

Assessment of the Competence of Student-Teachers in Government Owned Universities in Osun and Ekiti States, Nigeria

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Abstract

Within government-owned universities in Osun and Ekiti States, the study examined student-teachers' levels of teaching proficiency and school connectivity. It also determined the influence of school connectedness and demographic (sex and mode of entry) on the teaching competence of the student-teachers. A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. A total of 7,838 faculty of education students from government-owned universities in Osun and Ekiti State participated in the study as of 2020–2021 academic year. The sample size comprised 120 student-teachers from the Faculty of Education who were students enrolled in teaching practicum in their penultimate and final year using multistage sampling procedures. Two instruments, namely the Teacher Competence Assessment Scale (TCAS) and the School Connectedness Scale (SCS), were used to collect data for the study. The result showed a moderate level of teaching competence (73.3%) and school connectedness (67.5%) among undergraduate student-teachers. It showed a significant influence of school connectedness on the teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers ($R = .186$, $R^2 = .035$, $F = 4.237$, $p < 0.05$). It also reviewed that sex and mode of entry has no significant influence on the teaching competence of the student-teacher. It was concluded that school connectedness can help influence the teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers in Government Owned universities in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria.

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Introduction

University education is one of the most important levels after secondary school education, one of the main preoccupations of this level is to provide quality and functional education to the future generation. The aforementioned strategies encompass enhancing knowledge and information acquisition, broadening cultural, social, and economic development, and providing undergraduates with the necessary skills to succeed in society and get a job upon graduation. In essence, this will

result in teaching in a way of being competent and innovative to students which will help them to be successful in school, assist them with their educational problems and become useful persons in the society. Undergraduate students nowadays are expected to apply these well-taught abilities and appropriate learning strategies to solve problems and make the right judgements in their academic pursuits and in society at large. It's vital to remember that undergraduate student-teachers in the education faculty depend heavily on their

capacity to form strong bonds with their schools and grow as individuals to be competent instructors and achieve positive life outcomes (ThankGod, Oke, & Babalola, 2019).

The application of a connected set of information and abilities necessary to carry out a task successfully is referred to as competence. It frequently acts as the foundation for both possible assessment criteria for determining competency attainment and skill standards that outline the degree of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for success in a task (Rajesh & Chandrasekaran, 2014). In carrying out expertise in any profession there is a need for special skills in handling tasks. In teaching, the knowledge and capability of one teacher differ from one another. The teacher should be multifaceted in various ways he/she conducts and facilitates the teaching and learning processes. According to Wordu and Isiah (2020) competencies is a word that include different skills such as knowledge/ attitude and skill to Improve performance. While teaching competence is the ability of the teacher to put into action his/her duties in a responsible or practical means. It also involves the ability of the student-teachers to work on their teaching skills without being influenced by any other factor. For example, the student-teachers may feel afraid and skip a task if they think they cannot do a task. However, suppose the student-teachers think that adults and peers in their immediate environment can help them achieve there goal. In that case, they first accept responsibility for the work assigned to them. In fact, they also exert more effort and employ a range of techniques to accomplish their objectives if they believe that they can learn and comprehend with acceptable effort.

The greatest approaches in the world for exposing aspiring teachers or student-

teachers in training to classroom practice is known as teaching practice or practicum, which are found in teacher training programmes offered by university faculty of education and colleges of education. During their six-week or semester-long teaching practicum, aspiring student-teachers at Nigerian universities and education colleges receive adequate training, guidance, supervision, and motivation to effectively carry out their teaching duties. The quality of this exercise influences the calibre of teachers who are produced as well as the calibre of education. However, according to Bagudo (2019), these preparatory activities are commonly disregarded or performed incorrectly at certain universities, which lowers the calibre of student-teachers' competency and the calibre of teaching practice exercises. Furthermore, Ekundayo (2014), claimed that student-teachers in Southwestern Nigeria may lack the necessary study skills, attitude, and conduct to obtain teaching competency. This may be due to an unconducive learning environment, unavailability of teaching and learning materials, lecturers' poor knowledge of subject content, lecturers' attitude to students, and inadequate relevant resources. These factors could help student-teachers to possess teaching competence. Factors such as poor learning styles, poor teaching habits, peer influence, nonchalant attitudes of the students, and ignorance of the parents and school environment have been established to be responsible for teaching incompetence.

