

**TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES REQUIRED FOR
INNOVATIVE ECONOMICS INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY IN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN EBONYI STATE**

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Abstract

This study focused on teachers' professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools. The study was carried out in Ebonyi State. The need to identify teachers' professional competencies for effective instruction delivery that could enhance students' performance in Economics necessitated the study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The design of the study was a survey research design. The sample size of the study was 177 respondents which represents 50% of the entire population and was obtained using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection for the study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers with the titled Economics Teachers' Professional Competence Questionnaire" (ETPCQ). The instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.72. The analysis of data collected was done using mean and standard deviation while the t-test statistics were employed to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The results of the findings revealed that good knowledge of the subject matter and making lessons student-centred among others constitute teacher professional competence. The result of the findings further showed that professionally competent teachers facilitate to a high extent learning of Economics

in secondary schools. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government should ensure that only professionally qualified and competent teachers are employed to teach Economics and other school subjects. Also, there should be regular training and retraining of teachers to enable them to acquire the needed skill and competence necessary for effective Economics instruction delivery. This will enhance students' academic achievement.

Keywords: Teacher, Professional, Competence, Innovative, Economics, Instruction Delivery

Introduction

Teachers' professional competence no doubt, is very crucial as it determines teachers' job performance. Professional competence is particularly concerned with having enough skill, knowledge and attributes needed for organizational success. Professional competence in education as obtained in other fields of endeavour, has to do with possessing qualities, strengths, skills and abilities required for instructional delivery and management of educational resources. In practice, professional competence for educators encompasses an extremely broad range of having appropriate knowledge of the subject matter, being proficient in communication and ensuring balanced classroom management and control. Buttressing this, Agwu (2005) remarked that the Banjo Commission of Western Nigeria underlined the importance of what they considered to be the three elements of teaching as a thorough knowledge of the subject matter, the professional skill to handle a child's interest in what is being taught and a good moral character. The ability to select appropriate teaching objectives, pedagogy and instructional aides also depends on the teacher's professional competence.

A teacher in this regard, refers to any individual who engages in the act of teaching with the sole aim of causing others to learn. The teacher does this by helping the learner to acquire some desirable skills and knowledge which in turn results to a change in behaviour. A teacher can also be said to mean anyone that has acquired the special skill required to effectively impart knowledge and is actually involved in the teaching career. In other words, a teacher must be one that has undergone professional training in a certified institution of learning. With regard to this, Agwu in Uwem (2013) noted that teaching without equivocation, is a discipline, a profession that requires intensive training and practice in order to achieve proficiency both in the theoretical and practical dimensions especially in a classroom setting. The teacher is the individual who carries out the activity of teaching, he engages in the act of causing people to learn. The teacher further attempts to help learners acquire or change some skills, attitudes, and knowledge and creates avenues to influence desirable changes in their behaviour (Ikpe, 2005).

In general, there are usually some acceptable characteristics of occupations which are generally classified as professional. The following characteristics are among the most commonly acknowledged as vital: a long period of specialized preparation; activities that are predominantly intellectual and its members possess specialized knowledge and skill; regarded as a life career; relatively high standards for admission; represented by an effective organization or organizations; a broad range of autonomy and in a large measure sets its own standards; high priority for service as opposed to personal gain; emphasizes self-improvement and growth in service; dedication to the extension of knowledge in the area of its concern; requires a license or certificate to practice and bases its practice on clearly defined ethical principles (Agwu, 2005).

Judged in light of the above characteristics, Agwu (2005) further asked if teaching in Nigeria can really be classified as a profession. He explained that there is however no consensus as to wholly accepting teaching as a profession in Nigeria. To those who do not see teaching as a profession in Nigeria, a few reasons have been advanced. All professionals are expected to possess competence in a well-defined field. This is an important element which differentiates a professional from a layman and makes the latter depend on the former for advice and guidance. But one corollary of the diffuse nature of a teacher's role is that his competence cannot be easily discerned. Teachers mediate in various fields and the common denominator in all instructional situations is the method of teaching.

