

PRINCIPALS' HIGHER ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION: A TOOL FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAUCHI STATE

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of principals' academic qualification on students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State. The study adopted the descriptive research designed of the correlation type. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 out of 85 senior secondary schools in Bauchi State. A combination of purposive and simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 principals, 27 vice principals' administration and 17 vice principals academic as well as 359 teachers from 30 senior secondary schools in Bauchi State making it a total of 433 subjects as participants to this study. The instruments used to collect relevant data were Principals' Higher Academic Qualification and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (PHAQSAPO). National Examination Council (NECO) Result Documentary Analysis Format was also used to analyse students' academic performance. The instruments were pilot tested after experts have ascertained it contents validity. The reliability coefficient was 0.73 for the self-designed questionnaire. The data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). One hypothesis was formulated and tested. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis Procedure was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant levels. The results of the analysis showed among others that, there was significant impact of principals' higher academic qualification on students' academic performance. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, school principals should be encouraged to go for higher academic qualification to enable them keep in place appropriate leadership efficiency that will further influence students' academic performance.

Keywords: Principal, Higher Academic qualification, Student, Academic performance and Senior secondary schools

Introduction

The quality of education has been continuously alleged to be falling due to issues of overcrowded classrooms, laboratories, inadequate instructional materials and poor library facilities (Farombi, 1998). Aremu, Oluwole and Fayombo (2001) identified some of the factors responsible for poor students' academic performance to include: motivational orientation, self-esteem, learning approach, anxiety, intelligent quotient emotional problems, study habit, etc. This study therefore addressed the issue of the principals' higher academic qualification on students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi state. In order to achieve the lofty objectives of secondary education, proper appointment of school principals is a necessity. Section 12, subsection 103 of the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) has stated that: The success of any system of education is hinged on proper planning, efficient administration and adequate financing. Administration is a function of organization and structure, proprietorship and control, inspection and supervision. This means that, the success or failure of secondary school system largely depends on the quality of school principals and leadership provided in the day to day management of the affairs of such schools service for schools administrators' and staff.

Over the years, there has always been public concern following the annual release of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) results each year. Students' academic performance more, especially in recent times, does not match government and parental investments (Farombi, 1998). All stakeholders are unhappy about why the system is turning out senior secondary students graduates with poor results. To them, it is questionable whether teachers in the public secondary schools, who are the most important factor in the effectiveness of schools and in the quality of a children's education are not

competent to teach effectively. As the National Policy on Education stated, “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers” (FGN, 2004).

However, serious concerns have been expressed by a number of commentators and other organizations about students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Nigeria. Some attached the increase failure of students in public examinations to teachers, students’ poor reading habits, society/parents as well as the government (Farombi, 1998). The case of Bauchi State is different because the issue of students’ academic performance is largely attached to the school principals’ inability to discharge their duties efficiently (Bauchi State Ministry of Education, 2019). This view led to the Ministry of Education increase effort to supervision of instructions in all senior secondary schools and some supervisory team from the Ministry of Education were equally posted to various secondary schools to supervise the principals’ administrative duties so as to ensure better students’ academic performance.

The main goal of every educational institution is to produce students who are academically sound in all the subject areas taught in schools. The extent to which schools have succeeded in the intellectual development of students is partly measured by their academic performance, especially in final year examinations. But poor academic performance is a problem that appears to be affecting educational institutions at all levels in Nigeria’s educational arena. The case of secondary school in Bauchi State is particularly serious and disturbing as statistics from Bauchi State Ministry of Education (2019) indicates that, over 70% of students failed to obtain five credits and above in SSCE examinations over the last 10 years. Therefore, the main thrust of this study is to assess the impact of principals’ higher academic qualification on students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State.

Principals’ Higher Academic Qualification and Students’ Academic Performance

School principals set the academic tone and work actively with teachers and maintain high curriculum standards and formulate mission statement as well. Every school principal should have certain level of qualification which enables him or her to conduct his or her duties on a sound basis for instance; asking a classroom teacher to do something he considers unreasonable has its bad effect on his morale. Principals’ stimulates teachers and students to cooperate in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives of the institution. Their primary concern is to give effective leadership for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Therefore, the school principals need to possess desirable qualification which will enable him to become a competent leader.

