

Original Research Article

## A Survey of Teachers Opinion on Academic Achievement Analysis, Student Centered Teaching and Symptoms of Speaking and Reading Problems in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt

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**Abstract:** Formal education no doubt is a challenging venture. The daunting challenge therein basically lies in the hands of teachers who are professionally tasked to translate stated educational aims, goals and objectives into worthwhile learning experiences. Teachers therefore are the middle men entrusted with the responsibility to bridge the gap between theory and practice. In the course of practice, teachers tend to develop specific notions or opinions about the issues that affect them. And these go a long way to influence the way they relate to certain if not most educational issues. It is for this reason that the study surveyed teachers' opinion on topical educational issues in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education among which are; academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities (speaking and reading problems). The surveyed teachers were found to have eclectic view of academic achievement analysis, their views towards student centered teaching is quite dynamic while their notion regarding symptoms of speaking and reading problems most especially in the areas of screening and therapeutic recommendation is myopic and requires improvement.

**Keywords:** Teachers Opinion Speaking Reading Formal education.

### INTRODUCTION

Teachers occupy a pride of place in our society. They are held in high esteem by virtue of their profession. The teaching profession is eclectic in nature and/or nurture. The job descriptions of teachers attest to this. In our society, teachers suffice as nation builders, substitute parents, reservoirs of knowledge, imparters of knowledge, organizers of learning, models and modelers, inter alia. Their words in the view of with Iwundu (2019) are unchallengeable as they are reputable authorities in our world. The process of teacher preparation exposes them to the requisite and exquisite knowledge; skills and values needed to make children and adults learn and/or earn (Agina- Obu, 2005). Their interaction with students in the course of practice equally goes a long way to enrich their experiences about students. The teacher - student relationship is such a sensitive one that it can be used to diagnose and prognose, analyze and synthesize, rectify and/or revivify relevant issues. The teacher therefore is a reputable resource person when it comes to extracting information about topical educational issues (Iwundu; 2004). Adiele, Leigha and Abraham (2010) espoused that a teacher is an academic professional trained in procedural and declarative knowledge, attitude and standard of behavior needed for effective teaching. The qualities of an effective teacher include but are not limited to; mastery of subject matter, counseling or advising of students, professional self-development, interpersonal relationship, classroom management, assessment, evaluation, curriculum development and readiness to voice opinion on topical issues. The present study is concerned with teachers' opinion on essential issues that affect the educational process. Opinion as a concept word deals with a view or judgment formed or held about something. It is equally a statement of advice by an expert on a professional matter. In this study, opinion is packaged as a judgment, view point, or statement that is inconclusive. What this means is that such point of view is subjective and/ or subject to verification. Opinion therefore is used in lieu of perspective, belief, notion, impression or personal expression. Opinion is decisive in that it can affect an individual's

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attitude or stance as regards a phenomenon of interest given the nature of human character and behavior. This underscores the relevance of this study.

