

Teachers' Professional Development and Quality Assurance In Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between teachers' instructional tasks and their qualifications and teaching experience. The descriptive survey design was used in the study. Respondents included 60 principals and 540 teachers randomly selected from 60 secondary schools. Selection of the secondary schools was based on stratified random sampling method. Data were collected using Teachers' Instructional Task Performance Rating Scale (TITPRS), Interview Guide for Principals (IGP) and Teachers' Focus Group Discussion Guide (TFGDG). Data collected were analysed using Pearson product moment correlation statistics. There were significant relationships between teachers' qualifications and instructional task performance ($r = 0.681$ at $p < 0.05$), and between teachers' teaching experience and instructional task performance ($r = 0.742$ at $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that teachers' instructional task performance can be enhanced with a good qualification and experience in teaching, while the challenges that teachers face in the tasks of instructional inputs and curriculum delivery require effective capacity development during service, so as to improve the quality of teaching in secondary schools and the overall quality of the education system.

Keywords: Teachers' professional development, Instructional tasks, Teachers' qualifications, Teaching experience

1. Introduction

The educational enterprise involves development of human intellect, technical skills, character and effective citizenship. Consequently, the issue of quality assurance in education has become a matter of concern for the government, educational institutions and other stakeholders in order to meet expectations of the society (Fafunwa, 1995; Ayeni, 2010).

The quest for quality improvement in education service delivery necessitated the application of quality system management standards in the education sector. The adoption of quality assurance in education as an emerging policy perspective in the contemporary world emanated at the World Conference on Education for All led by UNESCO in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. Representatives of the international community agreed that all countries should pay greater attention towards improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all. This is to ensure substantial achievement of recognized and measurable learning outcomes in schools, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UNESCO, 2002). Quality assurance, therefore, is one of the most critical tasks facing every nation's educational institutions, so that the societal demands for improved education service delivery would achieve the best learning outcomes that enhance the quality of life of the citizenry (Ayeni, 2010).

According to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, quality assurance is "A programme for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met" (Merriam-Webster, as cited by Ameen, 2007). Oakland (1993) defines quality assurance as "the preventing of quality problems through planned and systematic activities. This will include the establishment of a good quality management system and the assessment of its adequacy, the audit of the operation of the system, and the review of the system itself. This definition is supported by Robinson (1994) who defines quality assurance as the set of activities that an organization undertakes to ensure that a product or service will satisfy given requirements for quality. Basically, it involves setting attainable standards for a process, organizing work so that objectives are achieved as well as ensuring the documenting of procedures required, communicating them to all concerned, and monitoring in order to review the attainment of standards. Its goals are the anticipation and avoidance of faults or mistakes. Harvey (1999) view that

quality assurance involves the process of ensuring effective resource input ,control, refining the process and raising the standards of output in order to meet the set goals and satisfy public accountability. This conception raises the issue of promoting a value system in the institutional management that emphasized production of quality learners' outcomes in the teaching –learning process.

Drawing from the above definitions, quality assurance in education can be regarded as the systematic management, monitoring and evaluation procedures adopted to measure the performance of school administrators (principals), teachers and students against educational objectives towards ensuring best practices in instructional inputs, through-put, outputs and improvement drives. Therefore, capacity development and curriculum delivery system become important for attention when seeking achievement of set standards in schools. A critical look at the definitions shows that quality assurance is evidence-based and directed at efficient and effective resource utilization in institutional management by principals and curriculum delivery by teachers in secondary schools.

1.1 Instructional Tasks and Quality Expectations

The teachers are expected to have sound knowledge of their subject areas to be able to select appropriate and adequate facts for planning of lesson notes, effective delivery of lessons, proper monitoring and evaluation of students' performance, providing regular feed-back on students' performance, improvisation of instructional materials, adequate keeping of records and appropriate discipline of students (Ayeni,2010). They must also have access to information which is up-to-date, reliable and relevant to the educational needs of students (Ayeni, 2010). In an information age, the principals are expected to provide quality orientation and capacity building for teachers towards keeping with the current thinking in curriculum planning by ensuring good organisation of the lessons with sequence, continuity and integration of concepts to facilitate systematic implementation and assessment of the curriculum to achieve the set goals.

All these are required to ensure a complete well-rounded education and production of quality students from the secondary school system as contained in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 4th Edition, 2004) which aptly states that the broad objectives of secondary education in Nigeria are:

- preparation of students for useful living within the society; and
- preparation of students for higher education.

