



ASSESSMENT OF TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION ABOUT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Reform efforts in the past were often unsuccessful because they failed to take teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs and attitudes into consideration. This study addressed the roles of knowledge and perception of teachers in the successful implementation of educational reform in Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were stated to guide the study. The sample used for the study was 330 teachers randomly drawn from 30 schools in Nsukka education zone of Enugu state, Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection was teachers' knowledge and perception about the Educational Reform Questionnaire (TKPERQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.72. The paper found that, teachers' qualification, experience and gender were factors that influence teachers' knowledge and perception about the implementation of educational reform. It was recommended that short term intensive staff development courses through workshops and seminars are required for proper integration of innovation in any reform in education.

Keywords: knowledge and perception, educational reform, qualification and experience

Introduction

Educational reform is synonymous with the injection of new ideas, methods and techniques or strategies into education system, so as to improve both internal and external efficiency of the system and development. It is described as a new dispensation to meet the challenges posed by new technological development and to improve the quality of education system. The nations of the world, including Nigeria are becoming closer, interconnected and experiencing profound socio-economic and political changes today. This means that all educational curriculums must also change in order to bring dynamic adaptation in the schooling process (Peretomode and Ikoya, 2010).

The issue that teachers are the most influential factor in educational change is not in doubt (Duffee and Aikenlead, 1992). Madu (2010) explained that from traditional approach, the lack of success of many reforms is attributed to the inability of teachers to implement the reforms or innovations. The inability of teachers to implement the reform could be as a result of

non-participation at the point of planning the reform or wrong perception of the reform at early stage of its introduction. Most teachers who have spent a long-time teaching ought to have mastered the subject content, acquired cumulated classroom skills and strategies to handle and cope with new reforms. Contrary to this expectation, Tobin and Devison (1992) indicated that the relative lack of success of many educational reforms was due to the non-consideration of teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes in the process. This implies ignoring teachers' knowledge and perception may lead to failures in reforms. Teachers' knowledge for the implementation of education reforms or innovations is crucial and could be moderated by a combination of their qualifications, experiences and gender.

Teacher's qualification seems to be a relevant agent for effective implementation of education reforms. According to Darling- Hammond (1998), a qualified teacher is one who was fully certified and held the equivalent of a major in the field being taught. Teacher qualification is the certificate(s) obtained as a result or evidence of training received in teaching programme. Teacher qualification could be in the form of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), first degrees, Post Graduate degrees and others in Education. Huang and Moon (2009) note that teacher qualification account for 40 to 60 percent of the variance in average of students' achievement in assessment. Akinsolu (2010) equally opines that, availability of qualified teachers determines the performance of students in schools. Ayodele (1997) observes a positive relationship between teachers' qualifications and students' academic achievement. Usman (2003) lamented that shortage of qualified teachers is responsible for the poor academic achievement observable among students. The positions of Akinsolu, Ayodele and Usman variously indicate that qualified teachers are not only indispensable elements for the academic success of students but also essential for every education reforms.

Teacher experience plays important roles in the classroom, as well as all education reforms. It fosters effectiveness, gaining of insight to the content of courses, improved service delivery and achievement among other. Kosegei, Mise, Odera and Ayugi (2013) assert that teacher experience is that rich background of service, which contributes insight and ideas to the course of teaching and learning. It is also seen by Gbore and Daramola (2013) as an aspect of teacher effectiveness, which exerts strong influence on academic achievement of students. Ilugbuis, Falola, and Daramola (2007) observed that teaching experience in schools counts significantly in the determination of students' achievement in internal and external examinations. The authors emphasized further that inexperienced teachers are easily upset and destabilized by unfamiliar situations. Teachers' experience in the context of educational reforms is yet to be examined.

Male and female in school setting are often used to describe gender and activities that are suitable to their psychological and sociological characteristics. Gender in a given society is a set of cultural expectation and assumptions that tries to dichotomized people's characteristics into males and females. Nnachi (2010) refers to gender as social roles, traditional expectations, cultural assumptions and beliefs about the nature and character of the biological differences between the human males and females. Both male and female teachers are the foremost transmitting agents of culture and morals of a society. They pedagogically impact knowledge on pupils/students at schools. The knowledge which teachers transmit is imbedded in the country's education reform documents. This is indicative that teachers exert great influence on their pupils/students. It is



worrisome that some teachers in Nigeria are unqualified and inexperienced. This unsatisfactory state of affair may have contributed to the massive failure of students in external examination. Therefore, the question that arises is: could the teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender influence their knowledge and perception of National Education reforms?

