
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS PREDICTOR OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The study investigated the extent to which teachers' professional development programme (teachers' pedagogical skills, knowledge of subject matter, and curriculum awareness) predict students' achievement in Social Studies among junior secondary school students in Ibadan Metropolis. A total of 18 teachers were observed in class while teaching and also responded to the questionnaire while 360 JSS2 students responded in the Social Studies achievement test using multi-stage sampling technique. Six validated instruments were used for the study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The combination of the independent variables proved to have joint contribution to students' achievement in Social Studies. Teachers' knowledge of subject matter is the most influential when it comes to students' achievement in Social Studies, followed by teacher's pedagogical skills. However, curriculum awareness did not contribute significantly to the prediction model on students' academic achievements in Social Studies. From the findings, recommendations were made, such as organisation of regular workshop and seminars by the government and professional bodies (such as Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN)) for the teacher and

adequate investment on Continuous Professional Development programmes, among others.

Key Words: *Pedagogical skill, knowledge of subject matter, curriculum awareness, SOSAN*

Word Count: 187

Introduction

Education is regarded as the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potential and all kinds of rights and powers. The increasing awareness of the importance of education to the upliftment of the individual and societal standards has awakened in people and nations a conscious effort at devoting their meager resources to acquiring qualitative education (Akindutire & Ekunadyo, 2010). Going by both international and national standards, the Nigerian educational system can be said to be in a state of confusion and disarray as a result of inconsistencies, non-implementation of education policies and corruption perpetrated by the stakeholders (Fareao, 2013). According to Ibukun (2004), the quality of human resource in form of teachers, often dictates the extent of effectiveness of educational programmes. Effective teachers are, therefore, vital for the success of any educational programme. The above underpins the perceived need for training and re-training of staff within the secondary and primary education system which is considered as "the gate-way to tertiary institution". This is the hallmark of teachers' professional development, thus the teacher makes a great input in the transformation of the raw materials (student) into finished products, that is, educated manpower (Emunemu & Ayeni (2000), cited in Adewale, 2002).

In the literature, various terms are used when discussing professional development of teachers. Such terms include, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), professional learning, on-the-job training, in-service training, career advancement, among others. A teacher is conceived of a reflective practitioner, someone who enters the profession with certain knowledge and who will acquire new knowledge and experience based on the prior knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). Professional development of teachers was borne out of the inadequacies identified with teacher

education in equipping teachers to maximally discharge their duties in the era of globalization and technological changes which brought with it variations in the population of learners and also variation in the skills expected to be mastered by the students to fit into the society. Korthagen (2004) argued that pre-service training for Social Studies teachers is very demanding: however, keeping a teacher up to date is much more difficult. In this view, Allian (2011) referred to teacher professional development as workshops and classes attended by current teachers to make them better teachers. In the same vein, Adeogun (2006) described teachers' professional development programmes as planned, organized activities aimed at improving and increasing teachers' pedagogical skill, knowledge of subject matter, and awareness of the new curriculum to enable them meet the demands of the teaching job.

In addition, Jekayinfa (2005) described it as all forms of in-service, continuing education, training and professional development, whether formal or informal. Teachers' professional development consists of activities a teacher can engage in to keep abreast of new development to evaluate and improve his/her classroom performance. Such activities, according to her, include participating in in-service courses and workshops, continuing graduate study and participating in reading professional journals among others. Professional development also includes formal experiences, such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring and so on while informal experiences cover reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline among others (Ganser, 2000).

One of the ways of ensuring sustainable professional development is through the re-training of teachers (Maddibo, 2006). It was stated in the Universal Basic Education (2005) Annual Report that since teachers are expected to continuously find ways of making learning more meaningful to learners and promoting effective use of innovative materials in classroom situation, thereby, sharpening their pedagogic skills in the school system, it requires that teachers need a continuous professional development in form of in-service training.

