

IMPACT OF TEACHERS' ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS ON LEARNING OUTCOMES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN YAMALTU DEBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Teachers' academic qualifications are widely considered a foundational pillar of instructional quality and student success. This study investigated the impact of these qualifications on learning outcomes within the specific context of public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State, Nigeria. Adopting a descriptive survey design, the research collected data from a sample of 156 respondents, comprising 13 principals, 78 teachers, and 65 students, selected via random sampling. A validated and reliable questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.78) was used for data collection. Analysis involved descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Results revealed an overall positive perception (average mean = 3.50) that academic qualifications enhance lesson delivery, instructional resource use, and the handling of learning difficulties. Principals exhibited the strongest agreement, followed by teachers and students. Critically, the ANOVA result ($F\text{-ratio} = 19.943$, $p = .002$) led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming a statistically significant effect of teachers' academic qualifications on perceived learning outcomes. The study concludes that while qualifications are a crucial determinant of teacher effectiveness, their impact is most potent when integrated with practical pedagogical skill. It is recommended that educational policymakers enforce stringent qualification standards in recruitment and complement them with robust, ongoing professional development programs to maximize instructional quality and improve student achievement.

Keywords: Teacher Qualifications, Academic Credentials, Learning Outcomes, Secondary Education, Gombe State, Instructional Quality.

Introduction

National development, social mobility, and individual empowerment are fundamentally linked to the quality of a nation's education system. In developing economies like Nigeria, schools are pivotal institutions for equipping youth with the competencies necessary for societal

participation and economic productivity. At the heart of this educational apparatus lies the teacher, whose influence on student academic growth consistently emerges as the most significant in-school factor, surpassing even resources, curriculum, or familial background in impact (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Consequently, enhancing teacher quality has become a central tenet of global educational reform.

Teacher quality is a multidimensional construct encompassing a blend of personal attributes, professional knowledge, and pedagogical skill. UNESCO (2022) emphasizes that bolstering teacher competency yields the greatest returns on student achievement, particularly in systems facing multifaceted challenges. Core components such as academic qualifications, subject mastery, pedagogical ability, and classroom management collectively determine instructional efficacy. Deficiencies in these areas invariably compromise student performance, even when other infrastructural improvements are present.

In Nigeria, persistent anxieties regarding declining academic standards are reflected in national examination results, prompting scrutiny of teacher preparedness in public schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). Scholars attribute weakened instructional effectiveness to factors including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate pre-service and in-service training, and the prevalent assignment of teachers to subjects outside their specialization (Olatunji, 2015; Nkesi & Adeoye, 2018). This landscape fuels a critical public discourse on whether the teaching corps possesses the requisite qualifications and professional capacity to deliver quality education.

Gombe State mirrors these national challenges, with documented issues concerning teacher deployment, competence, and resultant student performance. Reports from the State Ministry of Education (2021) indicate a concerning prevalence of underqualified teachers and those teaching outside their field of expertise in public secondary schools. This situation is exacerbated in rapidly growing areas like Yamaltu Deba Local Government, where population pressures strain educational infrastructure and resources. Within such contexts, the pivotal question arises: does the academic qualification of teachers, as a proxy for professional knowledge, effectively translate into improved learning outcomes amidst systemic constraints?

Academic qualifications serve as a foundational, though not exhaustive, indicator of teacher competence. They ostensibly certify the acquisition of pedagogical knowledge and subject matter expertise. Research across diverse settings suggests that teachers with higher and more relevant qualifications tend to exhibit superior instructional practices and foster greater student engagement (Nkesi & Adeoye, 2018). Nigeria's National Policy on Education stipulates the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) as the minimum teaching qualification, yet compliance remains inconsistent, especially in areas like Yamaltu Deba. This discrepancy between policy and practice necessitates a localized investigation into the actual influence of academic credentials on student learning.

Therefore, this study aims to empirically examine the impact of teachers' academic qualifications on learning outcomes within the specific context of public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State. By generating context-specific evidence, the

research seeks to inform targeted policies on teacher recruitment, training, and professional development, thereby contributing to broader efforts to enhance educational quality in Nigeria's secondary school system.

The role of the teacher has evolved from that of a mere knowledge transmitter to a multifaceted facilitator of learning, curriculum interpreter, classroom manager, and mentor. This modern conception underscores the profession's complexity, demanding a blend of deep content knowledge and pedagogical skill (Adeyemi, 2021). Subject-matter expertise forms the intellectual cornerstone, enabling teachers to demystify complex concepts and foster meaningful understanding (Olanrewaju & Yusuf, 2022).

