

Evaluation of Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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Abstract: *The research was designed to evaluate teachers' pedagogical competencies and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. On this basis a survey, causal-comparative research design was used in the study. The population of the study was 66,164 students, while the fluid survey sample calculator was used to draw a sample size of 382 respondents. The simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study. In generating data for the study, a structured questionnaires titled 'Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies Questionnaire' (TPCQ) was used. Content and face validation of the research instrument was carried out by expert judgment in the field of Measurement and Evaluation, while the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to obtain the reliability index of 0.71. The descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations were used in answering the research questions, while the inferential statistic of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to test the formulated null hypotheses in this study at 0.05 alpha level. It was found that there is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies to use instructional resources, teaching methods, teaching skills and academic performance. It was concluded that teacher-centred methods, learners-centred methods, content-focused methods and interactive /participatory methods were the main methods of teaching. Also that basic instructional resources were available and adequate in majority of the schools, and that teachers' teaching skills enhances a teacher's ability to create an environment that is fair, understanding. Therefore, the study among others recommended that teachers' utilization and improvisation of instructional resources should be improved.*

Key words: *Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies, Academic Performance, Senior Secondary School Students, Rivers State*

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INTRODUCTION

The school environment has a strong positive relationship with students' ratings of their overall school satisfaction, students' self-esteem, and attainment of educational objectives. For teaching and learning process to take place in classrooms, teachers are the most significant persons. The success of any curriculum to be implemented needs teachers who are competent (Wamala & Seruwagi, 2013). Similarly, the success of educational plans in any country depends largely on the teachers armed with required competencies and professional skills. As such, the quality of

education and performance of students depend on the teachers as reflected in the discharge of their duties. Teachers' competency enhances a teacher's ability to create an environment that is fair, understanding, and accepting of diverse students, ideas, experiences, and backgrounds. Pedagogical competency refers to the skills and personality of a teacher in handling the instructional process with the help of instructional methods, teaching aids and resource (Ugbe, 2010). The competencies of teachers thus incorporates a range of subject knowledge content, an understanding of learning styles and methods, and how to translate such knowledge into effective instructional methods while developing an ability to comprehend and nurture the unique person that is every learner. Pedagogical competence also entails to educational and teaching qualifications. In evaluating teachers' pedagogical competencies, the quality of teaching should be the primary consideration. Scope, breadth and depth are also important, as should the ability to plan, initiate, lead and develop education and teaching, as well as the ability to provide research-based teaching on the basis of research in the relevant subject, subject didactics and teaching and learning in higher education (Stavreva, 2013).

Teachers' pedagogical competence is based on sound, broad and current knowledge within the subject area, as well as knowledge of student learning and subject-based teaching and learning issues. It also presupposes a reflective and critical approach to teaching, learning and pedagogical development over time, as it is tied to one's own professional role. Teachers' pedagogical competencies in this study are referred to instructional resources, teaching methods and utilization of teaching skills. Research examining teacher characteristics confirms the logical conclusion that poor academic performance of students correlates strongly with poor quality of teachers teaching them in school (Anselmus, 2011). Effective students' learning and academic performance is hampered by weaknesses in teachers' pedagogical competencies and classroom practices. For instance, whereas appropriate instructional methods would facilitate grasping of new concepts, inappropriate methods are likely to constrain knowledge retention and application (Chang, 2010) hence poor academic performance by students becomes eminent. The various indices of teachers' pedagogical competencies in this study provides for; teachers' competencies to use instructional resources, teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods, and teachers' competencies to use various teaching skills.