Pedagogy or what is commonly referred to as teachers' technical skills is what distinguishes professional teachers from non-professionals. In contemporary educational practice, pedagogical skills appear to be rare and scarce commodities even among professionally trained teachers. Clark and Walsh (2002) defined pedagogical skills as "consisting primarily of knowledge about classroom, assessment, and methods for the motivation of students, personal knowledge about particular students and their families, socio-interactive skills. From this, we can infer that not everyone in the classroom today possesses the needed pedagogical skills to influence student learning and by extension, their academic performance.

Teachers' capacity training needs to be continuously enhanced in order to cope with the various challenges being thrown up in schools by the increasingly diverse population of students. Hence, there is the need to regularly provide opportunities for teachers to improve the knowledge of their course matter and the teaching skills learned in form of in-service courses in order to improve the standard of education in the country that will manifest in students' performance. Ahmed (2010) submitted that teachers need to be continuously updated in knowledge and skills in view of the large volume of knowledge being generated as a result of technological advancement, which in turn calls for new ways (skills) of doing things. According to him, the need to integrate new technology in the classroom and the expectations on the teacher to meet rigorous academic standards and goals in the class is a key in the 21st century pedagogic practice. It is believed that a carefully planned Teachers Development Programme (TPD) could assist teachers in overcoming the challenge of an unfriendly working environment in order to achieve the ultimate goal of teaching (Langsajo, 2014). It has been observed from various studies, that teachers' knowledge of subject matter has a lot of impact on student achievement. Philosophical argument and common sense support the conviction that teachers' own mastery of the subject-matter influences their effort to help students learn the subject-matter (Langsajo, 2014). When teachers possess inaccurate information or conceive knowledge in narrow ways, they may pass on these ideas to their students and may even

fail to challenge students' misconceptions, and they may use texts uncritically or may alter them inappropriately. Subtly, teachers' conceptions of the knowledge shape their practice, the kind of questions they ask, the ideas they reinforce and the sort of tasks they design for students. Understanding of the subject matter by the teacher implies that the teacher is able to teach the main points of the subject to the students. For instance, a teacher of Social Studies, who wants to teach "culture" as a topic, must know the meaning of culture, its components, characteristics, etc., and be able to give concrete examples.

The importance of teachers in successful implementation of Social Studies curriculum programme cannot be overemphasized (Ajiboye, Ajitoni and Gbadamosi, 2016). Much of the work of the implementation is resting on the shoulders of the teachers. However, the teachers need to be well informed about the new curriculum. Such teachers need to be trained in the new skills so that curriculum objectives will be met otherwise teachers with their competences will no longer be competent to carry out the objectives of the new curriculum which is in line with Millennium Development Goals and newly-introduced Sustainable Development Goals.

For the set objectives of secondary education to be achieved, teachers must be involved in decision making and planning of the curriculum. Observing the importance of involving teachers in decision making and planning of curriculum, Obinna (2007:8) observed that "no government policy on education can be realized if it does not first of all perceive the problems and opportunities before initiating decision- making process". The teacher is in the best position and most qualified resource person to be consulted. He also found out that in most cases, teachers are deliberately neglected when major decisions on education and matters concerning their welfare are taken. This ugly situation has tragic and negative consequences on curriculum implementation.

The Religion and National Values education curriculum- Social Studies theme of 9-year basic education needs to be understood by primary and junior secondary school teachers. It is not a question of qualified or unqualified teachers but of awareness and preparedness to use the new curriculum, especially in Social Studies.

Are the present teachers aware there is a new curriculum? Do they understand the core and depth of the curriculum? Do they understand the Millennium Development Goals and the relevance of the curriculum to the MDG? And ultimately, how do the PTD and curriculum awareness influence students' performance? These, and many more on teacher professional development, have led to this research.