The realization of these objectives hinges on quality of teachers, quality of input, teaching process, classroom management and students' academic assessment by the teachers. The quality of teachers' instruction has significant impact on students' academic performance (Ayeni, 2010). This key factor among others determines the extent to which the school can achieve the national education objectives in the process of implementing the curricula. The challenges facing the teachers and the principals in the school setting bother on how to enhance quality assurance through systematic management and assessment of procedure adopted to monitor students' learning outcomes against objectives, and to ensure achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements in secondary education (Harman, 2000; Ayeni, 2010).

The quality process requires that the classroom instruction meets the set standards. The teaching approach that a teacher adopts is one factor that may affect students' achievement and facilitates high standards of learners' outcomes. The success or failure of students rests on the quality of instruction and not lack of students' abilities to learn (Levine, 1985; Mills, 1991). In order to ensure quality assurance – oriented teaching and learning processes, the teachers are expected to have in-depth knowledge of the pedagogy in their subject areas to be able to understand the effective ways of organising and presenting subject matter (objective statements, providing the right methods, learning experiences and learning resources), and evaluating teaching and learning activities in consonance with the set objectives (Ayeni, 2010). Effective teaching - learning process is no doubt the hob of students' academic performance and leads to quality education in secondary schools.

However, Banjo (1987), posited that, adequate training of teachers in the latest methodology, to a large extent, determines how the learner learns during instructional activities. This viewpoint was further stressed by Maduekwe (2007) in a study on the strategies for teaching English lessons in Lagos, that in spite of the fact that most of the teachers have teaching qualifications, many of them do not have adequate knowledge of some grammatical concepts and they ended up imparting the wrong knowledge to their students. This situation is a serious gap in the teaching – learning process and also constitutes threat to the attainment of quality assurance in schools.

1.2 Teachers' Professional Development

Professional teacher training simply means teacher education and continued learning. Fafunwa (1985) viewed teacher education as the teaching and training experiences provided not only within teacher institutions but also outside them

with the basic aim of preparing and grooming potential teachers for teaching activities. Teacher training programme is generally seen as having context and composed of goals and objectives, input, process, evaluation and output (Kanu, 1992). Also, Harris (1980) viewed teacher education as “any planned programme of learning opportunities afforded staff members the purposes of improving the performance of an individual in already assigned position”(p.18). While Fullan (1995) conceived teacher professional development as “the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by the teacher in a compelling learning environment under conditions of complexity and dynamic change”(p.265). A common underpinning assertion of the above definitions is continuing learning process, by which serving teachers acquire the knowledge, skills and values to sustain the desired spark of intellectual vitality, which will improve the quality of teaching and students’ learning outcomes (Fullan, 1995).

Teachers are known to be responsible for the translation and implementation of educational policies. These depend professional practice. Teachers who are deficient in professional practice are not likely to help the students meet the challenges of learning (Ayeni, 2010). For instance, Ayeni and Akinola (2008) reporting on Ondo State, found that 57% of teachers in secondary schools were not given adequate training opportunities by their principals while facilities to improve their professional competence through in-service training were not adequately provided. This constituted encumbrance to education quality assurance.

The importance of training and re-training to career enhancement and capacity of teachers for improvement in teaching and learning processes cannot be over-emphasized. A study by Emetarom (1992) on Owerri Urban and environs: revealed that both teaching experience and formal training in educational administration are necessary for the appointment of principals and vice-principals into administrative posts in education. Also, a related study by Olagboye (1999) in his study revealed that 68.9% of the respondents were in favour of appointing only experienced teachers with formal training on educational administration to the posts of principals and vice principals while 32.1% of the subjects were not in favour. Considering the challenges posed by education quality assurance, principals are expected to be well-qualified professionally to be able to design, implement, aid and sustain relevant and effective in-service continuing professional development programmes that are participatory, school-based, focus on student’s learning and adequately address the specific training needs of teachers.

Teachers’ professional development is particularly important because of the need for teachers to do better and raise academic performance standards of students. In order to meet the challenging demands of their jobs occasioned by technological innovations, teachers must be capable and willing to continually upgrade their content knowledge, skills and practices. For instance, the results of the teacher survey by the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) on United States of America (USA) indicated that 90% of teachers participated in professional development in 1993-94, and 99% took part in 1998, in such areas as new methods of teaching, students’ assessment, cooperative learning, use of education technology for instruction, classroom management and in-depth study in their subject fields to improve their professional competencies in instructional task performance.