Educational advancements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have given rise to the emergence of lots of topical issues. Prominent among such issues are academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities. Academic achievement analysis is gradually becoming a household word in today's world. It deals with the consideration or breaking down of academic achievement into tit bits for proper appreciation. It seeks to answer questions on the how, what and why of academic achievement. The how question deals with the procedure or process of academic achievement. It seeks to ascertain the approach adopted by students which gave rise to a given outcome (result). What question deals with resources, requisites or pre-requisites for academic achievement. In other words, what questions seek to elicit the inputs or the things that are responsible for academic achievement. Why questions look at the rationale, reason or motive behind a given academic achievement. They normally focus on; motivation, drive, cue, response or reward that characterize a given outcome. Implicit in the above exposition is the fact that academic achievement analysis is a complex venture. This is so, because academic achievement as a phenomenon of interest deals with what students or pupils have been able to gain in school. It is the extent to which those committed to the educational process have been able to actualize or realize set goals. It is equally a quantification of one's academic attainment or qualification (Hammond, 2000; Sophie, & Chamorroremuzic 2011). Given the broad nature of learning which cuts across the cognitive, affective and psycho productive domains, there have been lots of opinions and counter opinions pertaining to academic achievement analysis in our society (Agina-Obu, 2005 & Inko-Taria 2004). The opinions of teachers pertaining to the phenomenon of consternation are therefore needed to foster proper understanding of the subject matter and ensconce utmost development. Student centered teaching is one of the nouveau schemes in our system of education. It is a paradigm shift or departure from the culture of teacher centered teaching. Under this new approach, the teacher assumes a passive role in the classroom. He or she provides or creates an enabling environment for learning to thrive while the students actively participate in it. Lessons under this approach are usually designed in content and function to serve the needs of the students and not the teachers. The approach turns teachers to mere facilitators while the learners take the centre stage. More and more persons are beginning to express their views about the entire process and most of such views are conflicting (Mba, 2010). It is therefore imperative to examine teachers' opinion about it as they are at the center of the entire controversy.

Symptoms of learning disability are somewhat difficult to unravel or unmask. This is so because most learning disabilities are relatively hidden or obscure. One only gets to know them when they manifest. Funny enough, there is no device anywhere that can be placed on a child to find out whether he or she has a learning disability or not and this is not only bothersome but also worrisome considering the observable decline or declines in academic achievement in our society. Jones (2007) espoused that learning disability is a snag in the process or means of acquiring knowledge, skill or value without any underlying brain damage. The existent or underlying learning disabilities in our society are dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, aphasia and visual motor-in-coordination. Dyslexia is a learning disability characterized by difficulty in reading, dysgraphia is a difficulty in writing while dyscalculia is an unusual difficulty in mathematical operations; aphasia on its part deals with difficulty in communication while; visual motor-incoordination deals with the inability to harmonize eye and hand movement. It could equally manifest as distorted perception (Goncalves & Crennte 2014). Südkamp, Kaiser, Möller (2016) espoused that teacher judgments of student achievement have considerable impact on students' learning experiences and educational trajectories. Also, many instructional decisions are determined by teachers' subjective judgments of their students' achievement. The ability to accurately gauge student outcomes is therefore one of the key characteristics of a good teacher. On this note, Sharma (2016) conducted a research study aimed at investigating the effect of teacher support, locale and sex on academic achievement. For this purpose initially larger number of students studying in government schools of Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh State were selected out of which 646 students were retained as final sample. To measure the academic achievement of the students, over all marks obtained by the students in different subjects (such as-Hindi, English, Mathematics, Science, & Social Science) in class 10th board examination was used. The dependent variable of the study was academic achievement and independent variables were teacher support, locale and sex. To analyze the data; descriptive statistics, and ANOVA technique were used. The ANOVA analysis revealed that teacher support and locale affect independently as well as jointly the academic achievement whereas role of sex was not found to be significant.

In a similar vein, Zeki and Güneyli (2014) investigated student teachers' perceptions about their experiences in a student centered course. The aim of this research was to examine the currently used curriculum of EGIT 450 Student Centered Education (SCE) course to highlight suggestions for a better design and implementation of the SCE approach. A qualitative paradigm was used with an interpretive methodology. The participants of the study were the 37 third year undergraduate students enrolled in the course at one of the tertiary institutions in North Cyprus. Qualitative data were collected through end-of-the-semester reflective essays and analyzed through content analysis method. The findings revealed that SCE methodology helped improve student teachers' cognitive skills via holding an active role and their affective skills through group work activities emphasizing its effect on permanent learning and learning how to learn.

Participants also pointed out the difficulty and complexity of the roles expected from the teacher and learners individually and cooperatively. The inefficiency of some of the teaching-learning activities, physical characteristics of the classroom setting and duration of the allocated time for the activities were among the weak aspects of the course.

