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FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY OF GEOGRAPHY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKOKA-YABA, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Geography is a crucial field that enhances our knowledge of the world we inhabit. It imparts understanding of the physical environment, human habitation, natural resources, and the interconnections between individuals and their surroundings. This study examined factors affecting quality of geography teaching and learning in secondary schools in Akoka-Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and collected primary data from 120 geography students from five selected public senior secondary schools in Akoka-Yaba metropolitan area of Lagos State. The instrument exhibited a reliability level reflected by a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.813, indicating a high degree of reliability. Analytical techniques including frequency distribution table to present the participants' demographics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient to test the research hypotheses. The findings of the study demonstrate that geography teacher qualifications and subject mastery are essential factors for effective teaching and learning and positive student attitude towards the subject. This study, therefore, recommends among other, that, government and other stakeholders should enhance teacher certification and guarantee the deployment of only certified geography teachers in secondary schools; facilitate ongoing in-service training and professional development initiatives centered on subject expertise and creative teaching methodologies; and promote mentorship initiatives wherein seasoned teachers coach beginner or less-experienced colleagues.
Keywords: Teaching, Learning, Geography, Teacher qualifications, Subject matter and Attitude

Introduction

Geography is a crucial field that enhances our knowledge of the world we inhabit. It imparts understanding of the physical environment, human habitation, natural resources, and the interconnections between individuals and their surroundings (Audu et al., 2024). The knowledge, skills, and values acquired from the geography curriculum enable students to make significant and transformative contributions to societal progress and integration. Scholars from diverse disciplines have recognized the distinctive characteristics and breadth of geography education. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2011) asserted that the geography curriculum serves as a conduit to all specialized fields within the sciences, social sciences, and humanities due to its integrated and comprehensive reach. Sangoleye (2018) said that geography not only equips learners with map-reading skills but also enhances their awareness of the world's interrelated nature through the study of other cultures and nations. This indicates that the acquired knowledge serves not only an academic purpose but also functions as a mechanism to bridge differences between continents and foster global citizenship. Consequently, effective teaching and learning of geography becomes essential.

Ajibo (2005) emphasizes the significance of quality instruction by stating that "Geography is a complex discipline that nothing reasonably good can be achieved if it is not handled by trained teachers." In addition to topic expertise, geography teachers must exhibit communication and interpersonal abilities, resource allocation, efficient classroom administration, and suitable questioning and feedback methods. Caratiquit and Pablo (2021) assert that the strategies employed by secondary school teachers markedly improved student performance. The actions of teachers in the classroom reflect their pedagogical methods, which ultimately dictate the success or failure of curriculum implementation. The professional competency of geography teachers warrants thorough scrutiny to ensure the subject's continued relevance in modern education.

Research consistently demonstrates that teacher qualifications and subject matter expertise are essential for student success. Olayemi and Amosun (2024) indicate that uncertified teachers or those lacking relevant subject expertise perform less effectively with students compared to their professionally educated counterparts. A professional teacher is both a guardian of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical proficiency, with certification serving as a fundamental element of effective teaching. Teachers possessing robust content expertise can integrate intricate materials, enhance learning beyond traditional texts, and create student-focused activities that render geography significant and captivating. Amosun (2016) asserts that proficiency in subject knowledge improves the capacity to formulate divergent and convergent questions that foster reasoning and active engagement. In the absence of such expertise, teachers risk the integrity of geography by relegating it to mere memorization, so compromising its comprehensive aims. Lambert (2013) characterizes content knowledge as the core of a teacher's professional capital, with all other talents functioning as ancillary components.

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In addition to qualifications, teaching experience is of equal significance. Fleischmann and van der Westhuizen (2019) contend that seasoned teachers, having amassed methods over time, are more adept at making spontaneous decisions in the fluid classroom setting. Teaching is a human-centered endeavor, resulting in unique lessons, and the capacity for real-time adaptation is essential. Mkhize (2023) substantiates this by observing that seasoned teachers frequently possess the ability to improvise, apply theoretical knowledge to unfamiliar scenarios, and adapt their methodologies to accommodate various contexts. Experienced geography teachers are likely to exhibit flexibility and contextual understanding that enhance curriculum implementation. The necessity for professional knowledge is further illuminated when seen in the context of the evolution of geography as a subject. Khalil et al. (2015) delineated four general phases in the evolution of geographical study: beginning with a rudimentary inventory of physical phenomena, progressing to the analysis of interrelations among processes, advancing through the quantitative revolution that incorporated statistical methodologies, and culminating in the contemporary phase of neo-environmentalism, which underscores human-environment interactions. Adewale (2016) contends that this neo-environmental emphasis has rendered geography increasingly pertinent in tackling challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and resource management. The evolving nature of the subject imposes greater expectations on teachers, who must be equipped to interact with novel topics and innovative techniques.

