

Causes and Remedies to Low Academic Performance of Students in Public Secondary Schools: A Study of Ijero Local Government Area of Ekiti State

Ige Olusegun Michael

Department of Business Education, College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria

Ogunleye Akinyemi Wumi

Department of Accounting, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Affiliated with College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the causes and remedies to low academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Ijero Local Government area of Ekiti State. The study adopted a survey research design. It was guided by two research questions. The population of the study consisted of 366 students of secondary schools in Ijero Local government out of which 122 were randomly selected. The instrument was validated by three experts. Findings revealed that there are various factors that contribute to low academic performance of students in secondary schools. Based on the finding recommendations were made among which are: teachers should make use of recent and relevant teaching materials to ensure better understanding and performance of students, teachers should employ different teaching methods as well as teaching must be from simple to complex and parents should give more attention and proper monitoring to their children education.

Keywords: Teachers, Parents, Academic Performance, Classroom Practices.

1.0. Introduction

Student's academic performance occupies a very important place in education as well as in the learning process. It is considered as a key criterion to judge one's total potentialities and capacities Nuthana & Yenagi, (2009) cited by Mendezabal, M. J. N. (2013) which are frequently measured by the examination results. It is used to pass judgment on the quality of education offered by academic institutions. Several factors have generally been identified as causes of poor academic performance. Agyeman (1993) in Kafui (2005) reported that a teacher who does not have both the academic and the professional teaching qualification would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his/her subject. However, he further stated that a teacher who is academically and professionally qualified, but works under unfavorable conditions of service would be less dedicated to his work and thus be less productive than a teacher who is unqualified but works under favorable conditions of service.

Neagley and Evans (1970) in Kafui (2005) were of the view that effective supervision of instruction can improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Etsey, Amedahe and Edjah (2004) in a study of 60 schools from peri-urban (29 schools) and rural (31 schools) areas in Ghana found that academic performance was better in private schools than public schools because of more effective supervision of work.

Another factor is motivation. A highly motivated person puts in the maximum effort in his or her job. Several factors produce motivation and job satisfaction. Young (1988) in Kafui (2005) examined the job satisfaction of Californian public school teachers in the USA and found that one of the overall job predictors was the salary one earned from it. Studies by Lockheed et al. (1991) in Kafui (2005) indicated that lack of motivation and professional commitment produce poor attendance and unprofessional attitudes towards students which in turn affect the performance of students academically. That is why Hall (1989) believes that there is a need to motivate pupils so as to arouse and sustain their interest in learning. "Motivation raises question on why people behave in the way they do it". An individual could therefore, from psychologists' point of view, be seen as politically, socially and academically motivated depending on the motive behind his or her activities.

The role and the influence of the parents in the affairs of the education of the students are extremely important, as they are one of the stakeholders in the education. Parents and families are an important influence upon school and classroom life even where their actual presence is somewhat silent and invisible. They occupy a powerful place in educators home and staff room methodology, which often contrasts strongly with what those same parents are really like Bastiani, (1995) in Vathukattu Kurian Joseph (2004) However, one could wonder whether the parents of the students at the township schools are taking any effective role in the education of their children. Unusual situations like extended families, single parenthood, learners living with step-parents or no parents are common in the township. These social situations prevailing in the community may not allow parents to give enough attention and care that is needed in the education of the learners. These situations eventually lead learners into activities that are other than education. Lack of effective parental involvement or no involvement in

the formation and the education of the learners are evident in the performance and behaviour of most of the learners at secondary schools. From the views above, the study investigates the causes and remedies to low academic performance of students' in secondary schools in Ijero Local Government area of Ekiti State.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The study sought to explain some causes and remedies to low academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Ijero Local Government area of Ekiti state.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The following objectives are expected to be achieved in this research:

1. To find out the causes of students low academic performance.
2. To find out the possible solution to the factors highlighted in the study.

1.4. Significance of the study

The study is important in numbers of ways as it will:

1. Provides useful information to the parents in respect of their responsibilities in the procurement of psychological and school needs to enhance and improve students' learning.
2. Reveal the various factors influencing students negatively or positively.
3. Encourage students to have a change of attitude towards any giving subjects.
4. Serve as a point to the Government both Federal and State on the need of seminar/workshop programme to improve the competence of the secondary schools teachers.

1.5. Research questions

Specifically, the research sought to answer the two following questions:

1. What are the teachers' factors contributions to the low academic performance of students in the public secondary schools?
2. What parents support variables causes students in performing poorly in their academic in secondary schools?

2.0. Review of Related Literature

This section discusses the factors that are well known to influence students' academic achievement.

Theoretical framework

This study reviewed the Martin Ford's Motivational Systems Theory (MST). This framework focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis, but embeds the individual in the biological, social, and environmental contexts that are crucial to development. Ford proposed a simple mathematical formula that attempts to represent all these factors in one model. The formula for effective person-in-context functioning is:

Achievement = (Motivation x Skill) x Responsive Environment

The formula proposes that actual "achievement and competence are the results of a motivated, skillful, and biologically capable person interacting with a responsive environment" (Ford, 1992).

