

Teachers' Skills and Business Studies Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State

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Abstract

The study adopted survey research design to determine the influence of teachers' skills on business studies students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The population of the study comprised 500 JSS III students in 23 secondary schools in the area of study, while 150 JSS III students chosen from ten secondary schools selected using simple random sampling technique served as the sample. The instruments used for data collection were "business studies students' rating of their teachers' questionnaire" and a test on business studies. The instruments were validated by three experts. The reliability coefficients of the instruments were .87 and .85 for the questionnaire and test respectively. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, using simple linear regression analysis. The result of the analyses showed, among others, that teachers' communication skills and classroom management skills influence business studies students' academic performance. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops to enhance their skills in line with modern trends in education.

Keywords: teachers, skills, business, studies, academic, performance

Introduction

By successful teaching, we mean that the learners actually attain some satisfactory level of proficiency in the academic activities that the teachers are engaging them in. Teaching without engaging the students is like tweeting continually with zero followers, singing to an empty arena and dancing alone in the dark. Education is a strong factor in national development, a key that unlocks the capacities of a people. Quality education is a necessity for the development of any nation.

Education, noted Ajuluchukwu (2015), is the real instrument for change, growth and development, a societal tool for its survival, and the only means through which the elimination of illiteracy, ignorance, unemployment, poverty and diseases can be facilitated among a people. Expectedly, educational attainments should produce individuals who are not only knowledgeable but who can also translate knowledge into

actions for their own advantage as well as that of the society at large. Thus, an educated person should have acquired the skills for self-confidence, wealth creation, employment generation, social mobility, and value re-education. Skill, according to Merriam- Webster Dictionary (2021), is the capacity to use one's knowledge proficiently and readily in carrying out a task.

Teachers possess a number of skills like communication skills, classroom management skills, among others. According to Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Education Faculty and University Students (2019), communication skills are vital for teachers. Teachers as leaders need communication skills as tools for overpowering fear. Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Education Faculty and University Students posited that the potentials that make effective teachers stand out include good communication skills. Irfan and Shabana (2012) stated that communication skills are among the several factors that impact on students' academic performance. Ajuluchukwu and Osakwe (2019) opined that currently, classrooms are shifting away from rows of desks to an environment that supports collaboration between students, teachers and learning devices. Today, information is increasingly created and co- created by users in an active, shared manner. There has been a change in what individuals expect of information delivery services.

Oğuz (2015) observed that a good teacher as an educator should have effective communication skills while working with students so as to manage the class efficiently. The author noted that a teacher with effective communication skills should be able to use body language effectively, be cautious about intonation and expression, have good listening skills, be exact in their statements and be pleasant to students. Brown (2021) posited that communication is the transfer of information from one person to another such that the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver. McCroskey (2003) opined that knowing how teachers' communication skill influence students' motivation is beneficial to stakeholders in education. In fact, good communication skills by teachers could influence students' motivation and in turn enhance academic performance, stated McCroskey.

However, Williams and Williams (2011) observed that how teacher's communication skill is related to students' motivation in technical colleges is unknown. Akpan (2006) carried out a study that showed that teachers' communication skills significantly improve the academic performance of students in Social Studies. Shirley, Armstrong and Warren (2016) also conducted a study and the result of their study revealed a significant positive correlation between teacher's communication skills and students' motivation to complete courses.

Classroom management skill is another aspect of skill teachers require. Classroom management, stated Sunday-Piaroi (2018), are the actions and ways a teacher uses to achieve fruitful learning atmosphere, have positive effect on students' performance, and achieve learning requirements and goals. A well-managed classroom gives the teacher

firm control over the class, whereas the teacher loses control over the class if it is not well-managed. Green as cited in Falsario, Muyong and Nuevaespana (2014) defined classroom management as all the plan of actions taken by the teacher in the classroom to bring about a conducive classroom environment that supports teaching and learning giving rise to fruitful academic attainment.

