

# The Impact of Teacher Characteristics on Student Performance

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## Abstract

It is not surprising that research on teacher competencies and student performance has revealed that the teacher quality can be related to student performance (Wayne & Yong 2003). This article registers an argument that unless the education systems worldwide begin to commit to capacity building of teachers with a view to develop a 'whole teacher', the remarkable objectives of having sustainable development will remain an absolute nightmare. The paper argues that there is a strong affiliation amongst teacher characteristics and learners academic performance. As such, in order for any nation to be seen to be having a relevant and quality education, its education system should be seen to be investing heavily in teacher professional development. Utilising the conceptual approach to research, this study investigated into the phenomenon of teacher characteristics along aside learners' academic performance. As such, the purpose of this paper is to intrinsically investigate the impact of teacher characteristics and how these affect learners' academic performance with a view to mainly come up with feasible strategies that could be used to improve the teaching practice. Vital Professional characteristics revealed by this study include skills such as subject knowledge, instructional delivery, classroom controlling, assessment and professional association for growth. The study ends by recommending to policy makers to commit to continuous professional development of teachers.

**Keywords:** Teacher competence, effective teacher, the teacher, academic performance, teachers' professional development

## Introduction

Teacher quality matters. In fact, it is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. It does not astonish that research on teacher characteristics and student performance has revealed that the teacher quality can be related to student performance (Wayne & Yong 2003). Research recognises that the greatest determinants of students' performance are the teacher as instructional gatekeepers (Oats, 2014). However, the question regarding which teacher competencies or characteristics are impactful remains unanswered. Competence is a skill, knowledge and behaviour someone needs to achieved in order to perform tasks or activities (Sullivan 2005). In the teaching and learning front, teacher characteristics needed by teachers to fully perform as their professional expectation according to Kishwar (2016) includes knowledge and understanding of children and their learning, subject knowledge, curriculum, the education system and the teacher's role. Vital Professional competence revealed by this study includes skills such as subject matter knowledge, instructional delivery, classroom controlling, assessment and record keeping.

Any debate on improving students' performance in any subject, should revolve around the teacher and the pedagogies that they employ in and outside the classrooms. Though many variables affect students' achievement, a teacher has direct responsibility to shape student's academic achievement. According to Siebrich, Win and Ellen (2014), the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers offers an important potential way to improve the quality of student learning. This is true because teachers are the most important school-based factor, therefore deliberate attempts should be made to identify aspects of teacher competencies that correlates with student performance. This is further buttressed by Darling-Hammond (1999) who found that teacher quality relates fairly well to increased student achievement. Darling-Hammond further opines that teacher quality is more important than other factors such as class size and overall school spending. The importance of competent teachers to the national school system cannot be over-emphasized. Armstrong (2014) conducted a study which its results were important to South Africa's educational system. In his work he was convinced that a teacher is a resourceful person in education and that it is necessary to understand how best to utilize this resource. The author further stated that, in many countries certain qualifications need to be obtained before teachers are permitted to enter the teaching force. Makwinja (2017) has in her study confirmed that many teachers have been sent for further studies to improve their teaching strategies so as to promote quality education in Botswana. Wayne and Young (2003) were cited by Armstrong (2014) explaining that there is a large body of literature on teacher characteristics and education outcomes but the focus of such studies vary. The studies vary between the question of teacher quantity and turnover and the issue surrounding teacher quality. Failure to question the premises that good teaching and learning depend on the competencies of a teacher is deeply problematic.

### **Unpacking the concept of teacher competence/characteristics**

The term competence or professional characteristics, has been used in human resource to mean demonstrable characteristics and skills that enable and improve the efficiency of performance of a job. Research reveals that how teachers instruct and interacts with students is the cornerstone around which to build effective schools. Taylor and Low (2009) observed that teacher competencies offer practical strategies, practices and rules to guide teachers in ways to improve instruction that improve student performance. The premise of this research may be of great importance because it will allow the researcher to identify the teacher characteristics that significantly impact teaching and learning at all levels. The framework of teachers professional development by Danielson (1990) reveals the following areas in which teachers needs to have competence for them to be deemed effective: The areas are;