Similar formula was used by Pinder (1984) and others cited in Nonis & Hudson, (2006) to demonstrate performance as a multiplicative function of both ability and motivation.

Performance = Ability x Motivation

The above formula indicates that a student with very high ability but low motivation is unlikely to perform well, whereas a student with low ability but high motivation is likely to perform well. That is, the variability in motivation across students may dampen associations between ability and performance. In the same vein, one can argue that it is simply the study habits and attitudes that ultimately bring about the desired performance and not students' inner desires or motivations. Therefore, similar to how motivation interacts with ability to influence academic performance, one can infer that study habits and attitudes interact with ability to influence student performance in board examination.

Board Exam Performance = Ability x (Study Habits and Attitudes)

2.1. Students' academic performance

Academic performance of students has been the subject of intensive research over the past years. It has become an issue of standards and quality in education as judged from the performance of students in West African Examination Council. However, various reports have documented the poor examination performance of students. For example the result statistics released by the West African Examination Council 2014/2015 revealed the total population of students that sat for the exam to be 22,270 in Ekiti state from which 7,530 of 33.8% have at least five credits including English and Mathematics while 14,740 of 66.2% have low performance. Hence, there is the need to look into the factors that contribute to the academic performance of students.

One review of literature highlighted the importance of students study habits and attitudes in their academic performance. According to Menzel, cited by Rana and Kausar (2011) in Mendezabal (2013) that, many students fail not because they lack ability but because they do not have adequate study skills. Students who have difficulty in secondary schools frequently do not have adequate study habits that affect their academic achievement. A central problem noted was that many of these students had not learned how to take effective notes and manage time for studying cited by Mutsotso S.N. & Abenga E.S. (2010). Moreover, a study by Nagaraju (2004) found that students usually do not devote sufficient time to their studies and seldom have proper study habits.

2.2. Improving Academic Performance

Efforts to help students deal with specific academic weaknesses (e.g., in English, maths e.t.c) can involve improvements in teacher practices in the many schools offer remedial classes either during the term (say, in the evenings, on weekends or during periods of preparatory leave) or vacations.

Another approach is to provide a two-week period (in addition to preparation leave) when no classes are held but teachers are available to help students address their weaknesses. Extra inputs could also be provided in more innovative ways, such as:

- Tutorial classes where additional problems are solved and students interact with each other.
- Where there are a large number of weak students who cannot be handled individually, a 'Student Academic Support Program' could systematically provide extra classes, extra notes and extra guidance.
- Student and faculty collaborations on projects (which may be integrated in the curriculum) where teachers are available to students formally and informally and focus attention on weak members of the group.

2.3. Improving Classroom Practices by Teachers

One of the most critical needs is to ensure classroom sizes in which teachers can give adequate attention to the students and involve them in the daily lesson. To enhance this, class teachers could adopt one or more of the following approaches.

1. Start by asking students what they know and build their knowledge and confidence by teaching some familiar material and gradually moving to a new or difficult topic.
2. Explain the importance of a topic being taught and its relevance to the 'real world,' industry, etc.
3. Give practical examples particularly when explaining difficult concepts. Balancing theory and practice is an important request from students – which also means giving more time to lab work, projects, industrial visits, in terns hips and apprenticeships.
4. Organize lesson by points, including adequate examples in each, using materials beyond the textbook!
5. Move around the classroom and inter act with students while they solve problems or read texts, or even while just giving the lesson.
6. Speak clearly and audibly.
7. Use media beyond 'chalk and board,' OHPs and Power-points - classrooms can be equipped with charts, models, projectors and videos to make instruction more visual and tactile.
8. Give feedback to students on their performance and how to improve it. Weak students (and others) say they rarely get constructive feedback; in some instances, they get no feedback at all. Besides making such feedback part of teachers' responsibilities, they need to be trained in how to provide it.
9. Be open to questions and to feedback from students about the teaching contents and style.
10. Be available for formal and informal contact after class.

3.0. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design for this study was survey research design and the reason for adopting this design is due to the fact that it does not involve any experiment or the use of parametric statistics.

3.2. Population and sample of the study

The population of the study consists of 366 students of public secondary schools In Ijero Local Government area of Ekiti State and the sample for the study therefore, consists of 122 students from the selected schools.

3.3. Sampling Techniques

Random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the sample for the study. The reason for using the technique is that the method implies that all the members of the population have equal chance of being selected like others to represent the entire population.

3.4. Research Instrument

Questionnaire was the research instrument used for data collection. The construction of the questionnaire was guided by research questions and based on four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (1). The questionnaire was made up of sixteen items. The questionnaire was validated by experts. One hundred and twenty two copies were administered to the respondents and all were correctly filled, returned and used for data analysis.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the respondents were presented using frequency counts and standard deviation for all the research questions. Any items equal or above 2.50 was regarded as accepted while any mean rating less than 2.50 was regarded as not accepted.