Lim (2014) investigated teachers' views of student-centered learning approach. The study explored teachers' views of SCL approach through individual in-depth interviews. Various themes emerged from the interviews. The findings provides evidence that teachers who exposed students to some elements of SCL, saw students actively engaged in the learning process, aware of their own responsibilities, sense of autonomy in learning and learned from their experiences. However, there were some challenges and constraints faced by teachers in implementing SCL approach.

Salleh and Yusoff (2017) investigated teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the use of Student-Centered Learning in English language classes. In addition, it also sought to examine the extent of the impact of student-centered learning practices amongst primary school teachers on their students' performance in the English language. A survey was carried out to collect data from 147 primary school English language teachers in Perlis. The questionnaires were used to determine the teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards student-centered learning and to measure the extent teachers practice or attempt to practice student-centered learning in their classrooms. The results for March Test and mid-term examinations were also collected from 346 respondents of Year Five students to determine the relationship between student-centered learning practices and the students' achievement. The findings of this research showed that there were positive attitudes of the English language teachers towards student-centered learning. However, the teachers employ both student-centered and teacher-centered learning strategies in teaching English language for the primary school. Apart from that, the findings also revealed that there was a positive relationship between student-centered learning practices and students' achievement in the English language subject but the relationship was found to be weak.

Yilmaz (2008) explored social studies teachers' views of learner- centered instruction and learning theories by employing the methods and procedures of the qualitative research tradition. In- depth, semi- structured interviews were conducted with the participants. The techniques and strategies of inductive qualitative data analysis were used to analyze the interview transcripts. The results showed that the participants had positive attitudes toward learner- centered instruction which they believed has the potential to make instruction engaging, enjoyable, involving, challenging, and relevant to students' learning. The teachers identified their teaching orientations more with the cognitive and constructivist approach than the behaviorist approach. The teachers' responses indicated the impact of the community on their views and practices.

Otara, Uworwabayeho and Nzabairwa (2019) investigated teachers' attitudes toward Learner Centered Pedagogy in public primary schools located in Nyarugenge District. A sample size of 165 teachers was selected from 13 public and government-aided primary schools. Simple percentages, and chi-square analysis were used to analyze data, and the findings were triangulated with questionnaire and interview responses. Results show that primary school teachers manifested negative attitude toward LCP. The study also indicates that both institutional and individual factors, such as insufficient and inadequate trainings, lack of clear indicators on LCP, and lack of prior experience on LCP among colleges and university tutors during pre-service training, affect the attitude of teachers. It was further revealed that gender does not influence the attitude of teachers; however, training was found to be significant at .05 level. It is therefore important that authorities ensure proper training to head teacher, school subject leaders, and teachers on LCP and avail clear indicators on those methods.

Rudiyati (2010) investigated teachers' knowledge and experience dealing with students with learning disabilities in inclusive elementary school inYogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia; and its implication in providing learning accommodations and modifications for students with learning disabilities. This study employed descriptive qualitative research Method Data collection techniques by observation and questionnaire. Observation guides in the form of a checklist of students with learning disabilities that arise based on the knowledge and experience of teachers, and questionnaire along with the efforts of teachers to accommodate and modify learning. Results showed that the teachers still do not know how to distinguish children with learning disabilities among children with learning difficulties.

Padhy, Goel and Das et al. (2015) investigated perceptions of teachers about learning disorder in a northern city of India. The study was a cross-sectional questionnaire-based study in the public schools located in the urban, rural and slum areas of Chandigarh. Teachers were recruited from 20 randomly selected schools out of a total of 103 schools in the Union Territory by proportionate sampling. The sample size required for  $\alpha$  of 0.05 and power of 0.80 to detect a difference of 15% from base rate of 35% was 80. Eighty teachers of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades of these schools were recruited using purposive sampling. Teachers were briefed for 5 minutes about the symptoms of LD. They were asked questions using a structured questionnaire about their socio-demographic status, methods of teaching, and students' progress and their perception about LD. Descriptive statistics was mainly used to represent nominal and ordinal data using frequency counts and percentages. Non-parametric statistical tests were used to assess relationship between the variables. Eighty

teachers were recruited, 87.5% were females, 57.5% had more than 5 years teaching experience; 56.3% of teachers thought that they were aware of LD, 67.5% of teachers perceived that they do encounter children with LD in the school, 43.8% endorsed educating such children in special schools, while 36.3% endorsed integration to regular schools. Interestingly, more than three fifth of teachers were willing to undergo special training for LD intervention if given the opportunity.

