of the primary school teachers in Abia State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State.
2. Identify the factors that affect teacher's quality practices in public primary schools in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State.
3. To ascertain the extent the challenges facing primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State?
2. What are the factors that affect teacher's quality practices in public primary schools in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State?
3. How can challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. Survey research is an efficient way of gathering data to help address a research question. It 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 study was carried out in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State. Aba North Local Government Area was one out of 17 local government areas that made up Abia State. The

population of the study was 120. Simple random sampling procedure was used in the selection of sample size. Ten (10) primary schools was randomly selected and 6 teachers were selected from each of the schools bringing the sample size to 120 (2x10x6=120).

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 (SA), Agree 4(A), Undecided 3 (U), Disagree 2 (D), and Strongly Disagree 1(SD). The questionnaire was first validated for clarity, suitability, and relevance to the research questions by three lecturers from the department of teacher education, primary education, and one lecturer from the department of measurement and evaluation from national institute for Nigerian languages (NINLAN).

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 by terms of clarity, appropriateness of language, ad adequacy of the items. Their comments and contribution 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.

Results

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 challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State?

Table 1: Challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area, Abia State.

S/N	ITEMS	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS	
		MEANS	DECISION
1.	The teacher designs effective, standard-based instruction, i.e. the lesson plan is mapped to state and/or district standards, with clear goal(s) and objectives, and student 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 level of student engagement, i.e. the teacher creates an environment that promotes high level of student involvement in their learning	4.25	Agreed
4.	The teacher uses assessment for students learning, i.e. the teacher has develop clear assessment strategies for	4.00	Agreed

5.	assessing students before, during and after the lesson The teacher uses a positive behaviour management strategy, i.e. expectations of student behaviour are clear and the teacher monitors behaviour 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 shows that all the items have a mean value of 3.0 and above. This shows that the respondents agreed that all the items above constituted teacher quality practices in primary schools in Aba North Local Government Area.

Research Question 2

What are the factors that affect teacher quality practices in public primary schools in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State?

Table 2: Responses: factors that affect teacher quality practices in public primary schools in Aba North Local Government Area

S/N	ITEMS	Primary school Mean	Teacher 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 classroom 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	Disagree
16.	Oppositions from school management, educational boards, and educational offices	2.32	Disagree

In Table 2 above, the respondent agree that factors of items 7-9 affect 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 challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North L.G.A Can Be Solved? 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 public primary school teachers agreed with the essential practices of high quality teaching and learning outlined.

In Table 1 as what constitutes teacher quality practices. This finding agree 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 ad relationships with children 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 students 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 2 showed that certain challenges facing public primary school teachers. 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 school management, late salary payment, and delay promotions. These finding agree with Adebayo (2009) who 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 over population.

However, teachers disagree that parent interference and impositions from school management affected 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 shows that increased teachers' salaries, available 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 teachers' salaries should be paid on time. The respondent 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 revealed that what constituted challenges facing public primary school teachers in Aba North Local Government Area includes unconducive environment for teaching and learning, insufficient classrooms for pupils, 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 include: 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.

1. To improve teacher quality practices requires that teachers should be conversant with knowledge of subject matter content, child development, methods of assessing students' progress and pedagogy. This requires maintenance of high quality teacher education programs.
2. Teacher preparation demands that a wide variety of professional learning opportunities be made available to teacher 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.
3. Physical and resource supports need to be of quality to provide conducive school environments as to enable teachers focus on quality teaching. This means that sufficient instructional facilities should be provided and maintained in every school and adequate classrooms and office should be provided for pupils and teachers respectively.
4. In relation to in-service training, seminars, and workshops, must be regularly organized and consistently offered for teachers to improve their knowledge and therefore their performance in the classroom.
5. Regular supervision and mentoring by supervisors should be provided to evaluate teachers' classroom progress and provide the necessary input for improvement.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Finally, both federal government and the state should try and locate schools in appropriate and safe environments for the wellbeing of teachers and pupils.

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