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INFLUENCE OF GENDER, QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE ON TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is one of the factors that determine success in examination among college of education students. Unfortunately, most students are challenged with reading comprehension. Research has shown that lecturers are among the factors that contribute to students' reading comprehension dilemma in colleges of education. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of gender, teachers' qualification and experience on techniques for teaching reading comprehension in colleges of education in North-Central Nigeria. Four Colleges of Education from Nasarawa, Kogi, Niger and Kwara states were selected for the study. A total of 40 lecturers and 200 students were randomly drawn as the sample for this study. A survey via self-administered questionnaire and students test scores were used to collect data for analysis. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The results indicate that gender has not much influence on techniques used in teaching of reading comprehension. However, the results reveal that teachers' qualification and experience wield much influence on techniques used by lecturers in teaching reading comprehension. This implies that qualified lecturers should be employed to lecture at colleges of education and unqualified lecturers should be encouraged to pursue their post graduate studies (such as post graduate diploma in education, masters and Doctorate Degree in Education) on a part-time or full-time basis. This will augment the quality of their performances and accordingly advances the students' performance which may in turn have great effects on teacher education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Influence, gender, qualification, students, performance

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INTRODUCTION

Without any doubt, many students in most institutions in Nigeria contend with the problem of low language proficiency and abysmal performance in tasks requiring reading comprehension. Reading is viewed as an essential skill necessary for personal learning and intellectual growth (Bozena, 2007). Thus, reading literacy is not only a prime requirement at colleges but a precursor for all academic attainments. The aptitude to read refers to more than just being able to discriminate letters and decode words. It embraces the capability to build meaning from the written words and familiarity with the various forms and functions of written texts (Pretorius & Machet, 2004). Ability to read is hugely valued and it is significant for personal, social and economic well-being of an individual. Reading is seen as a skill which forms the basis of literacy and civilization; it is through it that one attains a meaningful level of success in life because without reading ability, knowledge in all school subjects will not be attained from the primary to the university level (Sotiloye, Popoola & Michael, 2017). Jegede and Kolade (2017) define reading as the act of decoding symbols of a language in order to ensure intelligibility and understanding. Bojovic (2010) defines reading as a complex, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible activity that takes considerable time and resources.

Reading Comprehension is the ability to process text, understanding its meaning and to integrate it with what the reader already knows. It is therefore getting meaning from what is written; this implies that comprehension is a vital component of reading as a skill. For reading to be effective, the readers need to comprehend communicative materials by applying their beliefs about the world and what they already know about the present topic as a lens through which to interpret and understand the message the writer is attempting to convey. Fundamental skills required for effective and efficient reading comprehension are knowing the meaning of words, ability to understand the meaning of a word from discourse context, ability to follow organisation of the passage and to identify antecedents and references in it. Others are ability to draw inferences from a passage and to identify the main thought of a passage, ability to answer questions asked in a passage, ability to recognise the literary devices or propositional structures used in a passage and determine its tone, to understand the situation mood, convey for assertion, questioning,

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commanding, refraining, and ability to determine the writer's purpose, intent and point of view as well as draw inferences about the writer.

Reading is a very important activity which teachers and students have to deal with in daily academic life (Masduqi, 2014). Moats (2010) observes that knowledgeable teachers who provide quality instruction are crucial in helping children become successful readers and that school environment and the home environment need to be conducive for effective reading to take place. Badea (2012) opines that the development of efficient reading skills is a long term process, which requires the teachers' permanent adjustment of strategies in order to direct their students throughout the process. Also, for teaching and learning of reading to be effective, students need to develop positive disposition, attitude and good perception toward reading. It implies that the failure of students in reading comprehension cannot be unconnected with their negative attitude towards reading and reading habit. Regrettably, many students are flawed and lack abilities to read and grasp what they read. These contribute to the persistent failure in the students' performance across school subjects. Besides, Otenaike and Osikomaiya (2010) discover that students' wobbly background in English language right from primary school is one of the reasons students perform poorly in a subject. Therefore, ability to read and comprehend is a skill that students need to be successful in their academic pursuit.