Instructional resources include textbooks, charts, maps, audiovisual and electronic instructional materials such as radio, tape recorder, television and video tape recorder (Likoko, Mutsotso&Nasongo, 2013). Other category of material resources consist of paper supplies and writing materials such as pens, eraser, exercise books, crayon, chalk, drawing books, notebooks, pencil, ruler, slate, workbooks and so on. Wamala and Seruwagi (2013) observed that it is the kind of instructional resource available which had great implication on what goes on in schools today. Resources are necessary for any implementation of an innovation, as such lack of resource materials and facilities frustrate teachers' and diminish their motivation. Adequate materials and facilities will boost the teacher's confidence and thus ensure effective and productive teaching sessions. The instructional materials are crucial ingredients in learning and the intended curriculum cannot be really implemented without them. Instructional materials provide information or organize the scope and sequence of information and presents opportunity for students to use what they may have learned. The use of resources can be made more effective if the teacher has knowledge and skills on how to effectively utilize them in s the teaching-learning process, thus the availability of teaching resources and the teachers' awareness of their utility enhance students' academic performance.

Teaching is an interactive process through which knowledge and skills are shared with

students, with a view to improving students' understanding and ability to manipulate the social, economic, political and physical environment to enhance their survival. Teaching methods in the classroom can be teacher-centered, learner-centered, discussion method, mixed approach and so on. Watson (2003) noted that quite often teachers prefer methods that make their work easier based on their beliefs, personal preferences and norms of their disciplines. In this regard, some teachers believe that lessons should be teacher-centered, where the teacher is the expert and the authority in presenting information (Ahmad & Aziz, 2009). Nevertheless, teacher-centered methods are associated with inadequate stimulation of pupils' innovative capacities, intellectual thinking and memorization, cramming of facts, poor knowledge retention and high dependency among graduates (Adeyemi, 2008). Learner-centered methods are associated with imaginative, critical and creative skills; active participation of learners in the learning process through discussions and intellectual engagement; as well as higher learning performance and effectiveness in addressing problems of humanity. Although teachers have the discretion to choose methods for delivering lessons to their pupils, Chika (2012) observed that learner-centered teaching method is a powerful strategy for improving students' academic performance in examinations and application of knowledge and skills acquired. Chang (2010) pointed out that while appropriate instructional methods are likely to enhance learning performance; inappropriate teaching methods are known to stifle knowledge retention and realization of learning objectives. Consequently, aligning teaching methods with the needs and preferences of pupils is considered important for higher academic performance (Zeeb, 2004). In content-focused methods, both the teacher and the students have to fit into the content that is taught. Generally, this means the information and skills to be taught are regarded as sacrosanct or very important. A lot of emphasis is laid on the clarity and careful analyses of content. Both the teacher and the students cannot alter or become critical of anything to do with the content. An example of a method which subordinates the interests of the teacher and students to the content is the programmed learning approach (Asman, 2017). While, the interactive/participative methods are driven by the situational analysis of what is the most appropriate thing for students to learn/do given the situation of students and the teachers.

Teaching skills entails practical experience from and the ability to contribute to student learning by leading, organizing, planning, implementing, examining, developing and evaluating different types of teaching and education levels and producing teaching materials (Ubulom & Ikpa, 2019). The teaching skills of a teacher can be measured based on the teacher's abilities around comprehension and transformation of knowledge concepts to be imparted to learners (Ganyaupfu, 2013). Teaching requires one to first understand the specific outcomes of the topic as well as the subject matter structures of the respective discipline. Therefore, comprehension of purpose is a very important element of teachers' competence. According to Shulman (2012) the educational purposes for engaging in teaching are to assist learners gain literacy, develop skills and values to function well in the society, equip them with opportunity to acquire and discover new information, enhance understandings of new concepts, enable students to enjoy their learning experiences, enhance learners' responsibility to become productive in the economy, contribute to the well-being of the social, economic and business community. Moreover, the teachers' ability to distinguish the knowledge base of his or her teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy in the respective teacher's capacity to transform content knowledge into practices that are pedagogically influential and adaptive to numerous students' abilities and backgrounds. All the teaching and learning processes in the classrooms cannot be what it should be without the teacher. At the same time, teachers cannot be effective without possessing certain

characteristics. Teachers' pedagogical competencies are therefore indispensable in the teaching and learning processes. In Rivers State, there has been inconsistent academic performance of students in their examinations recently. To this end, it is not understood whether teachers' pedagogical competencies with regard to utilization of instructional resources, teaching methods and teachers' skills could be the reason for students' unsatisfactory academic performance in examinations. It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to evaluate teachers' pedagogical competencies and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Questions: The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent do teachers' competencies to use instructional resources relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. To what extent do teachers' competencies to use various teaching skills relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following formulated hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies to use instructional resources and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies to use various teaching skills and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State.