However, teaching competence of the student-teacher may be related to school connectedness, which is the students' attitudes towards other members of the school community and the larger society influenced by their sense that people in the community, where they are now part, value and encourage them in their efforts to socialise and put into practice what they

were taught in school. School connection is a sense of support and care that allows students to participate more in school activities and increase their social and academic welfare opportunities. It is the term used to describe the care and support student-teacher receive during school and the teaching practice period (Agu, Omenyi & Odimegwu 2010). Students' perception that peers and authorities at school are interested in both their personal growth and their academic progress is known as school connectedness. Perceptions of how adults in the building treat them are another aspect of school connectedness that adolescents and young adults experience. Student-teachers are less likely to be linked to bad behaviour when they are in a secure setting where relationships have been built and they feel like they are being treated properly. This means creating a safe environment could enhance excellent teacher-to-student interactions, and supporting academic objectives.

School connectedness transcends cultural boundaries and has been shown to influence competence regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. While the importance of school connectedness is widely acknowledged, little is known about how to best foster it. Having tried a number of piecemeal approaches to fostering connectedness, it seems that a holistic whole-school strategy to foster school connectedness holds the key to fostering teaching competency. Establishing a connection between students who are not engaged in their education and those who fall short academically can be accomplished through school connectedness. School connectedness is a vital process that increases students' sense of belonging and competency (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Blum, 2005).

Whether a student is engaged or not is largely determined by how connected their

school is. The degree of student participation or disengagement may determine their success or failure. Teaching competency is likely for students involved in and connected to their school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Furthermore, Blum (2005) showed that about half of high school students feel as though they are not a part of their school experiences, which could be attributed to feelings of insecurity and social isolation. Student-teachers must have a connection to their primary learning environment, especially during adolescence, as they undergo significant changes and have a perception of their value based on their performance in the classroom. According to research by Agu, Omenyi, and Odimegwu (2012), student-teachers who have a strong sense of belonging to their school are less likely to partake in dangerous behaviours such underage drinking, smoking, using other drugs, and so on. Additionally, academic competency, as seen by higher test and exam scores, improved attendance, improved teaching strategies, and longer school stays, is more frequent in student instructors who have a strong sense of ties to their institution. Furthermore, teaching competence and performance improved when meaningful relationships are established between adult and a student-teacher within the university and the school of their primary assignment. (Anfara, 2006; Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 2004).

According to Resource Guide for Virginia (2005), a document from the Virginia Department of Education, the most effective way to increase student attendance is to ensure students are involved and connected in the classroom. This suggests that the degree of school connectedness plays a significant role in enhancing student-teachers' attendance and competency. The more student-teachers are engaged in the school environment, and get involved in school activities the more likely they improve their teaching

competencies. In preventing truancy during teaching practice or normal course period, it best to ensure that student-teachers are engaged in activities and connected to at least one adult.

Apart from the above, demographic factors, such as sex and mode of entry of the undergraduate student-teacher may be some of the factors that could determine student-teachers teaching competence. Corroborating the above position, Afuwape and Oludipe (2008) and Clifford and Akpochafo (2015) conducted a study to determine gender difference in the accomplishment of graduating pre-service teachers integrated science and social studies teachers' competences. The finding of the scholarship revealed that gender differences have no significance impact on achievement of undergraduate student-teacher and social studies teachers' competences. In spite of these outcomes on gender influence, the research findings on mode of admission on the academic competence of the university undergraduates seem to be more unanimous than as it was found in the case of gender. Olajide, Okewole, and Agboola (2015) also compared the academic standing of applicants accepted via the Universities Matriculation Examination (UME.) and Direct Entry (DE) using cumulative grade point average of 173 undergraduate students in the Institute of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Among other things, it was discovered that the mode of admission significantly affected the academic competence of the student-teachers. Students admitted through UME were reported to have performed significantly better than their counterparts admitted through Direct Entry. However, This outcome is contrary to what Lawal, Murtala and Sadiq (2016) reported in their study that the academic achievement