It is necessary that students should be provided with the reading skills that will develop positive attitude and perception that will make them comprehend and enjoy various school subjects. It is important then that reading is taught across the various subjects of the school curriculum with a view to sustaining the quest to improve the teaching and learning of comprehension amongst colleges of education. Hence, what are the factors that might influence the adoption of various techniques for teaching reading comprehension? To this end, the next section dwells on research questions.

Research questions

a. Does gender influence the techniques used in the teaching of reading comprehension in collages of education?

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b. To what extent teachers' qualification influence the techniques used in the teaching of reading comprehension in colleges of education
c. Does experience influence the techniques used in the teaching of reading comprehension in colleges of education.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of gender, qualification and experience in the teaching of reading comprehension in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria. Specifically, this study is aimed at examining

a. the influence of lecturers' gender on techniques for teaching reading comprehension in the colleges of education in North-Central Nigeria.
b. the influence of lecturers' qualification on techniques for teaching reading comprehension in the colleges of education in North-Central, Nigeria.
c. the influence of lecturers' experience on techniques for teaching reading comprehension in the colleges of education in North-Central Nigeria

Review of Related Literature

For many people, sex and gender mean the same thing. A universally held notion is that sex and gender are interchangeable terms, yet abstractly, these two terms are not the same as the carry different meaning and undertone. However, as noted by Bornstein (2009), the terms sex and gender can have ambiguity and fluidity in meaning implications. Sex refers to the biological characteristics between males and females, which are universal and do not change. There has always been unresolved debate regarding the relationship between sexual orientation and academic performance and its related aspect of gender orientation and academic performance. Fundamentally, it is important to note that sex difference is a basic psychological factor that is rarely considered as such when discussing children's behaviour, but it is essentially because of this factor that the psychological make-up of the child differs. Thus, sexual orientation as a variable subsequently impacts on individual children's behaviour which may have a bearing on children's academic performance.

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Kolawole (2008) notes that in some developing societies, the boy child is often socialised to be competitive and aggressive, and therefore, is expected by society to excel in the more challenging areas of school work such as reading which is essential to full participation in modern society. On the other hand, the girl child is taught to be passive and soft line, which consequently makes society to expect her not to excel in the more challenging school subjects and in some cases of academic performance in general. Gender differences on the other hand tend to have great bearing on the differential socialisation of boys and girls (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). Often, boys and girls are treated differently by others including their parents, siblings, peers and teachers.

Teacher's qualification is another factor that influences the teaching of reading comprehension in colleges of education. This determines the level of exposure of the teacher in terms of training and this goes a long way in determining how he is able to manage his teaching in order to facilitate the teachings learning process (Osarenre, 2013; Lawal, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design for this study is descriptive survey and ex-post factor. An ex-post factor research seeks to find out facts that are associated with certain occurrences, outcomes, conditions or types of behaviours by undertaking the analysis of past events and already existing conditions. In this study, the researchers have no control over the variables neither could they apply any form of treatment to the group because they already exist. The study analysed the 2021 end of semester examination result of NCE II students in order to determine the impact of gender, teachers' qualification and experience on the performance of students in English language in the four Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample of the study comprised 40 lecturers and 200 students of English from the department of English and general studies across the four selected Colleges of Education in the North-Central, Nigeria using simple random sampling technique.

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Instrumentation

The survey was conducted through self-administered questionnaire which was divided into two sections A and B to collate data from lecturers. Section A elicited information on the Bio – Data of lecturers while Section B elicited information on the lecturers' qualification and experience. Other relevant data such as students test scores obtained from their previous and current semester examination were analysed. Meanwhile, the instrument was subjected to test-retest in order to ascertain its reliability before the main data collection. An average outcome of the test-retest revealed an r-value of 0.78 using Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient. The r-value of 0.78 indicates a high reliability index for the instrument.

Results

Table 1: Showing Teacher Gender

College	Number of teachers Males	Percentage %	Number of teachers Females	Percentage	Total number of teachers
1	3	30%	7	70%	10
2	4	40%	6	60%	10
3	3	30%	7	70%	10
4	4	40%	6	60%	10
TOTAL	7	35%	13	65%	20

Table 1 revealed that majority of lecturers 13(65%) teaching English language in the four COE are females while 7 (35%) are males.