Qualification could be seen as attainment of a particular level of knowledge or skills in a given subject. The school principals must possess higher academic and administrative qualification to help him or her manage an organization effectively. Poor academic mastery of administrative skills and knowledge could affect the school principal as a head, considering the situation of most of our secondary school principals today as not having the required qualification to act as the school head most of whom obtained degrees in various fields of knowledge that are irrelevant to the school administration. The untrained and unqualified administrators who happen to be on the position by chance are generally unable to apply the right administrative processes and procedures to achieve the organizational objectives at the end.

A study conducted by Bruce and Bruce (2008) indicates that, principals with stronger academic background produce better students’ outcomes. The article hypothesizes that school principals with certain attributes are likely to favour teachers with similar attributes to their own. The study uses the schools and staffing surveys from 1992 – 1994 at Kansas to test whether school principals who attended more selective universities are more or less likely to hire teachers who attend more selective undergraduate institutions. Findings suggest that, principals’ undergraduate background matters when it comes to their recruitment, selection and perhaps retention of teachers with strong academic undergraduate backgrounds, especially in high – poverty schools. Principals in

high poverty schools who attended highly or the most selective undergraduate institutions were 3.3 times more likely to hire teachers who attended similar institutions, which will influence students’ academic performance.

Akinsolu (2010) conducted a study on principals’ impact on students’ academic performance in Nigeria; he examined the number of qualified principals and its relation to students’ academic performance in the public secondary schools in the sample of local government areas (LGA) of Osun State. This descriptive study used a post-hoc data set an instrument title “Quality of Principal and Students’ Academic Performance (QPSAP)” was used for the study, twenty one (21) public secondary schools, one in each local government area from a population of thirty one (31) Local Government as in the state were sampled. The senior school certificate examination results from 2000/01 to 2004/05 were used to analyse students’ academic performance and reflected some concerns in the school. The data were analysed using ANOVA and Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient to test the three operational hypotheses. Findings of the study showed that, principals’ qualifications was significantly related to students’ academic performance.

Ronald (2007) examined the relationship between principals’ qualification and students’ performance. The purpose of the study was “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) program brought attention to the need for state to upgrade the criteria used to certify school principals for entry into the school administration. The study focused on collective principals’ qualification mandated by NCLB and the role they play in explaining differences in school performance. The study examined whether school level differences in principals’ qualification are related to students’ learning in reading and Maths in longitudinal cohort consisting of 14,000 students tested in a random sample of 197 secondary schools. Findings showed that, first as school level resources collective principals’ qualification was positively related to students’ academic performance in reading and Mathematics.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically the objectives of this study are;

1. To find out the impact of principals’ higher academic qualification on students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State.

Research Hypothesis

In order to guide the conduct of this study, the following research hypothesis was formulated, thus:

Ho₁: Principals’ higher academic qualification has no significant impact on students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State.

Methodology

The study was essentially descriptive survey designed of correlation type. It involved observations and survey approach in data collection and analysis of descriptive data on students’ academic performance. The study also assessed the impact of principals’ qualification on students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State. This research design was preferred because the main attempt was to describe and correlate data and analyse opinions collected after the events had already occurred. The population of this study comprises all eighty five (85) senior secondary schools in Bauchi State that are under the ownership of Bauchi State Government. This was to ensure homogeneity of the conditions of service under which the selected schools are operating. Some of these senior secondary schools are in urban centres while others are in the rural areas. Some of the schools are mixed schools while others are single sex schools for either boys or girls only. Some are boarding while others are day secondary schools.

Table 1: Summary of the Population of the Study

Senatorial E/ office	Principals	VP I	VP II	Teachers	G Total
Bauchi	37	35	30	308	410
Bauchi Central	22	20	19	290	351
Katagum	26	25	25	300	376

Total 85 80 74 898 1137

Key: VP1 = Vice Principal Administration

VP II = Vice Principal Academic

Table 1 shows that, the population of this study comprises all eighty five (85) senior secondary school principals, eighty (80) vice principals administration, seventy four (74) vice principals academic and eight hundred and ninety eight (898) teachers. Secondary school principals, vice principals and teachers served as participants for this study. They were so chosen because they had the required knowledge and experience to provide reliable information about school principals’ qualification and it impacts on students’ academic performance. Table 2 indicated the summary of the sample used for the study.