Although, there are various approaches to teachers professional development such as the cluster-type workshops, mentoring and full-time in-service training; which ever approach one adopts for teachers training, the important thing is for the teachers to be professionally equipped (Ayeni, 2010). It is incontrovertible that every approach has its own merits and demerits. For instance, the traditional approaches to professional development such as seminars, workshops and conferences have been criticized by researchers such as Fullan (1993), and Akinwale (1999), for being relatively ineffective because they are usually short-term, typically lasting from one to eight hours; they lack continuity due to inadequate follow-up and on-going feedback from experts; they take a passive approach to training teachers, allowing little opportunity to learn by doing and reflecting with colleagues.

Realizing this shortcoming, Gravani and John (2002) stressed that the centre-periphery model of professional development in which participants were made to be passive listeners be replaced with the cluster-type in which the practitioners and policy makers are brought together into new forms of discourse communities, where teachers can share their own knowledge of classrooms, children, subjects and pedagogy with policy makers who bring their own critical and substantive expertise to the knowledge-building table of the profession; this process is more likely to ensure a successful professional development enterprise. The much talked about cluster-training is also much criticized; but the important thing is that any approach that is adopted must be carefully and strategically designed and implemented to provide continuity between what teachers learn and what goes on in their classrooms and schools to produce long-lasting effects on teachers’ competencies and students’ learning outcomes (Fullan,1993). However, the inadequacies in teacher professional development constitute gap that can possibly lower the standard of teachers’ instructional task performance and the rate at which students understand the subject matter in schools.

A quality assurance-oriented training programme is predicated on the training needs assessment in which the school

activities are monitored to identify performance problems, knowledge gaps, concepts to be covered, categories of teachers to be trained and the evaluation procedures to determine the achievement of the specific training objectives. This is imperative to ensure future review and improvement in the contents and methods of training programme. It is expected that this process will increase the competencies of teachers to successfully cope with instructional tasks in secondary schools (Ebireri, 2007; Stone, 1982).

Teachers' professional development is informed by the fact that if teachers are to stay motivated on the job, they must have opportunities for continuing professional development, advancement and improvement in their chosen career. This is why findings by Ematarom (1992), Fullan (1993), NCES (1998) and Olagboye (1999) indicated that effective teachers' professional development is critical to quality assurance in education and to a large extent determines students' academic performance. However, gaps in teachers' professional development will no doubt cause set-back in teaching-learning process.

1.3 Statement of the problem

There is a growing concern of the society about the realization of secondary education objectives due to doubt that there have been steady decline in teachers' instructional task performance and students' academic performance which depicts non-realization of quality assurance in secondary schools (Adeniji, 2002). This has been attributed to gaps in teachers' competence, curriculum instruction, learning facilities and resources, funding and institutional management. Findings from literature (Ayeni & Akinola, 2008; Ipaye, 2002; Ogunu, 2001; Okebukola, 1996 and Zobaida, 2008) revealed that quality assurance in education is being affected by many problems. The identified gaps and challenges include the following:

- inadequate planning and delivery of lessons by teachers;
- lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of students' learning;
- inadequate provision of training facilities to develop teachers for professional growth and increased productivity.

A consideration of the above shows that there is a greater challenge ahead of teachers partly because of existing gaps and inadequacies in their instructional and supervisory duties. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine teachers' professional qualifications and competence in meeting the challenges of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ondo State which is the only state with a full-fledged autonomous Quality Assurance Agency in South-West, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

What are the effects of teachers' qualifications on their instructional tasks performance in secondary schools?

What are the effects of teachers' teaching experience on their instructional tasks performance in secondary schools?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are generated to guide this research study.

- There are no significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and their instructional tasks performance.
- There are no significant relationship between teachers' teaching experience and their instructional tasks performance.

2. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The target population comprised teachers and principals in secondary school in Ondo state. The respondents consisted of 60 principals and 540 teachers from 60 secondary schools out of the existing 599 public secondary schools in Ondo State using multi-stage sampling technique. The 540 teachers represent five percent (5%) randomly selected out of 10,798 teachers in post in the State. The selection of the secondary schools was based on stratified random sampling method from 5 Local Government Areas that were randomly selected out of the existing five educational zones in Ondo State. Three research instruments were used for data collection. They are Teachers' Instructional Task Performance Rating Scale (TITPRS), Interview Guide for Principals (IGP) and Teachers' Focus Group Discussion Guide (TFGDG). Two research questions were formulated and two hypotheses were tested for significance at $p < 0.05$ probability level of significance, using Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient statistics.

