

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF QUALITIES EXPECTED OF AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ETHEL-ECHEDO, EBERE

Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze
Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated students' perception of qualities expected of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State. A descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The population constituted 1174 year three junior secondary school students in Orumba South Local Government Area. A sample of 298 students was selected from the population using multi-stage sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire was developed, validated by experts and used in the collection of data. Data collected were analysed using the mean. The study found, among others, that students perceive teacher certification, communication skills, teacher-student relationship, use of instructional materials and teaching methods as qualities of an effective teacher. The study therefore recommended, among others, that teachers should continue to improve their skills in effective instruction; and mind the impact which their relationship with students could make on the students. Teachers also should develop a positive attitude to teaching and improve on their skills in the use of various teaching methods.

Key Words: Teacher, Qualities, Effectiveness, Junior secondary schools

Introduction

The teacher is at the centre of instruction. Kanno (2017) views the teacher as a professionally trained person responsible for imparting knowledge, skills and attitude to the immature person in any specific body of knowledge. The definition presupposes that the mere fact of somebody carrying out the job of 'teaching' does not necessarily translate to being a teacher. The person ought to be professionally trained and has the requisite knowledge and other qualities to impart knowledge in a given discipline. This is because the teacher holds the key to sound education. A teacher is one whose duty it is to teach or facilitate the learning process (Agwu & Ogbonnaya-Iduma, 2016). It is a person who transmits knowledge that will aid learners in building, identifying and acquiring skills that

will equip them for life challenges. A teacher is described as a professional, who imparts knowledge, learning experiences at his disposal to stimulate, guide, direct and facilitate learners to acquire adequate mastery of the skills being imparted (Akindutire & Ekundayo, 2012). A teacher therefore can be described variously as stimulator, director and facilitator of the right knowledge, attitude and skills.

Literature abounds that support the maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), and no nation can rise above the level of her teaching staff. Teachers are the pivot on which every educational development hangs. If the child is at the centre of education system, the teacher is the pivot of the education process. Teachers' quality, therefore, is very important if the standard of education at all levels must be maintained. The UPE programme of 1976 failed in Nigeria primarily because of teacher factor (Ejimkonye, 2017). The succeeding Universal Basic Education introduced in 2004 included three years of junior secondary education. This level of education comes after the primary education and it is meant for children eleven years (11+) to fifteen years. Jacobs (2015) enunciated that, the most innovative aspect of junior secondary school is the area of curricula activities which consist of broad or general education, practical opportunities and development of scientific talents. It is designed to provide basic intellectual and practical educational knowledge relevant to the Nigerian society.

Teaching at junior secondary school level, therefore, naturally requires people with best brains and aptitudes so as to improve productivity, quality and functional education at that level. In an empirical study carried out by UNICEF (2001) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education, they found that, of all inputs that go into education provision none was probably more important than the quality of the teacher. Adeyemi and Adu (2012) examined teachers' quality and internal efficiency of primary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria and found that the best predictor of internal efficiency of the schools was teacher qualifications. In another study, Orakwue, Okeke and Ezeibekwe (2018) investigated students' perception of teacher characteristics and their impact on academic achievement of students in secondary schools and found that students perceived content knowledge, instructional strategies, teacher-student relationship, attitude to learning and learner assessment as important characteristics of teachers needed to make desirable impact on students' academic achievement in secondary schools.

It is perhaps, on account of interest in teacher effectiveness that education practitioners have contended what should constitute the qualities of a teacher. Akiri (2013) conceptualized teacher effectiveness as a multidimensional construct since it measures a variety of different aspects of teaching such as; subject mastery, effective communication, lesson preparation and presentation. According to Uchefuna (2011), an effective teacher is one who produces desired results in the course of his duty as a teacher. Based on these,

perhaps, Ejimkonye (2017) highlighted what he considered the major qualities expected of a teacher at the basic education level which include the junior secondary school (Basic 7-9). These are adequate knowledge of the pupils as learners, instruction and assessment skills, clear communication techniques issues in teaching and learning, and understanding of the place of the profession and community in effective teaching and learning. Phin (2014) thinks that core teacher qualities should include knowledge, teaching skills and attitude. This is to say that knowledge of the subject matter, teaching skills and the right attitude are the major qualities expected of a teacher. On the other hand, Okoli (2017) contends that deep knowledge of content and communication competence are the two major qualities expected of an effective teacher.