Table 2: Summary of the Sample used for the Study

Items	Number existing	Number selected
1. Schools	85	30
2. Principals	85	30
3. Vice principal administrations	80	27
4. Vice principal academic	74	17
5. Teachers	898	35

Table 2 shows that, there are eighty five (85) senior secondary schools in Bauchi State, out of this number thirty (30) were selected and determined using the purposive sampling technique. This was to ensure that all categories of schools were represented in the study. There are thirty (30) principals and forty four 44 vice principals in the selected schools. All the principals and vice principals were deliberately sampled due to their small number. There are eight hundred and ninety eight (898) teachers in the selected schools; out of this number three hundred and fifty nine (359) were selected based on simple random sampling technique. This is a method of selecting number of units of sample out of the total population in such a way that every member has an equal chance of being selected. Therefore the subjects of this study comprised a total of 433 both principals, vice principals and teachers. Kerlinger (1979) opined that, statistics calculated from large samples are more accurate than those calculated from small sample provided the numbers of sample are drawn independently; the larger the sample, the closer the true value of the population in approach. The instruments of this study consist of the following:

- i. National Examinations Council (NECO) results documentary analysis format.
- ii. Self-Designed Principals’ Higher Academic Qualification and Students’ Academic Performance Questionnaire (PHAQSAPQ)

The Principals’ Higher Academic Qualification and Students’ Academic Performance Questionnaire (PHAQSAPQ) contained two sections with questions on students’ academic performance and principals’ qualification. The questions were based on a four point likert scale. The self-designed Questionnaire on Principals’ Higher Academic Qualification on Students’ Academic Performance (PHAQSAP) was submitted to some experts in educational administration and planning unit as well as those in psychological testing in Federal University, Kashere which determined the contents validity, their observations and corrections were effected in the original that upgrades its standard and accuracy. The reliability of the self-designed questionnaire on principals’ higher academic qualification and students’ academic performance, the instrument was tested in a pilot study; the study was conducted in 20 schools out of 55 that were not part of the selected schools for the study. Test re-test method was applied with an interval of two weeks in order to establish the reliability of the instruments over time. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in correlating the set of scores of the test-re-test exercise. A reliability index of 0.73 was obtained at 0.5 level of significance which indicated that the instrument was reliable.

Table 3: Rate of Questionnaires Distributed and Returned

S/N	Categories of Participants'	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Percentages
1.	Principals	30	30	100%
2.	VP I	27	27	100%
3.	VP II	17	17	100%
4.	Teachers	359	359	100%
	Total	433	433	100%

Table 3 revealed that a total of 433 questionnaires were distributed to the population used for the study and the same were retrieved 100% rate were used for analysis. Table 4 indicated principals' higher academic qualifications in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State.

Results

Table 4: Principals' Higher Academic Qualification

S/N	Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Ph.D. in Education or with Education	-	-
2.	M.Ed, or M.A, M,Sc with Education	1	3 (%)
3.	B.Ed, or B,Sc(ED) B.A Ed	25	84 (%)
4.	PGDE, NCE, ACE, TCII	3	10 (%)
5.	HND, ND	1	3 (%)
	Total	30	100 (%)

It is indicated in table 4 that majority of the senior secondary school principals in Bauchi State 84% had Bachelor degrees in Education or with Education e.g. B.Ed., B,Sc. (Ed.) B.A. Ed. and B.A. (Tech),10% of the principals had PGDE, NCE, ACE and TC Certificate. It is also indicated that 3% of principals had M.Ed., M.A., M.Sc. with Education, while 3% had HND, ND without any teaching qualification.

Participants' Opinion about Students' Academic Performance

The opinions of the participants' were summarized accordingly, students' academic performance responses, frequencies and percentage of principals' qualification and students' academic performance respectively. Table 5 indicated the participants' opinions about the students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State.

