

The Need for Enhancement of Teachers' Pedagogical Skills for the Achievement of Quality Education in Private Schools in Sokoto State Nigeria

Usman Abubakar

Federal College of Education Gidan Madi, Sokoto, Nigeria

Correspondent : usman4realonline@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the challenges faced by private school teachers in Sokoto State, Nigeria, and advocates for targeted interventions to enhance pedagogical skills. The complexities of the modern educational landscape, coupled with unique challenges faced by private schools, necessitate a comprehensive approach to pedagogical skills enhancement. Examining the context of private schools in Sokoto State, the paper underscores the need for pedagogical excellence and its profound implications for student outcomes, classroom dynamics, and overall educational development. It argues that private schools, often prioritizing academic excellence, benefit from teachers equipped with diverse and effective instructional strategies. However, the study identifies significant challenges faced by private school teachers in Sokoto State. These challenges include restricted access to professional development, outdated teaching methodologies, insufficient support systems, inadequate compensation, diverse student populations, and limited access to technology. Each challenge is discussed in detail, highlighting its impact on the overall quality of education. In conclusion, the paper calls for a concerted effort to address these challenges and enhance pedagogical skills. It suggests evidence-based solutions, such as online platforms for professional development, comprehensive teacher training programs, mentorship initiatives, compensation and recognition programs, training for inclusive education, and exploring opportunities for technology access. The study concludes by emphasizing the transformative potential of investing in the professional development of private school teachers to realize quality education and holistic student development in Sokoto State.

Keywords: Teacher Enhancement, Pedagogical Skills, Quality Education, Classroom Management



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INTRODUCTION

Education stands as the bedrock upon which societies build their future, empowering individuals with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities. In the context of Sokoto State, Nigeria, private schools emerge as key players in the educational arena, catering to a diverse selection of students from various backgrounds. These institutions bear the responsibility of nurturing young minds and preparing them to face the challenges of an ever-changing world. Central to the success of any educational system is the competence and proficiency of its teaching workforce. As aptly noted by Hattie & Donoghue (2016), the quality of education cannot surpass the quality of its teachers,

emphasizing the pivotal role educators play in shaping the educational landscape. In essence, teachers serve as the hub that connects educational aspirations to tangible outcomes, making their continuous professional development imperative for the realization of high-quality education in private schools across Sokoto State.

The complexities of the modern educational landscape demand teachers to be not only knowledgeable in their subject matter but also skilled in pedagogical approaches that engage, inspire, and challenge students. The private schools in Sokoto State, similar to their counterparts worldwide, confront unique challenges that impede the seamless delivery of quality education. The shortage of resources, limited access to cutting-edge teaching methodologies, and a dearth of opportunities for professional growth create a daunting scenario for educators. Consequently, this paper seeks to delve into the heart of these challenges, analyzing the multifaceted issues faced by teachers in private schools within Sokoto State. By dissecting these challenges, this paper aims to underscore the pressing need for targeted interventions that focus on enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills.

As the world witnesses rapid advancements in technology, globalization, and diverse learning needs, the role of teachers extends beyond the traditional classroom boundaries. Teachers are not merely disseminators of knowledge; they are mentors, facilitators, and guides who shape the future citizens of the world. To fulfill this multifaceted role effectively, teachers must possess a diverse set of skills, including but not limited to, understanding diverse learning styles, employing innovative instructional strategies, and leveraging technology to enhance learning experiences. Thus, this paper advocates for a comprehensive approach to pedagogical skills enhancement, encompassing not only traditional teaching methodologies but also the integration of modern technology into the practices.

In the subsequent sections, this paper will delve deeper into the challenges faced by teachers in private schools in Sokoto State, shedding light on the intricacies of the issues at hand. Moreover, it will explore evidence-based strategies and practices that can be employed to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills. By addressing these challenges and offering viable solutions, this paper seeks to contribute to the discourse on improving the quality of education in private schools in Sokoto State, thereby fostering an environment where students can thrive, learn, and ultimately contribute meaningfully to society.

