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An Assessment of the National Teachers' Institute National Certificate in Education, on Teachers' Professional Competence in a Social Studies Class

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the professional competence of teachers who hold the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in a Social Studies classroom. The study adopted a causal comparative design. Forty NCE teachers produced by NTI Distance Learning Programme and 40 Full-time NCE trained teachers were purposively selected from schools in eight local government areas of Ogun State. Instructional Competence Rating Scale ($r = 0.68$), and Teachers' Knowledge of Social Studies Content ($r = 0.72$) were used to collect data which were analysed using descriptive statistics. The result indicated that there was no significant difference between the two categories of teachers on their knowledge of subject matter. Finding also indicated that the NTI NCE and Full-time NCE trained teachers were not competent in term of classroom instructional practice as they did not give enough room for pupils' active involvement in the teaching-learning process. In view of the fact that teachers will continue to access professional training by NTI, there is the need for NTI to ensure a favourable training environment including the quality of the teaching practice organised for these category of teachers in order to enhance the production of teachers who possess high knowledge of subject content and who can engage in quality classroom instructional practices.

INTRODUCTION

Across the world, education is a vital process in human development and environment management. Education is a process of transmitting, refining and preserving the collective values embedded in the culture of the society (Oyekan, 2000). Through education, a network of worthwhile knowledge, skills and habits are also passed on to the next generation for effective citizenship and collective benefits of the society. Education is regarded as one of the fundamental responsibilities a government owes its citizens (Adeniji, 2003) hence, for all tiers of government; education usually takes up a large chunk of the annual budget. However, the adequacy of such allocation vis-à-vis what obtains in other countries of the world has been considered not enough. Also, this situation has always led to the consistent strike actions by organised labour in the education sectors in the country, to make government more responsive to the problem facing education in the country.

As important as education is in the life of any nation, a careful examination at the trend of students' academic performance in externally conducted examinations reveal a downward decline. This deplorable condition

has continued to generate concern on the educational scene and steps are being taken aimed at redressing the abnormality. Research efforts like those of Akinwumiju and Orimoloye (1997), Ugwu (2002), Adeniji (2003), Oloyede and Amosuro (2006), Akpan (2008) were pre-occupied with delineating the factors that are responsible for the dismal state of education in the country. Among the reasons adduced by these studies for the poor performance of students in public examinations include: location of schools, students', teachers' and school characteristics, teaching methods employed, teachers' gender and experience poor funding among others. In spite of these efforts, there is still need for concerted effort aimed at redressing the situation because students' poor performance is still here with us.

It is the belief of educational managers that no educational system can improve better than its teachers, and that the academic performance of students can be improved upon if there is an increase in the productivity and quality of teachers. According to Oloyede and Amosuro (2006) a teacher is the bridge that makes teaching and learning effective. The teacher is thus the builder whose performance depends on adequate knowledge, qualification, experience, preparation and competence in the discharge of his/her duties.

Competence in teaching simply implies the ability of the teacher to accomplish assigned duties, of which teaching is most central (Ololube, 2006) and is measured by 'the teacher's competence which is determined by his/her methodology, sense of vision, and interest in sharing knowledge' (Ayeni, 2005). By way of modifying Ayeni's view, a teacher's competence transcends mere interest in sharing knowledge (Harris & Muijs, 2005). It actually demands active participation in the transmission of knowledge, a process in which the teacher exhibits mastery of the subject matter (Kami & Ukpabi, 2007). Competence has consistently been used as an outcome measure when evaluating teachers' performance at three different stages: student-teacher, beginning teachers and experienced teachers by evaluation experts including teacher educators, researchers and government officials. As the public demand for accountability increases, schools are forced to identify the qualities of effective teachers and to plan curricula to ensure that prospective teachers demonstrate these qualities prior to certification (Hamdan, Ghafar & Li, 2010; Taylor, Middleton & Napier, 1990). The characteristics of quality teachers and teaching according to Ellis (1984) are a further proof of how a competent teacher can be identified. The characteristics as indicated by her are; content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, language/communication competence, classroom management competence, exposure to training and up-to-datedness.