Nevertheless, despite its significance, geography education in Nigeria encounters numerous obstacles. According to Ololobou (2019), students often perceive geography as less engaging than scientific disciplines like Chemistry, Physics, and Biology. Even within the arts discipline, it is seldom prioritized. Such views are influenced by structural and instructional obstacles. Audu et al. (2024) observe that schools frequently experience a deficiency of teaching resources, inadequate funding for textbooks and equipment, limited time within the schedule, and a scarcity of skilled teachers. Additionally, there exists the issue of student perceptions: geography is occasionally regarded as excessively expansive, overly intricate, and less gratifying than other disciplines. Such assumptions diminish student enrollment and undermine classroom participation. Teachers possess several methods to enhance the engagement of the subject matter. Adeyemi (2008) and Nwokoye et al. (2019) emphasize that geography instruction can employ several strategies, including lectures, inquiry, projects, field trips, discovery, and problem-solving techniques. The diversity of these methods indicates that geography can be imparted through interactive and inventive approaches. Regrettably, as noted by Sarrab et al. (2018), numerous educators fail to fully capitalize on these chances. The absence of field excursions, limited utilization of teaching aids, and insufficient contextualization of content with local examples sometimes undermine the subject's relevance. Khalil et al. (2015) emphasize the deficiency of skilled educators and systemic underfunding, which collectively foster the impression of geography as unappealing or challenging.

While these difficulties have been extensively recorded throughout Nigeria, there exists less documentation explicitly pertaining to Lagos State, and much less concerning Akoka-Yaba in particular. This region exhibits distinctive dynamics, characterized by a dense concentration of educational institutions and its proximity to higher education establishments, including the University of Lagos. Schools in Lagos may possess superior access to resources compared to rural locations; yet, they contend with challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, pressure to achieve good test scores, and a highly diverse student demographic. Although current research offers an overview of the elements influencing geography instruction, it has not thoroughly examined how these challenges manifest in the particular metropolitan context of Lagos. Furthermore, there is a paucity of study regarding the factors affecting the teaching and learning of geography in Lagos to address constraints. Likewise, whereas national studies (Audu et al., 2024; Ololobou, 2019) highlight students' disinterest, there is limited research about the perceptions of urban students in Lagos towards geography in comparison to their rural peers or other fundamental disciplines. The interplay of teacher qualifications, teacher experience, and student attitudes in Lagos remains insufficiently investigated, resulting in a lack of understanding regarding the distinct problems and opportunities present in this environment.

This study is both urgent and essential. Geography is not only an essential academic subject but also a field with significant social and developmental implications. However, ongoing issues jeopardize its quality and attractiveness. This study aims to identify context-specific elements influencing geography teaching and learning in Akoka-Yaba, Lagos. These findings will not only address a vacuum in the literature but also offer evidence-based recommendations for enhancing practices in Lagos and possibly in other urban areas. This study will elucidate whether the issues identified at the national level—such as teacher qualification and experience, student attitude—persist in Lagos, or if urban schools have unique issues that necessitate novel solutions.

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between geography teacher qualification and their mastery of the subject.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between geography teacher subject mastery and senior secondary school student attitude towards the subject.

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Methodology

This research utilized a descriptive survey design. The research hypotheses were tested using a survey study design. Polit and Beck (2021) assert that surveys are relevant to diverse groups, cover an extensive array of subjects, and serve numerous purposes. The study population consists of geography students in the Akoka-Yaba metropolis Area of Lagos State. This research utilizes a survey approach that enables swift data collecting from 150 geography students in SS1-SSIII among five selected public senior secondary schools in the Akoka-Yaba metropolitan. The data collection instrument was a meticulously crafted questionnaire including Sections A and B. Section A gathered personal information from the students, whilst Section B solicited their opinions on the subject matter through closed-ended items formatted in a 4-point Likert scale. The researcher utilized the random sample approach, ensuring that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected for the study.

During the field survey period, 120 responses were gathered, yielding a response rate of 80.0%, consistent with recognized survey standards (Fosnacht et al., 2019). The instrument demonstrated a reliability level indicated by a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.813, signifying a considerable degree of reliability. The gathered data was analyzed by frequency counts and percentages, alongside the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, employing SPSS 23.0, with a significant threshold established at 0.05.

Results

Table 1 below shows the respondents demographics at a glance.

