

# Teachers' Professional Traits and Students' Academic Performance in Lagos State Senior Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

*This study examined teachers' professional traits as predictors of students' academic performance with reference to public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to investigate the problem bedeviling professional traits of teachers and proffer solution to the students' academic performance in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. Stratified sampling technique was used to draw sample from the population. The reliability of the instrument was found at 0.79 and the data collected were analyzed through Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Formula to determine the relationship between teachers' professional traits and students' academic performance. Three (3) hypotheses were tested to obtain the results at 0.899, 0.352 and 0.694. Results held at 0.05 significant level. Overall findings indicated that there were significant relationship between teachers' professional traits and students' academic performance. Conclusion drawn from the findings suggest that teachers' adequate knowledge of the subject matter; students' perception of teachers' attitude in the classroom and students' perception of teacher's pedagogical skills served as good predictors and significant to positive academic performance of students. This study recommend that; There should be proper recruitment of professional qualified teachers to teach the core subjects in public senior secondary school, and there should be periodic supervision and assessment of students' academic performance.*

## Keywords

*Teacher, Professional Traits, Students' academic performance.*

## Introduction

Despite the hues and cries among the educational stakeholders over the outrageous rate of failure and drop-out of secondary schools students in Nigeria, the issue of poor academic performance of public senior secondary school students in Lagos state has been much concern to all and sundry. The problem was tagged to Teachers quality and professional traits which acclaimed fallen standard of education in Lagos State specifically and Nigeria at large.

The quality of education depends on the teachers professional traits as reflected in the performance of their duties. Overtime, students' academic performance in both internal and external examinations had been used to determine excellence in teachers and teaching (Ajao, 2001). Teachers have been shown to have an important influence on students' academic performance and they also play a crucial role in educational attainment because the teacher is ultimately responsible for translating policy into action and principles based on practice during interaction with the students (Afe 2001). It is not a gainsaying that both teaching and learning depend on teachers, as an effective teacher has been conceptualized as one who produces desired results in the course of his duty as a teacher (Uchefuna, 2001). Considering governments' huge investment in public education, its output in terms of quality of students has been observed to be unequal with government expenditure. Consequent upon this, the researcher observed that lukewarm attitude of some teachers to work, has been attributed to poor academic performance of students.

There have been series of reports about the character of teachers in Lagos state public senior secondary schools and the most worrisome above all is their teaching skill, professional misconduct and classroom management techniques. Specifically, most of the public senior secondary schools in Lagos are bedevilled with the following problems: the Stakeholders in education apportion blamed to students on lackadaisical attitude toward their studies as a major causes of failure and stipend teachers to enhance their

academic record. While, Teachers were also apportion blamed for habitual dereliction on duties in pursuance of external financial business purposes, lack of dedication to their jobs, lack of knowledge of subject matter, having canal knowledge with their students, extortion of money from student with mindset of increasing their academic record, poor attitude to control classroom with superfluous students population and finally, lack of pedagogical skills toward academic performance of students. The above problems are major concern of the study.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

- I. investigate the relationship between teachers' knowledge of subject matter in the classroom and academic performance of students in Lagos State public senior secondary schools,
- II. examine the extent to which the teachers' moral attitude in the classroom is related to academic performance of students in Lagos State public senior secondary schools and
- III. determine whether students' perception of teacher's pedagogical skills is significantly related to academic performance of students in Lagos State public senior secondary schools.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. Is there any relationship between teachers' knowledge of subject matter in the classroom and academic performance of students in Lagos State public senior secondary schools?
2. Is there any relationship between teachers' moral attitude to work and academic performance of students in Lagos State Public senior secondary schools?
3. Is there any relationship between teachers' pedagogical skill and academic performance of students in Lagos State public senior secondary schools?

### Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of subject matter in the classroom and academic performance of students in Lagos State public senior secondary schools.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' moral attitude in the classroom and academic performance of students in Lagos State Public senior secondary schools.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teacher's pedagogical skills and academic performance of students in Lagos State public senior secondary schools.