Narasimha (2016) investigated attitude of primary school teachers towards children with learning disabilities. The sample for the study consisted of 200 primary school teachers in Bangalore South from 16 schools. The findings of the study revealed that on a general note, the teachers had less favorable attitude towards inclusion of children with learning disabilities in regular schools. Female teachers had favorable attitude towards helping children with learning disabilities on overall scores of PSTALD scale compared to male counterparts. Apart from this, unaided school teachers and teachers with higher education had statistically significant positive ( $p < 0.05$ ) attitude on all the domains of PSTALD scale compared to other categories. The findings of the study evince the need for bringing awareness to change the attitude towards inclusion and bringing children with learning disabilities into the educational mainstream.

Until now, little or no studies have been conducted on teachers' opinion on academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities in Rivers State. It became necessary therefore to fill the missing link or gap by investigating teachers opinion on academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities in Ignatius Ajuru, University of Education, Port Harcourt.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ignatius Ajuru University of education remains a citadel of academic and moral excellence in Rivers State. It is the epicenter of educational advancement and attendant development in the State. Qualitative teacher education is one of its mandates. The institution is a renowned centre for the formation and transformation of 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers in the State. It houses demonstration; basic, undergraduate and graduate schools that strive to meet the educational needs of young, intermediate and advanced learners, Hence, whatever notion that the teachers in the State university of education have is sure to affect a whole lot of people if not generation advertently or inadvertently. Being an institution devoted to teacher education, whatever be the prevalent opinion therein on topical issues such as, academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities will go a long way to influence how its products (teachers) will relate to students in the course of their professional practice. If the prevalent notion or opinion is good, the reaction of a whole generation of teachers regarding the issues of interest will most likely be favorable and vice versa. On a negative note, the likely impact of the opinion of the teachers is better imagined than experienced. There is therefore a need to investigate the opinion of teachers regarding the phenomenon of interest. The problem of the study is to investigate teachers opinion on academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities.

## Thesis Statement

A survey of teachers' opinion on academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers opinion on academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt.

## Specifically, the study intends to investigate and provide validation on

- Types of speaking and reading problems;
- Symptoms of speaking and reading problems;
- Etiology of speaking and reading problems;
- Problems of speaking and reading problems;
- Issues in identification of speaking and reading problems;
- Psycho educational screening of speaking and reading problems;
- Recommended psychotherapy of speaking and reading problems;
- The how and why of the recommended psychotherapy of speaking and reading problems.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design. It was qualitative in approach. The population encompassed all the teachers in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Fifty (50) teachers were sampled in the State's institute of education. The teachers were interviewed and their opinions pertaining to the topical issues were elicited thematically and documented.