Conceptual Clarifications

For comprehension, the keywords in this study need a brief operational conceptualization.

Concept of Teacher Enhancement

Professional development in the education sector, commonly known as teacher enhancement, is a comprehensive concept designed to elevate teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and instructional practices. This ongoing process empowers educators to refine their teaching methodologies, stay abreast of emerging educational trends, and effectively address the diverse needs of their students (Ingersoll & Strong, n.d.). At its core, teacher enhancement serves as a catalyst for shaping effective

teaching practices and enhancing student outcomes. The multifaceted nature of this concept revolves around the continual improvement of teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and instructional approaches. By doing so, educators are better equipped to adapt to the ever-evolving landscape of education, ensuring they remain at the forefront of innovative teaching strategies (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In essence, teacher enhancement is not merely a one-time event but a dynamic and ongoing process that cultivates a responsive and adaptable teaching force. Through this approach, educators can consistently meet the diverse needs of their students, fostering an environment that promotes both effective teaching and positive student outcomes.

Concept of Pedagogical Skills

Building upon the foundation of teacher enhancement, the concept of pedagogical skills emerges as the cornerstone of effective education, playing an important role in crafting meaningful learning experiences for students. Their significant impact on student achievement and engagement is underscored by research (Hanushek et al., 2019). Pedagogical skills refer to the specialized knowledge and techniques that educators employ to facilitate effective learning experiences for students (Jiao et al., 2023). Through the application of diverse pedagogical techniques, educators have the power to cultivate interactive and participatory learning environments, fostering active student engagement with the subject matter (Major et al., 2021). At its core, pedagogical skills encompass the specialized knowledge and techniques educators employ to facilitate optimal learning experiences (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). These skills are crucial components of the teaching profession, covering a diverse range of instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and assessment methods. Educators with strong pedagogical skills can adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of different learners, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience (Brookfield, 2015). These skills are essential for meeting educational goals, enhancing student outcomes, and ensuring the overall success of the learning process. Teachers armed with robust pedagogical skills are not only equipped to navigate the complexities of the classroom but are also poised to make a lasting impact on the educational journey of their students.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is a critical aspect of effective teaching, encompassing various strategies and practices aimed at creating a conducive learning environment and regulating student behavior. Research has shown that effective classroom management positively impacts student behavior, academic engagement, and overall school adjustment (Aldrup et al., 2018). It involves implementing clear rules, smooth transitions between activities, and establishing a positive learning climate (Decristan et al., 2015). Furthermore, classroom management is not only about controlling student behavior but also about creating a positive learning climate, selecting appropriate instructional goals, and using the curriculum effectively (Matthew, 2022). Moreover, the role of teachers in classroom management is crucial, as their social support and effective management practices are related to students' achievement, interest, and self-concept across different subject domains (Aldrup et al., 2018). Teachers' knowledge of classroom management, including student ownership, conflict resolution, and restitution, has been identified as essential conduits to enhance instructional delivery (Ayebo & Assuah, 2017). Additionally, understanding students well and

establishing healthy communication with them are highlighted as key factors in achieving effective classroom management (Yikilmaz & Alincak, 2021).

METHOD

The concept of instructional methodologies covers a wide range of approaches and strategies aimed at facilitating effective learning experiences. One such approach that has gained attention in higher education is the flipped classroom model, which has been shown to engage students more effectively in the learning process (Jeong et al., 2016). Additionally, nontraditional instructional methodologies have been found to foster learning through discovery and collaboration, encouraging students to be active and self-directed in their learning (Orique & McCarthy, 2015). Furthermore, instructional methodologies involve the process of identifying and using relevant instructional methods and approaches to attain instructional objectives (Sikhosana, 2022). These methodologies are crucial in shaping the learning experience and can significantly impact the effectiveness of educational interventions (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2017). Additionally, the integration of active methodologies emphasizes the significance of student involvement in the learning process, highlighting the importance of instructional practices in achieving positive student outcomes.

