

TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND STUDENTS' CHOICE OF TEACHING AS A CAREER IN OSUN STATE

AKINTOMIDE Akinjide G.

&

OLUWATOSIN Sehinde A.

Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling

Obafemi Awolowo University

Ile-Ife

email: jideomoakin@yahoo.com,

olasehinde2006@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study investigated the teacher characteristics that influence students' choice of teaching as a career among secondary school students in Osun state, Nigeria. A sample size of 250 students was drawn from 10 randomly selected senior secondary schools in three local government areas of the state. Data were collected using a validated 35-item questionnaire titled "Teacher characteristics and students' career aspiration". The result revealed that factors such as quality of teaching, mode of dressing and communication skills are prominent among what students assess in their teachers as motivators towards choosing teaching as a career. The study also showed a significant relationship between students' attitude to choice of teaching as a career and teachers characteristics ($\chi^2 = 3.73, p < 0.05$). There was also a significant difference between the attitude of private and public school students towards teaching as a profession with regards to teachers characteristics ($t = 3.274, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that with the prevalence of the observed problems, there is urgent need to work towards repositioning teaching as a career that would attract the interest of people with the potential to deliver the educational need of the Nation by addressing some of the teacher characteristics that can influence students' choice of teaching as a career.

Key words: Teacher-characteristics, Career, Choice

Introduction

Career selection is one of many important choices students make in determining future plans. Alberts, Mbalo and Ackermann (2003) identified career choice as one of the major areas of concern for young people nearing the end of their schooling. It is important to both parents and their children because this decision will impact them throughout their lives. Every student, at one time or the other, is faced with the challenge of making a choice of career. This was buttressed by Cicero quoted by Hoppock (1957) saying "... we must decide what manner of men we wish to be and what calling in life we would follow and this is the most difficult problem in the world".

Akomolafe (2003) pointed out that the individual's vocation or career is one of the most important aspects of human endeavour because it determines a lot of things in human existence. It could either make or mar one's joy and happiness. He further contended that true joy, happiness and satisfaction are linked to proper choice of profession. He also posited that emotional and marital stability could be enhanced by the type of occupation one engages in. In Nigeria, many youths make wrong career choices due to ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, wrong modelling, advice from friends, parents and teachers, or as a result of the prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counselling (Salami, 1999). Consequently, many of them are unsuited for their careers, as they usually find themselves in jobs that do not satisfy their value needs. They are usually unable to contribute meaningfully to the society, and they ultimately become liabilities to the nation.

The essence of who the student is will revolve around what the student wants to do with his or her life-long work. Rosenstock & Steinberg, cited in O'Brien (1996) in support of this claim opine that work is one of our greatest blessings and that everyone should have an honest occupation. They also posited that every student carries the unique history of their past and this determines how they view the world. That history created in part by the student's environment, personality, and opportunity, will determine how students make career choices. It then follows that how the students perceive their environment, personality, and opportunity will also determine the career choices they make. All these constitute what is referred to as student support system. The components of the student support system include parents, relatives, siblings, peers, teachers and counsellors. Regarding the environment of a student, the home, peer group and the school are very significant. The

home environment has the influence of the parents, the media and other siblings on the student. A child can be influenced by his parents' profession or interest when making a choice of his career. A child's career choice can also be influenced by the other siblings or what he/ she sees or hears over the media. The school environment has the influence of peers, school counsellor and school teachers.

Many other factors within and outside the family have also been linked with career choices. These include factors such as gender stereotyping (Creed & Patton, 2003, Spitze & Logan, 1990, Wilgosh, 2002, Miller, Lietz & Kotte, 2002; Heckert, Droste, Adams, Friffin, Roberts & Wallis, 2002; Small & McClean 2002, 1997; and Bailyn, 2003), opportunities (Borchert, 2002) and teacher factor (Goh & Atputhasamy, 2001; Park, 2006) among others.

