



Conceptual Framework Of Teachers' Competence In Relation To Students' Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

Competence can be approached either in terms of outcomes or in terms of inputs believed to contribute to positive outcomes. Outcome-based indices of teacher competence are such things as increased test scores, or a harmonious classroom where students seem happy, engaged and well-behaved. Academic achievement (test scores) has the widespread belief that it has the most validity in indicating whether an educational institution or its teachers are excellent. One outcome indicator of teacher competence which has high psychometric advantage but which is rarely used in evaluating teachers is to ask students what they think about their teacher. A few studies have found that competence evaluations that rely heavily on elementary or secondary students' opinions are much likely to result in "false positives" (that is, labeling a competent teacher as incompetent). But there is an understandable general reluctance to acknowledge that children can or should be allowed to evaluate adults. While generally in favor of student ratings, it could be pointed out that these are most valid when they truly have an outcome focus, as it is easy for them to be hijacked by an input emphasis.

KEY WORDS: competence, academic achievement, assessment, motivation, teacher qualification

1. INTRODUCTION

According to [1] teacher's competence refers to the right way of conveying units of knowledge, application and skills to students. The right way includes knowledge of content, process, methods, and means of conveying content. Teacher's competence also refers to the ability of the teacher to help guide and counsel his or her student to achieve high grades. Most of the evaluations carried out for purposes of determining whether or not a public school teacher is competent involve an administrator (a principal, assistant principal or curriculum supervisor) visiting a classroom, recording observations and filling out a checklist indicating whether the teacher has demonstrated several defined behaviors [2]. The grade he/she receives is based on the number of skills that are, or are not, checked off. Such a method is very much grounded in what [2] termed an input-oriented approach. There are several problems with such an approach, the main ones being: (a) teachers vary in terms of how they teach and a one-size-fits-all checklist does not do justice to such variability; (b) classrooms vary in terms of the student learning and behaviour challenges that are posed, and these challenges (which may flare up during the time an evaluator visits) may alter how the teacher functions; (c) depending on the level and subject, some variability from lesson to lesson may be a good thing,

and the most creative teachers (just as the best writers) need to feel free to break the rules on occasion; and (d) a checklist approach, no matter how valid, will produce invalid results when in the hands of an incompetent, obtuse or unskilled administrator. Unfortunately, in education, it is well-known that people who go into administration were often not particularly distinguished or knowledgeable when they were in a teaching role (which often was in an auxiliary discipline such as Physical Education). If a teacher evaluation is to be valid, then it stands to reason that the evaluator should herself or himself be an exemplary teacher, but we know that is too often not the case [2].

2. TEACHERS' COMPETENCE

A characteristic of a competent teacher is that the teacher encourages students to reflect on social reality and empowers them to transform the existing conditions that shape their lives. Moreover, a competent teacher is one who engages student in dialogue and manages through dialogue to achieve genuine learning because when student and teachers are engaged in shared critical dialogue, they mutually create and construct knowledge instead of passively transmitting it, since they can share their experiences, reflect upon them and finally make critical evaluation

regarding the way they themselves have obtained that knowledge and those experiences, [3].

[4] defines a competent teacher as one who promotes cultural transmission and perpetuates civilizations by passing on as heritage essential basic skills and subjects from one generation to another. This is because it is necessary for the student to know about their culture and the world they live in, about other cultures that existed before them, to know about the important and historical persons who made great discoveries or contributed in a major degree to the shaping of the society. Additionally, it is necessary for teachers to present to the students an effective selection of the world they live in and to work in co-operation with them in order to help them attain competence in their world. Also [5] defines a competent teacher as one who abandons the educational “chain” of depositing, receiving, memorizing, and repeating knowledge on the student’s behalf but rather promotes consciousness to the students and helps them become conscious beings who adopt a concept of consciousness upon the world.

[6] have placed increased emphasis upon the basic areas of teachers competence which include, mastery of subject matter, understanding of human nature, interest in continues professional improvement of knowledge. [7] opined that a competent teacher attends conferences, workshops and seminars, have good classroom control, effective communication skills, adequate knowledge of the subject, utilize variety of teaching methods or strategies and show enthusiasm for teaching. [8] points out that no adequate teaching can take place without effective and competent teachers to handle the program. From the above premises therefore, a motivated teacher will inevitably put in every effort to the implementation process that will enhance high level performance in science subjects. Students performance in secondary school science subjects depends largely on how well they are taught ([9]; [10]), which in turn depends largely on the willingness of the teachers i.e. based on how they were motivated.

3. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Performance is how well an individual is able to demonstrate desired abilities. Ojoko (1987) cited in [11] asserted that academic performance is a cardinal concept in education. The centrality of this concept is derived from the goal of instruction which is to bring about desire changes in knowledge, skills and attitude of students. For example, people send their children to school in order to acquire certain competencies their preference on the attributes of interest provides an indication of the degree of efficiency of the

machinery of education. In the formal school system, student’s academic performance can be assessed at the main points which give rise to three types of performance assessment and these are: diagnostic, formative and summative evaluation or assessment (Bajah, 1982 cited in [11]).

The diagnostic assessment or evaluation takes place as the course commences, formative evaluation are conditions where teachers gives periodic tests for example continuous assessment exercise. While summative tests are used by classroom teachers and external examination bodies and grades are awarded. The grades of A.B.C and F. are awarded to students according to student’s performance by their teachers or examiners.

4. TEACHERS’ QUALIFICATION

Teacher’s professional qualification is tied to his/her competence in instruction and management of students and materials in the classroom. First, Nigeria educational system requires that all teachers in all educational institution nationwide should be professionally trained. This is with the view of enhancing teacher’s commitment to the teaching profession. Hence, the national policy on education [12] stipulated that the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE); it is therefore on the recognition of this fact that government setup the Teacher’s Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) under Act 31 of 1993 to control and regulate the practice of the profession.

According to the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria [13] other acceptable qualifications are degrees in education B.SC. Ed, M.Ed, PH.D in education. It is emphasized that those with degrees/diplomas in non education field must possess post graduates diploma in education (PGDE) or Technical Teachers Certificate (TTC). It is not a enough to accept or describe someone as a teacher merely because a certificate is presented in support of the claims. Thus the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria [13], posited that teacher trainee must be well equipped with adequate and appropriate characters, professional and academic knowledge and skills in the art of teaching.

It is equally required currently that teachers should update their knowledge, skill, attitudes to enhance teaching and learning. Ukeje cited in [14] contended that ‘the teacher is more directly related to development of the future of any nation than any member of other professions’. This makes it necessary for Nigerian teachers to see the need for greater depth and knowledge, increased skills in

teaching broad knowledge of contemporary civilization, right attitude, ideal and improved characteristics and relationships. A reasonable number of unqualified teachers are in the teaching field which is a contributing factor to the low standards in our educational system and this influences the poor performances of students in our secondary schools.

5. TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT

The [15] defined assessment as the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students to give feedback to students about their progress, strength and weakness; to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy as well as inform policy. Thus the various assessment techniques includes formal and informal observation, qualitative analysis of student performance and products, paper and pencil tests, oral questionings and analysis of students' records.

The assessment competence of a teacher as identified by the association to includes' knowledge and skills which is critical to a teacher's role as educator. By establishing standards for teacher's competence in students' assessment the association subscribed to the view that student assessment is an essential part of teaching and that good teaching cannot exist without good assessment.

The scope of teacher's professional role and responsibilities for student's assessment may be described in terms of the following activities. The activities that teachers need competence in student's assessment and sufficient time and resources to complete them in a professional manner are:

(a) Activities occurring prior to instruction: these include:

- (i), Understanding student's cultural background, interests, skills and abilities as they apply across a range of learning domains and subject area.
- (ii) Planning instructions for individuals or groups of students etc.

(b) Activities occurring during instruction: these include:

- (i) Monitoring student's progress towards instructional goals.
- (ii) Identifying gains and difficulties in students
- (iii) Adjusting instruction
- (iv) Motivating students

(c) Activities occurring after instruction: this involves describing the extent to which each pupil has attained both short term and long term

instructional goals. Responding and reporting assessment result for school level analysis, evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and materials used.

There are seven standard for teacher competence in educational assessment of his/her students. These include:

- Teachers should be skilled in choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions: Skills in choosing appropriate, useful, administratively convenient, technically adequate, and fair assessment methods are prerequisite to good use of information to support instructional decisions. Teachers need to be well-acquainted with the kinds of information provided by a broad range of assessment alternatives and their strengths and weaknesses. In particular, they should be familiar with criteria for evaluating and selecting assessment methods in light of instructional plans.
- Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions: Teachers will be skilled in planning the collection of information that facilitates the decisions they will make. They will know and follow appropriate principles for developing and using assessment methods in their teaching, avoiding common pitfalls in student assessment.
- The teacher should be skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting the results of both externally-produced and teacher-produced assessment methods: It is not enough that teachers are able to select and develop good assessment methods; they must also be able to apply them properly. Teachers should be skilled in administering, scoring, and interpreting results from diverse assessment methods.
- Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement: Assessment results are used to make educational decisions at several levels: in the classroom about students, in the community about a school, and in society generally, about the purposes and outcomes of the educational enterprise. Teachers play a vital role when participating in decision-making at each of these levels

and must be able to use assessment results effectively.

- Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments: Grading students is an important part of professional practice for teachers. Grading is defined as indicating both a student's level of performance and a teacher's valuing of that performance. The principles for using assessments to obtain valid grades are known and teachers should employ them.
- Teachers should be skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators: Teachers must routinely report assessment results to students and to parents or guardians. In addition, they are frequently asked to report or to discuss assessment results with other educators and with diverse lay audiences. If the results are not communicated effectively, they may be misused or not used. To communicate effectively with others on matters of student assessment, teachers must be able to use assessment terminology appropriately and must be able to articulate the meaning, limitations, and implications of assessment results. Furthermore, teachers will sometimes be in a position that will require them to defend their own assessment procedures and their interpretations of them. At other times, teachers may need to help the public to interpret assessment results appropriately.
- Teachers should be skilled in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information: Fairness, the rights of all concerned, and professional ethical behaviour must undergird all student assessment activities, from the initial planning for and gathering of information to the interpretation, use, and communication of the results. Teachers must be well-versed in their own ethical and legal responsibilities in assessment. In addition, they should also attempt to have the inappropriate assessment practices of others discontinued whenever they are encountered. Teachers should also participate with the wider educational community in defining the limits of appropriate professional behavior in assessment.

6. TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

According to [16] defined experienced teachers as those who have taught for many years (5 years and above) and are able to motivate students and hold their attention, know how to manage their classroom effectively and can change course in the middle of a lesson to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to enhance students learning. The definition of experience teachers hinge principally on the number of years taught, time related criteria can range from 2 years (Texas administrative code) or 3 years [17] to 9 years or more [18]; [6]. [6] study of K- 12 (this is equivalent of senior secondary 3 in Nigeria) teachers found out that teachers with more than five years of teaching had more positive attitude toward teaching than did less experienced teachers. [19] found out that experienced teachers managed their classrooms more effectively than less experienced teachers. They took more control of the class than the novice teachers in establishing classroom routines and monitoring group work and less controlling and reactive in dealing with individual student behavior.

[20] found out that inexperience teachers in the K-12 programs were more pre-occupied with students behaviors and reactions than with pedagogy and students outcomes. Experience teachers were more concerned with ensuring that learning was taking places and are less concerned about student's negative reactions to class activities or to the learning process.

Akyel, (1997) cited in [15] study compared experienced teachers with inexperience teachers and found out that, the experienced teachers considered a wider and more varied range of instructional options in response to students cues. They welcome initiations from students (questions or comments that prompt a change in the direction or topic of lesson) because they believe that this would lead to meaningful communication in the classroom. They were less concerned with student's disturbance in class that would cause a divergence from their lesson plan. [21] drawing on a work by [22] pointed out that experience teachers tend to make sure that the following characteristics takes place setting them apart from inexperience teachers:

- (1) A rich and elaborate knowledge base.
- (2) Ability to integrate and use different kinds of knowledge
- (3) Ability to make intuitive judgments based on past experiences
- (4) The desire to investigate and solve a wide range of teaching problems.
- (5) Deeper understanding of student's needs and learning.

- (6) Awareness of instructional objectives to support teaching
- (7) Better understanding and use of language learning strategies
- (8) Greater awareness of learning context.
- (9) Greater efficiency and effectiveness in lesson planning.

7. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

[5] carried a research on the influence of teachers' competence on students' academic performance in senior secondary school chemistry in Cross river state. The study revealed that there is significant difference between the performance of students taught by a qualified teacher and students taught by unqualified teacher in chemistry. Also there is significant difference between the performance of students taught by experienced teacher and students taught by inexperienced teacher. [23] investigated the relationship between the qualification of science teachers and students academic performance in science subjects. The study discovered that there is significant relationship between the qualification of teacher and students academic performance in science subjects. [24] investigated the influence experience and students learning outcomes in senior secondary schools in Ondo state. And found out those teachers who have been teaching for more than five years have more teaching experience than those who have taught for less than five years and this influences learning outcomes.

[25] investigated the influence of teacher's competence on student's academic achievement in mathematics. The findings revealed that teacher's competence greatly influences the performance of mathematics students.

8. CONCLUSION

Teachers often use published or other external assessment tools, the bulk of the assessment information they use for decision-making comes from approaches they create and implement. Indeed, the assessment demands of the classroom go well beyond readily available instruments. The teacher should select the techniques which are appropriate to the intent of the teacher's instruction in order to have high performance. As a result they will be able to administer standardized achievement tests and be able to interpret the commonly reported scores: percentile ranks, percentile band scores, standard scores, and grade equivalents. They will have a conceptual understanding of the summary indexes commonly reported with assessment results: measures of central tendency, dispersion, relationships, reliability, and errors of measurement. All teachers are therefore urged to demonstrate knowledge at selecting, applying, using communicating, and evaluating students' assessment information and students' practices. Thus, it is expected that experience is needed in the application of the standard that should lead to their improvement and further development.

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