Statement of the problem

The implementation of 3-9-3-4 educational policy in Nigeria is facing many problems, such as poor pedagogical skills, lack of knowledge of subject matter by teachers and low level of teachers' awareness of the new curriculum. Findings presumed that there is significant relationship between teacher quality and students' academic performance. Also, previous research work claimed that poor method of teaching, ineffectiveness, bad attitude towards teaching, lack of subject matter by the teacher and poor awareness of the new Social Studies curriculum by the teachers contribute to poor academic performance.

Moreover, there appears to be a dearth of empirical literature on teacher professional development (teachers' pedagogical skills, knowledge of subject matter and curriculum awareness) as they predict students' achievement in Social Studies.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of teachers' awareness of the new Social Studies curriculum?
2. Is there any significant relationship between teachers' professional development (pedagogical skills, knowledge of subject matter, and curriculum awareness) and students' academic achievement in Social Studies?
3. Which of the predictor variables is most influential at predicting students' academic achievement in Social Studies?

Method

This study employed the descriptive survey research design of the correlation type. The population for the study comprised all

secondary school teachers and junior secondary school two students in Oyo state while a multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select the respondents. The sample of the study consisted of Social Studies teachers and students that were selected through balloting system from schools within Ibadan Metropolis which has total of 303 schools in the ratio of 20 students to one Social Studies teacher. Eighteen Social Studies teachers and 360 JSS2 students were sampled for the study. The instruments are: 1) Teachers' Pedagogical Skills Observation Scale (TPSOS) adopted from the University of Ibadan Teaching Practice Rating Scale (2004) with reliability coefficient of 0.75 using scot-pie inter-rater reliability. 2) Teachers' Knowledge of the Subject Matter Test (TKSMT) was used to measure the teachers' mastery of the subject content. Part A seeks information on teachers' biodata while part B consist of 17 multiple choice questions on Social Studies. The reliability coefficient was 0.81 using Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR20). TKSMT was rated as 1 mark for each correct item.3) Curriculum Awareness Questionnaire (CAQ) was adapted from Atomatofa, Avbenagha and Ewesor (2013) to seek information on the level of teachers' awareness of the new Social Studies curriculum. Section A consists of teachers' biodata while section B is on awareness of curriculum, with 17 items 4- Likert-type of True of Me - VTOM, True of Me - TOM, Not True of Me - NTOM, Absolutely Not True of Me - NATOM. The instrument was revalidated using Cronbach Alpha and the reliability coefficient was 0.90.4. Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) was developed by the researcher with the help of experts in the subject area and consists of 20 multiple choice objective questions on Social Studies topics that are in the syllabus and have been taught by the teachers. The reliability coefficient was 0.86, using Kuder-Richardson formula 20 (KR20). The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Results

Research question 1. What is the level of teacher awareness of the new Social Studies curriculum?

Table 1: Level of Teachers' Awareness

Level of Awareness	N	%
	3	16.7
Moderate	10	55.6
High	5	27.7
Total	18	100

Table 1 shows the level of teachers' awareness of the new social studies curriculum. The table indicated that 5 (27.7%) have high level of awareness while 10 (55.6%) of the respondents have moderate level of awareness of the new curriculum, However, 3 (16.7%) have low level of awareness of the new social studies curriculum. It could be deduced that 15 (83.3%) have attained appreciable level of awareness of the new social studies curriculum. This could be as a result of advocacy and sensitization on the new curriculum. Also, the implementation of the curriculum might have also increased their awareness.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant relationship between teachers' professional development (pedagogical skills, knowledge of subject matter and curriculum awareness) and students' achievement in Social Studies?