METHODS

A survey, causal-comparative research design was used to compare the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competencies and academic performance of students. The population of the study was 66,164 students, while the fluid survey sample calculator was used to draw a sample size of 382 respondents from the population. The simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study. In generating data for the study, a structured questionnaire titled 'Teachers' Pedagogical Competencies Questionnaire' (TPCQ) was used to measure the independent variable while result of students from their schools were used to measure the dependent variable. Content and face validation of the research instrument was carried out by experts judgment in the field of Measurement and Evaluation in Rivers State University, while the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to obtain the reliability index 0.71 from the pilot study. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions, while the inferential statistic of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to test the formulated null hypotheses in this study at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *To what extent do teachers' competencies to use instructional resources relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?*

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the extent teachers' competencies to use instructional resources relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State

S/No.	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	<i>Teachers' use of instructional resources improves students' knowledge, abilities, and skills, to monitor their assimilation of information.</i>	3.24	1.37	High Extent
2	<i>It gives all students in a class the opportunity to share experiences necessary for new learning.</i>	2.58	1.56	High Extent
3	<i>It clarifies important concepts to arouse and sustain students' interests.</i>	2.75	1.53	High Extent
4	<i>Instructional resources makes learning more permanent on the students.</i>	2.66	1.09	High Extent
Grand Score		2.81	1.39	High Extent

From Table 1 above, the mean score of 3.24 and standard deviation score of 1.37 implies that teachers' use of instructional resources improves students' knowledge, abilities, and skills, to monitor their assimilation of information, to a high extent, the mean score of 2.58 and standard deviation score of 1.56 to a high extent accepted that It gives all students in a class the opportunity to share experiences necessary for new learning, the mean score of 2.72 and standard deviation score of 1.53, agreed to high extent that it clarifies important concepts to arouse and sustain students' interests, the mean score of 2.66 and standard deviation score of 1.09 entails that instructional resources makes learning more permanent on the students but to a high extent, while the grand mean score of 2.81 and standard deviation score of 1.39 implied that teachers' competencies to use instructional resources relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State to a high extent.

Research Question 2: *To what extent do teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?*

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the extent teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

S/No.	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
5	Discussion methods motivates students by making them to be participatory in the class.	2.69	1.54	High Extent
6	Teacher-centred strategies are most suitable for introducing lessons, and stating principles.	2.71	1.90	High Extent
7	The use of discovery method enhances students brainstorming and the capacity to discover new	2.76	1.64	High Extent

knowledge.

8	Learner-centred strategy is very suitable for research works and problem solving that are related to it.	2.90	1.33	High Extent
Grand Score		2.77	1.60	High Extent

From Table 2 above, the mean score of 2.69 and standard deviation score of 1.54 implies to a high extent that discussion methods motivates students by making them to be participatory in the class, the mean score of 2.71 and standard deviation score of 1.90 to a high extent accepted that teacher-centred strategies are most suitable for introducing lessons, and stating principles, the mean score of 2.76 and standard deviation score of 1.64, agreed to high extent that the use of discovery method enhances students brainstorming and the capacity to discover new knowledge, the mean score of 2.90 and standard deviation score of 1.33 entails that learner-centred strategy is very suitable for research works and problem solving that are related to it to a high extent, while the grand mean score of 2.77 and standard deviation score of 1.60 entails that teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State to a high extent.

