



CAREER CAPACITY AND TEACHER'S QUALITY AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ESAN CENTRAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA



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Abstract

This study investigated career capacity and teacher's quality as predictors of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. Specifically, the study examined the level of students academic performance, the extent teachers' quality influence students' academic performance, the extent career capacity of a teacher influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. Correlational research design was employed in this researcher work. The study population consisted of 50 teachers from public secondary schools in a Esan Central L.G.A of Edo State. Two instruments were used: Career Capacity and Teachers' Quality Questionnaire (CACATEQUQ) and the 2022/2023 NECO results in Mathematics and English Language from schools in the area. The instruments were validated through face and content validity, while reliability was confirmed using the split-half method yielding a coefficient of 0.70, which was considered acceptable. Data analysis was done using mean and standard deviation to answer research question 1, while simple linear regression was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 at 0.05 significance level. The results showed that that teacher's career capacity and teachers' quality significantly predicts students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. Study also found that the level of students academic outcome in Mathematics and English in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area was low. It was therefore recommended, among other things, that Therefore, for students to improve their academic performance, teachers, principals and Governments must understand how these variables influence academic outcome.

Key words: Career Capacity, Teacher's Quality, Students' Academic Performance, Public Secondary Schools, Esan Central Local Government Area

Introduction

Academic performance of students seems to be the most important indicator of success or failure of any educational system due to the fact that it is often used as a measure of how effectively schools are in achieving their primary goal of producing knowledgeable, skilled and competent individuals who can contribute meaningfully to national development. Students' academic performance determines not only their individual progress but also the overall quality of education in a society. When students perform poorly, it signals possible weakness in instructional delivery, inadequate teacher



preparation, or other systemic challenges that hinder educational quality and effectiveness. Hence, understanding the factors that predict students' academic performance is crucial in promoting educational improvement and sustainable national growth.

Academic performance generally refers to the level of achievement a student attains in his/her educational pursuits, often measured through continuous assessments, examinations and other forms of evaluation. It reflects the extent to which a student has mastered the required knowledge, skills and attitudes expected at a particular level of education. According to Akinola (2022), academic performance encompasses cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning which together provide a holistic picture of a learner's educational attainment. In Nigerian secondary schools, performance is typically assessed through internal and external examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO) test. However, evidence from recent studies (Adeniji & Olatunji, 2023) indicates that the level of students' academic performance, particularly in public secondary schools has been declining. This decline raises serious questions about the adequacy of teaching methods, teacher competence, career orientation and other environmental or personal factors that influence how students learn and achieve.

The level of students' academic performance in many public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area appears to be inconsistent and in several cases, below expectation. Reports from educational stakeholders and examination bodies reveal that a large number of students struggle to attain credit level passes in core subjects such as Mathematics and English Language. Factors contributing to this low performance include lack of motivation, poor study habit, inadequate school facilities, ineffective instructional strategies, and insufficient teacher guidance on career choices (Imoroa, 2025). Many students in these schools do not receive proper academic and career mentorship which limits their capacity to make informed decisions about their educational pathways. Similarly, when teachers lack professional competence or fail to apply effective pedagogical practices, students' learning outcomes suffer. Therefore, addressing students' academic performance challenges requires a careful examination of the teachers' qualities and the career capacity of both teachers and students, as these are key determinants of classroom success.

Teachers' qualities constitute one of the most critical factors influencing students' academic performance. The quality of a teacher can be described in terms of their educational qualification, teaching experience, subject mastery, pedagogical skills, communication ability, and professional commitment. According to Eze and Nwosu (2023), teacher quality is one of the strongest school-related predictors of student achievement. A highly qualified and motivated teacher not only delivers lessons effectively but also inspires students to develop a love for learning. Conversely, when teachers lack adequate training, commitment or instructional competence, students are more likely to experience academic difficulties. In many Nigerian public schools, disparities in teacher quality have been identified as a major contributor to uneven performance levels among students. Teachers with strong professional ethics, sound content knowledge and positive attitudes toward students tend to foster better academic engagement and achievement. Therefore, improving teacher quality is indispensable for raising the standard of education in Esan Central Local Government Area and beyond.