Scholars and teachers in education have acknowledged that subject matter and pedagogical knowledge are crucial to good teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1998) and is a potent predictor of teacher success (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). This fact has been confirmed and elaborated upon in a review of earlier works on teacher knowledge of subject matter and teachers' success by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). Also, the Ferguson study of 900 Texas School districts as cited by Darling-Hammond

(1998) reported that teacher expertise influenced students' achievement more than any other single factor in mathematics and reading instruction. Marks (1990) clearly describes the importance of subject content knowledge when he stated that in a practical sense, it represents a class of knowledge that is central to teachers' work and would not typically be held by non-teaching subject matter experts or by teachers who know little of that subject. In this sense the concept of content knowledge can be seen as meaningful and useful in helping teacher educators focus on what teachers ought to know and how they might learn it.

However, studies that examined the influence of teachers' knowledge of subject matter on achievement, and the relationship between teachers' knowledge of subject matter and quality of teaching have failed to yield consistent findings. Even though in some studies, a positive connection between teachers' subject matter knowledge and students' achievement was found (Rowan, Chiang & Miller, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000), others reported a negative correlation (Reed, 1986). In addition, some studies have found a non-significant effect of subject matter knowledge on students' achievement (Wilson, Floden & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). This inconsistency in previous studies on the influence of teachers' knowledge of subject matter and quality of teaching on students' achievement necessitates their further study with respect to the teaching and learning of Social Studies.

At the primary and junior secondary school levels, Social Studies is one of the core subjects taught which students must compulsorily offer. If effectively taught it has the potential to influence the intellectual, social and personal growth and development of Nigerian youths (Iyewarun, 1989), and in effecting citizenship education (Falaye & Okwilagwe, 2008). It could also bring about the realisation of the Nigerian education goals as stated in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). By virtue of its integrated nature and philosophy, Social Studies is highly affective and value-laden (Nwuabani, 2005). It is not merely designed to teach facts and information but to promote simultaneously the three domains of learning namely: cognitive, affective and psychomotor in order to achieve the education of the complete man (Obemeata, 1996). The Federal Ministry of Education (2007) states in the new 9-Year Basic Education Social Studies Curriculum for primary 4-6 the following as the objectives of Social Studies in primary schools in Nigeria. To:

- i. develop ability to adapt to the changing environment;
- ii. inculcate the right types values;
- iii. develop a sense of comprehension towards other people their diverse cultures, history and those fundamental things that make them human;
- iv. develop the capacity to recognize the many dimensions of being human in different culture and social contexts; and
- v. develop a sense of solidarity and sharing based on a sense of security in one's own identity.

The Nigerian system of education is committed to producing individuals who will not only possess the capability to solve personal problems but also

contribute to the development of the society. In spite of the important role of Social Studies in our educational system, students' performance in the subject show a growing decline at the Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) in some states of Nigeria (Yusuf, 2004). There is also the growing concern of the public that the NCE teachers produced by The National Teachers' Council, Kaduna are inferior to their counterparts who graduate from the regular Colleges of Education in the country. In the light of the foregoing, the present study finds it necessary to critically assess the professional competence of NTI NCE Social Studies teachers produced through Distance Learning System in terms of their knowledge of subject matter and instructional competence in the classroom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to guide this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What is the quality of NTI NCE and Full-time NCE teachers' knowledge of the subject matter of Social Studies?
2. Is there any significant difference in the teachers' knowledge of Social Studies content in terms of the mode of study?
3. What is the quality of the NTI NCE and Full-time NCE trained teachers' instructional competence in a Social Studies classroom?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is a non-experimental study that used a causal comparative research design. The variables in the study were not manipulated but a post-test only comparative group was built into the study to enable valid and reliable information to be obtained about the NTI teachers and be able to make inferences about their instructional competence.

Population, Sampling Procedure and Sample

The target population for the study comprised all graduates of the NTI (NCE) programme as well as other NCE holders who are graduates from the regular Colleges of Education in Ogun State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted which involved the stratification of the twenty local government areas in the State into four educational zones namely, Egba, Yewa, Ijebu, and Remo. Thereafter, two local government areas were randomly selected from each zone to give a total of eight Local Government Areas while purposive sampling procedure was used to select five schools from each of the selected local government areas. Finally, two Social Studies teachers (one a product of NTI and the other a product of regular NCE Colleges) who teach the middle basic classes (Primary 4 to 6) in each of the selected schools were purposively selected. In all, eighty (80) teachers constituted the sample for the study.