Generally, profession according to Oluwatimilehin, Odeleye & Okereke (2009), falls on a continuum. At one end of the continuum are professions like law, medicine, accountancy or accounting, architecture and engineering, which are accorded high status in the society. At the other end of the continuum are low rated professions such as teaching and farming. Though lowly-rated, teaching remains a unique and dynamic profession because education is a veritable tool for the building and sustenance of any nation (Oluwatimilehin et al, 2009). Musgrave (1982) stated that in many African nations, it is assured that many persons enter teachings because teaching is viewed only as a ladder through which they can climb unto other profession. One could decide for a profession based on one's interest, one's aptitude or the values attached to the profession or people on the profession. From the researchers' experience, when most students are asked why they would like to become a lawyer or a medical doctor, their responses most of the time were based on the fact that they were attracted by the Doctors' or Lawyers' physical personalities such as their mode of dressing, neatness, comportment and so on. Most often, students are attracted to the way doctors are smartly dressed especially while on their white coat with their stethoscope hung on their neck. They are attracted by the good look of a lawyer in his or her white on black dress with the wig on the head.

Many studies have investigated factors that influence choice of teaching as a profession among teachers and students alike. Extrinsic (matters such as remuneration and other benefits), intrinsic (the enjoyment of teaching and the school environment) and altruistic (making a difference to young lives) motives have been investigated (Goh

& Atputhasamy, 2001). But no study has been found to examine whether or not students are attracted to the teaching profession by the physical characteristics of their teachers. Any strategic plan to address the shortage of qualified and well trained teachers will have to include the promotion among learners of a positive perception of the teaching profession. The promotion of teaching, however, will depend largely on how successfully such a campaign analyses and responds to the existing opinions among learners and whether it adequately addresses both positive and negative perceptions of teacher characteristics and teaching as a career among them.

Purpose of the study

Many factors have been discovered to have influence on students' career choices. For instance, factors such as parental pressure or influence, peer influence, social prestige associated with a job, gender role, teachers' motivation, influence of other siblings, religious affiliation, course of study, job prospects, and so on, have been identified. There is a dearth of literature evidence showing influence of teacher characteristics on students' career decision making. It is not unlikely that some students would decide to choose a particular career such as medicine or law just because of the personalities or physical characteristics of these professionals. This study was therefore carried out to investigate the teachers' characteristics that could serve as motivating factors or otherwise for students to choose teaching as a career. Of specific interest to this study are characteristics such as teachers' personalities, social interaction, ability to communicate eloquently, remuneration, comportsment, among others.

Based on this concern, the study tried to address these **research questions**.

1. What are the teacher characteristics that students assess in secondary school teachers?
2. Do the teacher characteristics influence students' choice of teaching as a career?

The study also **hypothesised** that:

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' characteristics and students' attitude towards teaching as a profession
2. There a significant difference between the attitude of private and public school students toward teaching as a profession with regard to teachers' characteristics?

Methodology

Survey design was adopted for the study. Students in senior secondary schools in Osun state constituted the population. Data were collected from two hundred and fifty students (250) selected from ten (10) schools in three Local Government Educational Authorities in Osun State Nigeria. Five of the selected schools are privately owned while the other five are government owned (public) schools. The respondents were selected using stratified sampling from randomly selected schools. Class was used as a stratum; the students selected were those in upper senior class preparing for their final examinations. These students were believed to have reached a stage where they would have got an averagely stable career they are aspiring for and they should be able to say what has contributed to the career aspiration. The instrument used was a self-designed questionnaire with four sections. The first section elicited information on students' demographic data such as class, sex and so on. The second section comprised items on students' attitude to teaching as a profession. Section C was on teachers' characteristics assessed by the students while the last part elicited information on influence of such characteristics on students' career choice. The questionnaire was given to experts for content validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined using test-retest method and a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained before it was administered on the respondents. The teacher characteristics identified were subjected to statistical analysis using Relative Significant Index (RSI), the values based on responses of the students to each characteristic. Any characteristic with RSI value of

less than 60% (0.60) was reckoned as insignificant. Sections B, C and D of the questionnaire were scored with Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Undecided allotted 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 points respectively. The resulting aggregate points were cumulated in such a way that the heavier the cumulative score the more negative the respondent is in the assessment of teachers characteristics. The total scores were then categorized into two such that, scores of 30 or less were said to have assessed teachers characteristics as attractive and motivating towards the choice of teaching as a career while scores greater than 30 were said to have assessed teachers characteristics as repulsive and discouraging towards the choice of teaching as a career. Data collected were analysed using descriptive analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the teacher characteristics that students assess in secondary school teachers?