Research Question 3: *To what extent do teachers' competencies to use various teaching skills relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?*

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the extent teachers' competencies to use various teaching skills relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State

S/No.	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
9	The teaching skills of a teacher can be measured based on the teacher's abilities	2.71	1.18	High Extent
10	Comprehension of purpose is a very important element of teachers' competence	2.83	1.48	High Extent
11	Teachers enable students to enjoy their learning experiences.	2.64	1.10	High Extent
12	Teachers enhance students' responsibility to be academically sound.	2.59	1.25	High Extent
Grand Score		2.69	1.25	High Extent

From Table 3 above, the mean score of 2.71 and standard deviation score of 1.18 implies to a high extent that the teaching skills of a teacher can be measured based on the teacher's abilities, the mean score of 2.83 and standard deviation score of 1.48 to a high extent accepted that comprehension of purpose is a very important element of teachers' competence, the mean score of 2.64 and standard deviation score of 1.10 agreed to a high extent that teachers enable students to enjoy their learning experiences, the mean score of 2.59 and standard deviation score of 1.25 provides that teachers enhance students' responsibility to be academically sound, to a high extent, while the grand mean score of 2.69 and standard deviation score of 1.25 implied that teachers' competencies to use various teaching skills relate to academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State to a high extent.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I: *There is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies to use instructional resources and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.*

Table 4: Instructional resources use and academic performance

		Instructional resources	Academic performance
Instructional resources	Pearson Correlation	1	.133
	Sig. (2.tailed)		.051
	N	191	191
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.133	
	Sig. (2.tailed)	.051	
	N	191	191

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation result in Table 4 above shows that there exist a positive relationship ($r=0.133$) between instructional resources used by teachers and academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The correlation also appears to be significant at 0.05 level which suggests that teacher continuous use of variety of instructional resources rather than textbooks and reference materials alone would improve students' academic attainment.

Hypothesis II: *There is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.*

Table 5: Teaching methods use and academic performance

		Teaching methods	Academic performance
Teaching methods	Pearson Correlation	1	.227
	Sig. (2.tailed)		.011
	N	191	191
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.227	
	Sig. (2.tailed)	.011	
	N	191	191

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation result in Table 5 above shows that there exist a positive relationship ($r=0.227$) between teaching methods used by teachers and academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The correlation also appears to be significant at 0.05 level which suggests that continuous use of different approaches to teaching by teachers will raise the academic performance of their students in secondary schools.

Test of Hypothesis III: *There is no significant relationship between teachers' competencies to use various teaching methods and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.*

Table 6: Teaching methods use and academic performance

		Teaching skills	Academic performance
Teaching skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.129
	Sig. (2.tailed)		.006
	N	191	191
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.129	
	Sig. (2.tailed)	.006	
	N	191	191

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result in Table 6 above shows that there exist a positive relationship ($r=0.129$) between teaching skills used by teachers and academic performance of students. This implies that the use of various teaching skills by teachers such as teacher's abilities around comprehension and transformation of knowledge will enhance the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the major findings of this study was that there exists a positive relationship between instructional resources used by teachers and academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The correlation thus appears to be significant at 0.05 level which suggests that teacher's continuous use of variety of instructional resources rather than textbooks and reference materials alone would improve students' academic attainment. This finding is supported by Shulman (2012) who asserts that with a variety of resources, the schools can produce learners who are intellectually alert, able to explore and benefit from what their education environment offers them. The teachers should supervise utilization of instructional resource use by teachers in schools. This will aid in students improving their knowledge and competencies with what is required in their curriculum. Chika (2102) advised that audio and audio-visual cassettes should be developed to serve dual purposes for both literature and other skills like oral communication. This is likely to help schools cut down on expenses used in acquiring instructional resources. The results from the research questions also revealed that teachers relied on reference materials as the second most important resource in aiding teaching and learning process in classrooms. The third most utilized resource material were charts and maps, pictures, shapes and geometry, models and realia and lastly radio. On average, statistics shows that the utilization of instructional resources was above average in majority of secondary schools in Rivers State. These findings are different from Asman (2017) survey of students where results on lack of variety of instructional resources are appalling, in that, more than 80 percent of teachers of English reported absence of these resources in schools. Anselmus (2011) found out that lack of materials and apparatus undermines the efforts to provide a good Chemistry practical or experiment.