of students who were accepted into the institution through the UTME and DE student-teachers differed significantly. It was found that student-teachers admitted through DE significantly outperformed their counterparts admitted through UTME. Irrespective of where the pendulum of a better and significant performance swings, evidences in the literature have clearly shown that mode of entry may be considered as a significant determinant of teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers.

There is likelihood that the more a student-teacher is connected to school, the better their teaching competence vice versa. However, the extent in which school connectedness and demographic variables (sex and mode of entry) can influence teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers has been given less attention, hence, this study.

Objectives of the Study

- (a) determine the levels of teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers.
- (b) investigate levels of school connectedness of undergraduate student-teachers;
- (c) determine the influence of school connectedness on student-teachers teaching competence during the compulsory teaching practice exercise.

Research Question

1. What are the levels of each of teaching competence and school connectedness among student-teachers?
2. What is the influence of school connectedness and demographic factors on teaching competence among student-teachers?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant influence of school connectedness on teaching

competence among the student-teachers in the study area.

2. There is no significant influence of demographic factors (sex and mode of entry) on the teaching competence of the undergraduate student-teachers.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population for this study comprised the total number of student-teachers for 2020-2021 teaching practice exercise from government owned universities in Osun and Ekiti States, totaling 7,838. The sample size comprised 120 student-teachers of faculty of education from the two States government owned universities as at 2020-2021 academic session. Four universities were chosen from each of the two states, using a stratified sampling technique with ownership as bases for stratification. Three departments from the Faculty of Education were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Ten (10) student-teachers were selected from each department using purposive sampling technique (Social Sciences, Arts, and Science) who were in penultimate

year and final year. Two adapted research instruments were used to collect data for the study. These are Teacher Competence Assessment Scale (TCAS) and School Connectedness Scale (SCS). The TCAS was used by the researcher to observe and assess each of the student-teacher while SCS was used to gather evidence from the respondents. The TCAS comprised 32 items adapted from the original work of Sbrocco (2009) and from the Teaching Practices Assessment Forms used by various universities in Southwestern Nigeria to evaluate student-teacher's competence during teaching practice. The observer (researcher) ticked the degree or option that best described each of the student-teacher in the classroom as he/she teaches within thirty-five (35) to forty (40) minutes per period. While the SCS consisted of 20 items which were adapted from the works of Lohmeier and Lee (2011), which were administered on the student-teachers after being observed. Data collected were analysed using appropriate statistical tools and inferences were drawn based on the results of the analysis.

Table 1: Total Number of Faculty of Education Students in Osun and Ekiti States Government Owned University in Nigeria 2020/2021 Session

S/N	Name of School	Categories	Population	State
1.	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	Federal	2637	Osun
2.	Osun State University, Osogbo	State	1835	Osun
3.	Federal University, Oye-Ekiti	Federal	523	Ekiti
4.	Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti	State	2843	Ekiti
Total			7,838	

Source: Researchers' Compilation from the Universities Portals.

Table 2: Socio-demographic Data of the Sampled Government Owned University Student-teachers in Osun and Ekiti States Nigeria

Variable	Levels	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Level/Part	300L	59	49.2
	400L	61	50.8
	Total	120	100.0
Student's Sex	Male	44	36.7
	Female	76	63.3
	Total	120	100.0
Teaching Practice Experience as an undergraduate	First	63	52.5
	Second	57	47.5
	Total	120	100.0
Mode of Entry into the University	UTME	109	90.8
	Direct Entry	11	9.2
	Total	120	100.0

Results

Research Question One: What are the levels of each teaching competence and school connectedness among Faculty of Education undergraduate students?