The findings of this study would be useful to all stakeholders in education. With this, policy maker, Non-Governmental Organizations', parents, teachers, students and other various stakeholders in education are more concern with the employment of qualified and professional teachers in Lagos State. The findings of this study are expected to serve as basis for further study in this area of concern, broaden student's knowledge and improve the teaching skills of teachers in various subjects at public senior secondary schools of Lagos state and Nigeria at large. Therefore, the researcher findings of the study would bridge the gap between academic performance of student in Lagos State and the quality needed for teacher's effectiveness in handling their subjects across the State.

### Teachers Qualities and Professional Traits

Teachers are professional individuals who undergo educational training through the four walls of classroom with certification and ready to discharge qualitative education to students with strong pedagogical skills cum classroom management character. According to Stronge, Tucker, and Hindman in Moreno (2009), effective teacher has a psychological influence on the students, having a strong influence on their achievement. Moreso, Killen in Moreno (2009) also opines that effective teacher is the one who has clear objectives and own goals of teaching. A teacher can provide the students with the answer of a question, which can be effective only if the main objective is simply to compare and analyze different results. However, if the objective is to make the student think about the option of providing different possible answers, the teacher, in this case, may be regarded as ineffective Teacher. Adeogun in Oni (2013) states that the quality of the educational system depends on the quality of its teaching staff and that a school without human resources may not be able to achieve the goal and objectives of the educational system.

Eggen and Kauchak (2001) posit that, positive teachers attitude are fundamental to effective teaching. They identified a number of teachers attitude that will facilitate a caring and supportive classroom environment. They are enthusiasm, caring, firmness, democratic practices to promote students responsibility and use of time for lesson effectively. Teachers established efficient routines, and interact freely with students and providing motivation for them. Ehindero and Ajibade (2000) assert that students, who are curious stakeholders in educational enterprise, have long suspected and speculated that some of their teachers lack the necessary professional qualifications. That is, skills, techniques, strategies required to communicate concepts, ideas, principles in a way that would facilitate effective learning. They believed that these deficiencies contribute significantly to the growing rate of failure

and subsequent drop out of students in secondary institutions. These observations by stakeholders necessitate the need to investigate the effects of teachers' professional traits such as professional qualification, teaching skill and techniques necessary for teaching and learning in secondary schools on academic performance of students.

### Research Methodology

The study adopted two research designs: correlation design and descriptive design. Descriptive research of the survey type attempts a description of the existing situation regarding the state of students' perception on teachers' knowledge of the subject matter in the classroom, teachers' moral attitude to work and teachers' pedagogical skill to improve academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. While, Correlation research design was used to establish the relationship between teachers' professional traits and students' academic performance.

The population of the study comprised all the students of public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

The sample of this study was randomly selected from the population using the stratified sampling technique. The sample selected consisted of one thousand three hundred and twenty (1320) students from forty-four (44) public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The respondents for the study were thirty (30) students from each selected school in Lagos State. In each school, ten (10) students were randomly selected from S I, II, and III respectively.

The instruments used in this study were a structure Questionnaire titled "Teachers' Professional Traits Questionnaire and tagged (TPTQ)" and record observation of Students' West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results of 2011 to 2015. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A consists of personal information (bio-data) of respondent. While section B consists of twelve items on teachers' professional traits and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools. The items of the questionnaire varied as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), and scored as 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The researchers administered the questionnaire in each of the selected schools of the respondents. Explanations were made where necessary for proper clarification and understanding of the instrument and efforts were made to collect the questionnaire on the same day so as to ensure high degree of returns.

The analysis of this research work was done by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical method for hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. The hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

#### Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of the subject matter and students' academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools.

Table 1: A table showing the result of the relationship between teachers’ knowledge of the subject matter and students’ academic performance

Correlation	Teachers’ knowledge of the subject matter	Students’ Academic Performance
Teachers’ knowledge Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1  1320	.899** .000 1320
SAP Pearson Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	.899** .000 1320	1  1320

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

From Table 1, the data analyzed shows that significant relationship exist between teachers’ knowledge of the subject matter and students’ academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools. This is because the result ( $r = .899$ ;  $N=1320$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) indicates a significant relationship between the two variables. Hence, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers’ knowledge of the subject matter and students’ academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools is rejected.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between students’ perception of teachers’ attitude in the classroom and students’ academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools.