Evaluation Techniques

Evaluation techniques play a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness of instructional methodologies and learning outcomes. Objectives. The selection of appropriate evaluation methods is essential to ensure that the instructional strategies are meeting the desired result. It plays a pivotal role in assessing the effectiveness of instructional methodologies and learning outcomes (Stevens & Levi, 2023). They enable educators to answer fundamental questions about programs, policies, and interventions, such as whether they work, why they work, for whom they work best, and how to make them work better (LaVelle & Donaldson, 2015). Additionally, evaluation techniques are essential for measuring teacher effectiveness, understanding the unique roles and responsibilities of educators, and ensuring the quality of education in both general and special education settings (Sledge & Pazey, 2013); Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Concept of Quality Education

Expanding the discussion to the broader context of education, the concept of quality education emerges as a multifaceted endeavour, incorporating dimensions crucial for the holistic development of individuals. According to the World Bank (2018), it extends beyond traditional boundaries to encompass the cultivation of critical thinking skills and the practical application of knowledge in real-world contexts. The World Bank further defines quality education as inclusive, equitable, and effective in preparing learners with the essential knowledge, skills, and competencies

needed for active participation in society. This preparation includes instilling the capacity for independent learning, enabling individuals to adapt and remain relevant in the face of a rapidly changing global landscape. Building upon this perspective, UNESCO (2015) expands the understanding of quality education by asserting that it surpasses mere academic achievement. Quality education, as articulated by UNESCO, seeks to foster cognitive, emotional, and social growth in learners. It aspires to empower individuals with the necessary tools for critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, thereby equipping them to navigate the complexities of an ever-changing world. In essence, quality education becomes a dynamic force, shaping individuals into well-rounded contributors to society, capable of confronting challenges with resilience and innovation.

Private Schools

The concept of private schools has a rich historical foundation in the realm of education, displaying variations across diverse countries and regions. In this academic exploration, we will delve into the concept, drawing upon scholarly perspectives to elucidate its essence. According to Srivastava (2013) private schools, also known as independent or non-governmental schools are educational institutions characterized by private funding and operation (Srivastava, 2013). Unlike their public counterparts, these schools rely on sources such as tuition fees, endowments, and donations. Expanding on this view, Smith and Joshi (2016) describe private schools as all formal schools that are not public, and may be founded, owned, managed, and financed by actors other than the state. This definition underscores the autonomy of private schools, emphasizing their independence from government funding. In essence, private schools, therefore, are independent educational institutions that are privately funded and operated, distinct from public schools. Their reliance on private funding mechanisms, as highlighted by Srivastava and echoed by Smith and Joshi, underscores the multifaceted nature of these institutions. This academic exploration provides a foundation for understanding the nuanced characteristics of private schools and their place in the broader landscape of education.

Pedagogical Excellence in Nigerian Private Schools

The enhancement of pedagogical skills emerges as a cornerstone in the pursuit of educational excellence, profoundly impacting the quality of education in Nigeria. Acknowledging the paramount importance of pedagogical proficiency, this discussion delves into the multifaceted implications of refining teachers' instructional abilities, underscoring its influence on student learning outcomes, classroom dynamics, and the overarching educational setting.

The enhancement of pedagogical skills in the context of private schools in Nigeria carries profound implications for the quality of education and the overall development of students. Research by Franklin and Harrington (2019) emphasizes that improved pedagogical skills positively correlate with enhanced student learning outcomes (Franklin & Harrington, 2019). In private school settings, where academic excellence is often a top priority, the adoption of diverse and effective teaching methods becomes imperative. Teachers equipped with a repertoire of instructional strategies, including student-centered approaches, differentiated instruction, and interactive learning experiences, are better positioned to engage students deeply, leading to increased knowledge retention and academic achievement.