Instrumentation

Two instruments Teacher Knowledge of Social Studies Content (TKOSOSC) designed by the researchers and Instructional Competence Rating Scale (ICORAS) adapted were used to collect data in the study. The TKOSOSC consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions with five options. Its contents were selected from the Social Studies curricula for middle basic primary school

and the lower level of junior secondary school because teachers with NCE are expected to teach at these levels (FRN, 2004). The TKOSOSC was subjected to all the processes of content validation that is using a test blue print and ensuring that the items drawn reflect knowledge, comprehension and thinking levels of Blooms taxonomy of educational objectives in the cognitive domain. Experts in educational evaluation scrutinized it for ambiguity and their advice and suggestions were used to modify the final draft of the test. The modified test was then administered on fifty (50) teachers selected from fifteen schools that were not involved in the study. Twenty -five multiple-choice test items that were selected from the item analysis procedure, constituted the Teachers' Knowledge of Social Studies Content (TKOSOSC). It discriminated positively between the able and less able teachers and had item difficulty indices of between 0.48 and 0.63. The reliability coefficient of 0.72 using the Kuder-Richardson (K-R-20) was established for the test. ICORAS was an adaptation of Moore's (1992) teaching skills and the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan Teacher-Pupil Interaction Observation Sheet (TPIOS) used for monitoring teaching and learning in the classroom. The ICORAS covers the pre-instructional, instructional and post-instructional skills which a competent teacher needs to display in the course of teaching in the classroom situation. The instrument was re-validated with thirty primary school teachers and it yielded inter-rater reliabilities of between 0.68 - 0.72 using Scott's Phi.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers and three trained research assistants administered the instruments directly on the teachers in the participating primary schools. The data obtained for this study were analysed using descriptive (frequency count, simple percentages and graphs) and t-test statistics.

Results

The results in Tables 1a and b and the accompanying graph (Figure 1) present the quality of the two categories of NCE teachers' knowledge of Social Studies. Using a yardstick of a mean score of 16.68 as cut off, scores above 16 were regarded as high and those below as low. The result reveals that 24 (60%) regular NCE trained teachers possessed high knowledge of Social Studies content and 16 (40%) possessed low knowledge of Social Studies content whereas 28 (70%) of the NTI NCE trained teachers possessed high knowledge of Social Studies content while the remaining 12 (35%) possessed low knowledge of Social Studies content.

Table 1a: Distribution of Teachers Scores on Knowledge of Social Studies Content

Scores	Freq. for NTI NCE Trained Teachers	Freq. for Regular NCE Trained teachers
10	1	2
11	-	2

12	1	2
13	3	2
14	2	3
15	5	5
16	6	1
17	3	9
18	9	2
19	3	2
20	3	7
21	1	2
22	3	-
23	-	1
Total	40	40
	$\bar{x} = 16.43$ SD = 3.31	$\bar{x} = 16.93$ SD= 2.79

Table 1b: Level of Teachers' Professional Competence by Knowledge of Subject Matter

Mode of Study	Teacher Knowledge of Social Studies		
	Low Freq. %	High Freq. %	Total Freq. %
Full Time	16 40.0	24 60.0	40 100
Part Time	12 30.0	28 70.0	40 100

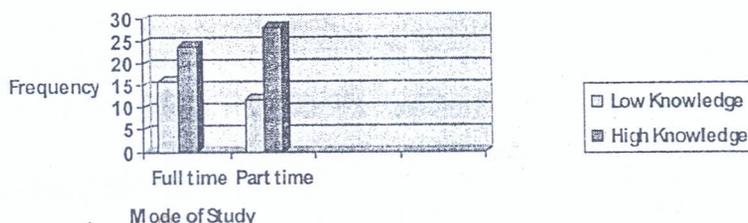


Figure 1: Group bar Chart of NTI NCE and Full Time Trained Teachers' Knowledge of Subject Matter

Table 2: t-test Analysis for Professional Competence of NTI NCE and Full-time NCE Trained Teachers by Knowledge of Social Studies Content

Mode of Study	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig.
Full-time	40	16.43	3.31	78	0.730	.468NS
Part-time	40	16.93	2.79			

NS = Not Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows a non-significant difference in teachers' knowledge of Social Studies content for both Full-time NCE and the NTI NCE trained teachers.