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to determine knowledge and perception of teacher's about the National Education reforms based on teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender. Specifically, the study sought determine:

- 1) the mean responses on the knowledge and perception of teachers about the objectives and goals of educational reforms with regard to teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender.
- 2) the mean responses on the knowledge and perception of teachers about the challenges of educational reforms with regard to teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

- 1) What are the mean responses on the knowledge and perception of teachers about the objectives and goals of educational reforms with regard to teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender?
- 2) What are the mean responses on the knowledge and perception of teachers about the challenges of educational reforms with regard to teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance;

- 1) Teachers' knowledge and perception about the objectives and goals of educational reforms do not significantly depend on teachers' qualification, teaching experience and gender.
- 2) Teachers' knowledge and perception of teachers about the challenges of educational reforms do not significantly depend on teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender.

Method

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The population of the study was all the primary and secondary school teachers in the Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. A sample of 330 teachers was randomly drawn from thirty (30) sampled primary and secondary schools in the education zone.

The instrument for data collection was the Teachers' knowledge and perception of the

Educational Reforms Questionnaire (TKPERQ). It was a 15-item likert-type questionnaire with four response options of; strongly agree (4point), agree (3points), disagree (2point) and strongly disagree (1point). The questionnaire sought information on the personal data of the teachers and on two dimensions of teachers' knowledge and perception about the educational reform. The instrument was validated and its reliability coefficient was estimated to be 0.72. The data collected was analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) while Analysis of Variance was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results are presented according to research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: What are the mean responses on the knowledge and perception of teachers about the objectives and goals of educational reforms with regard to teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teacher's Knowledge and perception about Objectives and Goals of Educational Reform by Qualification, Experience and Gender

Variables	N	\bar{X}	S.D
Qualification			
Master and above	105	51.44	0.88
First Degree	179	46.91	1.79
N.C.E.	46	43.41	1.32
Experience			
11 years and above	138	49.31	2.20
6 – 10 years	136	46.95	0.77
1 – 5 years	56	42.81	1.57
Gender			
Male	136	48.72	0.92
Female	194	45.77	1.78

Results in Table I indicate that teachers who possess qualification of Master Degree and above had higher mean knowledge and perception about the objectives and goals of Education reform than teachers who possessed first degrees and NCE had. Also the teachers who have teaching experience of 11 years and above had higher knowledge and perception about the Education reform. Female teachers' knowledge and perception about the education reform was less than that of their male counterparts.

Hypothesis 1: Teachers' knowledge and perception about the objectives and goals of educational reforms do not significantly depend on teachers' qualification, teaching experience and gender.



Table 2: Multiple Analysis of Variance Test Statistics of the Influence of qualification, Experience and Gender on Teachers Mean knowledge and perception Score

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3570.08	5	714.02	8.86	0.000
Intercept	367172.85	1	367172.85	4.56	0.000
Qualification	771.59	2	385.79	4.79	0.009
Experience	97.96	2	48.98	0.61	0.545
Gender	38.05	1	38.05	0.47	0.492

The results in Table 2 show that at 0.05 level of significance, teachers' qualification has significant effect while both teaching experience and gender do not have significant effect on the teachers' mean knowledge and perception about the objectives and goals of educational reforms.

Research Question Two: What are the mean responses on the knowledge and perception of teachers about the challenges of educational reforms with regard to teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teacher's knowledge and perception about the Challenges of Educational Reforms in Nigeria

Variable	N	\bar{X}	S.D
Qualification			
Master Degree and Above	105	27.35	0.53
First Degree		27.55	1.08
	179		
NCE		23.63	0.80
	46		
Experience			
11 years and above		28.63	1.32
	138		
6 – 10 years		24.44	0.46
	136		
1 – 5 years		25.41	0.94
	56		
Gender			
Male	136	25.45	0.55
Female	194	27.57	1.07

The data in Table 3 show that there was no difference between the mean knowledge and perception

of teachers who hold Master degrees or higher degrees and those with first degrees. The mean knowledge and perception of teachers with NCE was however lower. The standard deviations also varied according to qualification. Teaching experience also had effect on the mean knowledge and perception about teachers towards the challenges of educational reforms in Nigeria. There was also a difference in mean knowledge and perception about male and female teachers in favour of the females.