In a meta-analytical study in which 31 studies were reviewed, researchers compared the words and phrases students used to describe effective and ineffective teachers. The top three words used to characterize teachers with the highest ratings were: interesting, approachable, and clarity (Feldman, 1988 in Okoli, 2017). The definition extracted from descriptions of teachers nominated for teaching awards used these words: approachable, presents material well, makes subject interesting, helpful, and knowledgeable (Weimer, 2013). Also, Bangbade (2004) included teachers' knowledge of the subject matter, communication ability, emotional stability, good human relationship and interest in the job as attributes of an effective teacher.

Qualities of an effective teacher therefore, may be summarised as proper certification, good communication skills, good relationship with students, use of appropriate teaching method and appropriate use of instructional materials. All these constitute essential teacher behaviour that may differentiate one teacher from another (Okoli, 2017). They are therefore considered of interest to the present study on students' perception of quality of an effective teacher.

Although some of the studies in which the essential teacher qualities were determined were empirical, they were done in a different context and levels. What might be considered essential quality in one country may differ in another due to some cultural differences and expectations. Thus, the essential qualities of a teacher might not be universally accepted. Again, learners may vary in their expectations of teachers across levels. An undergraduate expectation of quality of a teacher may differ from a secondary school student's expectation of quality of an effective teacher. There is therefore the need for a research study to determine students' perception of qualities of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are important in ensuring the effectiveness of the education system. Most importantly to the success of any education system is the quality of its teaching force.

Teachers need to possess adequate knowledge of content and pedagogical skills in order to impart the right knowledge, skills and attitude to students. At junior secondary school level, teachers need in addition, such qualities as approachability, knowledge of students and so on in order to be effective. In fact, the qualities of an effective teacher at this level are legion that it becomes difficult to highlight the ones that must be possessed by teachers for effectiveness.

These qualities however are usually considered from the point of view of educators and other specialists in education. Little or nothing is done to determine the qualities of an effective teacher from the point of view of students who are the recipients of the teacher's wealth of knowledge and skills. Junior secondary school students are in a position to know the qualities expected of their teachers for effectiveness as he who wears the shoe knows where it pinches. If students' perception is not reckoned with, it may be difficult to determine the impact which teachers make on their students. The problem of the study therefore is, what are the students' perceptions of qualities of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools in Orumba South Local Government Area?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to find out students' perception of the qualities of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools in Orumba South Local Government Area. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Students' perception of the extent to which teacher's certification constitutes quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools;
2. Students' perception of the extent to which teacher's communication skills constitutes quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools;
3. Students' perception of the extent to which teacher's relationship with students constitutes quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools;
4. Students' perception of the extent to which teacher's use of appropriate teaching method constitutes quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools;
5. Students' perception of the extent to which teacher's use of instructional materials constitutes quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. To what extent do students perceive teacher's certification to constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools?
2. To what extent do students perceive teacher's communication skills to constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools?
3. To what extent do students perceive teacher's relationship with students to constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools?

4. To what extent do students perceive teacher's use of appropriate teaching method to constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools?
5. To what extent do students perceive teacher's use of instructional materials to constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises all the 1,174 junior secondary three (JS III) students in 14 government-owned junior secondary schools in Orumba South LGA, Anambra State. The sample of the study is 298. The sample size for the study was determined by the use of Taro Yamane Formula for determining sample size. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. This is a scaled questionnaire and requires respondents to rate the item-statements according to the extent or degree of acceptance or rejection. The instrument was administered by hand delivery by researchers. Respondents were accessed at their various schools and completed copies of questionnaire were collected on the spot to ensure high return rate. At the end of collation, 285 copies of valid copies were used for analysis. This represented 95.64 per cent of distributed copies of questionnaire. Data obtained from field study were analysed using simple descriptive statistics namely, frequency and mean.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings on Extent of Teacher Certification as Quality of Effective Teacher

S/N	Teacher Certification	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	Possession of a Nigeria Certificate in Education is adequate for effective quality of a teacher	143	83	24	35	285	3.17	High Extent
2	Possession of a degree certificate is an effective quality of a teacher	132	99	42	12	285	3.23	High Extent

3	The higher the certificate possessed by the teacher, the higher the quality of the teacher.	189	54	21	21	285	3.44	High Extent
4	Certification does not necessarily translate to effective teacher quality.	47	95	31	112	285	2.27	Low Extent
Mean of means							3.00	High Extent

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which teachers' certification constitutes quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools. All the items but one was rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 3.17 to 3.44. Item 4 however was rated below the cut-off point which indicates low extent. The mean of means of 3.00 falls within the mean range of 2.50 and 3.49 which indicates that students perceive teacher certification as quality of an effective teacher to a high extent.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on Extent of Teacher Communication Skills as Quality of Effective Teacher