## RESULTS

The results and findings of the study are quite interesting. Majority of the interviewed teachers expressed positive views over academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities. As regards academic achievement analysis, the teachers were of the view that it should be approached from an eclectic point of view. To them, families, schools and students all contribute to what manifest as academic achievement. The interviewed teachers acquiesced that academic achievement analysis should cut across the cognitive, affective and psycho-productive domains. It should not be solely intellectual based as it is practiced in some schools. This in the view of the researcher and in agreement with the views expressed by Agina-Obu, (2005) and Sophie and Chamorroremuzic (2011) is a healthy opinion as regards academic achievement analysis. Pertaining to student centered teaching, the interviewed teachers seem to be divided in their opinion towards it; with some expressing support and/or approval and others visible resentment. Those in approval of the teaching method regard it as a step in the right direction. To them, the approach is a way of saving students from the shackles of teacher centered teaching method which leaves the students as passive receivers in the educational process. Conversely, those against student centered teaching believe that the approach relegates them to the background in classrooms and creates a lacuna that the learners can leverage upon to become delinquent. These consolidate the findings of Lim (2014) and Salleh and Yussof (2017). The use of student centered teaching is rife with controversy and as such, it is consolidated with teacher centered teaching. Ignatius Ajuru University of education as a teacher preparation school takes time to groom teachers on the nuances of teaching with special emphasis on andragogue and pedagogue. They hinge the professionalization process on foundational courses such as; Educational Psychology, Educational Philosophy, History of education and Sociology of Education to mention but a few. These courses are sort of ambivalent when it comes to the projection/protection of a given teaching approach. The teachers are left to choose the approach to adopt. Howbeit, the researcher will not fail to aver that the process of teacher education in Nigeria in general and in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in particular has bias for teacher centered teaching and this is consequential.

As regards symptoms of learning disability, the teachers demonstrated mastery of the subject matter as well as humane stance towards the children with learning disabilities. To be concise, they opined that; the types of speaking problems in vogue are; stuttering, apraxia, dysarthria, voice disorders involving the larynx (voice box) and aphasia. Concomitantly, the teachers espoused that the existent reading difficulties are; dysphonia (auditory), dyseidisia (visual), dysnemesia and dysphonidia. They identified the symptoms of the identified speaking problems as repetition of words, addition of extra sounds, and elongation of words, making of jerky movements, blinking several times while talking and visible frustration. On the other hand, the symptoms of reading problems as put forward by them include; problems sounding out words, difficulty recognizing constituent sounds and letters, poor spelling, slow reading, problems reading out correctly and poor comprehension. It was further revealed by the sampled teachers that the causes of reading problems could be environmental or genetically oriented. Similarly, the causes of speaking problems according to the teachers are; autism, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, stroke, oral cancer / laryngeal cancer, huntington's disease, dementia, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. The issue of identifying students with speaking/reading problems is a grey area as seen in the hue and cry associated with it. Not all the interviewed teachers were sure of how to go about it. A whole lot of the teachers remarked that to be quite honest; they do not really know how to differentiate children with speaking and reading snag from their counterparts who are not serious with their academics. This consolidates the findings of Rudyati (2010) which revealed among other things that lots of teachers are not abreast with the techniques of identifying special needs children in school. As to the screening method, a whole lot of the teachers' demonstrated shallow knowledge of the various ways that can be used to identify special needs learners in the areas of reading and writing and this is problematic. Even at that, there is a huge difference between knowing that and knowing to. "Knowing that" alone cannot suffice as it does not really translate to knowing to (application of knowledge). The teachers therefore recommended that children with speaking and reading problems should be given divergent enrichment programmes and remediative interventions and this should be done in a hands on and minds on ways to activate and captivate the interest of the learners. On this note, the teachers opined that professionals and para-professionals in special needs education should be employed and/or deployed to in need schools (inclusive and mainstream) to help special needs learners improve on their learning experiences through personalized psycho-educational inventions and/or interventions. The special needs learners are likely to do well afterwards *mutatis mutandis*. That is, if the necessary changes are effected.

## CONCLUSION

Academic achievement analysis, student centered teaching and symptoms of learning disabilities are vital and pivotal issues in the educational sector. They are essential and existential. Their relevance therefore cannot be overemphasized. Teachers are at the hub of the entire educational process and as such their opinions are worth investigating. The opinions of the sampled teachers regarding the issues of interest are actionable and fashionable. They had an eclectic view of academic achievement analysis, their views towards student centered teaching is dynamic while

their notion regarding symptoms of speaking and reading problems most especially in the areas of screening and therapeutic recommendation is myopic and worth improving.

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