In the positive direction, some view teaching as a profession. According to Nweke in Ubanatu (2016), teaching by implication has an epistemological foundation as a science of the search for knowledge or truth guided by the fundamental principle of right thinking and ensures precision, clearness and accuracy in our thought process. Teaching is a strategy which guides students to secure a certain amount of quality experience which promotes maximum development of potential. This underscores the core values of teacher professional competencies which are geared towards the improvement of knowledge and development of skills in the learners. Besides, the quality of education and training is the highest concern of parents, the government and society at large. High levels of knowledge, competencies and skills are considered to be the very basic conditions for active citizenship, employment and social cohesion (Ayeni, 2011; Ibiyomi, 2012). Several factors could serve as determinants of teachers' professional competence. These include the ability to get one to learn, create varied learning experiences, encourage learners to ask questions, good knowledge of teaching methodologies and the belief that every child irrespective of all odds, can learn. Lending credence to this, Ede, Oleabhie and Modebelu (2016) stressed that a competent Economics teacher must be highly knowledgeable on current socio-economic issues of his immediate environment and the world at large. In other words, he should be competent enough to interpret and analyze the economic principles and

policies of any economy he finds himself. A competent teacher should also possess the skills and abilities to carry every learner along during the teaching-learning process without much consideration of age, sex, socioeconomic background and individual abilities. It, therefore, follows that the appointment of school teachers based on professional competence is an effective strategy for academic excellence. Corroborating this further, Uzodimma (2014) emphasized putting in place the type of teaching personnel with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that predispose them to future requirements.

However, recent development in the educational sector concerning the quality of its products stands as a testimony against teachers' professional competencies in Nigeria. In particular, there is public outcry over poor performances of students in both internal and external examinations in most of the school subjects Economics inclusive. This ugly trend is widely reported across the nation by examination bodies such as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) among others. This trend has again raised questions about the role of education in Nigeria as it threatens Nigeria's commitment to the values that sustain a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a great and dynamic economy and a strong, united and self-reliant nation; which have been entrusted into the hands of the teachers for onward transmission to the students.

Moreover, there seems to be a consensus among parents, teachers and administrators that though anyone can be called to teach, not everyone can teach some subjects due to the complex nature of such subjects. Economics happens to fall in the category of a subject not designed for all-comers. This perhaps, could be attributed to the fact that Economics involves abstract and deductive reasoning as well as aspects of Mathematics which generally creates mathematical phobia in both non-professionally trained Economics educators and learners. For the teaching and learning of Economics to be effective, interesting stimulating and result-oriented, Economics teachers must in addition to possessing adequate knowledge of Economics concepts, be committed and have experience in classroom management and control. Also, the variations in teachers' skills and potential for effective service delivery and classroom management call for the proper selection and employment of qualified teachers (Oko, Agbo & Obayi, 2018).

Introducing innovation in Economics instruction delivery requires a professionally trained teacher. Myriads of studies acknowledge the fact that there seems to be a shortage of professionally trained and certified teachers (Oleabhiele, 2017; Ubanatu, 2016 & Oko, 2021). In line with this, Kyrian (2012) observed that effective instruction delivery is enacted and anchored on the knowledge that one of the objectives of teacher education is to produce highly motivated, creative, conscientious and efficient teachers that can effectively handle the management of students and staff

at all levels of the educational system. Oko and Inya (2019) pointed out that this objective to some extent has not been achieved due to the failure of teachers to acquire the required competence and skills for effective instructional delivery. Effective professionalization of teaching will enable teachers to aim at the objectives and goals of the education system. There must be a radical shift from traditional education practices to innovative practices of teaching and learning. Thus, this study focused on teachers' professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' professional competencies required for innovative economics instruction delivery in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Specifically, the study:

1. ascertained the teacher professional competencies required for innovative Economics instructional delivery in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
2. investigated the extent professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the teacher professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?
2. To what extent do professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance also guided the study.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate learning in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is located in the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. It is mostly dominated by the Igbo-speaking tribe of Nigeria. It is bounded in the North by Benue State, in the East by Cross-River State, in the South by Abia State and in the West by Enugu State. The population of the study comprised all the 132 Economics teachers and 221 principals in the public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. A simple random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of 177 respondents which consists of 66 teachers and 111 principals representing 50% of the entire population.

The instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled “Economics Teachers’ Professional Competence Questionnaire” (ETPCQ) designed by the researchers to elicit information from the respondents based on the research questions that guided the study. The instrument was face validated by two experts; two in Economics education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation; all in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. These experts vetted the items in terms of sentence structure, clarity, and adequacy of the content instrument. The views of these experts helped the researcher to correct the items in terms of sentence structure and adequacy with respect to the research questions that guided the study. Based on this, three items out of the 24 items developed were dropped leaving 21 for the study. Moreover, the four-point response scale questionnaire was trial-tested to a small group of teachers numbering 30 outside the study area. Data collected from these teachers in the trial testing were used to compute the reliability coefficient using Cronbach Alpha. A reliability coefficient of .72 was obtained, which implied a high internal consistency of the instrument.

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance using the t-test statistic. The decision rule for accepting results from each research question was 2.50. Scores from 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while scores below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed. Also, scores from 2.50 and above were regarded as high extent while scores below 2.50 were regarded as low extent. The null hypotheses were accepted if the t-calculated values were less than the t-critical value and were rejected if the t-calculated values were greater than the t-critical.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the teachers’ professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Mean responses of Economics principals and teachers on professional competencies required for innovative instruction delivery

S/N	ITEM FOCUS	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1.	Good knowledge of the subject and subject matter	3.51	0.61	Agreed
2.	Improved confidence and skills in matching teaching and learning strategies	3.20	0.59	Agreed
3.	Helping students develop new knowledge directly related to the subject	3.32	0.76	Agreed
4.	Promoting reflective teaching and thinking	3.16	0.69	Agreed
5.	Making the lesson student-centred	3.41	0.51	Agreed
6.	Assessing the students regularly and timely	2.42	0.45	Disagreed
7.	Effective in applying instructional resources	3.22	0.52	Agreed
8.	Always ready to improvise teaching and learning aids	2.93	0.62	Agreed
9.	detecting easily students' preferred teaching strategy	3.44	0.81	Agreed
10.	Detecting easily the problems of the students	3.35	0.77	Agreed
11.	Giving room for students to ask questions	2.80	0.61	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.16	0.61	Agreed

Data in table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed on the questionnaire items on teacher professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery. This can be deduced from items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 which had mean scores above 2.50 mean cut-off mark earlier set as agreed with the exception of item 6 which disagreed that assessing the students regularly and timely is a professional competence required for innovative Economics instruction delivery. Nonetheless, the grand mean of 3.16 with a standard deviation value of 0.61 indicates that the respondents were homogenous in their responses on what constitutes teacher professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Table 2: Analysis t-test on significant difference in the mean scores of principals and teachers on teacher professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction.

Group	Mean	SD	N	Df	t-calculated	t-critical	Significant
Principals	3.16	0.61	111	175	1.00	1.96	Accepted
Teachers	3.09	0.63	66				

Data in Table 2 revealed that the calculated value of 1.00 was less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and at 175 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of principals and Economics teachers on professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery in secondary schools.

