



Strategies for Improving Secondary School Teaching and Learning Environment in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the Strategies for Improving Secondary School Teaching and Learning Environment in Rivers State. It is a descriptive survey. The study was guided by three research questions and two hypotheses. The population was 7619 teachers in public secondary school in Rivers State. The sample size was 500 teachers that were randomly selected. An instrument was constructed and designated as “Strategies for Improving Secondary School Teaching and Learning Questionnaire” (SISSTLQ)”. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation and using z-test to analyses the hypotheses. The instrument was validated with reliability index of 0.71. The findings revealed that the quality of education at any point in time depends largely on the strategies used by teachers’ to improve students’ performance and also teachers’ should apply the use of continuous classroom assessments and effective classroom management approaches to engage students in teaching and learning activities, manage student behaviours to avoid students’ disruptive behaviors. Based on the findings it was recommended teachers should provide students with continuous classroom assessments as part of monitoring students learning progress and that government should raise fund for their teachers’ development programmes.

Keywords: Strategies, effective, efficient, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the vital tools for emancipating mankind, such that each society puts a lot of capital on it to ensure that the entire generation acquires the necessary skills, knowledge and the desired attitudes critical for future survival. However, owing to its value, the extent to which education is measured greatly anchors on examination scores, yet academic achievement also corresponds to teachers’ job performance. The increased accountability to the society through effective teaching has triggered research interest in many countries of the world. However, despite various efforts by teachers’ to improve the students learning achievements, students’ performance in academics remain poor (Annah & Dorothy,2015). Without undertaking interventions, the trend is likely to continue being witnessed in secondary schools. This raises great concern to education stakeholders including school administrators, teachers, students, parents and policy makers.

Education is considered as one of the most promising paths for individuals to realize better and more productive lives (Rok, 2011). The interest attached to education is a confirmation for the increased need for quality human resource and increased accountability by stakeholders for student learning in many countries of the world. Secondary education level enables students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes, which, enables them to develop as holistic individual in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains (Rok, 2012).

Teaching in secondary schools for example, has been criticized as ineffective in preparing competent individuals (Bedi and Sharma, 2006 in Davidson, 2006). Secondary school students are claimed to finish school as unprepared individuals who fail to demonstrate competencies in work and life and hence

become a burden on their societies. Teaching and learning in secondary schools are also claimed to produce only temporary knowledge and skills that are used only in answering examinations (Malekela, 2000; Wedgwood, 2006). In addition, teachers are accused of devoting less attention in their teaching to conceptual rather than procedural knowledge, which further leads to memorization of facts rather than concept meaning formation (Wedgwood, 2007). Students in secondary schools, therefore, learn superficial knowledge and the necessary work and life skills are left unattended (Sumra and Rajani, 2006). Currently, the problem of effective teaching and learning has been the most persistent and thorny issues militating against secondary school ability to maintain existing services in Rivers State. The poor achievements in examinations among secondary school students in Rivers state reflect this superficial and temporary knowledge. Because of the low grades they score, a majority of the students cannot manage to join the upper levels of education. A teacher must be a highly versatile, sensitive person capable of assisting a child in her individual development, her increasing self-awareness and the establishment of her cultural identity. At the same time, that person must be capable of working with others, communicating with the most diverse layers of the population, expressing her viewpoint and participating in the processes through which democratic values are asserted in our society. New forms and technologies for the basic and further training of teachers, enabling them to develop their individual potential and the necessary personal and social qualities, must, therefore, be sought.

Today, basic training cannot provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they will need all their lives. Motivation, self-assignment, use of ICT and supervision etc is now seen as a new strategic. It confronts teachers with new challenges, as they must be capable of expressing their learning needs for each period of their professional development. The system of training, motivation and particularly of refresher training and further training must be emphasized on the whole in such a manner as to provide flexible and timely assistance to teachers in the realization of their learning needs. It is the above issues that inform this study which intends to investigate the strategies for improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of education in a society among other things remains to ensure the production of an individual into a sound, effective and efficient citizen. More so, it is imperative that teachers are not given the enabling environment such as timely training, provision of adequate instructional materials and motivation, proper psychological view of student. Meanwhile, secondary school teachers over the years has been poorly motivated which may have possible caused the drastic students' poor performance and which have triggered a national debate issue. The government has failed on their part to establish adequate lasting measures for improving teaching and learning in public secondary school. However, most of the teachers have not been sent for trainings and are not provided with incentive, salaries, allowances etc. as a result of these, there is serious laxity among the teachers in preparing the necessary teaching documents, such as schemes of work, lesson plans and lesson notes. Moreover, it has also been observed that most teachers are irregular in their places of work, supervision of school activities are inadequate and learners are insufficiently attended to, as most of the teachers feel demotivated. This study therefore sought to investigate the strategies for improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.

