Influence Of Teacher Quality Variables On Nigerian Primary School Pupils’ Achievement In English Language

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship that existed between teacher quality variables and primary school pupils’ achievement in English Language. The study was a correlational type. The sample of the study consisted of three thousand three hundred and seven (3307) pupils and four hundred and twenty five (425) teachers that were selected through multi-stage sampling technique among primary five pupils and their teachers in South Western Nigeria. The instrument used for the data collection include: Teacher Assessment Style Questionnaire (TSQ) and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). Two research questions were raised in the course of the study. Multiple Regression Statistical Method was used for data analysis. Results indicated that significant relationship existed among the variables of interest. It was therefore recommended that more studies on various disciplines were needed in Nigeria so that efforts at improving the standard of education could be enhanced.

Introduction

The importance of English Language in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Though it is a foreign language, it is being used as a second language (L2). It is the language of the government, business, commerce, the mass media as well as education, Adepoju (1996). In the school system, be it primary school or higher institution of learning, English Language is an instrument for effective teaching and learning of the language so as to improve learners’ academic performance. Adepoju (1996, 2002); Kolawole (1997); Adegbile (2007); Ayodele (1998, 2007) have observed through their empirical findings that failures in other subjects may be as a result of not having a sufficiently sound background in English Language, since instruction in all these subjects are in English Language. The importance of English Language in our society thus demands that we continue to probe more into variables contributing to learner’s achievement.

It should be stressed, at this juncture, that at the primary school level, especially in Nigeria, the English Language is very crucial to anything a learner has to study in the school system. It is therefore obvious that without a thorough mastery of its use, it is not possible to
have a sufficiently firm grasp of what the learner has to learn. It is a pity that English language is one subject in which most of our primary school learners' fare terribly poorly. The reasons for this are obvious. In the first instance, according to Ayodele, Adegbile, Nnamani & Ofoego (2007), English is introduced to many learners after their mother tongues have been firmly acquired and mastered. Thus, when it is taught to them, it has to compete seriously with their first language. Then, there is the factor of the environment in most situations; the English Language is not used in the learners' environment. Thus, the teachers' effort in the classroom is not complemented with the home and the larger environment. There are other factors militating against learners' effective learning of the language in the school. One of the major ones is the types of books available which are often not the most suitable to promote the teacher's efforts in making learners efficient users of the language. This is a factor which designers and writers of English textbooks should always bear in mind.

The challenge in the educational programme of Nigeria as a country is to examine how some teacher's quality variables could be geared towards ways of facilitating productive learning by the pupils in order to enhance academic standard. Research findings suggest that quality of instruction affect both student learning rate and achievement levels (Darkin-Hammond 1999, Walsh & Snyder, 2004, Raymond, Fletcher & Lugue 2001, Darling Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin & Heilig, 2005). Research consistently shows that teacher quality whether measured by content knowledge, experience, training and credentials or general intellectual skills is strongly related to student achievement. Many researchers and analysts argue that assigning experienced, qualified teachers to low performing schools and students is likely to pay off in better performance gaps.

Donna (2007) in his study found that teacher experience has significant effects on students' achievement. His study found a dramatic improvement in student achievement between one and five years of teaching experience and a more gradual boost in the years followed. He therefore made a preliminary recommendation that any changes in the way teachers are paid should emphasize financial rewards for experience rather than higher pay for teachers with graduate degrees. Findings about the influences are relative contributions as teacher training and experience levels are reinforced by those of 60 production functions studies (Greenwald, Hedges & laine, 1996) which found that teacher education, ability and experience along with small schools and lower teacher – pupil ratios are associated with increases in students' achievement across schools and district. In their estimate of the achievement gains associated with expenditure increments on various resources, spending on teacher education was found to be the most productive investment for schools, outstripping the effect of teacher experience and reduced pupil – teacher ratios.

Fettler (2001) found a strong negative relationship between average students' scores and the percentage of teachers on emergency certificates, as well as a smaller positive relationship between student scores and teacher experience levels after controlling for student poverty rates. When students' characteristics are held constant, the relationship of teachers' qualification to students' achievement is more pronounced. A study of high and low achieving schools with demographically similar student populations in New York City found that differences in teacher qualifications (educational degrees, certification status and experience) accounted for approximately 90% of the total variation in average school – level student achievement in reading and mathematics at all grade levels tested (Armour – Thomas etal, 1989).