Table 3(a): Descriptive Statistics of Observed Pre- Instructional Skills of NTI NCE and Full-time NCE Trained Teachers

S/ N	Pre- Instructional Skills	NTI NCE			FULL TIME		
		V. Good	Fair		V. Good	Fair	
i.	Creates effective daily lesson plans based on knowledge, and develops an overall effective plan.	31 (77.5%)	7 (17.5%)	2 (5%)	31 (77.5%)	5 (12.5%)	2 (5%)
ii.	Availability of relevant, adequate and variety of instructional materials.	1 (2.5%)	9 (22.5%)	30 (75%)	1 (2.5%)	6 (15%)	33 (2.5%)

Tables 3a, b and c show the results of the quality of the instructional competence of the teachers. The result in Table 3(a) reveals that thirty-one (77.5%) NTI NCE and Full-time NCE trained teachers respectively can create effective and daily lesson plans based on knowledge to cover all relevant aspects. As it concerns

Table 3(b): Descriptive Statistics of Observed Instructional Skills of NTI NCE and Full-time NCE Trained Teachers

S/ N	Instructional Skills	NTI NCE			FULL TIME		
		V. Good	Fair	Poor	V. Good	Fair	Poor
i.	Review previous/introduce new lesson.	33 (82.5%)	7 (17.5%)	-	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)	-
ii.	Development of lesson (clarity, sequence, objectives related, uses illustration and examples).	- (47.5%)	21 (52.5%)	19	- (47.5%)	21 (52.5%)	19
iii.	Mastery of subject matter (has mastery of subject matter, create learning experiences that make learning meaningful to all pupils and uses suitable methods).	7 (17.5%) (20%)	25 (62.5%)	8	7 (17.5%) (20%)	25 (62.5%)	8
iv.	Teacher demonstrates understanding/knowledge of subject content (uses various instructional strategies to develop critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills, organises content knowledge to promote these learning outcomes etc).	40 (100%)	-	-	40 (100%)	-	-
v.	Effective use of instructional materials.	7 (17.5%) (60.0%)	9 (22.5%)	24	6 (15%) (60%)	10 (25%)	24
vi.	Stimulates further exploration of topic taught.	16 (40%) (10.0%)	20 (50.0%)	4	16 (40%) (5%)	22 (25%)	2
vii.	Classroom management (creates conducive physical and positive classroom climate that promotes learning and is fair to all students).	- (17.5%)	33 (82.5%)	7	- (17.5%)	33 (82.5%)	7
viii.	Organisation (active						

i.	participation, social interaction between and among pupils, use instructional time and classroom routines effectively in/out and during group activities).	-	30 (75%)	10	-	28 (70%)	12
		(25%)			(30%)		
ix.	Ability to summarize lesson effectively.	32 (80%)	8 (20%)	-	34 (85%)	6 (15%)	-
x.	Teacher-Pupil interaction.	23 (57.5%)	17 (42.5%)	-	22 (55%)	18 (45%)	-

the sourcing of and use of relevant, adequate and variety of instructional materials for the lesson, almost all the sampled NTI NCE 30(75%) and Full-time trained teachers 33(82%) were very poor. Table 3(b) shows that during the instructional phase, 33(85%) NTI NCE and 35 (85%) Full-time trained teachers introduced their lessons very well but the development of lessons in terms of clarity, sequence, objectives relatedness, use of illustration and examples, NTI NCE and Full-time trained teachers 19(47.5%) respectively performed poorly. Seven (17.5%) of these teachers respectively had very good mastery of subject matter and could create very good learning experiences that made learning meaningful. Moreover, 7(17.5%) and 6(15%) NTI NCE and Full-time NCE trained teachers used suitable teaching materials, while 24(60%) respectively were very poor in the use of teaching materials. The two categories of teachers 40(100%) respectively demonstrated understanding of the subject content and understanding of various instructional strategies.

Table 3(b) further reveals that the teachers did not possess adequate ability for effective classroom management as majority of them 33(80.5%) respectively were just fair. In terms of organisation of lessons to create active participation, social interaction between and among pupils and effective use of instructional time, the sampled NTI NCE trained teachers 30(75%) and Full-time NCE trained teachers 28(70%) were just fair. Thirty-two (80%) NTI NCE teachers and 34(85%) Full-time NCE trained teachers possessed ability to summarise lessons effectively while only 16(40%) of these teachers respectively could stimulate pupils to further explore topics taught.

Table 3(c) shows that in the post-instructional skills of these teachers, 26 (65%) NTI NCE and Full-time NCE trained teachers respectively were able to evaluate their lessons effectively though majority of them 35 (87.5%) respectively did not give the pupils assignments at all.

