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Teachers' Qualification and Subject Mastery as Predictors of Achievement in English Language in Ibarapapa Division of Oyo State

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Abstract - The study investigated the extent to which teachers' qualification and subject mastery could predict students' achievement in English language among senior secondary students in Ibarapa Division of Oyo state. The study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type to provide answers to four research questions. The study covered twenty (20) senior secondary schools randomly sampled. In each of the schools, a total number of fifty (50) senior secondary II students were selected to participate in the study making a total of one thousand (1000) S.S.II students in all. All the S.S. II English language teachers in the selected schools also participated in the study. Subject Mastery ($r=.74$) Questionnaire and English Language Achievement Test ($r=.72$) were used in data collection. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentage. Multiple regression analysis was also used for data analysis. All research questions were answered at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study showed that Teachers' teaching qualification has a significant relative contribution to students' academic achievement in English language.

Keywords : *Teaching Qualification, Subject-Mastery, Predictors, Achievement, English Language*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The function of the English language for educational advancement is the most important of all its functions. It is taught at almost all levels of educational system in Nigeria and therefore it is introduced to students right from pre-primary to tertiary level of education. It has to be offered compulsorily by

primary school pupils; therefore, before the pupil can proceed to secondary level of education, he must have passed the subject (Labo-Popoola, 2010). This means that before a primary school pupil can proceed to the secondary level he must have been able to pass English language as a subject among other subjects.

It is also the medium of instruction in the Nigeria schools right from the upper primary to tertiary level. The knowledge of English language helps in understanding other school subjects since it is used to teach all other subjects except local languages. Good foundation of the language paves way to success in life. Students whose performance in English language is high usually have no problems with other subjects except in rare cases.

It is however a matter of great concern that, the English language achievement of the Nigerian school students has been on a steady decline since 1960. Studies have shown that there is a low performance of students in English language. (Abdullahi 2000; Odejide 2000). They observed the unpleasant performance at the school certificate level of the Nigerian secondary schools. At the tertiary level of education, students have so much difficulty with their communicative skills in the English language as a result cannot function effectively in the academic use of English (Okoro, 2000).

These very poor outings have made it increasingly difficult for our students to fill their admission quota in the different colleges and universities in Nigeria. This is rather uncomplimentary when one considers the extent of investment made in the educational sector by government, teachers, parents and other stakeholders, (Joseph and Joshua, 2010). The poor performances of students in English language in public examinations in recent times have left a number of questions to be answered. For years, educators and researchers have debated on factors affecting students' performance especially in English language. Onukaogu (2002) in his study reported that various factors such as absence of vigorous and robust language policy, inadequate materials and infrastructure for teaching the language, and unequipped teachers among other factors are responsible for this ugly trend. Fakeye and Ogunsiji (2009) stated that the poor performance of students in English language at public

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examinations in recent times has been explained as a major cause of the decline in academic achievement and standard of education in Nigeria.

It is in frantic search for solution to this problem that researchers are now beaming their searchlight on characteristics of the teacher. Studies have shown that teacher education, ability and experience are associated with increase in students' achievement across schools. Teachers are among the most important players influencing student achievement, holding the key to sealing the gaps in students' achievement. It takes a competent teacher to be able to teach the language skills effectively and to make them competent users of the English language. This means that the teacher should possess some characteristics to make him an effective teacher. Anderson (1991) in his study added that educators have come to realize that any meaningful improvement in the education that students receive is highly dependent on the quality of the instruction that the teacher provides. Darling-Hammond (2000) emphasized on the characteristics of a teacher. He reported a study carried out by the National Commission on Teaching and American's Future on the relationship between teachers' qualification and other school variables such as class size on the achievement of students. The result showed that students who are assigned to several ineffective teachers in a class have significantly lower achievement and gains than those who were assigned to several highly effective teachers.