School Reform News staff (2001) carried out a study and found that better qualified and more experienced teachers tend to move to schools with higher achieving students. Also, it was found that experience does not mean achievement as the result of Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué indicated that fourth –grade students whose teachers held a bachelor's degree
scored 225 on WACE math test. Students whose teachers held a master’s degree scored 227. Students whose teachers had been teaching for two years or less scored 223, three to five years’ experience 224, six to 10 years’ experience 226, 11 to 24 years’ experience 227 and over 25 years’ experience 228.

Also, in the first annual “Report to the Region” made possible by a partnership between University of California, Riverside and the Bank of America Foundation, researchers connected the dots to show a striking correlation between credited status of teachers and the academic achievement than students on the API – the Achievement Performance Index. Teaching styles according to Stein, Steaves and Smith (2001) include Formal Authority, Demonstration, Facilitator and Delegator. Formal Authority can be defined as teacher – centered approach, where teacher dominates the entire class, in formal authority style, the teacher is not concerned with establishing relationship among learners. Demonstrations teaching style also refers to as teacher- centered approach strategy but here teacher acts as a coach or guides to learners and learners are allowed to express their views and opinions. There is therefore opportunity for students to participate in teaching and learning process.

Facilitator as a teaching style is a student – centered approach, here students have great responsibility to play in teaching and learning process. There is therefore room for student to student interaction. The role of the teacher is just to facilitate the entire classroom atmosphere. Delegator as a teaching style is equally a student–centered approach, but here the role of students is a bit higher than that of facilitators. Students are to design learning materials by themselves.

Teachers’ level of awareness of assessment style also plays a very important role in the teaching – learning process. It helps the teacher to be creative and resourceful. This implies that being a trained teacher also involves the development of awareness of assessment style. In a study carried out by Egbnonu, Ezechukwu & Chukwuka (2007) on level of awareness of the baby friendly initiative among Nigerian Home Economics, teachers reported that only 34.5% of the teachers were aware of the concept while 60% could define breastfeeding prevented malnutrition in babies, only 12.5% knew about the protective effects of colostrums.

However, it should be pointed out that most of the previous studies reviewed so far centered on secondary schools. Therefore, there is a need to examine the primary school level and also to consider some teacher quality variables that can enhance pupils’ achievement in English Language. The foregoing explains why the major purpose of this study was the investigation of the influence of teacher quality variables on Nigerian primary school pupils’ achievement in English Language.

Research Questions

On the basis of the problem stated earlier, the following research questions were formulated to guide the researcher:

What is the composite effect of some teacher quality variables on pupils’ achievement in English language?

What are the relative effects of some teacher quality variables on pupils’ achievement in English Language?
Methodology

Research Design

The research design is a correlational survey study. Correlational research design seeks to investigate whether any relationship exists between or among variables of interest.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

The target population comprised all the primary school pupils and their teachers in South Western Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting sample for the study which involved three thousand three hundred and seven (3,307) pupils and four hundred and twenty-five (425) teachers in the arms of primary five. Three states (Osun, Ogun and Lagos) were involved in the study and five local government areas were randomly selected. Only an arm of primary 5 was randomly chosen from each of the schools. All the pupils and their respective teachers teaching English Language constituted the sample for this study.

Instrumentation

Two types of instruments were used for the purpose of this study. These include:

Teacher Assessment Style Questionnaire (TASQ)

English Achievement Test (EAT)

The Teacher Assessment Style Questionnaire (TASQ) was developed by the researchers. The instrument was used to collect information on teachers regarding their assessment style in eliciting feedback from their pupils. It was given to other experts in the area of Educational Evaluation. The final form of the item was then validated in terms of administering it on a sample of forty teachers and a cronbach alpha of 0.89 was obtained.

The second instrument, which centered on English Achievement Test, was a standardized instrument that comprised 20 items. The instrument was revalidated through Kuder Richardson formula 20 to establish its internal consistency. The reliability co-efficient was 0.80, the difficulty index was 0.4.

