



The Effects of Teacher Diversity on Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary Students in Sokoto State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of teacher diversity on students' academic achievement in senior secondary schools within Sokoto State, Nigeria. A quasi-experimental design was employed with 332 SSII students and eight teachers across four schools. Pre- and post- tests in English and Mathematics were administered, and the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that students taught by diverse teachers achieved significantly higher scores ($M = 64.8$) compared to those taught by local teachers ($M = 55.6$; $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that teacher diversity significantly enhances student academic performance. It recommends that the Federal Ministry of Education implement equitable teacher recruitment and exchange programmes to diversify classrooms and improve academic outcomes nationwide.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of teacher diversity in improving students' academic outcomes has become increasingly recognized in global and Nigerian educational research. Across the world, scholars, policymakers, and practitioners agree that education is not merely a process of knowledge transfer, but also a medium for shaping attitudes, values, and worldviews. Within this process, teachers serve as role models, mediators, and facilitators of learning. When students are exposed to teachers of different cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, they are presented with varied perspectives, teaching approaches, and worldviews that broaden their cognitive development and social adaptability. This exposure has been shown to enhance student engagement, learning motivation, and ultimately academic success.

Globally, the recognition of teacher diversity stems from the increasing multicultural nature of societies. In countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa, the educational system has had to respond to changing demographics brought about by migration, globalization, and cultural integration. These nations have witnessed debates and reforms concerning the composition of the teaching workforce to better reflect the diversity of the student population. Research in these contexts has consistently shown that students from minority or marginalized groups perform better when they encounter teachers who either share their cultural identity or who are well-trained in cross-cultural teaching competencies. Such teachers are often better able to understand the unique learning needs of their students, reduce bias in instructional delivery, and promote inclusive classroom environments.

In the Nigerian context, the debate on teacher diversity is relatively recent but equally important. Nigeria is a country of immense cultural, linguistic, and religious plurality, with over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 indigenous languages. Despite this diversity, the composition of the teaching workforce in most states has remained largely homogeneous, often reflecting the dominant socio-cultural group in the region. For example, in Sokoto State, many teachers are recruited from the same ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds as their students. While this homogeneity may promote familiarity and comfort, it inadvertently limits the exposure of students to broader cultural and intellectual perspectives. The absence of teacher diversity may therefore contribute to narrow worldviews, reduced critical thinking, and limited preparedness for participation in Nigeria's complex and interconnected society.

Teacher diversity is not only about ethnicity or language. It also encompasses gender, professional experiences, educational training, socio-economic background, and exposure to different pedagogical orientations. A diverse teaching workforce enriches the classroom environment by incorporating different problem-solving strategies, teaching methodologies, and motivational techniques. For example, female teachers

often bring unique perspectives to subjects traditionally dominated by male teachers, which can positively influence girls' academic aspirations and self-concept. Similarly, teachers trained in different parts of the country or abroad may introduce innovative teaching styles that break the monotony of conventional approaches. These variations can significantly enhance learning outcomes by catering to diverse student learning needs.

Furthermore, the relevance of teacher diversity is reinforced by several theoretical frameworks. From the lens of social learning theory, students model behaviors, attitudes, and skills from those they observe in authority figures such as teachers. When students encounter teachers with varied experiences and perspectives, they are more likely to develop broader cognitive repertoires and interpersonal competencies. Critical pedagogy also highlights the importance of diversity in challenging oppressive or biased knowledge systems. By introducing alternative viewpoints, diverse teachers empower students to critically evaluate information and develop independent thinking skills. In addition, contact theory suggests that meaningful interaction with individuals from diverse backgrounds reduces prejudice and fosters social cohesion, outcomes that are equally vital within the classroom environment.

Despite these potential benefits, teacher diversity in Nigeria faces several systemic challenges. Recruitment processes are often influenced by local politics, nepotism, and socio-cultural preferences, resulting in limited openness to candidates from outside the immediate community. Teacher deployment policies also tend to reinforce homogeneity, as educators are commonly posted to schools within their states of origin. Moreover, economic constraints and security concerns discourage teachers from relocating across states or regions. These dynamics reduce opportunities for students to experience a variety of teaching approaches and perspectives.

In Sokoto State, these challenges are particularly visible. The state, located in the far northwest of Nigeria, is historically and culturally rich, yet its teaching workforce does not fully reflect Nigeria's diversity. Most teachers come from the dominant Hausa.

Objective of the Study

1. To determine the difference in learning outcomes of students taught by diverse teachers and those taught by local teachers.

Hypothesis

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between the learning outcomes of students taught by diverse teachers and those taught by local teachers.

METHODOLOGY

A quasi-experimental research design was adopted. The

study population comprised 2,588 SSII students and 37 teachers in public secondary schools under the Ministry of Science and Technical Education, Sokoto. The sample consisted of 332 students and eight teachers, selected through purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling. Two schools served as experimental groups

(diverse teachers) and two as control groups (local teachers). Pre- and post-tests in English and Mathematics were validated by experts and demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$ and 0.79). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent t-tests.

RESULTS

Table 1: Difference between Diverse Teachers and Learning Teachers Outcomes

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Diverse Teachers (166),	166/166	64.8 / 55.6	8.2 / 9.5	4.67	0.000	Reject H_0
Local Teachers (166)						

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that teacher diversity significantly enhances academic performance in secondary schools. Data revealed that students who were exposed to teachers from diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds performed better academically than their counterparts taught exclusively by teachers from local, homogeneous backgrounds. This suggests that diversity within the teaching workforce introduces new perspectives, teaching styles, and motivational strategies that stimulate student interest and engagement in learning. Exposure to varied viewpoints challenges students to think more critically, adapt to different communication styles, and broaden their intellectual horizons beyond the limitations of their immediate environment (Dee, 2004; Egalite & Kisida, 2018).

This outcome is consistent with the growing body of international research emphasizing the role of teacher diversity in shaping student achievement. Studies conducted in multicultural societies have demonstrated that when students interact with teachers who bring diverse life experiences, they are more likely to feel represented, inspired, and supported in their learning journeys (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Such teachers can serve as role models, helping students to develop confidence, resilience, and aspirations for higher academic attainment. Diversity among teachers also enhances inclusivity, as students from minority groups often identify more strongly with educators who reflect their cultural or social background, thereby fostering a stronger sense of belonging and reducing barriers to participation (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011).

In the Nigerian context, where teaching staff often share similar socio-cultural identities with students, the introduction of diverse teachers presents an opportunity to bridge gaps in knowledge, skills, and

worldviews. By offering students access to new teaching methods and perspectives, diverse teachers expand their capacity to succeed in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world (Okeke & Anyaegbu, 2021). This aligns with broader educational reform goals that seek to prepare students not just for local relevance but also for global competitiveness. Therefore, the evidence underscores the urgent need for policies and interventions that deliberately encourage teacher diversity in recruitment, training, and deployment, as a means of improving academic performance and enriching the overall learning experience in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

Teacher diversity significantly improves student academic achievement in Sokoto State.

Recommendations

1. Teachers Service Board should ensure equitable recruitment and deployment of teachers across states.
2. Federal Ministry of Education and State Ministries of Education should reintroduce teacher exchange programmes across Nigeria.
3. National Commission for Colleges of Education and National University Commission should embed cultural responsiveness and diversity awareness in teacher education curricula.

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