Research Question 2

To what extent do professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 3: Mean response of Economics principals and teachers on the extent professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate learning of Economics

S/N	ITEM FOCUS	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
12.	Facilitates concentration among students	3.18	0.65	High Extent
13.	Encourages self-directed learning	3.36	0.45	High Extent
14.	Makes teaching student-centred	3.29	0.71	High Extent
15.	Helps students develop new knowledge directly related to the subject	3.41	0.69	High Extent
16.	Effectively applies instructional resources	2.88	0.55	High Extent
17.	Detects easily the problems of the students	3.32	0.66	High Extent
18.	Fosters students' cooperation	2.22	0.63	Low Extent
19.	Harnesses the energy and interest of students for academic advantage	3.23	0.76	High Extent
20.	Inspires students for healthy academic competition	2.98	0.74	High Extent
21.	Manages resources efficiently	2.36	0.88	Low Extent
	Grand Mean	3.10	0.67	High Extent

Data in Table 3 reveal that the respondents agreed to a high extent on the questionnaire items that professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate

learning of Economics. This can be deduced from items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 which had mean scores above 2.50 mean cut-off mark earlier set as agreed with the exception of items 18 and 21 which disagreed to a low extent that professionally competent teachers foster students' cooperation and manage resources efficiently. Nonetheless, the grand mean of 3.10 with a standard deviation value of 0.67 indicates that the respondents were homogenous in their responses that professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate the learning of Economics in secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate learning in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Table 4: Analysis t-test on significant difference in the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent professionally competent teachers facilitate learning of Economics

Group	Mean	SD	N	Df	t-calculated	t-critical	Significant
Principals	3.10	0.67	111	175	1.00	1.96	Accepted
Teachers	3.05	0.62	66				

Data in Table 4 indicate that the calculated value of 1.00 was less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and at 175 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate learning was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of principals and Economics teachers on the extent professionally competent Economics teachers facilitate the learning of Economics in secondary schools.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of data analyses presented in Table 1 indicated that the respondents agreed that all the items except item 6 that is, assessing the students regularly and timely, are teacher professional competencies required for innovative Economics instruction delivery. This highlights the fact that possessing professional competence will enhance teacher effectiveness. This finding is in line with Ede, Oleabehle and Modebelu (2016) who noted that the characteristics or qualities possessed by a teacher have a great influence on the quality of teaching or knowledge the students imbibe. The finding also agreed with Anaobi (2016) who posited that educational qualification plays an important role in the management of educational resources and enhances good relationships among staff. An Economics teacher is expected to have good qualities that will make teaching and learning effective. This is because teachers are the major implementers of the school curriculum and education programmes and as such, must

set up learning opportunities aimed at enabling learners to acquire the desired knowledge, skill, and attitudes.

The result of the data analysis presented in Table 2 also revealed that the respondents agreed to a high extent that professionally competent teachers facilitate the learning of Economics. The findings agreed with Uwem (2013) who reported that professional competence is demonstrated by the learner's attitude, knowledge of the subject matter and the level of skill acquired after a specified period of teaching and learning. Also, Oko and Inya (2019) earlier found that effective teaching is positively related to teacher factors such as teacher qualification, job satisfaction, training and welfare. The finding further corroborated the finding of Udosen (2014) which revealed that principals and teachers with higher teaching qualifications and experiences significantly impact their staff and students' academic achievement.

In addition, the results of the hypotheses presented in Tables three and four established that there are no significant differences between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on professional competencies required for innovative instruction delivery by teachers; and the extent professionally competent teachers facilitate learning of Economics in secondary schools. These collaborate with the assertion of Oko, Agbo & Obayi, (2018) that principals and teachers understood the attributes of competent teachers, their capabilities and their influence on effective instruction delivery in secondary schools.

Conclusion

The study clearly identified the teacher's professional competencies required for innovative instruction delivery and also showed that professionally competent teachers facilitate learning. It, therefore, follows that efforts should be made to ensure that only professionally qualified and competent teachers are given the opportunity to handle secondary school classroom Economics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

1. Government should ensure that only professionally qualified and competent teachers are employed to teach Economics in secondary schools.
2. Economics teachers should be regularly trained and re-trained in order to enhance their teaching capabilities.

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