Academic qualifications the formal degrees, diplomas, and certifications held by teachers are thus critical as they provide the foundational knowledge and professional legitimacy for this role. They represent the structured acquisition of both content and pedagogical theory (Okaforcha & Amuzie, 2025). Nigerian research generally supports their importance. Studies by Okaforcha and Amuzie (2025) and Awolola and Alabi (2025) link higher qualifications to improved student engagement and instructional quality, respectively. Shittu (2024) further affirms their positive correlation with academic performance in Osun State.

However, a critical nuance emerges from the literature. Qualifications alone may be an insufficient guarantor of success. Research by Guni and Keter (2025) and Taiwo (2024) indicates that the impact of academic credentials is significantly amplified when combined with practical pedagogical competence, subject mastery, and effective classroom engagement. This underscores that while qualifications are a necessary component of teacher quality, their ultimate effect on learning outcomes is mediated by the teacher's ability to translate theoretical knowledge into effective classroom practice.

The quality of instruction is unequivocally the most potent school-based determinant of student learning outcomes at the secondary level. In Nigeria, as in many developing nations, the teacher's influence profoundly shapes academic performance, learner attitudes, and future educational pathways (Adebayo, 2019). Despite this, persistent declines in educational quality in Gombe State's public secondary schools, evidenced in policy reviews and examination records, raise urgent questions about teacher effectiveness. In Yamaltu Deba Local Government Area, observed gaps in student achievement prompt a focused inquiry into how specific teacher attributes contribute to these outcomes.

While systemic challenges like infrastructure and funding are frequently cited, robust evidence positions teacher-related variables as the most direct and significant influencers of learner achievement (World Bank, 2021). A central concern within this domain is the issue of teachers' academic qualifications. Despite the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) mandating relevant credentials, persistent reports from Gombe State reveal a mismatch where teachers are either underqualified or teaching outside their specialization (Ogunlade & Oluremi, 2020). Such misalignment jeopardizes accurate content delivery, appropriate pedagogy, and effective

learner guidance, contributing to conceptual misunderstandings and poor examination performance (Usman, 2015).

A significant gap exists, however, in empirical research that precisely measures the extent of this influence within the localized context of Yamaltu Deba Local Government. The absence of such evidence hampers the development of targeted, evidence-based interventions for improving teacher deployment and qualification standards. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by investigating the impact of teachers' academic qualifications on learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba LGA, Gombe State.

The study sought to: Find out the impact of teachers' academic qualifications on learning outcomes in secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State;

The study was guided by this research question: To what extent do teachers' academic qualifications shape students' learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State?

This null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance in the study:

H₀: Teachers' academic qualifications do not exert any significant effect on students' learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study, as it facilitates the systematic description of characteristics and perceptions within a population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The target population comprised all principals, teachers, and students in public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba LGA, totaling 43,819 individuals (126 principals, 1,567 teachers, and 42,126 students) as per the Gombe State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2025).

A sample of 156 respondents was drawn using a random sampling technique. This included 13 principals, 78 teachers, and 65 students. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled the "Teachers' Quality and Learning Outcomes Questionnaire (TQALQ)." The instrument's face and content validity were established by a panel of experts in Education. Its reliability was confirmed via a pilot study, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.78. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) to answer the research question and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the stated hypothesis at the 0.05 significance level.

Results

Research Question: To what extent do teachers' academic qualifications shape students' learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State?

The data collected through the administered questionnaire on Principals, teachers and students in respect to research question one was analyzed using frequency, mean and standard deviation. The summary of analysis made on this research question is presented in table 1.

Table 1: To what Extent do Teachers' Academic Qualifications Shape Students' Learning Outcomes in Public Secondary Schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State?

SN	Item	Respondents	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	SD
1.	Teachers with higher academic qualifications deliver lessons more effectively	Principal	8	5	-	-	-	4.615	0.506
		Teacher	60	8	-	2	8	3.282	0.820
		student	-	17	5	6	37	2.907	0.986
2.	Students understand subjects better when taught by well-qualified teachers.	Principal	11	2	-	-	-	4.846	0.375
		Teacher	22	23	5	2	26	3.794	1.255
		student	26	11	3	4	21	3.492	1.293
3.	Teachers' academic qualifications contribute to improved student performance in examinations.	Principal	4	8	-	1	-	4.153	0.800
		Teacher	6	16	5	-	51	2.820	1.235
		student	1	34	10	19	1	3.230	0.948
4.	Academically qualified teachers use appropriate instructional resources in teaching.	Principal	8	3	2	-	-	4.000	0.776
		Teacher	31	27	3	7	10	3.448	1.411
		student	1	43	12	5	4	2.769	0.903
5.	Teachers' qualifications enable them to handle students' learning difficulties more efficiently.	Principal	6	3	2	2	-	4.461	1.154
		Teacher	-	42	24	8	4	3.333	0.862
		student	1	23	10	1	30	2.846	1.414
6.	Students benefit more from teachers who possess specialized training in their subject areas.	Principal	4	8	-	1	-	4.153	0.800
		Teacher	3	39	16	7	13	3.153	1.185
		student	1	33	12	17	2	3.215	0.960
7.	Higher academic qualifications help teachers	Principal	6	5	2	-	-	4.307	0.751
		Teacher	3	31	7	9	28	2.641	1.413