Falsario, Muyong and Nuevaespana (2014) posited that the future of a country is on the shoulders of teachers and how they teach students. Thus, classroom management is an important part of effective and fruitful teaching because students perform well in an optimistic classroom environment in which they feel secured, safe, cared for and involved. Affirming this, Schein, Wilson and Keelan (2017) cited in Ajuluchukwu and Osakwe (2019) stated that the public need to be engaged in conversations and debate about issues affecting them. According to Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development (2008), researches over the past 30 years show that in poorly managed classrooms, teachers struggle to teach and students usually learn less than they should, as there are plenty of disciplinary issues; while a well-managed classroom provides an environment that teaching and learning flourishes.

Marzano (2003) observed that the need for students feeling safe at school is connected to their learning and to classroom management. He noted that poorly managed classroom influences the academic performance of students negatively. Walker (2009) stated that the best teachers do not simply teach content, they teach people; that well-managed classroom enhances effective teaching and learning and improves student's academic performance. Moore (2008) carried out a study and the study revealed a positive relationship between some classroom management strategies and higher students' performance scores in diverse elementary setting. Wenglinsky (2000) carried out a study on Educational Test Service (ETS). The findings revealed that teachers' classroom practices greatly influence students' academic achievements, and that more attention needs to be paid to improve classroom practices. Akpan, Ekpe and Essien (2016) in a study examined teacher's effectiveness and students' academic achievement in social studies in Cross River State, Nigeria. The result showed that teachers' classroom management skills, among others, improve the academic performance of students.

The academic performance of students these days have given many people serious concern. The secondary school graduates cannot defend their certificates. Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals. Academic performance involves the students' classroom behaviour, activities, classroom participation, attitude towards learning and teaching, learning capabilities, motivation, discipline and so on. Hornby (2004) defined academic performance as the quality and quantity of knowledge, skills, techniques and positive attitudes, behaviour and philosophy that learners achieve or acquire. These abilities are evaluated by the marks and grades that the pupils attain in a test or examination which is done at the end of a topic, school term and year or education cycle. The scores and grades that students obtain measure the degree of achievement. The quality of the grade and the

number of candidates who pass in various grades determine the level of academic performance in a given subject, business studies inclusive.

Business study is one of the vocational education subjects specifically offered by the students in junior secondary schools in Nigeria. Ohaka (2017) defined business studies as a subject that prepares and arms students with knowledge aimed at creating career awareness of saleable skills that will enable them to fit into the world of work with little or no difficulty. It is made up of five component units namely; Typewriting, Shorthand, Book-keeping, Commerce and Office practice. With the increased demand for accountability in line with performance standards and with the growing demand for evidence-based policy, students' academic performance is considered an accurate measure of teachers' effectiveness and has become a basis for value-added teacher assessment systems (Braun, 2005; McCaffrey et al., 2004).

Despite all the initiatives undertaken by stakeholders in education to improve students' academic performance in schools, poor or low level academic performance, high failure rate in examinations such as West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), National Examination Council (NECO), among others and low quality school graduates that are turned out have called for very serious concern in the society. These have attracted the attention of many education stakeholders including parents, teachers, the government and other external stakeholders funding educational projects. What could be responsible for this ugly trend? Against this backdrop, this study is conceived to find out the influence of teachers' skills on students' academic performance in business studies in secondary schools.

Purpose of the study

The study sought to determine the influence of teachers' skills on business studies students' academic performance in the secondary schools in Ekwusigo Local Government Area. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The extent that business studies' teachers utilize good communication skills.
2. The extent that business studies' teachers practice good classroom management skills.

Research questions

Two research questions were posed for the study, namely:

1. To what extent do business studies' teachers utilize good communication skills?
2. To what extent do business studies' teachers practice good classroom management skills?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at .05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of teachers' communication skills on business studies students' academic performance.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of teachers' classroom management skills on business studies students' academic performance

Methodology

The research design used in this study is the survey research design. This study was carried out in Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 500 JSS III students in the 23 secondary schools in Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State (Source: Statistics unit of the State Secondary Education Board, 2021). The simple random sampling technique was used to select 150 JSS III students, used as respondents, from ten schools selected for the study.

The instruments for data collection included a questionnaire titled "business studies students' rating of their teachers' questionnaire" and a test on business studies constructed by the researchers based on the variables studied. The questionnaire comprised two sections, A and B. Section A was designed to collect demographic data. Section B has 20 items structured on a four point scale. Section B was sub-divided into two parts, I and II. Each part contained ten items. Each item on the questionnaire required the respondents to express their opinion under Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Small Extent (SE), and Very Small Extent (VSE).