Table 5: Participants' Opinions about Students' Academic Performance

S/N	A. Students' academic performance	Agreed	Disagreed
1.	Students' Performance in NECO is satisfactory	201 (46%)	232 (54%)
2.	Students possess practical skills	175 (40%)	258 (60%)
3.	Principals' signature on students' performance	94 (11%)	384 (89%)
4.	Principals' utilization of resources	43 (10%)	390 (90%)
5.	Principals' maintenance of resources	42 (10%)	391 (90%)

Table 5 showed that, 232 representing 54% disagreed with the item descriptive that, students' performance in NECO examinations in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State was satisfactory. While 201 which represented 46% agreed with the view that, students' performance in NECO was satisfactory. Majority 60% disagreed with the questionnaire item that students' performance in NECO practical examinations was the actual skills possessed by the students. On the other hand 40% agreed that, students' performance in NECO practical was the

reflection of the actual skills possessed by them. Majority 89% participants disagreed with the item description that, the school principals were carefully performing all administrative functions of planning, organizing, directing, staffing, supervising, coordinating, communicating and budgeting to ensure students’ academic performance. While only 11% agreed with that item. Majority 90% disagreed with the item description that, the school principals ensured that, students made optimum use of resources for good students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State and 10% agreed. While the majority of the participants’ views, 90% disagreed that, school principals ensured that, resources were properly maintained to guarantee good students’ academic performance in their schools, and 10% participants’ disagreed. Majority 90% disagreed that, principals ensured that, resources were properly maintained to guarantee good students’ academic performance and 10% disagreed.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing involved the application of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to test the relationship between principals’ higher academic qualification and students’ academic performance. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One

Ho₁: Principals’ higher academic qualification has no significant impact on students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State. This hypothesis was tested and presented in table 6.

Table 6: Impact of Principals’ Higher Academic Qualification on Students’ Academic Performance

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Cal-r	p-value	Decision
Qualification	30	1.70	.57	29	.95	.44	Ho ₁ rejected
performance	30	2.99	.73				

Table 6 indicated that, the calculated (r) value of .95 was greater than the p- value of .44 at .05 level of significant. Therefore the hypothesis which stated that, principals’ higher academic qualification has no significant impact on students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State was rejected.

Discussions of the Findings

Higher academic qualification of school principals was significantly and highly correlated with students’ academic performance in senior secondary schools in Bauchi State. This meant that, the hypothesis which stated that, there was no significant impact of principals’ higher academic qualification on students’ academic performance was rejected. This means that, the higher the principals’ qualifications the better influenced the academic performance of students could be. Principals’ higher academic qualification were pre-requisite to students’ academic performance. It also signified that, the higher the principals’ higher academic qualifications, the better chances of academic performance of students. On the other hand the poorer and low principals’ qualification the poorer the academic performance of students could be. Principals who obtained higher academic qualification produce better students’ academic performance.

Majority of participants to this study 59% agreed that, higher academic qualifications of school principals could have significant impact on students’ academic performance. The high correlation between principals’ higher academic qualifications and students’ academic performance could be explained in the context of the fact that school principals who possessed higher academic qualification could apply the administrative principles and skills in their schools to impact students’ academic performance. The finding of this study was in harmony with Bruce and Bruce (2008), Akinsolu (2010), and Ronald (2007), they all come to conclusion that, qualifications of school principals were significantly related to students’ academic performance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that, principals' higher academic qualification has positive impact on students' academic performance. Among the reasons for poor students' academic performance are perhaps the principals were deliberately neglecting their higher academic qualification, and therefore not performing the administrative functions of planning, organizing, directing, supervising, coordinating, communicating and budgeting to ensure students' academic performance in schools. Majority of the participants 90% to this study agreed that the staff were mostly unwilling and the students were unable to make optimum use of available resources to improve their academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research and the subsequent conclusion drawn from this study, the following recommendations were presented:

1. School principals should be encouraged to go for higher academic qualification to enable them keep in place appropriate leadership efficiency that will further influence students' academic performance
2. Government should in as much as possible encourage school principals to obtain higher degrees in relevant and specialized areas in education specifically educational administration and planning so as to get all the necessary knowledge and skills of leader ship procedures that will definitely influences students' academic performance.

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