Purpose of the study

The main aim of the study is to investigate the Strategies for Improving Secondary School Teaching and Learning Environment in Rivers State. However, the specific objectives include:

- 1) To examine the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers state
- 2) To examine the influence of students' assessments in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.
- 3) To examine the influence of teachers' development programmes in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers state

Research Question

- 1) What are the effects of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers state?
- 2) What are the influence of students’ assessments in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State?
- 3) What are the influence of teachers’ development programmes in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers state?

Hypotheses

Ho1: there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.

Ho2: there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of students’ assessments in improving secondary school teaching and environment in Rivers State.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. In this design, opinions of individuals concerning the topic under discussion were collected. This information will be generated by using the questionnaire without any manipulation of the variables.

Research question 1: *What are the effects of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching environment in Rivers State?*

Table 1: Analysis of the mean scores of male and female teachers on the effect classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.

S/N	ITEMS	Female N=300		Male, N=200		$\frac{X_1+X_2}{2}$	Decision
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD		
1.	Effective classroom management set the stage for teaching and learning in the school	2.51	.90	2.97	.91	2.74	Agree
2.	Proper management of the classroom captures students attention for effective teaching and learning	3.02	.86	2.87	.80	2.94	Agree
3.	Poor classroom management is likely to disorganize student’s academic performance	2.94	.85	2.74	.87	2.84	Agree
4.	Students involvement/cooperation in classroom activities help to create conducive learning environment	2.84	.96	2.97	.91	2.90	Agree
5	Effective classroom management enable teachers in curtailing students disruptive behaviours	2.99	.88	2.73	.98	2.86	Agree
6	Classroom management promote students responsibility for academic for work and improve academic performance of the students.	3.22	.92	2.61	.95	2.91	Agree
7	Students growth and positive development in school is influence by effective classroom management	2.86	.96	2.86	.94	2.86	Agree
8	Effective classroom management bestows in students a sense of self-control and realization of optimal learning	2.80	.91	3.15	1.01	2.97	Agree
9	Meaningful teaching and learning cannot be achieve in a classroom environment characterized by noise making and other distraction by students	3.07	.85	2.79	1.03	2.93	Agree
10	Students academic achievement can be attributed to the teachers capacity to control the classroom during learning	3.10	.81	2.95	.99	3.02	Agree
	Aggregate mean	2.93	0.89	2.86	0.93	2.89	

The data in table 1 shows that items 1-10 had weighted mean scores which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Thus were agreed to be the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.89 above the criterion mean of 2.50, it is evident that the female and male teachers in public secondary schools accepted that effective classroom management set the stage for teaching and learning in the school, proper management of the classroom captures students attention for effective teaching and learning, poor classroom management is likely to disorganize student's academic performance, students involvement/cooperation in classroom activities help to create conducive learning environment, effective classroom management enable teachers in curtailing students disruptive behaviours, classroom management promote students responsibility for academic work and improve academic performance of the students, students growth and positive development in school is influence by effective classroom management, effective classroom management bestows in students a sense of self-control and realization of optimal learning and students' academic achievement can be attributed to the teachers capacity to control the classroom during learning. All these are the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.

Research question 2: *What are the influence of students' assessment in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State?*

Table 2: Analysis of the mean scores of male and female teachers on the influence of students' assessment in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.