Table 3: Levels of Teaching Competence among Undergraduate Student-Teachers in Government Owned Universities in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria

Teaching Competence	Score range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Low	31-85	17	14.2
Moderate	86-113	88	73.3
High	114-155	15	12.5
Total		120	100.0

Mean= 98.9, SD=13.6

Table 3. shows the levels of teaching competence among Faculty of Education undergraduate student-teachers in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria. The result showed that 14.2% had a low level of teaching competence, 73.3% had a moderate level,

while 12.5% had a high level of teaching competence. Therefore, this result showed that most of the Faculty of Education undergraduate student-teachers in Osun and Ekiti State Nigeria had a moderate level of teaching competence.

Table 4: Levels of School Connectedness among Faculty of Education Undergraduate Student-teachers in Osun and Ekiti States Universities in Nigeria

Variables	Levels	Score Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
School Connectedness	Low	16-43	23	19.2
	Moderate	44-57	81	67.5
	High	58-64	16	13.3
Total			120	100.0

Table 4 shows the levels of school connectedness among student-teachers in the study area. It indicated that 19.2% had a low level of school connectedness, 67.5% had a moderate level, and 13.3% had a high level of school connectedness. As shown above, this indicates that majority of Faculty of Education undergraduate student-teachers in Osun and Ekiti State Universities Nigeria had moderate school connectedness. This categorization was

subjected to a descriptive analysis of frequency, percentage, and results. This implies that most undergraduate student-teachers are more engaged with classrooms and school activities not minding the extent of distraction in other activities within and outside their campuses.

Hypothesis One: School connectedness has no significant influence on teaching competence among the student-teachers in the study area.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Influence of School Connectedness on Teaching Competence among the Student-Teachers in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	116.966	8.822		13.259	.000
School Connectedness	-.362	.176	-.186	-2.058	.042

Dependent Variable: Teaching Competence

Predictor: (Constant), School Connectedness, * $p < .05$ ($p = .042$)

Table 5, shows that the influence of school connectedness on the undergraduate student-teachers teaching competence yielded a multiple regression coefficient (R) of .186 and a multiple correlation square (R^2) of .035. These values are statistically significant at a 0.05 probability level ($R = .186$, $R^2 = .035$, $F = 4.237$). The school

connectedness variable could account for 3.5% of the observed variance in undergraduate student-teacher teaching competence. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a significant influence of school connectedness on teaching competence among undergraduate student-

teachers in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria ($R = .186$, $R^2 = .035$, $F = 4.237$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of demographic factors (sex and

mode of entry) on the teaching competence of the undergraduate student-teachers.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance Test of Significant Influence of Demographic Variables (sex and mode of entry) on Teaching Competence of Student-Teachers

Source of Variance	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	η
Corrected Model	579.366	3	193.122	1.048	.374	.026
Intercept	353707.511	1	353707.511	1918.853	.000	.943
Sex	8.290	1	8.290	.045	.832	.000
Mode of Entry	160.974	1	160.974	.873	.352	.007
Error	21382.600	116	184.333			
Total	1197686.000	120				
Corrected Total	21961.967	119				