Table 2: A table showing the result of the relationship between students’ perception of teachers’ attitude in the classroom and students’ academic performance

Correlation	Students’ perception of teachers’ attitude in the classroom	Students’ Academic Performance
Students’ perception Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1  1320	.352** .000 1320
SAP Pearson Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	.352** .000 1320	1  1320

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between students’ perception of teachers’ moral attitude in the classroom and students’ academic performance in Lagos State public senior secondary schools. This because the result, ( $r = .352$ ;  $N=1320$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) shows a weak positive relationship between the two variables. Thus, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between students’ perception of teachers’ attitude in the classroom and students’ academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools is rejected.

### Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between students’ perception of teacher’s teaching skills and students’ academic performance in Lagos State public senior secondary schools.

Table 3: A table showing the result of the relationship between students’ perception of teacher’s teaching skills and students’ academic performance

Correlation	Students’ perception of teacher’s pedagogical skills	Students’ Academic Performance
Students’ perception Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1  1320	.694** .000 1320
SAP Pearson Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	.694** .000 1320	1  1320

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

It reveals from Table 3 that significant relationship exist between students' perception of teacher's pedagogical skills and students' academic performance in Lagos State public senior secondary schools. This is so because, the result( $r = .694$ ;  $N=1320$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) show a strong positive relationship between the two variable.

The hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between students' perception of teacher's pedagogical skills and students' academic performance in Lagos public senior secondary schools is rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

From the result of the analysis, the following findings were made; firstly, it was discovered that a significant relationship exists between teachers' knowledge of the subject matter and students' academic performance in Lagos State public senior secondary schools. This result is consistent with previous findings of Ehindero and Ajibade (2000). They showed that there is significant relationship between students' perception of teachers' knowledge of subject matter and academic performances. Hence if teachers know his or her subject very well, it is natural for the students to like him or her and performed well in the subject.

The second findings revealed that a significant relationship exists between students' perception of teachers' moral attitude in the classroom and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State. This study corroborates and consisted with the finding of Durojaiye (1976), Nakpodia (2001), and Akomolafe (2004) as cited by Olaleye (2013) they supported the idea that teachers' positive attitude and good personal qualities have effect on students' academic performance.

It was further revealed in the study that students' academic performance correlate positively and depends significantly on students' perception of teacher's pedagogical skills. This findings is consistent with the views of Sotonwa in Olaleye (2011) which identified the qualities related to teaching skills such as content knowledge, clarity of expression, questioning and so on. Mushra, Sharm and Bansal, (2007) as cited by Olaleye (2013) also asserted that teachers' verbal or intellectual aptitude always correlates with better students' academic performance. Based on the previous research findings and the finding of this study on students' perception of teachers on knowledge of subject matter, attitude and teaching skills on academic performance, the study shows a significant relationship.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it is indispensable to note that the heart of Nigerian educational system is the teacher and those teachers are the major predictor and determinant of students' academic performance. Obanya (2004) posits that teachers are considered instrumental to translating content standards into teachables, the teachers' remains a constant factor in the successful implementation of any educational programme. In conclusion, the researcher opines that a discipline professional teachers and thoroughbred classroom managers with educational qualification play pivotal role in academic performance of students in Lagos State Public Senior Secondary School. From the study, it can be concluded that employing unqualified teachers in the school system can affect academic performance of student.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the researcher suggested the following recommendations that:

1. There is need for wholistic review of teacher education certification status to meet up with global educational standards at various levels of the educational process.
2. Government should create more opportunities for creative teachers through technological innovation, organizing seminars, workshops and periodic training.
3. The teachers should make use of different instructional materials as long as they are relevant to their lesson content.
4. Policy-makers in the secondary school should raise funds to procure materials necessary for improvisation and purchase of text books that will facilitate the effective teaching of the subjects.
5. Government should motivate public school teachers through the implementation Teacher Salary Structure package in order to reduce the endemic rate of professional misconduct.
6. Parents should be encouraged to buy recommended text books for their wards in order to supplement teachers lesson notes. The Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigerian Education Research Council (NERC) should establish a functional centers for this purpose; it should also make evaluation and recommendations on specific and relevant instructional materials.
7. Government should employ more qualified teachers that have registered with Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) to teach the core subjects in public senior secondary schools and transfer unprofessional teachers (Cheaters) to other ministries of their status.
8. Lagos State government should not relent on its effort to constantly monitoring public senior secondary schools through a periodic supervision and assessment of teachers in relation to the students' academic performance.

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