The test on business studies contained ten multiple choice questions with four options. The instruments were validated by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was established using test retest method. The reliability coefficients were determined using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The instruments had reliability coefficients of 0.87 and 0.85 for the questionnaire and business studies test respectively. The researchers, with the help of two research assistants, administered the questionnaire and the test to the students. All the copies of the questionnaire and test were retrieved and used for data analysis.

The data obtained from the administered instruments were analyzed using different statistical methods. Weighted mean scores and standard deviation scores were used to answer the research questions. The two hypotheses were tested using simple regression analysis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The following limit of numbers were used to interpret the mean value attracted by each item of the questionnaire: Very Great Extent (VGE, 4) - 3.50-4.00, Great Extent (HE, 3) - 2.50-3.49, Small Extent (LE, 2) - 1.50-2.49, Very Small Extent (VLE, 1) - 0.04-1.49. For the test of hypotheses, the decision was to reject a null hypothesis when the calculated F-value is greater than the critical F-value; otherwise the hypothesis is not rejected.

Presentation of results

Research question 1: To what extent do business studies' teachers utilize good communication skills?

Table 1: Respondents mean ratings on teacher's communication skills

S/N	Communication skills	Mean	SD	Remarks
	Our teacher			
1	uses gestures	3.22	.715	GE
2	uses facial expressions	3.35	.616	GE
3	establishes eye contact	3.33	.580	GE
4	listens to the students	3.18	.556	GE
5	uses verbal communication	3.09	.622	GE
6	uses nonverbal communication	3.34	.603	GE
7	uses multiple communication skills	3.30	.632	GE
8	uses proper questioning technique	3.15	.669	GE
9	combines different communication skills	3.15	.669	GE
10	uses actions to illustrate concepts	3.02	.598	GE
	Cluster Mean	3.20	.613	GE

Data in Table 1 show that all the items were rated within the range of great extent. The cluster mean value for the cluster is 3.20 which also fall in the range of great extent. The standard deviation values were below 1.00. This is an indication that the scores are closely scored.

Ho1: There is no significant influence of teachers' communication skills on business studies students' academic performance.

Table 2: Linear regression analysis on the influence of teachers' communication skills on students' academic performance

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-Level
Regression	523.223	1	523.223		
Residual	710.777	158	4.499	116.308	.000
Total	1234.000	159			

$R = .651; R^2 = .424$

The result displayed in table 2 shows that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 116.308 which is statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. On the basis of this result, the hypothesis is rejected. This means that teachers' communication skills influence business studies students' academic performance. The results also show a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .651 and a coefficient of

determination (R^2) of .424. This implies that 42.4% of the variance in students' academic performance was accounted for by the teachers' communication skills. Thus 57.60% of the variance in students' academic performance may be attributed to the effect of variables extraneous to the study.

Research question 2: To what extent do business studies' teachers practice good classroom management skills?

Table 3: Respondents mean ratings on teachers' classroom management skills

S/N	Classroom management skills	Mean	SD	Remarks
Our teacher:				
1	Takes care when making criticism so as not to upset students	3.28	.585	GE
2	Makes students feel that he/she respects their opinions	3.06	.631	GE
3	Ensures discipline and positive students' behaviour	3.17	.646	GE
4	Provides opportunities for students to ask questions	3.20	.622	GE
5	Allocates extra time for weak students	3.19	.668	GE
6	Rewards group performance in the cooperative setting	3.20	.581	GE
7	Assigns students to work in homogeneous groups	3.14	.639	GE
8	Allows students free expression of ideas	3.21	.655	GE
9	Allows appropriate seating arrangements in classroom	3.31	.656	GE
10	Creates environment of mutual respect	3.01	.663	GE
Cluster Mean		3.18	.635	GE

The result in table 3 shows that ten items were used to rate respondents' views on teachers' classroom management technique. All the items and the cluster mean values are in the range of great extent. The standard deviation values were below 1.00. This is an indication that the scores are closely scored.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of teachers' classroom management skills on business studies students' academic performance.