To answer this question, section B of the questionnaire was subjected to descriptive statistics. The factors were extracted based on their Relative Significant Index (RSI) and the result is as presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Teacher characteristics assessed by students

S/N	Factors	*RSI
1	Teachers' Qualification	0.7976
2	Teachers' mode of dressing	0.7576
3	Quality of teaching	0.7448
4	Punctuality to classes	0.7440
5	Social interaction with students and colleagues	0.7360
6	Punctuality to work/school	0.7280
7	Time management	0.7248
8	Enthusiasm doing the work	0.7152
9	Smartness/comportment at work	0.7064
10	Spoken English and fluency in communication	0.6904

*RSI - Relative Significant Index

From Table 1, ten major characteristics that students assess in their teachers while on the job were identified. The choice of these factors was based on the Relative Significant Index (RSI) of each of the factors. It was discovered from the results that the most prevalent characteristic assessed by the students was teachers' qualification with the highest RSI value of 0.7976. This was closely followed by the way teachers dress (RSI value of 0.7976) and teachers' quality of teaching with RSI values of 0.7448.

Research Question 2: Do the teacher characteristics influence students' motivation in choosing teaching as a career?

To answer this research question, section D of the questionnaire was given a descriptive analysis and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Influence of teacher characteristics on motivating students to choose teaching as a career.

	Teacher characteristics	5	4	3	2	1	RSI
1	Teachers quality of teaching	47.2	28.4	10.0	11.2	3.2	0.8104
2	Teacher's spoken English	41.2	29.2	20.4	8.8	0.4	0.8040
3	Teachers punctuality in school and classes	38.4	31.6	16.8	7.6	5.6	0.7792
4	Teachers' conduct and behaviour in school	34.0	35.6	17.6	9.2	3.6	0.7744
5	Teachers' mode of dressing	30.8	38.0	18.4	10.4	2.4	0.7688
6	Social interaction/communication with students and colleagues	34.0	31.2	19.2	12.8	2.8	0.7616
Other teaching Characteristics that influence student choice of teaching as a career							
	Teaching Characteristics	5	4	3	2	1	RSI
1	The salary of the teachers	51.2	27.6	13.6	6.0	1.6	0.8416
2	Making teaching practice compulsory for whoever wants to be a teacher	43.6	23.6	17.6	5.2	10.0	0.7712

* 5 - Influence to a great extent, 4 - influence averagely, 3 - influence to a low extent, 2 - No influence, 1 - Undecided, RSI - Relative Significant Index

From Table 2, it can be seen that six of the factors earlier identified were of immense influence on students' motivation in choosing teaching as a career. The factors that were prevalent in influencing students' motivation to choose teaching as a career were "Quality of teaching" and "Teachers' fluency or spoken English" with RSI values of 0.8104 and 0.804 respectively. Other factor that also significantly influence students' choice of teaching as a career include; "Teachers social interaction with students", "Teachers' mode of dressing", "Teachers' punctuality to school and classes" and " Teachers' conduct and behaviour in school". From the results, it could therefore be concluded that teachers' characteristics greatly influenced students' motivation in choosing teaching as a career. Other characteristics that are associated with teaching that also influence students' motivation in choosing teaching as a career include "salary of teachers" and "making teaching practice compulsory".

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between teachers' characteristics and students' attitude towards teaching as a profession

To test this hypothesis the students' responses to items on teachers' characteristic assessed and students' attitude to teaching profession were scored and given descriptive and inferential analysis and the result is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Teachers' characteristics as assessed by students

	Frequency	Percent
Attractive-Motivating characteristics	39	15.6
Repulsive-discouraging characteristics	211	84.4
Total	250	100.0

Table 3 shows that most of the students (84.4%) rated teachers' characteristics as repulsive and discouraging in terms of motivating them towards choosing teaching as a career while only 15.6% claimed that the teachers' characteristics were attractive and motivating in terms of their choosing teaching as a career.