- **Planning and Preparation;**

Instructional planning, commonly known as Lesson planning guarantee of 100% learning and a guide for teachers in presenting the lessons systematically. As such a written instructional plan is an antidote to aimlessness. Planning and preparation are key elements of the Instructional Design (ID) process. ID the systematic development of instructional specifications using learning and instructional theory to ensure the quality of instruction. It is the entire process of analysis of learning needs and goals and the development of a delivery system to meet those needs. It includes development of instructional materials and activities; and try-out and evaluation of all instruction and learner activities. It implies that with respect to planning teacher are expected to demonstrate Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy (indication of deep knowledge of content & strategies, encompass cultural diversity, global awareness, 21st century skills). A key element in planning is demonstrating Knowledge of Students who instruction is planned

for. As such more effective teachers should show understanding through planning of the knowledge of the nature of their learners, the different levels of intellectual and emotional maturity and genuine concern and sincere love for their learners

- **Environment;**

A critical element under this domain according to Danielson ( ) is the competence to create an Environment of Respect and Rapport. In teaching and learning, the learning environment is deemed a place where people feel they are respected and accepted for who they are and for what they say and do is a conducive atmosphere of Learning. It consists of the physical, as well as the psychological environment, that surrounds the learner and that influences his/her learning. It is the classroom and all the instructional features and the non-threatening classroom climate needed in planning and implementing all teaching and learning activities. Classroom proceedings the clear and enthusiastic voice of the teacher that elicits equally eager and keen responses from the students help create a conducive and beneficial ambiance for learning. Along the same a competent teacher prepares relevant supplies and materials earlier and uses them accordingly and fully.

- **Instruction;**

this domain involves actual delivery of content consistent with plans. At the core of instructional delivery is mastery of subject matter. As such more effective teachers must have unwavering mastery of subject content. Thus teachers are expected to demonstrate competence in first essentials requisites of particular subject philosophy and content, have a thorough grasp of the subject and keep abreast and keep up with new and updated trends in their subject areas. Along the same, competent teachers communicate with Students, use Questioning & Discussion Techniques efficiently and effectively, engage Students in Learning, use both Assessment of learning and for learning fruitfully and demonstrate flexibility and Responsiveness to learner needs.

- **Professional Responsibilities;**

The components of this domain according to Danielson (1990) represent the wide range of a teacher's responsibilities outside the classroom. In essence teachers are expected largely to reflect on teaching so as to go back to the drawing board a plan better to improve their practices. Teachers who demonstrate good competencies are highly valued by their colleagues and administrators, as well as being seen as true professionals. It is thus expected of teachers to show competence in among others Maintaining accurate Records of their learners, communicating with key stakeholders mainly Families, participating in the Professional Community for their growth in the practice of teaching, and Showing Professionalism in all their endeavours. For Oats (2014), a master teacher should possess the attributes of: patience, effectiveness, Efficiency, confident, firm, true and dedication. It implies that the complexity of teaching requires continued growth and development. Continuing to stay informed and current, as well as increasing their skills, allow teachers to become ever more effective and to exercise leadership among their colleagues.

### **Relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the practice of teaching**

Studies on teacher's self-efficacy have been conceptualized with in Bandura's 1994 and 2002 notion of self-efficacy. Teachers' self-efficacy has been defined as the extent to which a teacher is confident enough to his or her ability to promote students' learning. Teacher self-efficacy beliefs are considered to be the important aspect of teacher competence which influences teachers' instructional behaviours and student motivation (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Schunk (2012) defines teachers' self-efficacy as instructional

self-efficacy, referring to “personal beliefs about one’s capacity to help students learn” (p. 153). Achurra and Villardo (2012) opine that the perception that teachers have of their teaching (self-efficacy), includes a whole set of beliefs about their ability to teach and exert positive effects on the student learning. They further opine that, instructional self-efficacy affects the teacher’s activities, effort, and persistence with students. This definition implies that for students to learn effectively, teachers must believe in their own abilities to enhance learning. If a teacher does not have instructional self-efficacy beliefs, students can be disadvantaged in learning.

Achurra and Villardo (2012) have also found out that, this self- perception plays major role on how teachers select assignments and activities, shaping their efforts and perseverance when addressing certain challenges and even their emotional response to difficult situations. It is also noted by Donald (2008) that people with a negative sense of self-worth may begin to feel that they have few positive qualities or standing in the eyes of significant others. On the other hand, as observed by Achurra et al (2012), teachers with high self-efficacy level are more open to new ideas, show greater willingness to try new teaching methods, design or organise their classes better and more enthusiastic and satisfied with their teaching. Kauchak and Eggen (2012) add on that teachers who are enthusiastic increase learning, students’ confidence and achievement and teacher modelling is the most likely mechanism.