S/N	Communication skills	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	$\bar{X}$	Remark
5	Teacher should speak audibly enough for students to hear and understand.	144	76	33	32	285	3.16	High Extent

6	A quality teacher should be able to give students immediate feedback.	158	76	31	20	285	3.31	High Extent
7	An effective teacher uses both verbal and non-verbal cues during instruction.	167	88	25	5	285	3.46	High Extent
8	Teacher should be able to communicate with students' families.	132	55	32	66	285	2.89	High Extent
9	An effective teacher should be able to organize his lessons to flow accordingly.	187	87	11	-	285	3.62	Very High Extent
Mean of Means							3.29	High Extent

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which teachers' communication skills constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools. All the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 2.89 to 3.62. The mean of means of 3.29 falls within the mean range of 2.50 and 3.49 which indicates that students perceive teacher communication skills as quality of an effective teacher to a high extent.

Table 3: Mean Ratings on Extent of Teacher's Relationship with Students as Quality of Effective Teacher

S/N	Relationship with Students	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	$\bar{X}$	Remark
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10	An effective teacher should be able to maintain cordial relationship with students.	201	67	10	7	285	3.62	Very High Extent
11	An effective teacher should be fair and firm to all his students.	245	38	2	-	285	3.85	Very High Extent
12	An effective teacher should be able to create an environment of rapport and respect.	258	20	4	3	285	3.87	Very High Extent
13	An effective teacher should be able to manage students' behaviour.	211	32	30	12	285	3.55	Very High Extent
14	An effective teacher should be accessible to his/her students.	256	27	2	-	285	3.89	Very High Extent
Mean of Means							3.76	Very High Extent

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which teachers' relationship with students constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools. All the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 3.55 to 3.89. The mean of means of 3.76 falls within the mean range of 3.50 and 4.00 which indicates that students perceive teacher relationship with students as quality of an effective teacher to a very high extent.

Table 4: Mean Ratings on Extent of Teacher's Use of Appropriate Teaching Methods as Quality of Effective Teacher

S/N	Teaching Methods as Quality	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	$\bar{X}$	Remark
15	An effective teacher should be able to choose appropriate strategy for any given topic.	176	43	21	45	285	3.23	High Extent
16	An effective teacher should vary his strategies rather than using only one.	134	87	43	21	285	3.17	High Extent
17	An effective teacher should be innovative in providing learning experiences.	266	19	-	-	285	3.93	Very High Extent
18	An effective teacher should be able to use question & discussion techniques.	235	50	-	-	285	3.82	Very High Extent
19	An effective teacher uses diverse techniques to accommodate different learning styles.	270	15	-	-	285	3.95	Very High Extent
Mean of means							3.62	Very high Extent

Table 4 shows the mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which teachers' use of appropriate teaching methods constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools. All the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 3.17 to 3.95. The mean of means of 3.62 falls within the mean range of 3.50 and 4.00 which indicates that students perceive teacher use of appropriate teaching methods as quality of an effective teacher to a very high extent.

Table 5: Mean Ratings on Extent of Teacher's Use of Instructional Materials as Quality of Effective Teacher

S/N	Use of Instructional Materials	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	$\bar{X}$	Remark
20	An effective teacher should be able to make appropriate use of instructional materials.	211	54	5	15	285	3.62	Very High Extent
21	An effective teacher should be able to improvise in the absence of standard instructional materials	187	43	32	23	285	3.38	High Extent
22	An effective teacher engages students in improvisation of instructional materials.	266	13	6	-	285	3.91	Very High Extent
23	An effective teacher does not teach without deploying suitable instructional materials.	276	8	1	-	285	3.96	Very High Extent
Mean of Means							3.72	Very High Extent

Table 5 shows the mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which teachers' use of instructional materials constitute quality of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools. All the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. They were rated from 3.38 to 3.96. The mean of means of 3.72 falls within the mean range of 3.50 and 4.00 which indicates that students perceive teacher use of instructional materials as quality of an effective teacher to a very high extent.

Discussion of Findings

The study sought to investigate students' perception of qualities expected of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools. Five areas of quality expectation were investigated. They include teacher certification, relationships with students, communication skills, use of appropriate teaching methods and use of instructional materials. The finding of the study was that teacher certification is one of the qualities expected of an effective teacher according to students' perception. Students perceive possession of a Nigeria Certificate in Education as adequate for effective quality of a teacher. In addition, possession of a degree certificate is an effective quality of a teacher. Students also believe that the higher the certificate possessed by the teacher, the higher the quality of the teacher. They equally perceive that certification translates to effective teacher quality. The finding disagreed with Okoli (2017) who argued that qualifications are no guarantee of adequate knowledge or teaching skills. Improved qualification through certification may therefore lead to improved skills in teaching. Students' perception that certification is a mark of quality is consistent with earlier findings. For instance, Adeyemi and Adu (2012) conducted a survey on teacher factor in the effective teaching and learning of English as Second Language (ESL) in Kaduna State, Nigeria and found that 53.7% of teachers were non-degree holders or teachers specialized in other subjects teaching English Language in schools, resulting in abysmal performances of students in English language. The issue of getting competent teachers has been a major problem to students' learning outcomes.