Table 1: Participants' Demographics

Characteristics	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	44	36.7
	Female	76	62.3
	Total	**120**	**100.0**
Age	13-14 years	75	62.5
	15-16 years	32	26.7
	Above 16 years	13	10.8
	Total	**120**	**100.0**
Class	SSI	36	30.0
	SSII	53	44.2
	SSIII	31	25.8
	Total	**120**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Test of Hypotheses

The research hypotheses were tested with the use of Pearson Correlation, as shown below:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between geography teacher qualification and their mastery of the subject.

Table 2: Correlation Statistics

		Subject Mastery
Teacher Qualification	Pearson Correlation	.732**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016
	N	120

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis shown in Table 2 indicates a robust positive association between teacher qualifications and subject competence in geography, evidenced by a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .732$. This suggests how an increase in teacher qualifications correlates with a similar improvement in subject mastery. This is a strong association, implying that qualification is intimately linked to subject matter competency. The *p-value of .016* (two-tailed) is below the standard threshold of 0.05, indicating that the observed link is statistically significant and not attributable to chance. The sample size of N = 120 yields substantial evidence, offering credible insights into the population of secondary school geography teachers being examined. This research indicates that professionally trained and qualified teachers are more likely to have a robust knowledge of geography subject matter, which is essential for effective teaching and student learning outcomes. The null hypothesis, which posits no significant association between teacher qualification and subject mastery, is rejected based on the statistical evidence. This underscores the necessity of having geography taught by suitably competent teachers with the requisite intellectual and pedagogical training.

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Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between geography teacher subject mastery and senior secondary school student attitude towards the subject.

Table 3: Correlation Statistics

		Student Attitude
Subject Mastery	Pearson Correlation	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	120

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 demonstrates a robust and statistically significant association between geography teachers' subject's mastery and students' attitude toward the subject. The Pearson correlation coefficient of *r = .701* signifies a strong positive correlation, indicating that as teachers exhibit increased proficiency in geography, students are more inclined to cultivate favorable attitudes toward learning the subject. This implies that proficient teachers who effectively convey concepts, incorporate real-world examples, and elucidate intricate ideas are more likely to foster interest and drive in their students. The significance value (*p-val. = .003*) is much below the traditional thresholds of 0.05 and 0.01, so confirming that the observed link is not attributable to chance. With a sample size of N = 120, the results offer compelling evidence that teacher subject expertise significantly influences students' attitude towards geography. This study rejects the null hypothesis of no significant association, substantiating the assertion that teacher professional competence—especially their extensive subject knowledge—directly influences student involvement and attitudes. The conclusion underscores the necessity of teacher training and ongoing professional development as a means to enhance student performance in geography.

Discussion of the Findings

The test of the first hypothesis indicates that a significant association exists between geography teacher qualification and subject mastery. This corroborates Fleischmann and van der Westhuizen's (2019) argument that seasoned teachers, having amassed methods over time, are more adept at making spontaneous decisions in the fluid classroom setting. Teaching is a human-centered endeavor, resulting in unique lessons, and the capacity for real-time adaptation is essential. Mkhize (2023) substantiates this by observing that seasoned teachers frequently possess the ability to improvise, apply theoretical knowledge to unfamiliar scenarios, and adapt their methodologies to accommodate various contexts.

The result from the test of this study's second hypothesis indicates that geography teachers' subject mastery significantly correlates with students' attitude towards geography. This is in consonance with the claim that uncertified teachers or those lacking relevant subject expertise perform less effectively with students compared to their professionally educated counterparts. A professional teacher is both a guardian of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical proficiency, with certification serving as a fundamental element of effective teaching. Teachers possessing robust content expertise can integrate intricate materials, enhance learning beyond traditional texts, and create student-focused activities that render geography significant and captivating (Olayemi and Amosun 2024).

Conclusion

This study's findings demonstrate that geography teacher qualifications and subject mastery are essential factors for effective teaching and learning. Competent and experienced teachers are more adept at making instantaneous decisions, modifying teaching strategies, and maintaining student engagement. Furthermore, teachers possessing robust subject mastery positively impact students' perceptions of geography, cultivating enthusiasm and drive in the discipline. These findings highlight the importance of teacher proficiency—both in education and implementation—when influencing student results. Ensuring exceptional teacher preparation and continuous professional development is crucial for enhancing geography education in secondary schools.

Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Government and other stakeholders should enhance teacher certification and guarantee the deployment of only certified geography teachers in secondary schools.
2. Incorporate contemporary educational tools, such as GIS technology and ICT resources, to enhance the engagement and relevance of geography for students.
3. Periodically review and update the geography curriculum to match with current environmental and developmental challenges, hence maintaining student engagement.

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