It was also found that there exists a positive relationship between teaching methods used by teachers and academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The correlation also appears to be significant at 0.05 level which suggests that continuous use of different approaches to teaching by teachers will raise the academic performance of their students in secondary schools. This finding is in line with Wamala and Seruwagi (2013) whose studies confirmed that learner-centered instructional methods accounted for a larger proportion

of variance in the performance of students. This is because learner-centered methods are more effective in enhancing students' academic performance than teacher-centered approaches. Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo (2013) established that students' academic performance was also associated with teacher-centered instructional methods, including lecture, dictation and chalkboard notes, as well as learner-centered approaches, including group discussions, take-way assignments and brainstorming. From the above studies, it is clear that teacher usage of various instructional methods in classrooms will improve learning which will later lead to better academic outcomes among students in schools.

Finally, it was found in this study that there exists a positive relationship between teaching skills used by teachers and academic performance of students. Ganyaupfu (2013) supported this finding in his research where he asserted that the teaching skills of a teacher can be measured based on the teacher's abilities around comprehension and transformation of knowledge concepts to be imparted to students. Teaching requires one to first understand the specific outcomes of the topic as well as the subject matter structures of the respective discipline. Therefore, comprehension of purpose is a very important element of teacher competence. In the view of Ubulom and Ikpa (2019), the educational purposes for engaging in teaching are to assist students gain literacy, develop skills and values to function well in the society, equip them with opportunity to acquire and discover new information, enhance understandings of new concepts, enable students to enjoy their learning experiences, enhance learners' responsibility to become productive in the economy, contribute to the well-being of the social, economic and business community. Moreover, the teachers' ability to distinguish the knowledge base on his or her teaching lies in the intersection of content and pedagogy in the respective teacher's capacity to transform content knowledge into practices that are pedagogically influential and adaptive to numerous students' abilities and backgrounds. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers consider the relevant aspects of students' distinct abilities, languages, cultures, motivations and prior knowledge and skills that affect their responses to different forms of representation

CONCLUSION

The study found out that teacher-centred methods, learners-centred methods, content-focused methods and interactive /participatory methods are the main method of teaching. The findings meant that teachers who used various teaching methods were able to post positive results in their classes than those who relied on one method of teaching. Responses from teachers showed that basic instructional resources (textbooks and reference books) were available and adequate in majority of the secondary schools in Rivers State. This implied that teachers who regularly alternated and improvised teaching aids while teaching were able to post positive good academic outcomes unlike those who relied on other conventional teaching aids. The study thus concluded that teachers' pedagogical competency enhances a teacher's ability to create an environment that is fair, understanding, and accepting of diverse students, ideas, experiences, and backgrounds. The pedagogical competency of teachers incorporates a range of subject knowledge content, an understanding of learning styles and methods, and how to translate such knowledge into effective instructional methods while developing an ability to comprehend and nurture the unique person that is every learner. As such all the teaching and learning processes in the classrooms cannot be what it should be without the teacher, hence making teachers' pedagogical competencies indispensable in the teaching and learning processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations based on the results of the study.

- To improve teachers' utilization and improvisation of instructional resources, the study recommends that head teachers should monitor and ensure teachers use variety of teaching aids in teaching since most schools were found to have the resources.
- To improve teachers' pedagogical approaches in teaching methods, in-service training is required. This will be facilitated through the ministry of education, schools and teachers themselves.
- In addition, the study suggests that there is need for constant supervision of teaching by quality assurance and standards officers to ensure effective utilization of the various teaching skills in the classrooms.

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