Career capacity on the other hand, refers to the ability of teachers and students to make informed, purposeful and effective career-related decisions that influence learning and future aspirations. It includes awareness of career opportunities, understanding of personal interests and abilities and possession of the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue chosen career paths successfully. According to Shahjahan et al. (2021), students' career capacity enhances their sense of purpose and motivation to excel academically. When students understand how their present studies connect to future career goals, they are more likely to engage meaningfully in learning activities. Likewise, teachers with strong career capacity act as mentors, guiding students in setting realistic educational and vocational goals. Unfortunately, many students in public secondary schools lack proper career guidance and exposure to real world career expectations, resulting in low motivation and unclear academic direction. Thus, building both teachers' and students' career capacity can significantly enhance learning effectiveness and academic performance.



Considering these perspectives, it becomes evident that career capacity and teacher quality are interrelated predictors of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. When teachers possess high professional quality and strong career capacity, they are better positioned to mentor students effectively, align instruction with students' aspirations and create an engaging learning environment. Conversely, when teachers are under qualified, demotivated or lack proper career orientation, students may experience confusion, poor learning attitudes and low achievement. Therefore, investigating how career capacity and teacher quality jointly predict students' academic performance is vital for identifying strategies to enhance educational standards. The present study thus seeks to determine strategies to enhance educational standards. The present study thus seeks to determine the extent to which career capacity and teacher quality influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria.

A review of past studies shows that much work has been done on factors affecting students' academic performance but important gaps remain. For example, Ozuome et al. (2024) examined the link between self-efficacy and academic achievement among secondary school students in Imo State. The study involved 860 SS2 students and used a reliable self-efficacy scale. Results showed that students with higher self-confidence to performance, it did not consider teachers' quality or career capacity as influencing factors. It also focused on only English and Mathematics, not the broader secondary school context hence this study is relevant. Obadiaru (2020) analyzed trends in students' performance in Computer studies in Rivers States between 2014 and 2018. The study used existing WAEC results and found that students performed well in the subjects during the five years period. This study relied only on WAEC results and did not examine the role of teachers' qualifications or career-related skills of students. It was more descriptive than predictive and this make this current research more relevant. Nnamni and Oyibe (2016) studied how gender affects' academic achievement in social studies in Ebonyi State. Using achievement test and statistical analysis, they found that female students generally performed better than male though both gender had high performance. Study examined gender but ignored teacher quality and students' career capacity as factors influencing performance. Shahjahan et al. (2021) examined factors influencing poor academic performance among urban university students in Bangladesh. Result showed that there is a need for implementing an appropriate counseling strategy to follow up the academic performance of the poor performing students. However, the study was carried out in a foreign context, focusing on university students rather than secondary schools in Nigeria. Olanipekun (2015) analysis students' academic performance in General English in Kwara State College of Education (Tech.) Lafiagi, Nigeria. Found that students performed poorly in General English at College of Education in Kwara State, but this study addressed tertiary students and one subject area only. Abisola (2017) examined study habits and academic performance of secondary school students in Mathematics. Findings showed that the level of students academic performance was low. Study addressed study habits but ignored teacher factors and students' career readiness, study was subject-specific (Mathematics) and location-specific. Igberadja (2016) assesses the effects of teachers' gender and qualifications on students' achievement in industrial safety. The findings revealed that teachers' educational qualifications significantly predicted students' academic achievement in the study area. But the studies were subject specific and did not consider wider factors such as career readiness. Owolabi, Adedayo and Olugbenga, (2012) examined the effect of teachers' qualifications on senior secondary school students' achievement in Physics. The findings further confirmed that educational qualification was a significant predictor of students' academic achievement in Physics in Ekiti State. Study narrow focus on Physics only, did not consider career capacity or other teacher related qualities beyond qualification. Olusola, Gbadegesin and Adu (2015) investigated school input factors and teacher effectiveness in public secondary schools in selected local government area of Lagos State. Findings showed that teachers' effectiveness and school inputs in Lagos strongly related to students' performance but research work excluded career capacity as a predictor. Umasankar and Pranab (2016) studied the level of teaching effectiveness among secondary school teachers in Purba Medinipur district f West Bengal. The findings showed that overall teaching effectiveness in the district was good and that there was a significant relationship between teachers' educational qualifications and students' academic

