

# QUALITY TEACHER: PREREQUISITE TO STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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## **Abstract**

Quality education which is the bedrock and backbone to the development of any nation cannot be possible without quality and competent teachers. Government may provide millions of naira worth of equipment and other relevant and necessary facilities for the growth and development of education, but the whole exercise may still be a waste without quality teachers. Teachers' quality appears central to quality education and national development of any nation. This paper highlights teachers' quality and students' academic performance. The paper sees quality competent teacher as capable of making the learner to learn even in the midst of obstacles and problems surrounding him. This paper recommended that only qualified competent teachers should be employed for all levels of our educational system through competency tests and interviews from time to time. Also in every area of the educational sector, the best brains should be employed to handle them.

Education is the greatest hope of any nation. The significant role that teachers play in the education process can definitely not be over emphasized. The position occupied by teachers in the educational development of any nation is second to none. Government can build classrooms, provide teaching materials and equipment but without competent teachers to handle them to the advantage of the student, they remain worthless. Teaching materials cannot teach by themselves. The true position is that quality teaching can only take place with competent teachers even in the absence of much needed teaching materials and infrastructure.

It is these teachers that are responsible for producing the medical doctors, engineers, architects, teachers, politicians etc that can launch a country into its scientific, technological education and political development (Ngada, 2008). No matter how much a nation invests in education, it is more of a waste of resources if there are no competent and committed teachers to implement the curriculum of its educational system at all levels. The development of any nation and its education lies squarely on the availability and adequacy of quality teachers in its educational system at all levels.

## **Who Is A Teacher?**

A teacher is one who attempts to help someone acquire or change some skill, attitude, knowledge, idea or situation (Isyaku, 2006). He is one who has a good understanding of what his students need to learn and impart such knowledge and skills to his students. A teacher is able to judge how much he needs to intervene in each students learning and knows the most effective way of providing this assistance. A good teacher is said to be one who is:

- equipped academically and professionally to teach confidently at the school level;
- sensitive to change and by his training, be capable of effecting innovative practices;
- capable of promoting the continuity of the desirable elements in the moral, social and cultural heritage of the community in which he serves;

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- able to help children develop critical thinking by introducing them to scientific methods, encouraging the spirit of enquiry, adopting problem solving approach and awakening intellectual curiosity (Ugwu, 2002).

### **Quality Teacher**

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) stated that education of no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. Ali (1992) stated that an education system is only as good as the teachers who operate it. The availability of competent, qualified, professional teachers is the major determinant factor in the quality of education of any nation. The quality of such teachers will determine the quality of medical doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, politicians and teachers etc of that nation. This shows the crucial position occupied by teachers in the implementation of the curriculum in the schools. Good teachers will definitely produce trustworthy civil servants and professionals in every sector of a nation's civil service.

According to Ali (1992), effective teacher must have a basic command of his subject, he must keep abreast of his field and be able to communicate his knowledge effectively to others at their levels of comprehension. He must have a thorough acquaintance with psychological principles and be able to make practical use of them in his teaching. Thus, for a teacher to be effective and competent, he needs to be professionally trained, knowledgeable in the subject-matter, be able to communicate very well with his students and know his students very well to be able to meet their individual needs. This shows that without competent professional teachers in our schools, quality education may not be guaranteed.

Ukeje (1991) stated that quality teacher should be a person who is dependable, adaptable, cooperative, considerate, enthusiastic, forceful, honest, neat, industrious, open-minded and refined. While in the classroom, he should be able to transmit knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently and inspire learners to greater heights. He should in addition, have broad educational background, sound professional knowledge and experience.

Akinbote (2007) stated that teacher education is the key to the entire education programme, for a teacher can make or mar the best educational programme in any society whether developed or undeveloped. Nkwodimmah(2003) observed that the future of a nation rests in the hands of her teachers, for the qualities they process today will inevitably be reflected in the citizens of tomorrow. This is clearly seen in the complaints we have today in Nigeria in almost every sector as it concern the low quality of our graduates.

