

INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN CIVIC EDUCATION IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated influence of teachers' characteristics on the academic performance of secondary school students' in Nasarawa State. Two research questions with their corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The study used descriptive survey design. The population consist of 30,069 secondary school students. The sample size for the investigation consists of 377 students as respondents obtained through simple random sampling technique. The researcher developed an instrument title Civic Education Achievement Test (CEAT). The instrument was validated and had a validity index of 0.79 and a reliability index of 0.81 using KR-20 method of estimating reliability. Descriptive statistics was used to provide answers to the research questions while ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level significance. All analysis was done using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings revealed that there is significant influence of teachers' qualification on students' academic achievement in civic education, there is significant influence of teachers' experience on students' academic achievement in civic education. The study recommended that teachers with lower qualifications like NCE and those without professional qualifications should be encouraged to further their studies for effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: Teachers' characteristics, Teachers' qualification, Teachers' experience, Academic achievement

Introduction

Education is a vital process in human development and environmental management, and a process of refining and preserving the collective values embedded in the culture of the society (Nja, Cornelius-Ukpepi & Orim, 2019). By education, a network of worthwhile knowledge, skills and habits is passed on from one generation to the next for effective citizenship and collective benefits of the society. Education is a systematic, intellectual and moral training, development, geared towards obtaining knowledge, development of character and also mental development that will ensure human survival (Nja, Idiege & Obi, 2017). This becomes a reality through effective teaching and learning. Education is often conceived as a systematic action of imparting relevant knowledge, skills and habits to the learners in their preparation for a meaningful life and contribution to a better society. This action is, however, usually delivered through skilful exposure to several academic disciplines.

Nja, Cornelius-Ukpepi, Edoho and Orim (2019) opined that education is widely regarded as a basic human right, a key to enlightenment, and a source of wealth and power. Education is critical to industrial and technological development, with the history of developed nations bearing records of this. Developing nations aspiring to realise the same status have to put a premium on it. Knowledge holds the key to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include food security, eradication of child mortality, and reduction of the spread of HIV and AIDS, among others.

According to Ekperi (2018), education and its benefits can never be overemphasised as the root of economic, industrial, political, scientific and technological and even religious development. All aspects of development are centred on education. Every educational system at any level depends heavily on teachers for the execution of its programmes. Teachers, therefore, are highly essential for the successful operation of the educational system and important tools for educational development. Ekperi (2018) noted further that it is an acceptable fact that the teacher is the most important factor in the educational process and that teachers are instrumental to the success of any educational programme embarked upon by any government. This is because, apart from being at the implementation level of any educational policy, the realisation of these programmes also depends greatly on teachers' dedication and commitment to work.

The quality of any educational system depends on the quality of its teaching staff, and without quality teachers, a school may not be able to achieve its goals and objectives (Ekperi, 2018). The National Policy on Education further stated that, "no educational system can rise above the quality of teachers in the system" (FGN, 2019). In view of the above statement on the pre-eminent role of the teacher in boosting the quality of education of a nation, the Federal Government of Nigeria has made several attempts and enacted laws concerning the development of education. Among such attempts is the law concerning the training and recruitment of teachers, which was enacted to achieve qualitative educational outcomes. The National Policy on Education emphasises that only qualified and skilled teachers should be recruited into the educational system of Nigeria (FRN, 2014).

In recent years, students' academic achievements in the senior secondary certificate examination (SSCE) in civic education have declined. The decline in academic accomplishments of students is reflected yearly in students' results published by the examination bodies (Dinah, 2013). This low students' academic achievement has been attributed to several factors, among them teacher characteristics. Jepsen (2015) notes further that teachers have a strong influence on students' achievement, noting that teacher characteristics are key in determining the academic achievement of students' senior secondary school.

The term “teacher characteristics” can be referred to as qualities that can be measured with tests or derived from their academic or professional records. These include teachers’ qualifications, and teachers’ experiences. Teacher characteristics influence the teaching and learning of students in secondary schools. Ukpong (2022) stated that the explanations for good or poor students’ academic achievement have been quite exhaustive, yet controversy still exists among scholars as to what contributes singly or jointly to students’ poor performance.