achievement. Study was conducted in a foreign context, making generalization to Nigeria secondary schools difficult. It also overlooked career capacity. Xiaoyan et al. (2016) explored the relationship between teachers' overall teaching experience in public schools and students academic achievement in Western New York State. The results showed a moderate negative relationship between years of teaching experience and satisfaction with operating procedures, meaning that as teachers gained more years of experience, they became less satisfied due to heavy workloads. However, study did not establish a strong link to students' achievement and excluded career capacity. Also, context differs significantly from Nigerian secondary schools. Ade (2019) studied the relationship between teachers' teaching experience and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings showed that schools with more teachers having five or more years of teaching experience achieved better result in the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) examinations than schools with mostly teachers having less than five years of experience. Study linked teachers' qualifications and years of experience to better student outcomes but they did not go further to investigate how students' career capacity might interact with teacher quality to influence academic performance. Taken together, most of these studies either focused narrowly on one subject, one variable or a different educational context. Hannah (2018) determined the extent to which teachers' educational qualifications and years of experience influenced students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Rivers State. The results showed that teachers' educational qualifications and years of teaching experience were related to students' academic achievement scores. Study looked at teaching experience only, not broader aspects of teacher quality or students career capacity. Okose and Obiunu (2024) examined the influence of teachers' years of teaching experience and qualification on students' academic performance in basic education certificate examination in basic science in Delta State. The results were inconclusive regarding the effect of degree level alone on students' academic achievement. However, the findings showed that years of experience as well as the interaction between years of experience and degree level, had an effect on students' academic performance in basic education certificate examination in basic science in Delta State achievement in both communication art and mathematics. Study focused on foreign context, subject limited and not account for student career preparedness.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the declining level of students' academic performance in public secondary schools across Nigeria has continued to raise serious concern among educators, parents and policymakers. In Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, reports from examination bodies such as WAEC and NECO indicate that many students perform below expected standards, especially in core subjects like English Language and Mathematics. This persistent underachievement questions the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and suggests that several critical factors influencing students' performance may not have been adequately addressed. Observations reveal that many students lack proper career direction, motivation and academic focus, which are essential components of meaningful learning. Similarly, many teachers in public secondary schools seems to experience professional gaps in subject mastery, classroom management and instructional competence, all of which may be linked to inadequate career capacity and variations in teacher quality. Despite the importance of teacher quality and career capacity in improving students' academic outcome, limited empirical studies have focused on how these two factors jointly predict students' academic performance in Esan Central Local Government Area. Many existing interventions emphasize infrastructural improvement and curriculum reform, while less attention is given to enhancing teachers' professional quality and students' career readiness. Consequently, the persistent low achievement among students could be a reflection of poor teacher quality, weak career guidance structure and inadequate mentorship in schools. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the extent to which teachers' qualities and career capacity predict students academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. Findings from such an investigation could provide evidence based insights for improving teacher development programs, strengthening career guidance systems and ultimately enhancing students' academic achievement in the region.

Research Questions

- a) What is the level of students academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area?
- b) To what extent does teachers' quality influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area?
- c) To what extent does career capacity of a teacher influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

- a) To what extent does teachers' quality influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area?
- b) To what extent does career capacity of a teacher influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area?

Methodology

The study used a correlational research design because it focused on examining the relationship between career capacity, teachers' quality and students' academic performance in the study area. The population consisted of all 50 teachers in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area, since the numbers of teachers were small, the entire population served as the sample. Two instruments were used: Career Capacity and Teachers' Quality Questionnaire (CACATEQUQ) and the 2022/2023 NECO results in Mathematics and English Language from schools in the area. The NECO results were grouped into high and low academic outcomes, with a mean score above 2.50 considered high and below 2.50 considered low. The instruments were validated through face and content validity, while reliability was confirmed using the split-half method yielding a coefficient of 0.70, which was considered acceptable. The scales in the instruments were therefore suitable for use in the study. Data analysis was done using mean and standard deviation to answer research question 1, while simple linear regression was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 at 0.05 significance level.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of students academic outcome in Mathematics and English Language in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area?

Table 1: Level of students academic outcome

S/N	ITEMS	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	REMARK
1	Mathematics	50	2.34	0.85	Low
2	English Language	50	2.42	1.09	Low
	Total mean		2.38		Low

The result from table 1 shows that students had a low level of performance in both Mathematics and English Language. The mean score for Mathematics was 2.34 with a standard deviation of 0.85, while the mean score for English Language was 2.42 with a standard deviation of 1.09. The total mean of 2.38 indicates that, on average, students' performance in these subjects was generally low. Hence the level of students academic outcome in Mathematics and English Language in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area was low.

Hypothesis 1: Teachers' career capacity do not significantly predict students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area.