3. Results

<Table 1 about here>

The result presented in table 1 revealed that the r -value of 0.681 at $p < 0.05$ is significant, indicating that the quality of teachers' instructional input was greatly influenced by their professional qualifications; hence, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This shows that there is a substantial significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and instructional task performance in secondary schools.

<Table 2 about here>

The result obtained from table 2 showed that a significant relationship was established between teachers' teaching experience and instructional task performance with r -value of 0.742 at $p < 0.05$. The null hypothesis (H_0) of no significant relationship is hereby rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This shows there is a significant relationship between teachers' teaching experience and instructional task performance in secondary schools. The teachers' instructional practices are enhanced by years of their teaching experience.

4. Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of data revealed a significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and instructional task performance ($r=0.681$ at $p < 0.05$), indicating that the quality of teachers' instructional input was greatly influenced by their professional qualifications. This is a good development that will serve as catalyst for good academic performance of students in secondary schools.

The relationship between teachers' experience and instructional task performance was significant ($r = 0.742$ at $p < 0.05$). This implied that teachers' instructional practices are enhanced by years of their teaching experience. This is a positive development that will have a multiplier effect on students' learning outcomes in secondary schools.

A critical look at the analysis of teachers' qualifications and experience in tables 1 and 2 showed that most of the teachers in post have the requisite professional qualifications with long standing cognate experience. It is, however, important to mention that teachers' competence is not only determined by their educational qualifications, abilities to demonstrate meta-cognitive, pedagogical and pedagogical skills also count a lot in the discharged of instructional tasks. This was supported by Combs (1968) that consistent professional renewal and career development for all teachers' hinges on challenging pedagogical research extended far beyond pre-service training; this is desirable to promote consistent improvement in the quality of teachers' instructional task performance in secondary schools.

The in-depth interview conducted by the researcher revealed that many principals sponsored teachers to attend seminars/workshops and conferences that were organized by the Ministry of Education and professional associations and about 50% had benefited. The principals also organized in-house seminars for teachers on termly basis to improve their capacities for job performance, while most of the teachers also participated in the marking of WAEC and NECO SSC Examinations to update their knowledge and skills in their various subjects. However, there were constraints of funds to support in-service training of teachers. They therefore suggested increase in the grant-in-aids to schools by the state government to enable them cope with these challenges.

Furthermore, the viewpoints of teachers interviewed indicated that their work were being hampered by shortage of instructional materials and relevant textbooks, poor condition of infrastructure and lack of necessary equipment for their conveniences, inadequate financial resources to attend in-service training and excessive workload, especially in English Language and Mathematics in which teachers were allocated 22 to 26 periods per week. This had hindered teacher from giving regular essays, comprehensions and class exercises to students. All these challenges constituted gap in the quality of teachers' instructional tasks performance and students' learning. The teachers therefore suggested an improvement in their working environment and payment of special incentives to support their in-service training.

5. Conclusion

Quality Assurance in education hinges on teachers' quality and effective curriculum delivery; consequently, teachers are expected to cultivate interest in continuous learning for professional development while the principals should organize in-school training program for capacity building, no matter how proficient they are deemed to be. This will no doubt improve the quality of curriculum delivery and outputs (students) that meet set standards and expectations of the society.

6. Recommendation

School principals, government and professional bodies in the education sector should promote capacity development of teachers through intensive and regular seminars/workshops based on needs assessment of professional practices of teachers to improve their knowledge, pedagogical skills and competence in various subjects, with a view to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning processes in secondary schools.

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Table 1. Relationship between Teachers' Qualifications and Instructional Task Performance

Variables	n	X	S	r	p
Teachers' Qualifications	529	3.55	2.35	0.681	< .05
Instructional Task Performance	60	42.79	6.66		

Table 2. Relationship between Teachers' Teaching Experience and Instructional Task Performance

Variables	n	X	S	r	p
Teachers' Teaching Experience	536	3.32	0.975	0.742	< .05
Instructional Task Performance	60	42.79	6.66		