To further support the important position occupied by the teacher in the education system, Ukeje (1991) pointed out that if the child is the centre of the education system, the teacher is the pivot of the education process. In every educative process, there always stands the teacher in front or at the back, at the centre or at the side. What he knows and does makes a great difference and what he does not know, cannot do, or fails to do, can be an irreparable loss to the child.

The teacher in the final analysis translates policies into practice and programs into action. Thus, we can manage possibly without adequate classrooms and other facilities, we can educate without books and teaching aids but we cannot do without the teacher. In a similar vein, Anikweze (1995) argued that though learning can take place independent of a teacher, yet is inconceivable for there to be a school without a teacher. He pointed out that it is the competence of the teacher that gives life and substance to education. The competence and professional qualification of the teacher more than anything else, plays the greater role in sustaining the quality of education.

### Quality Teacher: Prerequisite to Students Academic Performance

Quality teachers are teachers who place their learners above personal gains. They are teachers who are more of directors and disciplined assistants, who are always available to assist the students to discover things for themselves. These are teacher who apply different methods of teaching to make the learner learn at all costs (Lubasa,2008).

### **Teachers' Competence and Students' Academic Performance**

For any meaningful teaching and learning to take place, the teacher must be knowledgeable in the area he is teaching. Ugwu (2002), stated that competency demands that there must be order in the class. It is only a competent teacher who can effectively motivate students to higher academic performance. The knowledge of subject, subject preparation and organization, presentation of subject matter, use of teaching aids, utilization of time, clarity of explanations, appearance, personality, grading of test, and tolerance of students' view points are very important. This criteria could be used to determine teachers' performance, but it should be noted that pupils characteristics and external variables do affect the outcomes of teaching (although they are not controllable by the teachers).

The concept of evaluation is very important in discussing teachers competence in relation to students' academic performance. Evaluation, according to Borg and Gall (1979) in Onyishi (2003), is the process of making judgment about merit, value or worth of education programmes. Again according to Sax (1979), educational evaluation makes it possible for people to make decisions about the adequacy of educational programmes, teacher's effectiveness, or teaching methodology. In the opinion of Onyishi (2003), evaluation of student's performance takes the form of continuous assessment and terminal examination. From this point of view, evaluation is seen as a useful tool for decision making. Evaluation is also the process of critical appraisal through which the worth or merit of a product or performance is estimated. Therefore, it is the systematic collection of evidence to determine whether changes are taking place in the learners as well as to determine the amount or degree of change in individual student.

Teacher's competence is the ability and knowledge a teacher has to discharge and impact to student while carrying out his responsibilities. Teachers' competence and students' academic performance are related in one way or the other, that is to say that teachers' competence has impact on student academic performance and this can be seen in the following ways:

- 1) **Quality Graduate Teachers and Qualified Trained Teachers** There are some qualified graduates that read one subject or the other, for example, History or Economics. They may be very good in their areas and the Government may employ them. It may be true that they know the subject but they may not impact the knowledge to the students because they do not possess teaching techniques and as a result it will affect the students' academic performance. On the other hand, qualified trained teachers influence students academic performance positively. These qualified, trained teachers have undergone one type of teacher training programme, namely, Grade II,N.C.E,B.A.(Ed) or B.Sc.(Ed) respectively. These categories of qualified, trained teachers are trained to discharge their duties to students because they possesses teaching techniques, pedagogy and methodology that will help increase students interest in their studies and subsequently academic performance.
- 2) **Non-Qualified Teachers** Some teachers are said to be half-baked because they do not update their knowledge through further training or education. In the same vein, they may undergo some training but they may not reach the peak of their career and this might make them unaware of innovative ways and methods of teaching when compared with teachers who started their teaching career with Grade II,N.C.E,B.A.(Ed) or B.Sc.(Ed) ,etc. This can also affect students academic performance.