Table 2: Analysis on Teachers' career capacity and Students Academic Performance

R = .159 ^a Actual R ² = .025 Adjusted R ² = .022 F(1, 49) = 7.009						
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	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t-val.	p-val.	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
Model							
(Constant)	34.517	2.671			12.925	.000	Significant
Teachers' Career Capacity	.284	.107	.159		2.647	.009	Significant

a. Dependent Variable: Students Academic Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Teachers' Career Capacity

*t-values and f-value are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

Result from table 2 shows that teachers' career capacity has a positive and significant influence on students' academic performance ($\beta = 0.284$, $p = 0.009$). Although the relationship is weak ($R = 0.159$) and explains only about 2.5% of the variation in performance ($R^2 = 0.025$), the effect is statistically significant. This means that an improvement in teachers' career capacity can lead to a corresponding, though small, improvement in students' academic performance. So therefore, teachers' career capacity do significantly predict students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area.

Hypothesis 2: Teachers' quality do not significantly predict students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area.

Table 3: Analysis on Teachers' Quality and Students Academic Performance

R = .212 ^a Actual R ² = .045 Adjusted R ² = .041 F(1, 49) = 12.651						
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	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients		t-val.	p-val.	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
Model							
(Constant)	34.50	2.004			17.216	.000	Significant
Teachers' Quality	.278	.078	.212		3.557	.000	Significant

a. Dependent Variable: Students Academic Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Teachers' Quality

Result from table 3 shows that teachers' quality has a positive and significant effect on students' academic performance ($\beta = 0.278$, $p = 0.000$). Although the relationship is weak ($R = 0.212$) and explains only about 45% of the variation in performance ($R^2 = 0.045$), the effect is statistically meaningful. This means that higher teachers' quality leads to an improvement in students' academic performance. Therefore, teachers' quality do significantly predict students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area.

Discussion of Results

Result from table 1 showed that the level of students academic outcome in Mathematics and English in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area was low. The turnout of this result can largely be explained by deficiencies in teachers' career capacity and quality because teachers' career capacity which encompasses their professional skills, pedagogical competence, subject mastery and continuous professional development plays a decisive role in determining how effectively they can facilitate learning and improve students' achievement. Result align with Shahjahan et al. (2021) who's result showed that there is a need for implementing an appropriate counseling strategy to follow up the academic performance of the poor performing students. Result agreed with Olanipekun (2015) who find that students performed poorly in General English at College of Education in Kwara State. Result supported that of Abisola (2017) who's findings showed that the level of students academic performance was low. Result disagreed with Ozuome et al. (2024) who's study used existing WAEC results and found that students performed well in the subjects during the five years period. Result also disagreed with Nnamni and Oyibe (2016) who found that female students generally performed better than male though both gender had high performance.

Result from table 2 showed that teacher's career capacity significantly predicts students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. When teachers possess high career capacity, they are better equipped to create stimulating learning environment, apply innovative teaching methods and adapt their instruction to meet students' learning needs all of which translate into improved academic performance. Result agreed with Igberadja (2018) who's findings revealed that teachers' educational qualifications significantly predicted students' academic achievement in the study area. Result supported that of Owolabi (2017) who's findings further confirmed that educational qualification was a significant predictor of students' academic achievement in Physics in Ekiti State. Result is in line with Olusola, Gbadegesin and Adu (2017) who's findings showed that teachers' effectiveness and school inputs in Lagos strongly related to students' performance but research work excluded career capacity as a predictor. Result align with Umasankar and Pranab (2016) who's findings showed that overall teaching effectiveness in the district was good and that there was a significant relationship between teachers' educational qualifications and students' academic achievement.

Result from table 3 showed that teachers' quality significantly predicts students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. Teachers' quality is widely recognized as one of the most critical school relate factors influencing students' learning outcome. High quality teachers are capable of transforming classroom instruction into meaningful learning experiences, fostering students' intellectual curiosity and ensuring that educational objective are achieved. Result supported the findings of Xiaoyan et al. (2019) who's results showed a moderate negative relationship between years of teaching experience and satisfaction with operating procedures, meaning that as teachers gained more years of experience, they became less satisfied due to heavy workloads. Result is in line with that of Ade (2019) who's findings showed that schools with more teachers having five or more years of teaching experience achieved better result in the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) examinations than schools with mostly teachers having less than five years of experience. Result agreed with that of Hannah (2018) who's results showed that teachers' educational qualifications and years of teaching experience were related to students' academic achievement scores.

Conclusion

The study concluded that career capacity and teachers quality do significantly predict students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area. These variables both individually and together play important roles in determining how well students perform academically. Therefore, for students to improve their academic performance, teachers, principals and Governments must understand how these variables influence academic outcome.



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