Table 4: Linear regression analysis on the influence of teachers' classroom management skills on business studies students' academic performance

Source of Variation	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	P-Level
Regression	412.205	1	412.205		
Residual	821.795	158	5.201	79.251	.000
Total	1234.000	159			

R=.578; R²=.334

The result displayed in table 4 shows that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 79.251 which is statistically significant at 0.05 probability level; the hypothesis is thus rejected. This means that teachers' classroom management skills influence business studies students' academic performance. The results also show a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .578 and a coefficient of determination (R²) of .334. This implies that 33.4% of the variance in students' academic performance was accounted for by the teachers' classroom management skills. Thus 66.6 % of the variance in students' academic performance may be attributed to the effect of other variables extraneous to the study.

Discussion of the findings

The first research question answered showed that good communication skills were utilized by teachers to a great extent. This finding finds relevance in the statement by McCroskey (2003) that effective communication by technical college teachers could influence students' motivation thereby enhancing their academic performance. The assertion by Oğuz (2015) supports the finding of this study. Oğuz observed that a good teacher as an educator should have effective communication skills while working with students so as to manage the class efficiently. The author noted that a teacher with effective communication skills should be able to use body language effectively, be cautious about intonation and expression, have good listening skills, be exact in their statements and be pleasant to students. The statement by Ajuluchukwu and Osakwe (2019) is of relevance to the finding of this study. They opined that, currently, classrooms are shifting away from rows of desks to an environment that supports collaboration between students, teachers and learning devices. The statement by Williams and Williams (2011) is at variance with the finding of this study. They stated that how teacher's communication skill is related to student motivation in technical colleges is unknown.

The result of the first hypothesis tested showed that teachers' communication skills do significantly influence business studies students' academic performance. This finding is in line with the finding of Akpan (2006). The result of their study showed that teachers' communication skills significantly improve the academic performance of students in

Social Studies. The finding of Shirley, Armstrong and Warren (2016) supports the finding of this study. The results of their study revealed a significant positive correlation between teachers' communication skill and students' motivation to complete courses.

Regarding teachers' classroom management skills, the finding from the second research question showed that teachers utilize good classroom management skills to a great extent. This finding finds relevance in what Green, as cited in Falsario, Muyong and Nuevaespana (2014), posited that the future of the nation is on the shoulders of teachers and how they teach students. Thus, that classroom management skill is a critical part of effective and successful teaching as students perform well in an optimistic classroom atmosphere and an environment in which they feel secure, safe, cared for and involved. This finding is supported by the finding of Akpan, Ekpe and Essien (2016). Their study examined teacher's effectiveness and students' academic achievement in social studies in Cross River State, Nigeria. The result showed that teachers' classroom management skills, among others, improve the academic performance of students. Also what Walker (2009) noted is in line with the finding of this study. In his own observation, Walker stated that the best teachers do not simply teach content, they teach people; that well-manage classroom enhances effective teaching and learning and improve student's academic performance.

The finding also showed that there is a significant influence of teachers' classroom management skills on business studies students' academic performance. This finding is supported by the finding of Moore (2008) whose finding revealed a positive relationship between some classroom management strategies and higher students' performance scores in diverse elementary setting. The finding of the study by Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development (2008) gives credence to the finding of this study. The research showed that in poorly managed classrooms, teachers struggle to teach and students usually learn less than they should and there is abundance of discipline issues; while a well-managed classroom provides an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish. Also the study by Sunday-Piaroi (2018) is in line with the finding from this study. Sunday-Piaroi investigated the influence of classroom management and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The result indicated that classroom management skills influence students' academic performance. The finding of this study also finds relevance in the finding of Wenglinsky (2000) who carried out a study on Educational Test Service (ETS). The findings revealed that teachers' classroom practices greatly influence students' academic achievements, and that more attention needs to be paid to improve classroom practices.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it is concluded that communication skills and teachers' classroom management skills influence business studies students' academic performance and students' academic performance in general.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should be allowed to attend workshops to enhance their skills in line with modern trends in education.
2. Holders of qualifications such as Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) should be allowed to proceed in their education either through part-time or study leave.
3. Administrators of schools should take necessary steps to ensure that all teachers working under them have access to books and other instructional materials. This will help teachers to enhance their knowledge about their subjects and teaching methods.

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