The teachers’ qualification and their dedication are therefore important aspects to consider if students have to achieve better grades or not. Chokera (2014) suggested further that the effectiveness of individual classroom teachers’ influence on students’ academic achievement is therefore wanting. The idea is supported by the fact that no student would achieve beyond the quality of their teacher. Teachers’ Qualification (TQ) and Teachers’ years of Experience (TE) may be responsible for the downward trend in academic achievement of senior secondary school students especially in civic education. The achievement of students in civic education is reported to be heavily influenced by their teachers’ years of experience and qualifications. Noting that highly qualified teachers produce more competent learners than less qualified teachers (Utitofo, 2023).

Kile (2013) defined teaching experience as all activities undertaken by the teacher in his pre- and post-teacher training exercises. It includes participation in professional development activities geared towards equipping the teacher for better service delivery. This aspect of teacher characteristics has not been given adequate attention because it is a general belief that anyone who can talk convincingly will do well as a teacher, regardless of whether he or she has experience in pedagogy. According to Mbaka et al. (2022), experience helps the teacher to facilitate the transfer of knowledge effectively. Teachers with many years of teaching might be better at content delivery as they have interacted with the content for a long period of time. Odumbe, Enose and Ayodo (2015) noted that teachers with long experience enhance and improve students’ academic achievement, and that long-serving teachers are hands-on in preparation of their lessons and keen on learner progression from academic achievement. According to Wandera and Imonje (2019), long teaching experience in actual classroom teaching produces better learner achievement results than short teaching experience.

However, Omotayo (2019) observed a positive correlation between teachers’ experiences and students’ learning outcomes. Imogie and Johnson (2019) identified some areas of teacher experience, such as pedagogical studies, content studies, instructional technology, and post-teaching training, among others. Studies indicate that a teacher with both content knowledge and instructional ability achieves a higher percentage of students’ learning outcomes than teachers without such experience.

Statement of the Problem

Poor academic achievement among senior secondary school students in civic education has become a source of worry to successive governments and major stakeholders in the education sector in the country, and Nasarawa State in particular. This ugly trend has persisted despite efforts by governments to invest in education. This trend has further instigated the current worry among stakeholders as to the factors responsible for the poor academic achievement of senior secondary students in civic education within Nasarawa State. This poor academic achievement of senior secondary school students in civic education may indicate that students have learning difficulties in comprehending what teachers teach in school. Evidence from observations seems to suggest that classrooms may not be providing students with adequate skills to enhance their academic achievement especially in civic education. Given the persistent decline in the academic achievement of senior secondary school students, instead of looking into

the general and specific causes of declines, most of the time, castigate school-related factors, especially those that are teacher-related. A functional education system, however, depends on the adequacy of some indispensable teachers' characteristics, which may include teachers' qualification and teachers' experience which may influence the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in civic education either positively or negatively. This study, therefore, examined the influence of teachers' characteristics on senior secondary school students' achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the influence of teachers' qualifications on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State?
2. What is the influence of teachers' experience on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of teachers' characteristics on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Nasarawa State. The specific objectives include:

1. Determine the influence of teachers' qualifications on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State.
2. Examine the influence of teachers' experience on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho₁: There is no significant influence of teachers' qualification on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State.

Ho₂: There is no significant influence of teachers' experience on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey involves the collection of data within a short period of time from random samples of the target population (Anikweze, 2013). This design is considered appropriate because the study seeks to find out the influence of teachers' characteristics on students' academic achievement of secondary school students in civic education in Nasarawa State. The population of the study 30,069 SS2 students in Nasarawa State (Nasarawa State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2024/2025). The simple random sampling technique was used to select 377 SS2 students as respondents using the recommendation of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The instrument for study is titled "Civic Education Achievement Test (CEAT)". Civic Education Achievement Test (CEAT) comprised two sections, the first consist of bio data while the second section contain 25 items with multiple choice of A, B, C and D for students to choose the correct answer. The instrument was validated by two experts with validity index of 0.79. The reliability of the instrument was conducted on 20 students from GSS Kofar Hausa, Keffi. KR-20 was employed to compute the coefficient of internal consistency of the instrument. The coefficient of internal consistency of 0.81 was obtained. The researcher visited all the selected schools and administered the questionnaires and collected them after completion from the respondents on the spot. The researcher made use of descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The researcher administered a total of 377 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. However, 364 copies were successfully retrieved and found suitable for data analysis, representing a 96.6% retrieval rate. The remaining 13 copies, representing 3.4%, were not retrieved. Consequently, the analysis and interpretation of the findings were based on the 364 properly completed and retrieved questionnaires.