According to Kauchak and Eggen (2012) the inferences teachers make about students’ future academic potential and academic achievement, strongly influence teacher’s actions. Hughes (2001) indicates that positive expectations help produce high standards. The author goes on to maintain that an efficient and effective teacher knows what they are doing and do the right things constantly. Along the same, Marzano (2007) state that effective teachers clearly communicate positive expectation for learning to their learners. Simply put, they tell students that something is important and thow important it is. Sometimes effective teachers’ expectations are communicated more subtly but they communicate positive expectations by holding all the students accountable for learning (Kauchak & Eggen, 2012). Hughes (2001) mentioned that good practice involves the use of teaching methods which sustain the momentum of children’s work by stimulating intellectual curiosity, matching approaches to the children being taught and exploiting opportunities to contribute to the quality of pupils’ wider educational development.

Kauchak and Eggen (2012) are of the view that high-efficacy teachers teach differently than those who are low in personal efficacy. They go on to say, they praise rather than criticism, persevere with low achievers, use time efficiently and praise students for their efforts. On the other hand, they noticed that low efficacy teachers spend less time in learning activities, “write off” low achievers and are more likely to criticize students. Since the success of any school depends on the teaching and learning process which are notably influenced by teacher’s self-efficacy, it can be concluded that students’ academic performance depends on the assignments and classroom activities planned and selected for them by the teacher. Kansanen, Meri, Tirri, Krokfors, Husu and Tyrhama (2000) mentioned in their study that, it is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at classroom level that ultimately shapes the kind of education young people get. This was emphasised by Bandura (1995) saying, the expectations for teachers to create classroom cultures conducive to learning rests heavily on their (teachers) talents and self-efficacy. Lee (2002) as cited in Freeman (2008), states that, teacher’s beliefs

and practices are ultimately at the heart of student's success. Therefore, the teacher efficacy, the expectation that one possess, the talent and the ability to bring about student learning is central to school reforms. .

In another instance, Armstrong, Hensen and Savage (2009), pointed out that in order to provide quality learning experience for all students, lessons must be well planned and prepared effectively. Kauchak and Eggen (2012) defined planning as all instructional decisions teachers make prior to actual teaching. The teacher is the most significant factor in planning. Kauchak and Eggen (2012), concluded that, teacher's beliefs about the role of school and what children learn, teacher's capacity to help students, and teacher's philosophical approach to teaching and learning all affect the planning decisions a teacher will make. They also found out that planning organizes instruction and helps teacher feel more confident and secure.

According to Kishwar (2016), a teachers with good instructional planning plan the lessons by merging his own ideas, thoughts, beliefs, students thinking and understanding of concepts. It was also noted by Salem al-amarat (2011) in his study that teachers play a role in the classroom problems when they do not make their objectives clear and when they do not plan their teaching method earlier. The author concludes thus when teacher follow the traditional methods in teaching, this leads to students getting bored and stressed. Wassermann (2000) states that teachers can do a great deal to empower children by providing them with opportunities to engage in real activities that challenge their thinking faculties. Moore (2000) also finds the need to put an emphasis on the development of independent process of learning rather than the memorising and regurgitating of facts or knowledge. Hughes (2000) opines that role of the primary teacher is to plan for genuine collaborative and cooperative work, where children are learning is enhanced through group work. Petty (2004) states that the aim of the action plan is to think of concrete activities which will help achieve learner's goals and so devise ways of closing the gap between where the learner is now and where they want to be. For inexperienced teacher, it may be challenging to have a more specific and concrete lesson plan.

### **Impact of Instructional Approaches on students' academic performance**

Since the adoption of the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994, which represents Botswana's response to globalisation, the national education system has embraced transformation learning. The educational goals have gradually placed greater emphasize on self-programmable learner. Educators have to realise that how to deliver information to audience is as important as the content of that information. Tabulawa (2009) says the education system is expected to develop in learners, attributes such as creativity, versatility, innovativeness, critical thinking, problem solving skills and disposition towards teamwork. Beames, Higgins and Nicol (2012) argue that the intended outcome is that all young people should become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.