Studies have consistently shown that teacher quality whether measured by content, experience, training and credentials or general intellectual skills are strongly related to students' achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000 and Anderson, 1991). Researchers and analysts argued that assigning experienced and qualified teacher to low performing schools and students is likely to pay off in better performance gaps (Adegbile and Adeyemi, 2008). The above strongly shows that subject matter knowledge (competence), Teachers' qualification, teacher Teaching experience, Classroom behavior (Teachers' Altitude, Teaching skills and teacher-student relationship) are strong variables indicating students' performance.

Kimberly (2009) stated that teachers must be knowledgeable in their area of study. In truth, if a teacher is not enlightened in his/her subject, then any hope of effectiveness goes right out the window. Hence, effective teaching could be measured by the level of a teachers' subject matter competence which Mullens (1993) regarded as a prime predictor of students' learning. Most teachers do not possess the competence of the subject. The reason for this may be that English language is a second language. They may have not acquired and master the language. Anderson (1991) opined that the teacher must possess the knowledge and skills needed to attain the goal and must be able to use that knowledge and skills if the goals are

to be achieved. It has been established that there is a high correlation between what teachers know and what they teach. Thus, the ability to teach effectively depends on the teachers' knowledge of the subject matter. Teachers are handicapped if they are unfamiliar with the body of knowledge taught and teachers' characteristics is subject specific. Adediwura and Bada (2007) stated in their study that nobody could teach what he does not understand or know. They went further to state that they (teachers) must thoroughly understand the content of what they teach. A teacher whose understanding of topic is thorough uses clearer language, their discourse is more connected, and they provide better explanations than those whose background is weaker. The way the students perceive the teaching in terms of their (teachers) knowledge of content of subject matter may significantly affect the students' academic performance. Because of this, the teacher should therefore master the subject matter before teaching commences. Most teachers go into teaching without knowing what to teach. It is to be noted that pedagogical knowledge are not exactly the same thing as knowledge of subject matter, they nevertheless are, intimately linked with it, because teachers' mastery and use of them in the classroom will indicate the depth of their knowledge of subject matter.

Teachers' teaching qualification is another quality of the teacher. This means that the qualification of a teacher matters when it comes to effective teaching. Darling-Hammond (2000) opined that Certificate or licensing status is a measure of teacher qualifications that combines aspects of knowledge about subject matter and about teaching and learning. Its meaning varies across the states because of differences in licensing requirements, but a standard certificate generally means that a teacher has been prepared in a state approved teacher education program at the undergraduate or graduate level and has completed either a major or a minor in the field(s) to be taught. In Nigeria, the minimum requirement for teaching is Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) as stipulated by the Federal Government of Nigeria (National policy on Education, 2004). In most schools, you find a teacher who read mass communication, international relations and the likes, teaching English language. Some are B.A or B.Sc holders and this does not certify them as teacher. This is because there is shortage of teachers and high rate of unemployment, which have made so many people to go into teaching even when they are aware that they are qualified to teach. Hence, most teachers of English language are not certified to teach the subject. Aguoru (2008) observed that most teachers of English language do not perceive their jobs to be a profession in which they require skills to excel. He went further to explain that a large number of these teachers lack the commitment in carrying out their task and the failure came from uncertified teaches who are allowed to

teach the language. Ehindero and Ajibade (2000) asserted that students, who are curious stakeholders in educational enterprise, have long suspected and speculated that some of their teachers (lecturers in the university) lack the necessary professional (not academic) qualification (that is, skills, techniques, strategies, temperament et cetera) required to communicate concepts, ideas and principles in a way that would facilitate effective learning.

II. THE PROBLEM

There have been reports of persistent poor performance of students in English language at the Senior Secondary School level of education. Scholars have attributed this to the handling of the subject by unqualified teachers who themselves have no proper mastery of the subject among other factors. Hence, this study was carried out to investigate the extent to which these teacher characteristics could predict students' academic performance in English language among public senior secondary students in Ibarapa Central Local Government of Oyo state.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the relative contribution of teachers' qualification to students' achievement in English?
2. What is the relative contribution of teachers' subject mastery to students' achievement in English?
3. What is the joint contribution of teachers' qualification and subject mastery to students' achievement in English?
4. Which of the two teacher related factors would predict student academic achievement in English language?