Research Question One: What is the influence of teachers' qualification on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State?

Table 4.1: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing influence teachers' qualification on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State

Teachers Qualification	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std error
NCE	108	26.93	5.13	0.49
B.Ed/BSc	150	30.78	4.57	0.37
M.Ed/PhD	106	42.56	4.99	0.48

Table 4.1 presents data on influence of teachers' qualification on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Students taught by teachers with NCE qualifications had a mean achievement score of 26.93, with a standard deviation of 5.13, and standard error of 0.49 indicating a great variability in achievement across a sample size of 108 students. In comparison, students taught by teachers holding a B.Ed/BSc had a higher mean score of 30.78, with a standard deviation of 4.57, and standard error of 0.37 reflecting a similar level of variability among 150 students. Notably, the highest mean achievement score of 42.56 was observed among students taught by teachers with M.Ed and or Ph.D qualifications. However, this group had a standard deviation of 4.99, and standard error of 0.48 suggesting greater variability in students' achievement.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of teachers' experience on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State?

Table 4.2: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing influence teachers' experience on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State

Teacher Experience	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std error
1-2 years	95	27.61	5.87	0.62
3-5 years	124	33.09	4.37	0.39
6 above	145	44.70	5.60	0.46

Table 4.2 provides data influence of teachers' experience on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria measured by mean scores, standard deviations, and standard error across different experience categories. Teachers with varying levels of experience were categorized as having experience between 1-2 years, between 3-5 years, and 6 years and above of teaching experience. Among students who were taught by teachers with between 1-2 years of teaching experience, the mean achievement score is 27.61, with a standard deviation of 5.87, with standard error mean of 0.62 based on a sample size of 95 students. This group demonstrated a relatively low mean score, suggesting that new teachers may achieve relatively low results in teaching. In contrast, students taught by teachers with between 3-5 years of experience show a higher mean achievement score of 33.09, with a standard deviation of 4.37, and standard error mean of 0.39 and a sample size of 124 students. Interestingly, students taught by teachers with 6 and above years of experience exhibited the

highest mean achievement score of 44.70, with a standard deviation of 5.60, and standard error mean of 0.46 and a sample size of 145 students.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: there is no significant influence of teachers' qualification on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Table 4.3: ANOVA Showing influence of teachers' qualification on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14403.110	2	7201.555	303.735	.000
Within Groups	8559.308	361	23.710		
Total	22962.418	363			

The ANOVA results reveal significant differences among the mean scores of the three qualification groups: N.C.E, B.Ed/B.Sc, and M.Ed/Ph.D. The analysis shows a substantial F-Statistic of 303.735, which indicates that the variation between the group means is much larger than the variation within each group. This suggests that there are notable differences in average scores across the qualification categories. Additionally, the sig of 0.000 which is less 0.05 level of significance, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis that all qualification groups differ in mean scores. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant influence of teachers' qualification on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: there is no significant influence of teachers' experience on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Table 4.4: ANOVA showing influence of teachers' experience on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18691.424	2	9345.712	333.285	.000
Within Groups	10122.862	361	28.041		
Total	28814.286	363			

ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of teachers' years of experience on senior secondary school students' achievement in civic education. The table summarizes the variation in mean achievement scores across three experience categories: teachers with between 1-2 years, between 3-5 years, and 6 years above of teaching experience. The ANOVA results revealed a significant difference in mean achievement scores between the experience categories, as indicated by a substantial F-statistic of 333.285. the data show sig. value of 0.000 < 0.05 alpha level of significance. Indicating that the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, stating that there is significant influence of teachers' experience on students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from hypothesis 1 reveal a compelling relationship between teachers' qualification levels and students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State. Qualified teachers often bring insights and interpretations that enrich students' learning experiences, fostering deeper understanding of civic responsibilities and enhancing critical thinking abilities. This aligns with existing research, such as the findings from Ichazu and Omoregie (2020), who found that students taught by qualified teachers generally perform better

academically than those taught by teachers with lower qualifications. Furthermore, the study is in agreement with Dien, Oyo-Ita, and Ari (2022) who highlighted the combined influence of teachers' qualifications and years of teaching experience on effective pedagogy. Noting that experienced teachers, possessing higher qualifications, are better equipped to adapt teaching strategies, provide personalized support to students, and create conducive learning environments. The finding also accepts that of Chokera (2014) who revealed that teachers and their qualification had a significant influence on pupils' academic achievements. Further, the finding is in line with the finding of Machingambi, Oyedele, Chikwature and Oyedele (2018) who discovered that teaching qualification has a great influence on students' performance. Also, the finding accepts that of Bamigbade, Amoo, Oluwadare and Adedokun (2021) who revealed that there is a great significant influence of the teacher's academic qualifications and teaching experience on student's academic performance. Moreover, the study resonates with Hillary, Worth, and De-Lazzari (2017), who emphasized the correlation between teachers' academic credentials and their instructional effectiveness. Teachers with advanced degrees are generally more adept at employing innovative teaching methodologies, integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, and fostering critical inquiry among students.

The findings from research question 2 and hypothesis 2 highlight significant difference in the impact of teachers' teaching experience on students' achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Teachers with more years of experience bring wealth of knowledge and expertise to their teaching practice. This finding aligns with research by Podolsky, Kini, and Darling-Hammond (2019), who found positive association between teaching experience and students' academic achievement across various stages of teachers' careers. Their study emphasizes that as teachers gain experience, they are better equipped to facilitate learning effectively, contributing to higher levels of students' success. The finding further accepts that of Ukpong (2022) who revealed that teachers' qualification and teachers' years of teaching experience inextricably has a significant influence on students' academic performance. Further, the finding also accepts that of Muriithi (2018) who revealed that teachers of high academic qualifications produced high results than students taught by teachers of low qualifications. Also, the finding aligns with Mbaka, Mwalw'a and Adhiambo (2022) who found out that teacher experience influence student's academic achievements. Further, the finding aligns with Agbo-Egwu, Adadu, Nwokolo-Ojo and Enaboifo (2017) who discovered that teachers teaching experience significantly influenced students' academic performance. The finding also agrees with the finding of Bwenvu, Adhiambo and Anyona (2020) who revealed that there was a significant relationship between teacher experience and students' academic performance. The finding also accepts that of Wandera, Imonje and Akala (2021) who discovered that teachers teaching experience significantly influence students' academic performance.

Conclusion

The study's findings show the critical role of teachers' characteristics in influencing students' academic achievement in civic education in Nasarawa State. Several factors were identified as significant contributors to students' academic success. Firstly, teachers' qualifications emerged as pivotal factor, with well-qualified teachers demonstrating deeper understanding of concepts and effective teaching strategies. This proficiency enhances students' comprehension and appreciation of Civic Education, thereby positively impacting their academic outcomes. Secondly, the study highlighted the importance of teachers' experience in shaping students' achievement levels. Experienced teachers bring extensive subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise, enabling them to deliver more comprehensive and nuanced instruction.

Their ability to engage students effectively, adapt teaching methods, and foster critical thinking skills contributes significantly to improved academic achievement in Civic Education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. Nasarawa State Government, through the Ministry of Education and relevant education agencies, should prioritise the recruitment, retention and professional development of qualified Civic Education teachers. Regular in-service training, opportunities for higher qualifications, mentoring programmes and appropriate incentives should be provided to strengthen teachers' professional competence and classroom effectiveness.
2. Experienced teachers should be equitably deployed across schools in Nasarawa State and encouraged to mentor less-experienced colleagues. These measures are expected to enhance the quality of Civic Education teaching and ultimately improve students' academic achievement in the subject.

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