4.0. Presentation and data Analysis

Research Question: 1. What are the teachers' factors contributions to the low academic performance of students in the public secondary schools?

In order to provide answer to research question one, item 1-8 in the questionnaire designed were used to elicit responses from the respondents. The analyses of the responses of the respondents are shown in table 1 below.

Table: 1

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	St.D	Remarks
1	Teachers' interactions with students have effect on academic performance.	80	20	10	12	3.38	0.99	Agree
2	Teachers' professional qualifications have effect on academic performance.	71	33	10	8	3.16	1.21	Agree
3	Teachers' teaching methodologies have a great effect on academic performance.	82	21	5	14	3.40	1.00	Agree
4	The readiness of teachers have effect on academic performance	71	33	10	8	3.16	1.21	Agree
5	Teachers' personalities such as dressing, talking, walking e.t.c have negative effect on academic performance.	67	26	15	14	3.20	1.05	Agree
6	Completion of syllabuses have effect on academic performance	79	20	14	9	3.39	0.95	Agree
7	The use of recent and relevant materials to teach students have effect on academic performance	84	20	7	11	3.45	0.95	Agree
8	Attitude of teachers have effect on academic performance	57	41	14	10	3.19	0.94	Agree

The first factor has a mean of 3.38 and standard deviation 0.99, the second factor has mean of 3.16 and standard deviation 1.21, the third factor has mean of 3.40 and standard deviation of 1.00, the fourth factor has mean of 3.16 and standard deviation of 1.21, the fifth factor has mean of 3.20 and standard deviation of 1.05, the sixth factor has mean of 3.39 and standard deviation of 0.95, the seventh factor has mean of 3.45 and standard deviation of 0.95, and the last factor has mean of 3.19 and standard deviation of 0.94.

The table 1 showed that all the respondents' means teachers' factors contribute to the low academic performance of students in the public secondary schools were accepted. This is because their means were above the cut-off points of 2.5 indicating acceptance.

Research question 2

What parents support variables causes students in performing poorly in their academic in secondary schools?

In order to provide answers to research question two, item 9-16 in the questionnaire designed were used to elicit responses from the respondents. The analyses of the responses of the respondents are shown in table 2 below.

Table: 2

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	St.D	Remarks
9	The presences of marital problem like divorce and separation negatively affect educational attainment	58	36	8	20	3.08	1.09	Agree
10	Socio-economic status of parents have effect on academic performance	40	67	6	9	3.13	0.81	Agree
11	Provision of basic needs such as (school uniform, school bag, exercise book, pencils, rulers and pens have effect on academic performance	75	31	12	4	3.45	0.80	Agree
12	The involvement of parents in Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) have effect on academic performance	4	12	75	31	1.91	0.69	Disagree
13	Availability of recent and relevant textbooks provided by parent effect on academic performance	42	51	12	17	2.97	1.01	Agree
14	Parental interest in education have effect on academic performance	82	21	5	14	3.40	1.00	Agree
15	Motivation of parents have effect on academic performance	61	40	10	11	3.24	0.94	Agree
16	Parental responsibility of providing a conducive learning environment for their wards	79	20	11	7	3.32	0.88	Agree

The first factor item one has a mean of 3.08 and standard deviation 1.09, the second factor has mean of 3.13 and standard deviation 0.81, the third factor has mean of 3.45 and standard deviation of 0.80, the fourth factor has mean of 1.91 and standard deviation of 0.69, the fifth factor has mean of 2.97 and standard deviation of 1.01, the sixth factor has mean of 3.40 and standard deviation of 1.00, the seventh factor has mean of 3.24 and standard deviation of 0.94, and the last factor has mean of 3.32 and standard deviation of 0.88.

The table 2 showed that all the respondents' means parents' factors that contribute to the low academic performance of students in the public secondary schools were accepted except the involvement of parents in Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A).

4.1. Discussion of findings

That data presented in table 1 provide answer to research question one, the finding revealed that all the items listed are causes of low academic performance of students by the teachers in secondary schools. Also the result in table two reveals that all the items listed except the involvement of parents in Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) which respondents disagree upon are parents support factors that contribute to the low academic performance of students in secondary schools in Ijero Local Government area of Ekiti state.

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research it was concluded that there are several factors as (shown in table 1&2) causes the low academic performance of students in Ijero Local Government secondary schools in Ekiti State.

5.1. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made:

1. Adequate care should be giving and school needs should be provided by parents of the students to ensure effective learning and better performance of the students.
2. Teachers should by all means make use of recent and relevant teaching materials such as textbooks, charts, e.t.c in the teaching, learning process to ensure better understanding and performance of students.
3. Teachers should employ various teaching strategies as well as the teaching must be from known to unknown i.e from simple to complex for better understanding of their students.
4. Teachers personalities should be cooperate and simple to attract the attention of the students so as to contribute positively and enable students to have sense of belonging to academic.
5. Teachers should develop positive attitude towards the students under his/her control to ensure effective learning and better performance of their students.
6. Parents should give more attention and proper monitoring to their children education.

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