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study investigated teacher related factors as predictors of senior secondary students' achievement in English in selected public schools in Ibarapa Central Local Government Area of Oyo State. Findings from this study would be significant in the following respects: The study would provide empirical information on the teacher related factors that could predict student academic achievement in English language. The study would also contribute to research efforts geared towards finding a permanent solution to the problem of poor performance of students in English language. It will also serve as an eye opener to teachers and other stakeholders on which of the teacher related factors could predict students' academic achievement in English language.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type. This is because the variables studied have already been manifested and the researcher had no control over them.

The population consisted of all S.S.2 students and their respective teachers teaching English language in public secondary schools in Ibarapa division of Oyo State. There are 25 public senior secondary schools in Ibarapa Central Local Government out of which twenty (20) were randomly sampled for the study. In each of the schools, a total number of fifty students (50) senior secondary II students were selected to participate in the study making a total number of one thousand (1000) S.S.II students in all. All the S.S. II English language teachers in the selected schools also participated in the study. Two instruments, namely, Subject Mastery Questionnaire and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) were designed respectively for the study. The questionnaire was a self-designed one by the researcher and the items were carefully structured to elicit response on teachers' mastery of subject matter and teacher classroom behaviour. It consists of four sections, A, B, C and D. Section A 'sought demographic information of the students such as students' school and class., Section 'B' sought information on students' evaluation of the teacher on teachers' mastery of subject matter, Section C elicited responses on teachers' classroom behaviour while section D was on teachers qualification. The questionnaire was fashioned along four point modified Likert scale. Developed by the researcher whose scores were scaled with strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed attributed to the questions. Alongside this, the researcher collected information about the twenty teachers' gender, teaching qualification and teaching experience from the principal's office. The achievement test was constructed by the researcher based on past questions in English Language. The questionnaire was given to my supervisor who made his input. It was later given to other experts in the field of research in the University of Ibadan. Further comments were factored into production of final draft of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha yielding co-efficients of .74 respectively for items on subject mastery. The achievement test in English language was constructed by the researcher based on past public examination questions. The test was administered on a separate group of students from two schools, which are not part of the schools for the main study. The reliability was determined through test-re-test yielding a value of .72.

The researcher sought permission from the principal of the sampled schools before embarking on the data collection process. Appointments were booked and the researcher visited respondents in their schools

to administer the questionnaire. Information on teachers' qualification and years of teaching experience. The study lasted for two (2) weeks. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple

percentage. In addition, multiple regression analysis were use to provide answers to the research questions. All research questions were answered at 0.05 level of significance.

VI. RESULTS

Answering the Research Questions

Table 1 : Summary of multiple Regression Analysis showing Relative contributions of Teacher related factors Students' Achievement.

Model	Un standardized co-efficient	Standard coefficient			
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig
(constant)	37.969	3.847		9.871	.000
Teacher qualification	.602	.163	.192	5.756	.000*
Subject mastery	.456	.093	.169	4.923	.000*

* Significant at 0.05 Level

Research Question 1: What is the relative contribution of Teacher Qualification to students' achievement in English?

Table 1 above reveals that the relative contribution of teachers' qualification to students' academic performance in English language was significant ($\beta = 0.192$; $t = 5.756$; $P < 0.05$),

Research Question 2 : What is the relative contribution of teachers' knowledge of subject matter to students' achievement in English Language?

From table 1, it was observed that teacher mastery of subject contributed significantly to students achievement in English language ($\beta = 0.116$; $t = 4.923$; $p < 0.05$)

Research Question 3 : What is the joint contribution of Teacher's Qualification and Teachers' subject mastery to students' achievement in English Language?

Table 2 : Regression Analysis Showing joint contribution Teacher's Qualification and Teachers' subject mastery to students' achievement in English Language?