Apart from certification, students also perceive communication skills as important teacher quality for effectiveness. Teachers need to speak audibly enough for students to hear and understand. Since most of the teachers' teaching act is done through verbal means, the ability of the teacher to speak loud enough becomes imperative. Moreover, an effective teacher uses both verbal and non-verbal cues during instruction. A quality teacher should be able to give students immediate feedback. Students need to be communicated through feedback in order to understand progress they make in their academic pursuit. The teacher should be able to communicate with students' families. Likewise, he should be able to organize his lessons to flow accordingly. It is through this way that learning is facilitated.

Students perceive to a very high extent that teacher relationship with students is one of the qualities of an effective teacher. An effective teacher should be able to maintain cordial relationship with students, be fair and firm to all his students, create an environment of rapport and respect, manage students' behaviour, and be accessible to his/her students. The findings agreed with previous studies on relationship between teachers and students, and academic performance of students. For instance, Suarman (2015) identified the inter-mediatory impact of relationship between lecturers and students towards students' satisfaction and lecturers' teaching quality. Jacobs (2015) also observed that

notwithstanding the aforementioned variables of teachers' quality, how teachers relate with their students in the school system has been adjudged an important variable of teacher quality especially at the basic education level which includes the junior secondary school.

Students also perceive teachers' use of appropriate teaching methods as quality expected of an effective teacher. They perceive that an effective teacher should be able to choose appropriate strategy for any given topic, vary his strategies rather than using only one, be innovative in providing learning experiences, use question & discussion techniques and diverse techniques to accommodate different learning styles. The findings on the use of appropriate teaching methods as quality of an effective teacher are in line with Orakwue, Okeke and Ezeibekwe (2018) who investigated students' perception of teacher characteristics and their impact on academic achievement of students in secondary schools. According to this earlier study, students perceived content knowledge and instructional strategies, as important characteristics of teachers needed to make desirable impact on students' academic achievement in secondary schools.

On instructional materials, students perceive that the use of instructional materials is also an important quality of an effective teacher. Use of instructional materials is also one of the qualities of an effective teacher. An effective teacher should be able to make appropriate use of instructional materials, improvise in the absence of standard instructional materials, engage students in improvisation of instructional materials, and does not teach without deploying suitable instructional materials. The use of instructional materials is a pedagogical skill that differentiates a professional from a non-professional teacher. The findings agreed with Suarman (2015) that it is not only the qualifications obtained by a teacher that could contribute to a teacher's quality but actual achievement in terms of pedagogical skills.

The perception of students on quality expected of an effective teacher therefore embraces, certification, communication skills, relationship with students, use of appropriate teaching methods and use of instructional materials. The teacher should be certified after undergoing some training in relevant content, and pedagogical skills. The teacher also should be able to communicate content as well as progress to students and those concerned with learning outcome. To be effective in teaching, the teacher should relate well with his students and employ appropriate teaching methods and instructional aids.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and implications of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers should continue to improve their skills in effective instruction. This can be achieved through in-service training, seminars and workshops.

2. Teachers should mind the impact which their relationship with students could make on the students. The fact that cordial relationship with students is viewed as most important teacher quality is an indication of its level of impact. Teachers should therefore establish good healthy relationship with their students.
3. Teachers should also develop positive attitude to teaching. They should view teaching, not just as an occupation, but a call.
4. Teachers should improve on their skills in the use of various teaching methods. These skills will enable the teacher employ suitable method that will match the content and improve the performance of his students.
5. School authorities should consider use of students in teacher assessment. This will enable teachers put in their best for improvement of junior secondary school education system.

Conclusion

Teachers as behaviour changers need some qualities to be able to achieve effective teaching in the junior secondary schools. These qualities are many, but in the study, students perceive teacher certification, communication skills, relationship with students, use of appropriate teaching methods and instructional materials as qualities expected of an effective teacher in junior secondary schools. It is remarkable that among all qualities, intangible quality like good relationship with students is perceived by students as most important quality. Teachers therefore need to build healthy relationships with their students as a measure of teaching and learning effectiveness.

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