For section B, the items were scored in a similar manner but some positive items were scored in a transposed manner. The resulting scores were also cumulated to constitute a measure of students' attitude towards the choice of teaching as a profession. The scores were categorized into two in such a way that scores of 45 or less were said to be positive attitude whereas scores greater than 45 were said to be of negative attitude. They were also given a descriptive analysis as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Students' Attitude towards teaching as a career

	Frequency	Percent
Positive attitude	65	26.0
Negative attitude	185	74.0
Total	250	100.0

From Table 4, it can be seen that most of the students (74%) possess negative attitude towards the choice of teaching as a career while only 26% possess positive attitude. A cross tabulation of the two variables, teachers' characteristics and students' attitude was carried out and the chi-square value was determined. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Teachers' characteristics and students' attitude to teaching as a career

	Attitude		Total	χ^2	df	P
	Positive attitude	Negative attitude				
Attractive-Motivating characteristics	15	24	39	3.73	1	0.043
Repulsive-discouraging characteristics	50	161	211			
Total	65	185	250			

It can be seen from Table 5 that the chi-square value obtained in the test of relationship between students attitude to choice of teaching as a career and teachers characteristics is 3.73 at $p = 0.043$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it can be concluded that there was a significant relationship between students attitude to choice of teaching as a career and teachers characteristics.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the attitude of private and public school students toward teaching as a profession with regard to teachers' characteristics

To test this hypothesis, the attitude score of the students towards teaching as a profession was subjected to a t-test of difference using public/private schools as the differentiating variable. The result is presented on Table 6.

Table 6: Difference between the attitude of private and public school students to teaching as a career

Types of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Public	118	50.6949	5.84487	246	3.274	0.001
Private	130	48.1154	6.49822			

From Table 6 it can be seen that the mean attitude score of the students from the public school was more negative (greater in value) than those of private schools. The t-statistic obtained in the test of difference was 3.274 at $p = 0.001$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there was a significant difference between the attitude of private and public school students toward teaching as a profession with regard to teachers' characteristics and that students in public school demonstrate more negative attitude towards teaching as a profession than students in private schools.

Discussion

Overwhelming evidence from the findings of this study revealed that secondary school students have a negative attitude towards teaching profession. This study tends to draw support from other findings such as those of Nwosu, (1999), Sule (1995) and Musgrave, (1982). Musgrave (1982) for instance found out that most African societies exhibit negative attitude towards teaching profession possibly because some individuals take to teaching only as a stop gap, pending the time when they may be able to get more juicy jobs. Sule (1995) argued that students may harbour negative attitude to teaching as a profession due to some unwholesome attitude of some teachers especially male teachers who would demonstrate characteristics such as indiscriminate beating and general lack of decorum. This present study tends to attribute students' negative attitude towards teaching profession to their assessment of teachers' characteristics which was adjudged by the students to be repulsive and discouraging. Some of the teachers' characteristics that the students assessed include teachers' qualification, mode of dressing, quality of teaching, punctuality to classes and social interaction with students. Others include time management, smartness or comportment at work, spoken English or fluency in communication and enthusiasm at work.

The result also revealed that students do not only assess these characteristics in teachers, but they are significantly influenced negatively by them. This was evident in their level of unwillingness to choose teaching as a career.

Events in Nigeria show that some of the traditional respect and prestige enjoyed by teachers in the society have been eroded quite considerably (Awanbor, 1996; Oluwatimilehin et al, 2009). Gone are those days when teaching could stand tall side by side with other professions. Everybody in the society aspired to be associated with teachers then. They were held in high esteem; their personality commanded respect. Today, the reverse is the case. Students see their teachers on a daily basis, they interact with them and they are so familiar with them, with their characteristics and personalities. It now seems that there is nothing attracting the students to teaching profession based on what they assess in their teachers' lifestyle. It is not surprising that Oluwatimilehin et al

(2009) adjudged teaching to be on the other side of the continuum with other low-rated professions, this rating comes from the public; stakeholders, students and parents alike. Students' rating of the profession would be based on their observations of teaching generally and their teachers' characteristics in particular. More importantly, this study revealed that students pay more attention to their teachers' qualification, mode of dressing and quality of teaching. Most teachers seem not to be motivated doing their work. It is observed that teaching profession has almost been left for third class citizens who could not get other 'better jobs'. Admissions into teacher education in most of Nigerian higher institutions have been left majorly to those students who could not be admitted into other 'seemingly better courses'. To worsen the whole episode, the government is not helping matters. While teachers and people on other professions such as medicine, banking and engineering live under the same economic situation, government never see reasons to make teachers' take-home and allowances up to those of these high-rated professions. All these things are observed by the students and they informed their decisions whether or not to choose teaching as a career.