	prepare clear and organized lessons.	student	-	19	2	22	22	2.927	1.218
8.	Qualified teachers demonstrate greater confidence while teaching.	Principal	7	5	-	1	-	4.384	0.869
		Teacher	-	39	1	27	11	2.500	1.023
		student	-	37	4	16	8	3.076	1.149
9.	Academic qualifications positively influence teachers' ability to assess students accurately.	Principal	7	5	1	-	-	4.461	0.660
		Teacher	36	-	5	17	20	3.115	1.248
		student	-	17	4	13	31	3.107	1.263
10.	Students are more motivated to learn when taught by highly qualified teachers.	Principal	7	4	2	-	-	4.384	0.767
		Teacher	2	31	19	6	20	2.859	1.266
		student	1	14	4	26	20	2.730	1.156
Average Mean								3.50	1.01

Table 1 examines how teachers' academic qualifications influence students' learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government. The overall average mean of 3.50 indicates that respondents generally believe academic qualifications play an important role in shaping learning outcomes. Principals consistently recorded very high mean scores for instance, 4.615 on effective lesson delivery and 4.846 on improved student understanding howing strong confidence in the value of qualified teachers. Teachers and students also acknowledged these benefits, though with lower but moderate means such as 3.282 and 2.907 on lesson delivery. The data further show that academic qualifications enhance teachers' ability to use relevant instructional resources (3.448 from teachers) and handle learning difficulties (3.333). Students also recognized that teachers with specialized training contribute to better learning, reflected in a mean of 3.215. Moreover, accurate assessment and improved motivation recorded means above 3.0 among teachers and students, suggesting broad agreement. Overall, the table demonstrates that higher academic qualifications strengthen teaching effectiveness and student performance.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the opinions of principals, teachers and students on the impact of teachers' academic qualifications on learning outcomes in secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State.

The opinions of principals, teachers and students were gathered and tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA). The summary of the hypothesis tested is presented in table 4.6:

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Statistics on the Impact of Teachers' Academic Qualifications on Learning Outcomes in Secondary Schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State

Status	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	F-critical	Prob.
Between Groups	20.894	2	29.947	19.943	2.61	.002
Within Groups	54.875	154	4.488			
Total	75.769	156				

The ANOVA results indicate a significant difference in learning outcomes based on teachers' academic qualifications in secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government. The between-group sum of squares (20.894) and the mean square value (29.947) produced an F-ratio of 19.943, which is substantially higher than the F-critical value of 2.61. This means the variation observed among groups is unlikely to have occurred by chance. The associated probability value (.002) further confirms statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Consequently, teachers' academic qualifications meaningfully influence students' learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of well-qualified teachers in improving achievement. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the opinions of principals, teachers and students on the impact of teachers' academic qualifications on learning outcomes in secondary schools in Yamaltu Deba Local Government, Gombe State is rejected.

Discussions

The analysis revealed a significant difference in the views of principals, teachers, and students regarding the influence of teachers' academic qualifications on learning outcomes. This aligns with several empirical studies highlighting the importance of professional qualifications for effective teaching. For instance, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) found that teachers with higher qualifications demonstrate stronger instructional delivery and better classroom performance. Similarly, Guni and Keter (2025) reported that higher academic preparation equips teachers with broader content knowledge and improved pedagogical decision-making, which enhances students' achievement. Research across Nigeria consistently shows that better-qualified teachers promote deeper comprehension and improved academic performance (Eze & Olorunfemi, 2020; Usman, 2015). Human capital theorists also argue that teachers' academic preparation strengthens critical competencies necessary for supporting learner growth. Therefore, the significant ANOVA result corresponds with existing evidence that teacher qualification remains central to student success. The rejection of the null hypothesis aligns with the consensus that academic credentials contribute meaningfully to improved learning outcomes in secondary schools.

Conclusion

The study concludes that teacher-related variables play varying roles in influencing learning outcomes in secondary schools within Yamaltu Deba Local Government. Academic qualifications, subject mastery, and classroom management skills emerged as significant contributors to student performance, confirming their centrality in effective teaching. Teachers who possess higher qualifications tend to demonstrate stronger instructional capabilities, while those with sound subject mastery promote deeper understanding among learners. Similarly, effective classroom management enhances engagement, reduces distractions, and increases instructional time.

Recommendations

The study recommended that educational authorities should prioritize the recruitment and retention of teachers with relevant academic qualifications. Continuous professional upgrading should also be encouraged through sponsored training, workshops, and in-service programs.

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