Model	Variables	Achievement in Social Studies	Pedagogy	Knowledge	Awareness
Correlations	Achievement in Social Studies	1.000			
	Pedagogy	0.225	1.000		
	Knowledge	0.162	0.030	1.000	
	Awareness	-0.041	-0.031	-0.013	1.000

Table 2, presents the correlation matrix between predictor variables: teachers' professional development (pedagogical skills, knowledge of subject matter, and curriculum awareness) and students' achievement in social studies. There is positive relationship between teachers' knowledge of subject matter and students' achievement in Social Studies ($r = 0.162$; $P < .05$) and between teachers' pedagogical skills and students' achievement in social studies ($r = 0.225$; $P < .05$). Conversely, other correlations that exist are negative as well but low, such as curriculum awareness and achievement in social studies ($r = -0.041$; $P < .05$),

Research Question 3: Which of the predictor variable(s) is/are most influential at predicting student's academic achievement in Social Studies?

Table 3 Coefficient:

Table 3 shows the contribution of each of the independent variables to the prediction model. Two of the independent variables contributed significantly to the prediction model at 0.05 level. Teachers' Knowledge of subject matter ($\hat{\alpha} = .161$; $t(372) = 3.138$; $p < .05$) was most influential followed by Teachers' pedagogical skill ($\hat{\alpha} = .124$; $t(372) = 2.444$; $p < .05$), while curriculum awareness does not contribute significantly to the prediction model for students' achievement in Social Studies ($\hat{\alpha} = 0.011$; $t(372) = 0.210$; $p > .05$).

However, knowledge of subject matter and teachers' pedagogical skills are variables that could predict students' achievement in Social Studies

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study, with regard to the level of teachers' awareness of the new social studies curriculum, indicated that teachers have attained an appreciable level of awareness of the new Social Studies curriculum. This could be as a result of advocacy and sensitization on the new curriculum. This finding corroborates the report of Atomatofa, Avbenagha, and Ewesor, (2013), who concluded that the Federal government of Nigeria disbursed N 113.5 billion for the provision of adequate qualified teachers for the new system, retraining of old teachers to fit into the new curriculum, organization of workshops and conferences.

Also, the result on the amount of variance accounted for by the predictor variables show that the prediction model used is reliable as shown by the multiple regression correlation R and R square. The result revealed that certain percentages of the variance is due to the predictors in this study; however, the remaining percentages are due to chance. This is shown by the different studies indicating that a number of factors are predictors of students' academic achievement. Findings with respect to contributions of the predictor variables show that two of the predictor variables (knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical skills) contributed and are significant to achievement in Social Studies. This finding is in line with that of Langsajo (2014) who reported that teachers' subject matter knowledge influences their capacity to help students learn subject matter. The knowledge of a teacher about a subject matter influences his/her ability to teach it, set questions on it and give work to students' based on it. These results also support that of Gbadosi and Jegede (2015) that there was a joint contribution between independent variables (teachers' competence, methods of teaching and teachers' personality trait) and students' academic achievement. This finding is also consistent with that of Fehintola (2014) who found out that there is a relative contribution of each of these independent variables on students' academic performance

among the secondary school students. He reported that the teachers' content knowledge made the most significant relative contribution to the prediction of academic performance followed by teachers instructional quality, teachers' academic qualifications, followed by teacher's evaluation procedures and then, teachers' job satisfaction in that order.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers made the following recommendations;

1. Government should invest in Continuous Professional Development for teachers. They should sponsor more teachers to attend refresher courses such as conferences, seminars and workshops to enable teachers to update their knowledge, skills and competences in the teaching profession. Teachers' participation in such programmes will act as a catalyst for improvement in teaching and motivate them to be diligent and committed.
2. Professional bodies, such as Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should organise seminars and workshops for primary and secondary school teachers to bridge the gap between them and lecturers in tertiary institutions. This will also provide avenues to disseminate research findings on innovative teachings to equip Social Studies teachers with 21st century teaching skills.
3. The findings from this study revealed the need for stakeholders in education to take into account the variables considered in this study while addressing secondary school students' academic achievement problems.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from this study that teachers' pedagogical skills and mastery of subject matter contributed to students' academic achievement in Social Studies while curriculum awareness did not. As such, these important variables should be focused on when trying to look for the factors that could predict students' achievement in Social Studies.

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