Anediema (2016) remarked that meaningful science activities, which are relevant to children's daily lives, allow children to make connections between what they already know and what they are learning. Martin et al (2004) lament that, experiential learning has been regarded as an active process involving the learner being placed in unfamiliar environments, outside their positions of comfort and into a state of

dissonance. Authors go on to say, this lack of harmony requires problem solving, inquiry and reflection. Adunola (2011) was picked by Ekperi (2018) saying the method of teaching is as important as the subject been taught. Whether the student will understand what is been taught or not is a function of the method employed by the teacher. So, instructional strategies employed during lesson presentation have significant effect on the teaching and learning of any subject. Rice (2003) confirmed that a teacher's performance is influenced by the level of his pedagogical knowledge and any teacher who does not possess the required knowledge of the subject matter cannot be effective. Obot (2014) adds on that good knowledge of the subject matter helps teacher to teach learners correctly. He further asserts that this leads to the achievement of set objectives and the consequent interest of the learners' to continue in the learning process. The implication of this for teachers as described by Kauchak and Eggen (2012) is that teachers must not only be conversant with the content themselves but must be competent in the use of such knowledge during their teaching process if they are to be effective enough to promote learning.

In this paper I argue that teachers are responsible for the interpretation of the instructional objectives to pupils and appropriately committed to the use of suitable teaching methods which bring about quality teaching. Radford, Raaheim, de Vries and Williams (1997) argues that there can be no doubt that new ways of arranging the learning situations are decided upon by the teacher or some other party which likewise sees itself as responsible for the final results. Quality teaching was defined by Tella (2008) as teaching that maximizes learning for all students that entails engaging pupils as active learners to induce positive, comprehensive changes in their pre-existing knowledge, skills and attitudes. Stein and Hurd (2000) concluded that student-student interactions and student-faculty interactions both have important influences on academic success and satisfaction. They also found out that cooperative learning is more effective than traditional approaches in improving critical thinking, self-esteem, multicultural relations and positive social behaviours in more specific studies.

Donald et al (2008) state that active learning needs to involve a variety of activities, some whole class instruction and interaction, some group or pair activities and some individual activities. This was also mentioned by Davies (1993) cited by Stein and Hurd (2000) that students learn best when they are actively involved in the process. She goes on to posit that, regardless of the subject matter, students working in small teams tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Petty (2004) also pointed out that it (independent learning) increases motivation. The coaching involved encourages students to take full responsibility of their own learning, it challenges passive attitudes to learning and teaches the active learners' coping strategies and mind-set. For Kishwar (2016), due to the emergence of technology, it is feasible for teachers to show real-life situations in classroom through electronic gadgets and media. Teaching and learning activities that build learners and put their learning process in their responsibility also maximise their learning in the limited time. Therefore, teachers must ensure that the learning environment is favourable enough to support effective learning.

To a certain extend instructional strategies must allow learners to manipulate a variety of instances possible looking for solutions to the problems. Andiema (2016) states that in this approach, teachers guide children as they work together by providing materials and explaining when the children are in need of assistance. So, it is the role of the teacher to prepare appropriate materials for learning activities

that motivate learners to achieve desired goals and objectives. Teachers as such can use differentiated instruction technique in classrooms for assisting the students of various abilities, so that their delivery is inclusive. Teachers can thus assign extra relevant tasks for quick learners and meanwhile apply another technique to clarify the concept for slow learners, (Kishwar 2016).

Although students are learning within the parameters of the curriculum, they are driven by their own curiosity and are given the scope to focus on specific topics that have high levels of personal relevance and interest, Beames et al (2012). According to Buckler and Castle (2014) teachers should aim at providing interesting and stimulating lesson content, perhaps taking the driest of the topic and finding ways to make it as engaging as possible. Killen (2000) argue that if learning activities are to motivate students, they must be seen by the students to be purposeful, useful and challenging but not impossible. Newcomb et al (1993) emphasize that practical be supervised by the teacher such that reward and reinforcement, including modelling and re-instruction can be used to ensure that practice leads to desirable outcomes. Bond, Cohen and Sampson (2007) advise that it is important that assessment guidelines are made clear and equitable. It supported by Radford et al (1997) as they say that it is not always the case that members of the team will exchange ideas and share responsibilities. Hattie (2009) identified feedback as the single most powerful educational tool available for improving student performance.

Buckler et al (2014) opine that, if learners enjoy their work, this promotes a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment which in turn encourage the learner to engage further with their learning. Stein and Hurd (2000) also noted that students who work in collaborative groups also appear satisfied with their classes. Simpson (2006) says teachers are able to prepare students for future by fostering their present ability through a carefully designed curriculum. So, effective pedagogies do not only lead to academic achievement but also to social and emotional development, acquisition of technical development skills and a general ability to contribute to the society. Through the usage of school gardens, students are exposed to an interdisciplinary learning experience that can show students how to grow crops, foster skills applicable for future livelihoods. Beames et al (2012) say, the outdoors provides a means of bringing curricula alive; it helps students understand the environment and related issues of sustainable development and encourages physical activity. Authors further state that, as with learning inside the classroom, learning outside should be planned in line with curriculum guidelines, in order to maximize the learning potential.