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that the incidence of negative attitude towards teaching is worse among students in public schools compared to their counterparts in the private schools. It is not surprising that students in public schools are more negative in their attitude may be because teachers in public schools lack adequate attention and remuneration from their employers and this translates into their physical disposition and commitment to work which are the major ways of expressing the value attached to the career. It is not that teachers in public school are necessarily better than those in private schools at all time, but there is adequate monitoring and supervision in the private settings. The owners of private schools would want their teachers to be well looking, always at their duty posts and be enthusiastic, since these will attract more 'customers' to them.

Conclusively, with the prevalence of those observed problems, the study therefore presents the urgent need to address them so as to reposition teaching as a career that would attract the

interest of people with the potential to deliver the educational need of the Nation. Government should encourage teachers through the remuneration and allowances so that they could also live a better life like people in other professions. Also, teachers should also be encouraged to focus on the identified teacher characteristics that command respect and interest of students in this present age. Lastly, teaching should not be seen as a job for the less qualified, minimum standard for admittance into the profession and teacher education should be strictly enforced.

References

- Akomolafe. (2003) Relationship between fathers' occupational status and their children's, occupational preference. *Journal of Research in Counselling Psychology* 9, 127 - 131.
- Alberts, C., Mballo, N. F., and Ackermann, C. J. (2003). Adolescents' perceptions of the relevance of domains of identity formation: a South African cross-cultural study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 32 (3), 169-84.
- Bailyn, L. (2003). Academic careers and gender equity: lessons learned from MIT. *Gender Work and Organisation*. 10 (2), 137-53.
- Borchert, M. (2002). *Career choice factors of high school students*. Unpublished Master of Science thesis. University of Wisconsin-Stout
- Creed, P. A., and Patton, W. (2003). Differences in career attitude and career knowledge for high school students with and without paid work experience. *International journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*. 3, 21-33.
- Dunn, J., Slomkowski, C., and Bearsall, L. (1994). Sibling relationships from the preschool period through middle childhood and early adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 30, 315-24.
- Goh, K. C., and Aputhasamy, L. (2001). *Teacher Education in Singapore: What motivates Students to choose a Teaching Career?* Paper presented at the International Educational Research Conference, Fremantle, December.
- Heckert, T. M., Droste, H. E., Adams, P. J., Friffin, C. M., Roberts, L. L., and Wallis, H. A. (2002). Gender differences in anticipated

- salary: role of salary estimates for others' job characteristics, career paths, and job inputs, *Sex Roles* 47 (3-4), 139-51.
- Ipaye, T. (1986). *Educational and vocational guidance: concepts and approaches*. Ife: University Press.
- Kniveton B. H. (2004). The influences and motivations on which students base their choice of career. *Research in education*. Manchester University Press
- Miller, L., Iietz, P., and Kotte, D. (2002). On decreasing gender differences and attitudinal changes: factors influencing Australian and English pupils' choice of a career in science. *Psychology, Evolution and Gender*, 4 (1), 69-92.
- Musgrave, P. (1982) *Sociology of Education*. N.Y. Heinemann Books Ltd.
- Oluwatimilehin, Odeleye & Okereke, (2009). Secondary Students' Attitude Towards the Teaching Profession. *Free Online Library*.
- Park, T. (2006). Teaching as a career choice: attractors and deterrents identified by Grade 11 learners. *South African Journal of Education*. 26(1), 143-156.
- O'Brien, T. (1996). *A case study of six students in work bound*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- Small, J., and McClean, M. (2002). Factors impacting on the choice of entrepreneurship as a career by Barbadian youth: a preliminary assessment. *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies*, 27 (4), 30-54.
- Spitze, C., and Logan, J. R. (1990). Helping as a component of parent-adult child relations. *Research on Ageing*, 14, 291-312.
- Spraggs, G. (2002). *Outlaws and highwaymen*, London: Pimlico.
- Sule, FM. (1995). Vocational choices among secondary school students. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2(3), 7-10.
- Wall, R. (1996), Marriage, residence, and occupational choices of senior and junior siblings in the English past. *History of the Family*, 3, 259-71.
- Wilgosh, L. (2002). Examining gender images, expectations and competence as perceived impediments to personal, academic and career development. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 24 (4), 239-60.