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Table 2 showing the qualification of teachers

Teachers Qualification	Number of Teachers College 1	Percentage %	Number of Teachers College 2	Percentage	Number of Teachers College 3	Percentage	Number of Teachers College 4	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Phd	4	40%	3	30%	3	30%	3	30%	7	35%
M.Ed/M.A Ed/M.Sc Ed	3	30%	4	40%	4	40%	3	30%	7	35%
M.A/M.Sc	1	10%	1	10%	1	10%	2	20%	2	55%
B.Ed/B.A Ed/B.Sc	1	10%	1	10%	1	10%			2	25%
B.A/Bsc	1	10%	1	10%	1	10%	2	20%	2	5%
Total	10	100%	10	100%		100%	100%	100%	20	100%

Table 2 has revealed that majority of teachers 14 (70%) have masters and Ph.D degrees with relevant teaching qualification in the four colleges of education used for the study. Only 1% have first degree or master's degree without teaching qualification.

Table 3 showing lecturers experience

Teacher years of experience	Number of Teachers College 1	Percentage %	Number of Teachers College 2	Percentage	Number of Teachers College 3	Percentage	Number of Teachers College 4	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 – 5 years	2	20%	6	60%	2	20%	3	30%	8	40%
6 – 10 years	6	60%	3	30%	4	40%	3	30%	9	45%
11 – 15 years	1	10%	1	10%	3	30%	3	30%	2	55%
16 – 20 years	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%
21 and above	0	0%	0	0%	3	30%	1	10%	0	0%
Total	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	20	100%

Table 3 revealed that majority of teachers of (45%) have between 6 – 10 years teaching experience. Reasonable number 8 (80%) have 1 – 5 years teaching experience, only 2 (10%) have 11 – 15 years teaching experience while (15%) have 16 – 20 years teaching experience.

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding also revealed that the gender does not have any significance influence on the teaching of reading comprehension on the students' performance among the colleges of education.

The findings of this study also revealed that students taught by teachers with professional teaching qualification in Education such as; B. Ed, B.A Ed, B.sc Ed, M. Ed, M.A Ed, M.sc Ed and PhD performed better than those taught by teachers without teaching qualifications. This implies that teachers' qualification has significant influence on students' performance in English language. This is in line with the findings of Akin 2013, Van den Bergh and Roos (2014), Boyd et al. (2008), Wiki (2003), and Abe and Adu (2013) who found out that teachers' qualification contributed to the improvement of students' scores in their academic performance.

The findings of this study revealed that students taught by teachers with 6-15years teaching experience performed better than students taught by teachers with 1-5years experience. The mean difference was 0.76. This is an indication that teacher's years of experience is a measure of quality and it is vital in the achievement of teaching reading comprehension. This aligns with Akinsolu (2005) who advocated that experienced teachers need to be retained in schools if higher productivity is to be attained because learners achieve more from these teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made:

The individual differences of the learners should be taken care of based on their gender difference as regard their academic pursuit especially where the culture of the people influences the girl's education.

Federal and state governments should give uncompromised attention during recruitment of lecturers and to ensure that only qualified lecturers are considered for the job i.e., graduates with teaching qualification should be employed to teach English in Colleges of Education.

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The lecturers should be encouraged and supported to update themselves by attending seminars and conferences in order to acquire modern skills for their profession/discipline.

Experienced lecturers should be assigned to mentor the newcomers so that they can tap from their wealth of experiences for a sound foundation. This will help to improve teachers' quality of teaching and consequently improve the performance of students and ultimately, the quality of teacher education in Nigeria.

Federal government should not relent from its task of organizing workshops quarterly for lecturers to get familiar with the modern ways of teaching reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The study has empirically revealed that teachers' qualification and experience are major variables that can influence students' performance in reading comprehension. It has also shown that teacher quality is a therapy for realization of educational goals and objectives. It is therefore not out of place for the National Policy on Education (2009) to have equivocally stated that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Therefore, teachers need to constantly seek for ways of improving their knowledge, techniques, and pedagogical skills by undergoing one form of on-the-job training or the other.

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