### **Functional Classroom Management for Academic Success**

Classroom management is one of the most imperative facets of the teacher's professional responsibilities. It is an integral part of effective teaching and learning. Successful teachers appear to be those who deliberately use classroom management strategies that maintain conducive learning environment. It is defined by Lefrancois (2000) as all of the actions that the teachers takes to organize instruction and classrooms to use time effectively and happily to maximize learning. Hughes (2001) says effective teachers spend little time dealing with misbehaviour as they establish strategies beforehand to prevent children's misconduct. Canter (2006) explained that, no instructional strategy will be effective if teachers are unable to get all students to quickly follow their directions to get and stay on task. So, classroom management is an area where teachers have the freedom to choose from a variety of

classroom management strategies based on their personalities and values as well as the personalities of the students.

Functional classroom management helps to prevent behaviour problems through improved planning, organizing and managing of classroom activities, better presentation of instructional material and better teacher-student interaction. Newcomb et al (1993) mentioned that, students are not apt to cause difficulties if that which is taught is interesting and it is taught interestingly. According to them students must be mentally set in order to learn. So, aiming at maximizing students' involvement and cooperation in learning is very important and it helps in the modelling and promotion of good behaviour. Teachers are enormously pressured to raise the academic achievement but their efforts are continually stymied by a small group of students whose disruptive behaviour impact the entire learning environment of the classroom. Tarman (2016) described effective managers as the teachers who have a minimum of student misbehaviour and high levels of time -on task and ineffective managers having less diversity in delivering their methods.

Effective teachers and classroom managers address the needs of children both in terms of what they teach and how they teach. Though teaching is generally a group activity, learning is very individual. Effective teachers are sensitive to these differences and take actions to accommodate these so that, ideally, each child is provided an optimal learning experience. John Dewey (1859-1952) believed that children are socially active learners who learn by exploring their environment. So, schools must take advantage of children's learning curiosity by bringing the outside world into classroom, making it the focus for study, (Kauchak & Eggen, 2012). Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009) concluded that learning requires opportunities for practice and exploration, space for thinking or reflection and for interaction with others and learning from and with peers and experts. Ideally, students have to be engaged in deep learning that remains after instruction. Tabulawa (2009) maintains that the education system is expected to develop in learners' attributes such as creativity, versatility, innovativeness, critical thinking, problem-solving skills and a positive disposition towards teamwork. Additionally, Kansanen et al (2000) say rather than presenting students as objects, passive recipients of teaching, gradually they are considered as individuals that actively make use of their own cognitive strategies and their previous knowledge base. As it is suggested by many researchers, classroom management is one of the leading factors influencing learning. It is significant in facilitating the learning process and creating efficient learning environment for learners.

A fit-for purpose and functional classroom organisation provides a structured, caring environment that meets students' personal and academic needs. According to Canter (2006) effective classroom managers not only believe their students can behave appropriately, but they believe they have the ability to influence their students to choose to do so. So, these teachers have sense of personal efficacy that is critical to their success in making the students to behave in a positive manner, even those considered to be noncompliant. Canter (2006) further opines that the foundation of teacher's ability to create a classroom environment that promotes academic success rests on the beliefs and expectations regarding their ability to influence students' behaviour. Teachers with strong self-efficacy beliefs have also been shown to be better organized, to engage in more effective planning (Allinder, 1994), and are more likely to set high performance standards for themselves as well for their students (Ross, 1995). In addition to



planning how to conduct instructions, these teachers know how they will manage student behaviour during all classroom activities.

Classroom management is a significant part of an effective teaching learning process. Due to an effective classroom management, students flourish in a positive class climate and a compassionate environment. According to Buckler et al (2014), the classroom is a powerful tool in enabling children to feel comfortable within the educational setting, something that will inevitably foster a sense of relaxation and in turn lead to more effective and pleasant learning. Mann (2008) believed that the intervention strategies are required to create a positive learning environment in which the teacher will encounter less problems. He further promotes the approach to classroom management by using what he called the four C's – commendation, communication, consistency and content.