Moreover, Frederick-Williams (2019) assert that student-centered approaches and differentiated instruction cater to various learning styles, abilities, and interests. In the diverse and often heterogeneous classrooms of private schools, where students may come from varied backgrounds, these pedagogical approaches become crucial (Frederick-Williams, 2019). The implementation of such strategies contributes not only to higher academic performance but also to a deeper understanding of the subject matter, fostering a holistic and inclusive learning environment.

Beyond academic achievement, pedagogical skills play a pivotal role in nurturing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among students. Facione (2015) argues that engaging teaching methods, such as inquiry-based learning and collaborative activities, stimulate students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information (Facione, 2015). In the context of private schools in Nigeria, where the emphasis on holistic education is pronounced, the development of critical thinking skills is instrumental. These skills are transferable beyond the classroom, preparing students for the complexities they may face in their future careers and societal roles.

Effective classroom management is another crucial aspect influenced by enhanced pedagogical skills. Brophy (2006) posits that engaging instructional techniques not only capture students' attention but also contribute to a positive and conducive learning environment. In private schools, where maintaining a positive reputation is paramount, skilful classroom management reduces behavioural issues and disruptions, fostering a sense of security and trust among students (Brophy, n.d.). Emmer and Sabornie (2015) further argue that well-managed classrooms encourage active participation and open communication, allowing educators to focus on delivering high-quality instruction and individualized support (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015).

The role of pedagogically skilled teachers extends beyond immediate academic goals; they serve as inspirations for lifelong learning. Faulkner and Latham (2016) work on the growth mindset highlights the importance of fostering a passion for knowledge and continuous self-improvement. In private schools, where a commitment to excellence is often embedded in their mission, educators with a growth mindset instil in students the value of curiosity, exploration, and intellectual curiosity (Faulkner & Latham, 2016). These habits transcend the classroom, empowering students to become self-directed learners actively engaged in critical inquiry, adaptable to evolving challenges in their personal and professional lives.

By acknowledging the interconnectedness of pedagogical skills with student outcomes, critical thinking abilities, classroom management, and lifelong learning, private schools can make informed decisions regarding the professional development of their educators. In doing so, these institutions contribute not only to the immediate academic success of their students but also to the cultivation of responsible, adaptable, and intellectually curious individuals poised to make positive contributions to society.

Despite the potential benefits, it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges that teachers in private schools in Sokoto State may face that significantly impact their ability to provide quality education to their students. These challenges, deeply rooted in the socioeconomic context of the state, create barriers to effective teaching and learning experiences, hampering the overall educational outcomes in private schools.

Challenges Faced by Private School Teachers

In the pursuit of providing quality education, private school teachers in Sokoto State encounter a myriad of challenges. While recognizing the potential benefits of private education, it is imperative to address the obstacles that impede effective teaching and learning experiences, thereby influencing overall educational outcomes in these institutions.

- I. A primary impediment faced by private school teachers in Sokoto State is the restricted access to professional development opportunities. Extensive research underscores the significance of continuous professional development for educators to stay abreast of contemporary teaching methodologies (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Financial constraints and a lack of institutional support, however, deprive many private school teachers of workshops, seminars, and training sessions essential for improving their pedagogical skills (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The absence of adequate training inhibits the adoption of innovative teaching techniques and the integration of technology into lessons, thereby compromising the overall quality of education.
- II. A second challenge lies in the prevalence of outdated teaching methodologies within private schools in Sokoto State. Traditional approaches that emphasize rote memorization and passive learning persist, failing to engage students actively or cater to diverse learning styles (Smith & Joshi, 2016). Modern educational research advocates for student-centered learning methods that foster critical thinking and collaboration (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2023). The absence of such progressive teaching techniques hampers the development of essential skills among students, posing a formidable obstacle to effective education delivery.
- III. Insufficient support systems, such as mentorship programs and collaborative networks, present a third challenge for private school teachers. Mentorship is pivotal for professional growth, providing guidance and constructive feedback (Dunst et al., 2015). The absence of formal mentorship initiatives and limited collaboration between private schools and external institutions hinders teachers from navigating the complexities of their profession (Darling-Hammond, 2017). The absence of a supportive ecosystem undermines the professional development of private school teachers, impeding their ability to deliver high-quality education.
- IV. Compounding these challenges are issues related to inadequate compensation and lack of recognition for private school teachers in Sokoto State (Karoga & Hassan, 2018). Low salaries and limited benefits can lead to dissatisfaction, affecting motivation and job performance (Duflo et al., n.d.). The disparity in compensation between private and public school teachers exacerbates this issue, undermining financial stability and dedication to the teaching profession (Carr-Hill & Sauerhaft, 2019). Addressing this challenge requires collaborative efforts from educational authorities, administrators, and policymakers to ensure equitable compensation and incentivize excellence in teaching.
- V. The diverse student population in private schools, encompassing varying academic abilities and learning needs, constitutes a fifth challenge. Ensuring inclusive education for all students, including those with learning disabilities, demands specialized training and resources (U.N.E.S.C.O., 2017). Teachers need access to professional development programs focusing on inclusive teaching strategies and classroom accommodations to meet the diverse needs of their students (Sailor, 2017). Collaborative efforts between educators, special education professionals, and policymakers are crucial to developing inclusive education policies.