Results and Discussion

RQ 1: What is the composite effect of some teacher quality variables on pupils’ achievement in English Language?

Table 1: Multiple Regression of Teacher Quality Variables on Pupils Achievement in English Language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Regression (R)</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Square</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R Square</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that the multiple regression correlation coefficient (R) revealing the linear relationship between the independent variables (teacher quality variables) and dependent variable (pupils’ achievement in English Language) is 0.26. The adjusted R Square equals 0.049, meaning that all the teacher quality variables taken together accounted for 4.9 percent variation in pupils’ achievement in English language. Multiple regression ANOVA was used to further test the significance of the linear relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. F- ratio value equals 3.76; p < 0.05. This implies that the linear relationship between teacher quality variables and pupils’ achievement in English Language is significant at 0.05 alpha level. This result corroborated Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain (2005) who found that teacher quality differences explained variation in student reading ability which is an aspect of English language.

RQ 2: What are the relative effects of some teacher quality variables on pupils’ achievement in English Language?

Table 2: Coefficient indicating relative effects of teacher quality variables on pupils’ achievement in English Language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Quality Variable</th>
<th>Standard Coefficient Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of Experience</td>
<td>-.176</td>
<td>-3.532</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher qualification</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>2.949</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal authority</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>1.075</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration</td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>-1.095</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>-.064</td>
<td>-.822</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.415</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of assessment style</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>-.096</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S = Significant at 0.05 alpha level
NS = Not significant at 0.05 alpha level

The relative effects of the teacher quality variables on pupils’ English Language achievement in the order of absolute magnitudes indicated by standardized Beta (B) weights are presented in Table 2. Teachers’ years of experience contributed most, though inversely to pupils’ achievement in English Language ($\beta = -.176; t = -3.536; p < .05$). Next to year of experience of teachers is their educational qualifications which also contributed significantly to pupils’
achievement in English Language ($\beta = .1451; t = 2.949; p < .05$). The magnitudes of contributions of the other predictors to English Language achievement of pupils are:

- Formal Authority ($\beta = -.117; t = 1.075; p > 0.05$)
- Demonstration ($\beta = -.102; t = -1.905; p > 0.05$)
- Delegation ($\beta = -.064; t = -8.22; p > 0.05$)
- Facilitation ($\beta = -.046; t = -.415; p > 0.05$)
- Assessment style ($\beta = .032; t = -.528; p > 0.05$)
- Awareness of assessment ($\beta = -.006; t = -.96; p > 0.05$)

Only two predictors - teachers year of experience and educational qualification have been found to have significant relative effects on pupils’ achievement in English Language. This finding disagrees with a wide range of findings in the relationship between years of teaching experience and students’ outcomes. Hanushek (1986) found that fewer than half of the 109 previous studies on the estimated effects of teacher experience showed that experience had any statistically significant effect of students’ achievement. Of these, 33 studies found that additional years of experience had a significant positive effect. Also on teacher educational qualifications, the results taken with Straness & Vogt, (2001) who were of the view that measures of teachers’ academic qualification represent one of the best predictors of teacher quality variables.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, it could be deduced that there existed linear relationship between teacher quality variables: level of awareness of assessment style, educational qualification, length of service and teaching style on pupils’ achievement in English Language. Also, of the eight variables designed as teacher quality variables on pupils’ achievement in English Language for this study as far as relative effect is concerned, two variables (teacher’s years of experience and teacher’s educational qualification) were found to be significant while the remaining six variables were not significant. At this juncture, it is very obvious that teacher quality plays a very significant role in the teaching-learning process. Adegbile (2001) opines that the development of a student in terms of the quality of education he receives depends largely on the qualities of the various teachers’ behavior in desired directions.

One of the major sources from which students learn the language is the classroom. Adegbile (1999) points out that students’ inability to perform very well in the subject may be as a result of wrong teaching methods in the class which could also be due to the teacher’s quality. The foregoing implies that teacher variables have been regarded as one of the major causes of poor students’ performance. It is therefore recommended that further studies should be conducted at various levels of educational level with the prime purpose of assessing other teacher quality variables capable of enhancing academic upliftment of the learners.

**References:**


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