S/N	ITEMS	Female N=300		Male, N=200		$\frac{x_1+x_2}{2}$	Decision
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD		
11	Students assessment are tools used to track on student's performance	3.04	1.02	2.86	.91	2.95	Agree
12	Students assessment enables teachers to ascertain whether the learning goals have been achieve	3.02	.85	2.97	.98	2.99	Agree
13	Classroom assessment help teachers in making important decision about daily teaching instruction	3.13	1.09	2.91	1.05	3.02	Agree
14	Classroom assessment information assist teachers in monitoring student progress in the class	3.01	.76	2.60	1.02	2.80	Agree
15	Classroom assessment information assist teachers in interpretation of students level of performance	2.94	.97	2.58	1.05	2.76	Agree
16	Classroom assessment information give constructive feedback and improve both student learning and teaching methods	3.01	1.06	2.80	.97	2.90	Agree
17	Classroom assessment adds value to students' academic performance	3.01	1.05	2.75	.99	2.88	Agree
18	Teachers who implement well planned classroom activities are able to engage students effectively to minimize disruptive behaviours	3.13	.85	2.95	.88	3.04	Agree
	Aggregate mean	3.03	0.95	2.80	0.98	2.91	

The data in table 2 show that items 11-18 had weighted mean scores which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. Thus were agreed to be the influence of student's assessments in improving secondary school teaching environment in River State.

In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.91 above the criterion mean of 2.50, it is evident that the female and male teachers in public secondary schools accepted that students assessment are tools

used to track student's performance, students assessment enables teachers to ascertain whether the learning goals have been achieved, classroom assessment helps teachers in making important decision about daily teaching instruction, classroom assessment information assist teachers in monitoring student progress in the class, classroom assessment information assist teachers in interpretation of students level of performance, classroom assessment information give constructive feedback and improve both student learning and teaching methods, classroom assessment adds value to students' academic performance and teachers who implement well planned classroom activities are able to engage students effectively to minimize disruptive behaviours are all the influence of student's assessments in improving secondary school teaching environment in River State.

Research question 3: *What are the influence of teachers' development programmes in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers state?*

Table 3: Analysis of the mean scores of female and male teachers on the teachers' development programmes in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers state

S/ N	ITEMS	Female N=300		Male N=200		$\frac{x_1+x_2}{2}$	Decisio n
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD		
19	Teachers development initiative provides assistance to enable the teachers to be equipped with adequate knowledge for solving educational problems	2.93	.93	3.19	.70	3.06	Agree
20	Teachers teaching skills are improved through capacity building training	3.18	.80	2.66	1.07	2.92	Agree
21	Teachers classroom performance are improve at the end of orientation program	3.13	.92	2.78	1.09	2.95	Agree
22	On-the-job training improves teachers teaching method	2.98	.86	2.74	.96	2.86	Agree
23	In-service training enables teachers to adapt to new teaching technique	2.85	.97	2.72	1.07	2.78	Agree
24	Constant workshop/conference will improve teachers knowledge	2.92	1.04	2.81	1.03	2.86	Agree
25	In-service training help both old and new teachers to learn new skills and process in order to recharge their intellectual battery	3.14	.97	2.75	.93	2.94	Agree
	Aggregate mean	3.01	0.92	2.80	0.97	2.90	

The data in table 3 show that items 19-25 had weighted mean scores which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. Thus were agreed to be the influence of teachers' development programmes in improving secondary school teaching environment in Rivers state. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.90 above the criterion mean of 2.50, it evident that the female and male teachers in public secondary schools accepted that teachers development initiative provides assistance to enable the teachers to be equipped with adequate knowledge for solving educational problems, teachers teaching skills are improved through capacity building training, teachers classroom performance are improve at the end of orientation program, on-the-job training improves teachers teaching method, In-service training enables teachers to adapt to new teaching technique, constant workshop/conference will improve teachers knowledge and In-service training help both old and new teachers to learn new skills and process in order to recharge their intellectual battery are the influence of teachers' development programmes in improving secondary school teaching environment in Rivers state.

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment.

Table 4: z-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State.

Category of Institution	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	z-cal	z-crit	Level of significant	Decision
Female	300	2.93	0.89	498	0.4	± 1.96	0.05	Ho is retained
Male	200	3.86	0.93					

A critical look at the table 4 shows a summary of means, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching. The z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypothesis stood at 0.4 while the critical z-test value stood at ± 1.96 , using 498 degree of freedom at 0.5 alpha level of significance. Since the z-cal is less than the z-crit value, the null hypothesis (Ho) is therefore upheld. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching environment in Rivers State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of student's assessments in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in River State.