- VI. Finally, limited access to technology and digital resources poses a significant hurdle for private school teachers in Sokoto State. The digital divide between urban and rural areas compounds this issue, leaving remote regions at a disadvantage (Warschauer, 2016). Limited access to technology impedes teachers' ability to integrate digital resources into their lessons, hindering the development of digital literacy skills among students (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2013). Effective utilization of technology in the classroom necessitates training and support aligned with the curriculum and educational goals (Mouza, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

Recognizing the pivotal role that teachers play in shaping the educational landscape, it is imperative to address the challenges faced by private school teachers in Sokoto State. The enhancement of pedagogical skills emerges as a key solution, serving as a solution for overcoming the obstacles faced by private school teachers. To achieve this, the integration of evidence-based strategies, policies, and practices is essential. This integration will create an environment where teachers can thrive, adapt to the evolving educational landscape, and, in turn, empower students for success in a rapidly changing world. Acknowledging and addressing these challenges head-on, there is a profound opportunity to foster an educational ecosystem that not only meets immediate academic goals but also nurtures critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning among students. The journey towards pedagogical excellence in private schools requires collaborative efforts from educators, administrators, policymakers, and the broader community. Through a concerted commitment to teacher enhancement and the implementation of targeted interventions, Sokoto State can pave the way for a transformative educational experience that equips students with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of the future. As we reflect on the challenges outlined in this paper, let it serve as a call to action for all stakeholders to invest in the professional development of private school teachers, ultimately contributing to the realization of quality education and the holistic development of individuals in Sokoto State.

Suggestions

Addressing the challenges faced by private school teachers in Sokoto State requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving various stakeholders. Here are some suggested solutions for each of the identified problems:

1. Building online platforms for professional development can provide a cost-effective and accessible solution. Teachers can engage in virtual training sessions, webinars, and collaborative discussions, overcoming geographical barriers and making continuous learning more feasible.
2. Design and implement comprehensive teacher training programs that focus on modern, student-centered teaching methodologies. These programs could be conducted by educational experts and could include workshops, seminars, and on-the-job training to ensure the practical application of new methods.
3. Establish formal mentorship programs connecting experienced educators with newer teachers. This fosters a supportive environment where knowledge and experiences are shared, helping new teachers navigate the complexities of their profession.

4. Introduce Compensation and Recognition Programs that acknowledge and reward outstanding private school teachers. Recognition can come in various forms, such as awards, public acknowledgment, or professional development opportunities, enhancing motivation and job satisfaction.
5. Develop training programs that equip teachers with the skills and strategies needed to address diverse learning needs. This may include workshops on inclusive teaching methods, differentiated instruction, and the use of assistive technologies.
6. Explore opportunities for securing grants or forming partnerships with organizations that can provide private schools with access to technology. This might involve acquiring computers and tablets and ensuring reliable internet connectivity.

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