Lastly, Mann (2008) discusses the importance of challenging content in the teacher's lessons. The more the students are engaged, the author claims they will less likely cause present disruptive behaviours. Kansanen et al (2000) acknowledged that the teacher is seen as a meaning maker who aims at shaping and influencing what students become as persons when living through pedagogical situations in schools and classrooms. So, when students are allowed to become active in their education, the resulting sense of empowerment can have a tremendous positive effect on their achievement, their behaviour and values, Lefrancois (2000). Kauchak and Eggen (2012) argue that this suggests that teachers should plan for students to acquire background knowledge as they teach critical thinking skills. Eyster and Martin (2010) make it clear that, by turning students loose on independent projects with clear roles, structures and expectations in place, it is possible to create an atmosphere that is both energizing and engaging. Similarly, Glavin (2002) states that the behavioural problem may appear as a result of inappropriate skills which students learn, choosing inappropriate time for learning and the restricted learning opportunities offered to students.

From students' standpoint, effective classroom management provides them the opportunities to socialize themselves while learning on the other hand, from a teacher perspective; effective classroom management involves precautionary discipline and fruitful teaching. However, teachers are responsible for regulating the classroom environment including classroom discipline, implementing approaches and methods of learning and interacting with students in the classroom. Kiplagat (2013) argues that a supportive learning classroom is one which is student centred and involves use of a variety of teaching and learning resources. For the classroom to serve its purpose, the teacher must be able to establish order. This requires him or her to have the knowledge, attitude and skills necessary. He or she must be able to establish rapport with the students and their parents, involve students in the processes of establishing ground rules for correcting behaviour and being accountable for their actions, manage transitions during instructions, and motivate students to maximize time-on-task, supervise students in their learning activities and lastly deal with students' misbehaviour effectively.

Effective classroom management is much more than just administering corrective measures when a student misbehaves; it is about developing proactive ways to prevent problems from occurring in the first place while creating a positive learning environment. Barkley (2006) concluded that teachers can have a great impact on their students' education with focused attention on their various learning styles and abilities. Teachers should establish that classroom climate for learning and set the right tone. The

author further states that learning styles should not be perceived as hindrances, but tools that provide a clear connection to the best method to successfully equip students. It can be evident that an instructional approach that is based on the constructive approach encourages student to take ownership of their learning as they engage in meaningful content. That is to say effective classroom managers create orderly, safe environments where students feel valued and comfortable, thus setting the stage for teaching and learning. Apart from teaching pedagogies, Barkley (2006) realized that one of the most important requirements for better quality in education is an improved learning environment, encompassing the physical school infrastructure and interaction between children and teachers. To achieve a conducive learning environment, teachers should strategically arrange classroom space to support a variety of independent, small and large group activities such that there are no “blind” areas in the classroom, laboratory or school garden where students can be out of view. Donald et al (2008) pointed out that, good interpersonal relationship within the classroom is critical in the process of developing an effective, inclusive, health-promoting classroom culture.

### **Concluding remarks**

This paper made an argument that students performance depends largely upon the quality of the teacher, especially as it concerns the knowledge of the subject matter and teaching methods. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers’ characteristics do actually influence the teaching and learning of any subject at all levels. Teachers with high level of competency in the subject lead to significant level of student interest in learning hence better academic achievement. The practices such as lack of subject specialization and teacher education impact negatively on the level of teacher competency..

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the pervasive influence of the findings from this study recommendations are made aimed at the Ministries of Education and their allied institutions such as teacher training institutions, curriculum developers and evaluators, school administrators and teachers.

- Teacher training institutions have to review their study materials to align them with the ideals of respective subjects. Both academic and ‘methods course’ material should be reviewed with a view to add more content on developing what I call ‘a whole teacher’. In some cases, deficiencies that exist in some topics should be filled. Among other additions needed, the syllabus should specify the skills, values and attitudes and beliefs that are to be covered. Teacher education should ensure the development of effective pedagogical skills in teachers and focus attention on learner interest as an important aspect of a teacher competence.
- Curriculum developers and evaluators should embark on time to time and proper monitoring and evaluation of syllabi to ensure that the set goals are achieved. This will help in a series of explorations of how knowledge exchanges across generations can be merged to bring about the importance of each subject.
- There should be increased cooperation between school administration and the departments of education to reduce the academic problems that face teachers in the delivery of subject content. School management also should interact more with teachers to find out where they lack and intervene for support.
- Having learners with diverse abilities, teachers must adjust their teaching strategies to the audience. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt different teaching strategies during teaching and to attend

seminars and workshops both local and international so as to keep abreast of new and more effective teaching methods.

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