Furthermore, teacher competence in area of specialization affect students academic performance. For instance, a teacher that is specialized in Social Studies and Igbo and asked to teach English Language because he has specialized in one language, cannot perform well compared to the teacher that specialized in English Language. If this happens, it can affect student academic performance. Moreover, if the teachers are not well motivated, they will perform below expectation and it will greatly affect students' academic performance.

### **Factors Influencing Students Academic Performance**

It is risky for any nation to place the responsibility of educating its citizenry in the hands of unqualified teachers. In other words, a teacher that is either academically unqualified or professionally ineffective is not anything less than a blind man leading fellow blind men. As Elementary and Junior Secondary Schooling is mandatory in Nigeria, and is placed under the Universal Basic Education (UBE), it therefore means that the destiny of children are legally placed under the custody of teachers for a significant portion of their lives. The quality of teachers and teaching is undoubtedly one of the most important factors shaping not only the learning and growth of students, but also the development of the nation concerned.

The teacher is the principal figure in the classroom. According to Oye and Odekunle(2003), Teachers effectiveness in Mathematics teaching is a great indicator of students performance and achievement in Mathematics. To them, if a teacher is inconsistent, the class will be inconsistent, if a teacher is poor in Mathematics, the performance of students will be poor in Mathematics. Precisely, the behavioral tendencies of the teacher in attitude, performance and expectation, contribute immensely to students behavior and subsequently influence their attitude towards learning. Factors reflecting a negative attitude of teacher to work has far-reaching negative effects on students. Among some of the behavior of teachers that may contribute to poor academic work of students are: teachers lack of knowledge of subject matter, frequent absence from school, wrong application of teaching methods, etc. Onyishi (2003),observed that teachers play a very important role in the implementation and success of any curriculum. He suggested that teachers activities should be evaluated from time to time so as to find out if teachers perform their duties well.

The negative attitude of students to schooling may be explained in terms of the rapid changing value of the society. It is imperative therefore, that students attitude to schooling change from what it is if any improvement in performance is expected. The students themselves, more than anyone else are responsible for their performance.

From the above analysis, there seem to be a symbiotic relationship between teacher quality and student academic performance. We cannot have one without the other. If one considers this as a self-evident truth, then the place of high quality teacher is logically central in the education and national development process.

### **Conclusion**

The crucial role of the teacher in education and national development of Nigeria is central. If our education is to achieve the national objectives, then well trained, qualified, efficient, motivated and dedicated teachers are absolutely essential. The quality of the teaching staff is probably one of the most important determinant of education standard at all levels. This is summed up in the opinion of Ngada (2008) that while the provision of school facilities are vital and organizational purpose and leadership essential, availability of money and the provision of a well designed instructional programmes necessary, never the less, one the most crucial element in the educative process remains the teacher. The teacher occupies a position second to none in the educative process.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made in order to ensure that teachers are competent since it has positive effect on students' academic performance.

- 1) The working conditions of teachers should be improved so that they can improve their production.
- 2) To enhance high productivity, teachers qualified for promotion should be promoted. Similarly, all benefits and entitlements meant for teachers should be paid to them as when due to make it more meaningful.
- 3) The educational managers should try as much as possible to give many opportunities to the staff in the schools to receive further training and retraining on their disciplines. This is because staff development is an essential aspect of motivation since such programme is aimed at enabling the individuals within the system to be more effective in performing their work or at preparing individual for greater responsibilities.
- 4) Only professionally trained and academically qualified teachers should be employed to teach in our schools. In other words, only tested teachers found to be competent should be employed into the teaching profession.
- 5) Considering the enormous responsibility of the teacher in the realization of the nation's development plans, teacher education should either be made free or highly subsidized.
- 6) Competency tests should be given to teachers before employment and from time to time on their job to keep them abreast and fit for the job.
- 7) The best brains should be employed to handle every sector of our educational institutions.

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