Table 3(c): Descriptive Statistics of Observed Instructional Skills of NTI NCE and Full-time NCE Trained Teachers

S/ N	Post- Instructional Skills	NTI NCE			FULL TIME		
		V. Good	Fair	Poor	V. Good	Fair	Poor
i.	Evaluation	26	9	5	26	9	5

	(appropriateness).	(65%) (13%)	(22.5%)	(65%) (12.5%)	(22.5%)
ii	Assignment (adequacy and appropriateness).	- (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)	35	35 (12.5%)

Discussion

The findings in this study indicated that majority of the observed NTI NCE teachers (70%) and Full time teachers (60%) possessed high knowledge of Social Studies subject matter content. Their performance in the test administered gave credence to the fact that the teachers were well exposed to the necessary curriculum content during the training period, and were therefore, able to demonstrate high knowledge of the content. The finding supports that of Oguntimehin (2004) who found out that NTI NCE graduates were performing well on their job because they possessed high knowledge of the subject matter. That the NTI NCE trained teachers in this study were found to possess high knowledge of subject matter as much as the Full-time NCE teachers was not unexpected because they seem more matured and possibly may have been influenced by the rationale for registering for the NCE programme while on the job. They also seem to be more aware of the rigour in getting the fees among other programme needs and so tended to have no choice than to be serious with their studies like their counterpart Full-time trained teachers. Also, findings are in support of Balogun and Adeniyi (2000) who endorsed the sandwich mode of upgrading teacher qualification because they found that the mean score of Part-time NCE teachers were consistently above average, for which reason the authors claimed they could not be said to be academically inferior to their Full-time counterparts, Study finding, however, negates these of (Davidson, 2008; Cooney, 1994; Brown & Borko, 1992) who in their separate studies found that teachers do not have correct conceptual knowledge of the subject matter and so do not teach the subject well. Their findings forced them to the conclusion that one cannot give what one does not have.

The finding that the two categories of teachers do not have high competence in teaching Social Studies classes in this study because they over dominate the teaching-learning process, confirms earlier findings by Blake and Landsdell (2000) and the works of other researchers like Akpan (2008), Falaye (2007) and Okwilagwe, (2005). These scholars reported that teachers give very little opportunity for students' initiated behaviour and scarcely involve them in the teaching learning process. These primary school teachers have not complied with the policy that the methods of teaching at this level should be practical, exploratory and experimental rather than relying heavily on the use of lecture and/or other poor classroom teaching methods for instruction. The compliance with the recommended teaching method in the education policy will guarantee more interaction and participation of pupils in the teaching-learning process. If pupils are given opportunity to participate in classroom activities, they will learn and retain facts and information better.

Also observed in this study is that most of the teachers do not have instructional materials for teaching, talk less of integrating them in the teaching-learning process. This finding supports the works of Oguntimehin (2004) and Adeogun (2001) who in their separate studies found that the NTI NCE graduates were inadequate in the preparation and use of instructional materials for teaching. These and other research findings by Adeogun (2001) and Babayomi (1999) have provided the rationale for the use of instructional materials in lesson delivery. Children are known to learn best when they actively explore a learning environment rich in instructional materials. Adeogun (2001) for instance, claimed that knowledge is absorbed through five senses assessed in the following proportions: sight 75%, hearing 13%, touch 6%, smell 3% and taste 3%. In the case of Babayomi (1999) found that availability of instructional materials was significantly linked to academic performance in schools, and that schools which were rich in instructional resources performed better than schools which were less endowed in instructional resources. Instructional materials are, therefore, important in the teaching-learning process especially at the lower level of education.

CONCLUSION

The success of any education system or programme depends to a large extent on the quality and availability of qualified and committed teachers. This is true because the teacher formulates objectives, designs, assembles, controls, supervises, selects, explores, facilitates, manipulates, assesses the teaching-learning process and materials as well as evaluates all other factors in the teaching-learning process. The study indicated that majority of the teachers' possessed high knowledge of Social Studies subject matter though their instructional competence was not very satisfactory. Thus, irrespective of the type of programme undertaken by the two groups of NCE teachers, their knowledge of subject matter were the same, as well as the quality of their instruction, no group seemed to be inferior to the other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to enhance the professional competence of Social Studies teachers, it is necessary that teacher trainers produce teachers who are of high quality, in view of the fact that teachers will continue to access professional training by NTI. It is recommended that there is the need for NTI to ensure a favourable training environment by incorporating innovative pedagogic training, including the improvement of the quality of the teaching practice organised for this category of teachers. This will enhance the production of teachers who possess high knowledge of subject content and can engage in quality classroom instructional practices that could lead to better facilitation of learning. It will also lead to the attainment of the objectives of education at the basic level of education in the country. Furthermore, the problem of professional competence development seems to have received little attention, therefore, further researches should be conducted to exploit this area.

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