$\eta =$ Eta Squared

Table 6, shows a two-way ANOVA conducted to explore the influence of demographic variables (sex and mode of entry) on the teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers. It can be observed that there was no statistically significant influence of sex, $F, (1,116) = 0.045$, $p = 0.832$, $\eta = .000$) and mode of entry, $F(1,116) = 0.873$, $p = 0.352$, $\eta = 0.007$) on the teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers. Sex and mode of entry of the undergraduate student-teachers respectively were able to account for 0.0% and 0.1% of the observed variance noticed in the dependent variable. The effect of this size according to Cohen (1988), is small. The mean teaching competence rating score for male undergraduate student-teachers (Mean = 101.30, SD = 15.21) was higher than their female (Mean = 97.64, SD = 12.46). However, the difference in the mean teaching competence rating score was found not statistically significant at a .05 confidence level. Also, the mean teaching

competence rating score for undergraduate student-teachers admitted through UTME (Mean = 99.28, SD = 13.22) was found to be higher than their counterparts admitted through Direct entry (Mean = 96.00, SD = 17.22). However, the difference in the mean teaching competence rating score was also not statistically significant at a .05 confidence level. This result concludes that there was no significant influence of demographic variables of sex and mode of entry on the teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the levels of teaching competence and school connectedness among undergraduate student-teachers in Government Owned Universities in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria. The findings of the research question and hypothesis are discussed below.

The outcomes of the study showed that most Faculty of Education undergraduate student-teachers in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria possessed a moderate level of school connectedness. There is an indication from this finding that the undergraduate student-teachers demonstrated some measures of expectations in relations to their school connectedness. The study found that school connectedness significantly influenced teaching competence among undergraduate student-teachers in Osun and Ekiti State, Nigeria. This finding implies that school connectedness is a significant predictor of teaching competence. School connectedness has the potential to promote other positive outcomes because connected students participate more in classroom activities and respond to their teachers. School connectedness and the development of positive relationships are also important factors in fostering conditions conducive to increased student competence. The study findings are consistent with those of Agu, Omenyi, and Odimegwu (2010), who found that students felt more supported and connected to their school administration than to their teachers. Furthermore, the study's findings are consistent with those of Anfara (2006) who found that meaningful relationships between adults and students within the school improve academic competence and performance. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) discovered a robust link between school connectedness and educational outcomes such as school attendance. As demonstrated by the study's findings and supported by previous research studies, it is clear that school connectedness tends to promote positive outcomes.

Also, the study found that demographic factors like sex and mode of entry do not significantly influence the teaching competence of undergraduate student-teachers; this implies that gender

and methods admission do not significantly influence their teaching competence. Therefore, no significant differences were found. The finding of the study on gender differences corroborates the findings of Afuwape and Oludipes (2008) study, which revealed no statistically significant gender differences in the achievement of pre-service teachers in integrated science, and that Clifford and Akpochafo (2015) found that gender has no significant influence on social studies teachers' competences in the use of the inquiry method in upper basic schools.

Finally, the finding of the study on mode of entry deviates from what has been reported in the literature on the likely influence of mode of admission on the academic outcomes of university undergraduates. The findings of Olajide *et al.* (2015), and Lawal *et al.* (2016) all suggested a significant influence of the mode of entry on the performance of students. Nevertheless, these aforementioned studies adopted students cumulative grade point average (CGPA) as a measure of performance, while the current study obtained the competence measure of the students through an observational process using the Teacher Competence Assessment Scale (TCAS) for Student-teachers. The mode through which the teaching competence of the undergraduate student-teachers that participated in the current study was measured and how competence was calculated by the previous studies may account for the observed differences in the outcomes.

Conclusion

The study concluded that:

1. the level of teaching competence and school connectedness among undergraduate student-teacher in Osun and Ekiti state Government owned university is moderate.

2. there is a significant influence of school connectedness on teaching competence of undergraduate student teacher in the study area.
3. there is no significant influence of sex and mode of entry on the teaching competence of the undergraduate student-teacher in both states.

Recommendations

The study recommends improving the academic competence of undergraduate student-teachers in Southwestern Nigeria's education faculty by:

1. Promoting support from peers, adults, and staff.
2. Psychologists should explore other factors affecting academic competence.
3. Stakeholders should formally induct student-teachers, this will enable higher education institutions to better meet student-teachers' needs and provide necessary support services, based on their perceptions of school connectivity and self-assessed strengths and areas for improvement.

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