Table 5: z-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of student's assessments in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in River State.

Category of Institution	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	z-cal	z-crit	Level of significant	Decision
Female	300	3.03	0.95	498	0.7	± 1.96	0.05	Ho is retained
Male	200	2.80	0.98					

A critical look at the table 5 shows a summary of means, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the influence of student's assessments in improving secondary school teaching environment in River State. The z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypothesis stood at 0.7 while the critical z-test value stood at ± 1.96 , using 498 degree of freedom at 0.5 alpha level of significance. Since the z-cal is less than the z-crit value, the null hypothesis (Ho) is therefore upheld. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of student's assessments in improving secondary school teaching environment in River State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that effective classroom management set the stage for teaching and learning in the school, proper management of the classroom captures students attention for effective teaching and learning, poor classroom management is likely to disorganize student's academic performance, students involvement/cooperation in classroom activities help to create conducive learning environment, effective classroom management enable teachers in curtailing students disruptive behaviours, classroom management promote students responsibility for academic for work and improve academic performance

of the students, students growth and positive development in school is influence by effective classroom management, effective classroom management bestows in students a sense of self-control and realization of optimal learning and students' academic achievement can be attributed to the teachers capacity to control the classroom during learning are the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in Rivers State. This finding agrees with the view of Umoren (2010),that the concept of classroom management is broader than the notion of students control and discipline, it include all the things teachers must do in the classroom to foster students' academic involvement and cooperation in classroom activities to create conducive learning environment. A corresponding research question from hypothesis tested showed a no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the effect of classroom management in improving secondary school teaching and learning. This may be as a result of rigours testing. However, the findings imply that the variables identified are needed to improve classroom management in secondary school teaching and learning.

The study revealed that students assessment are tools used to track on student's performance, students assessment enables teachers to ascertain whether the learning goals have been achieved, classroom assessment help teachers in making important decision about daily teaching instruction, classroom assessment information assist teachers in monitoring student progress in the class, classroom assessment information assist teachers in interpretation of students level of performance, classroom assessment information give constructive feedback and improve both student learning and teaching methods, classroom assessment adds value to students' academic performance and teachers who implement well planned classroom activities are able to engage students effectively to minimize disruptive behaviours are all the influence of student's assessments in improving secondary school teaching environment in River State. This finding agrees with the view of Flanagan, Mascolo, and Hardy (2009) on the advantages of using standardized testing, any form of testing used in school should provide information about the student or groups of students. A corresponding research question from hypothesis tested, found no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of students' assessments in improving secondary school teaching and learning environment in River State. This may be as a result of rigours testing. However, the findings imply that the variables identified are needed to enhance student's assessments in secondary school teaching and learning environment in River State.

The study revealed that teachers development initiative provides assistance to enable the teachers to be equipped with adequate knowledge for solving educational problems, teachers teaching skills are improved through capacity building training, teachers classroom performance are improve at the end of orientation program, on-the-job training improves teachers teaching method, In-service training enables teachers to adapt to new teaching technique, constant workshop/conference will improve teachers knowledge and In-service training help both old and new teachers to learn new skills and process in order to recharge their intellectual battery are the influence of teachers' development programmes in improving secondary school teaching environment in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

The quality of education at any point in time depends largely on the strategies used by teachers' to improve students' performance. Also teachers' should apply the use of continuous classroom assessments and effective classroom management approaches to engage students in teaching and learning activities, manage student behaviours to avoid students' disruptive behaviors. The provision of various teachers' development programmes will result to effective teaching and learning and relevant skills needed for effective academic activities in secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

- Teachers should provide students with continuous classroom assessments as part of monitoring students learning progress. This is because giving assignments as part of assessments remains critical part of teaching strategies.
- Government should raise fund for their teachers' development programmes. This will help to enhance the knowledge and skills of the teachers' professional growth.
- Government should employ competence and qualified teachers. Shortage of teachers in secondary schools affects students' performance.

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