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	1501.022	1	1501.022	10.105	.000*
Residual	222172	1252	177.454		
Total	226701.166	1253			

* Significant at 0.05 Level

Table 2 shows that the joint contribution of teachers' qualification and teachers' subject mastery to student's achievement in English is significant ($F_{(1,1252)} = 10.105$; $P < 0.05$) .

Research Question 4 : Which of the two teacher related factors would predict the academic achievement of students in English Language?

Based on Table 2, it is discovered that both subject mastery of the teachers in English language ($\beta = 0.116$; $t = 4.923$; $p < 0.05$) and teacher qualification ($\beta = 0.192$; $t = 5.756$; $P < 0.05$) would predict students' achievement in English

relative contribution to students' academic achievement in English language ($\beta = 0.192$; $t = 5.756$; $P < 0.05$).

- Teachers' knowledge of subject mastery has significant relative contribution to academic achievement of students in English language ($\beta = 0.116$; $t = 4.923$; $p < 0.05$)
- The joint contributions of teachers' qualification and teachers' subject mastery to student's achievement in English is significant ($F_{(1,1252)} = 10.105$; $P < 0.05$) .
- The two teacher- related factors in this study would predict student academic achievement in English language: Teachers' teaching qualification ($\beta = 0.192$; $t = 5.756$; $P < 0.05$), teachers' mastery of subject mastery ($\beta = 0.116$; $t = 4.923$; $p < 0.05$)

VII. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study showed that

- Teachers' teaching qualification has a significant

VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study showed that the relative contribution of teachers' qualification and subject to students' achievement in English Language is significant. These findings were consistent with those of Jones (1997) who claimed that students tend to achieve better results when taught by teachers with more years of teaching experience. This finding also corroborated Hariss and Sass (2008) who observed that teachers experience and qualification has a significant effect on students' achievement in English language. In line with this, Strauss and Vogt (2001) were of the opinion that teachers teaching qualification and experience are strong determinants of student academic achievements. Komolafe (1989) and Ojo (2008) supported this in their findings that teachers' qualification and experience, among others affected the performance of the students in English language. They explained that, the more the teacher is qualified and experienced, the better his or her students are likely to perform. Robinson (2009) and Rockoff (2004) added that teachers' teaching qualification could contribute significantly to students' achievement in mathematics and language only if it was combined with others school factors. However, this finding negates that of Makinde and Tom-Lawyer (2008) who found no significant relationship between student academic achievement and teachers' qualification and experience. The disparity in two findings may be due to the fact that this study looked at junior secondary students. Zaku (1983) who found that teaching qualification had a non-significant standardized partial regression of (- 0.06) and it made little contribution to the explained variance. This may however, be due to the environment in which the study took place. Adewumi (2000) and Adegbile and Adeyemi (2008) found out teachers' teaching qualification had non-significant correlation co-efficient with students' achievement in the various subjects that they examined. This was as a result of the fact that, the study was carried out on biology and integrated science.

The study also found out that teachers' mastery of subject matter contributes significantly to students' academic achievement. This is also in line with Ehindero and Ajibade, (2000) who reported a significant relationship between students' perception of teachers' knowledge of subject matter and students' academic performance. This finding also corroborates Monk and King (1994) who reported that teachers' mastery of subject matter is significant to students' achievement.

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study focused on teacher characteristics and class size as predictors of public school students'

achievement in English language in Ibarapa Central Local Government area of Oyo State and it was concluded that all the variables focused viz: teachers' teaching qualification, teachers' teaching experience, teachers' mastery of subject matter and teachers classroom behaviour are teacher related factors that contribute to students' achievement in English Language. As such, these important teacher variables should be focused when trying to look for solution to related persistent poor performance of students' in English language.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that government should regularly organize seminars, workshop and training programmes to foster teachers' mastery of the subject. Government should also make sure that teachers employed possess the necessary teaching qualifications to certify them to teach English language. Different teachers should be made to handle different aspects of English language. This would enable them to be more efficient as they would be made to handle what they have interest in and capable of doing. Teachers should also endeavor to improve themselves in the profession. They should make attempt to upgrade their certificate.

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