Hypothesis Two: Teachers' knowledge and perception of teachers about the challenges of educational reforms do not significantly depend on teachers' academic qualification, teaching experience and gender.

Table 4: Multiple Analysis of variance test Statistics of the effect of Qualification, Experience and Gender on Mean knowledge and perception of Teachers about the Challenges of Educational Reforms.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	990.11	5	198.02	6.81	0.000
Intercept	112449.57	1	112449.57	3.87	0.000
Qualification	450.99	2	225.50	7.76	0.001
Experience	2.83.06	2	141.53	4.87	0.008
Gender	246.38	1	246.38	8.48	0.004

Table 4 indicates that teachers' qualification, experience and gender had significant effect on the mean knowledge and perception of teachers about the challenges of educational reforms in Nigeria.

Discussions

The data analyzed showed that the teachers' knowledge and perception about the objectives and goals of national educational reform are low. The low mean responses of teachers as observed could be as a result of other stakeholders' neglect of the teachers during planning stage of the reform. This neglect in turn causes some teachers to put up look warm attitude towards the implementation of the reform. Thus, identification of teachers' knowledge and perception as well as participation is considered to be very important to the reform process. Lumpe, Haney and Czeniak (2000) opined that teachers' capabilities as well as their beliefs about their teaching context are the more precise agents of change.

A lot of education reform effort in the past do not recognized the place of teachers. Those who often design some education reform feels that the role of the teachers in the context of reform usually has been perceived as executing the innovative ideas of others, such as policy makers, curriculum designers and researchers (Sparks and Lucks-Horsley, 1990). It was based on this notion that Ball and Cohen (1999) argued that the role of the government should be limited to establishing a framework for reforms, for instance, by setting standards and providing useful tools such as curriculum materials. The authors posit that, reform of actual practice should be in the



hands of the professional teacher.

The findings which indicate that teachers who possess qualification of Master Degree and above had higher mean knowledge and perception about the objectives and goals of Education reform than teachers who possessed first degrees and NCE implies that qualification plays a role in the knowledge and perception of teachers about reform. Also the teachers who have teaching experience of 11 years and above had higher knowledge and perception about the Education reform. This implies experience give teachers better knowledge and perception about education reform. Female teachers' knowledge and perception about the education reform was less than that of their male counterparts indicating that male teachers hold higher opinion about education reform. The analysis also showed that teachers' qualification, experience and gender had significant influence on their knowledge and perception about the challenges of educational reforms in Nigeria. Although experience contributes to an increase in the extent of a teachers' knowledge, absence of variety of experiences within a system could lead to knowledge decreases. This phenomenon is called knowledge concentration (Beracter and Scardamalia, 1993). Consequently, it becomes difficult for someone to move into an area of experience he or she is not familiar with. For this reason, innovators often tend to consider teachers' practical knowledge conservative (Tomand Valli, 1990). However, as it is the expression of what teachers really know and do, it is a relevant source for innovators when planning and implementing educational changes.

The knowledge and perception of teachers about educational reforms was found to be moderate and also significantly depended on qualification. This finding is in line with previous researches which warn that to understand the role of teachers in educational reform, it is very important that teachers' practical knowledge and beliefs be analyzed through research. This is because, their personal knowledge and perception will exert a major influence on the way and method teachers respond to educational change. This practical knowledge and perception constitute the main focus of this article.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The result of this research indicates that more qualified teachers as opposed to less qualified teachers, have developed an integrated set of knowledge and beliefs, which are consistent with how they act in practice. Other factors such as gender and experience seem to determine, to a certain extent, the content of their practical knowledge. Consequently, in the context of educational change, several problems may arise if such factors are not taken into consideration in planning and implementation of educational reforms.

Teachers belief with respect to the new content or pedagogy may differ from the intentions of the reform innovation. There is therefore the need to employ appropriate staff development programmes, such as short term intensive workshops in upgrading teachers' knowledge and in their acceptance of the ideas of educational reforms. Teachers need to restructure their knowledge, perception and beliefs, and on the basis of teaching experiences, integrate the new information in their practical knowledge for a successful implementation of educational reform in Nigeria.

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