

# IMPACT OF TEACHERS' LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION ON THEIR LESSON DELIVERY IN GHANA

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**Abstract:** Teacher qualification all over the world is a big setback to the development of the teacher. The success or failure of the teacher in their classroom performance depends largely on their qualifications and training. A lot of articles have been devoted on the teacher and teacher related issues, but little research has been done on college tutors qualifications and the subjects that they teach. This article tries to fill that knowledge gap by looking at the qualification levels of tutors in delivering geography lessons in social studies curriculum. This descriptive study was used and a cross-sectional survey with aggregated data were collected from different participants at different points in time. The study used a sample size of sixty-two (62) and was non-experimental in nature. Self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection.

**Keywords:** Credentials, Qualification, Professionals, Cost-Effectiveness, Evaluation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher qualifications refers to the credentials, knowledge, and experience that teachers bring with them when they enter the classroom, such as coursework, grades, subject matter education, degrees, test scores, experience certification(s), and evidence of participation in continued learning (Laura & Leslie, 2008). Teacher qualifications are particularly necessary for regulating entry into the classroom when performance and outcome data are not yet available, as in the case with new teachers. Teacher qualifications are also commonly used as indicators of teacher quality because of the relative ease and cost-effectiveness of collecting this data, which can often be found in public records maintained by states and districts. Academic qualification, professional qualification, refresher courses or trainings and teacher experience are the important qualities of a teacher.

Professional teachers are the hubs of our educational system around which the quality of the teaching and learning experience revolve. A school cannot be better than its teachers because it is the teachers who determine the quality of education. Therefore, the nation's educational system at all levels must to a great extent be improved upon or be marred by the quality of its professional teachers. Fafunwa, (1991) was of the view when he noted, "persons were trained to acquire a certificate in B.A/B.Sc. education. But now there is emphasis on B.Ed or PGDE". Although he further argued that it was agreed that a degree with a nine-months diploma was not a satisfactory method and lacked professional aptitude, many are interested in teaching as a stepping stone to other fields of endeavor. There is great need for a sound professional background; an unqualified teacher is an enemy to the students' progress and a danger to the child's upbringing. For a non-professional teacher to handle any subject in school is a very serious problem because it concerns the intellectual, moral and emotional phases of the child's life

Goldhaber (2003) stated that, teachers clearly play an important role in shaping the future of individuals as well as of entire generations and in recent years, new research has demonstrated the dramatic effect that teachers can have on the

outcomes of students from all academic and social backgrounds. (p. 1). The basic skills and abilities of the teaching learning process are developed in a teacher through professional qualification. Likewise, professional qualification can be termed as the preparation for life long journey to the teaching profession. Professional qualification is divided into two more categories i.e. pre-service and in-service professional qualification. B.Ed., M.Ed., M.A. Education, M.Phil. Education, Ph.D. Education and some other teaching diplomas are the professional qualification (Muhammad, Rashida, Riffat & Fayyaz, 2011)

Shulman (1987) opines that teachers need to understand the subject matter deeply and flexibly so as to help students create useful cognitive maps, relate one idea to another as well to address their misconceptions. In his contribution to the scholarship of teacher knowledge, Shulman states that teachers need to master three types of knowledge, namely content knowledge also called “deep” knowledge of the subject itself, pedagogical content knowledge which is a special blend of content and pedagogy that is exclusive to teachers as a special form of understanding how best to teach a specific content and thirdly, knowledge of the curriculum development termed as curriculum knowledge.

Similarly, in a study, Ross, Cousins, Gadalla and Hannay (1999) found that teacher efficacy was lower for teachers who were teaching courses out-of-field. This indicates that the effectiveness of the teaching-learning is highly dependent upon the level of training that teachers attain in a particular subject area. Where teachers are more effective as a result of the professional training that they undergo, the teaching-learning process also tends to be effective. There is lack of sufficient arrangements for teacher training and refresher courses, lack of the subject matter knowledge, inflexibility with little motivation in adopting the opportunities, lack of basic facilities and transport facility, and minimum salary (Kazmi, 2005). Similarly, the less number of years of schooling, trainings programs with the lack of master trainers, no stress on teaching practice, absence of monitoring system and accreditation body, and politicized appointments are the factors of low teacher quality

Monk (1994) in his study of high school mathematics and science teachers found that teacher experience had no effect on student performance. Young teachers who just entered the profession may leave their training institution with limited practical experience, in spite of strong theoretical preparation. This will not lead to high student performance (Bailey & Celce-Murcia, 1979). This is similar to the finding of Hanushek (1997) who also reported that, as teachers gained experience, they tended to make career moves that put them in classrooms of already higher-achieving children. He asserted that the first year of teaching is kind of rocky. It has been found that teacher effectiveness increased as a result of on-the-job learning.

Goe (2007) examination of teacher quality focuses on four categories of teacher quality indicators-teacher qualification, teacher characteristics, teacher practices and teacher effectiveness which he determined in his research studies on teacher quality published between 2000 and 2007. Teacher completion of an undergraduate or graduate major in mathematics is associated with higher student achievement in high school and middle school (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sanders, 2003; Frome, Lasater, & Cooney, 2005; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Monk, 1994; Wenglinsky, 2000, 2002). According to Valli and Rennert-Ariev (2002), measures of teacher qualifications are; diagnosis and evaluation of students' learning problems; collaboration with students when addressing matters that concern them; effective organization and management of the class; asking meaningful and effective questions; and effective usage of appropriate methods, techniques and materials.

Al-Jasser (n.d.) conducted a study to examine the effect of teaching experience on foreign (English) language achievement in Saud. The sample comprised teachers and students of King Saud University. The following findings emerged from the study: Firstly, students who received instructions from the first group of teachers, who had the lowest teaching experience, had unexpectedly the highest performance level (Mean = 29.47). The students who received instructions from the next group of teachers, who have the highest teaching experience, had the lowest performance level (Mean = 25.63). Although this correlation was significant at the .05 level, it was considered a weak correlation. It was, an unexpectedly, negative, rather than a positive, association ( $r = -.24$ ). Based on this  $r$ -value, the researcher concluded that higher teaching experience did not cause or predict a higher level of learning achievement, but rather that lower teaching experience was associated with a higher level of learning achievement. For instance, a study of four low-income urban districts in 2003 found that in each case there were more than enough qualified applicants to successfully fill existing vacancies. But, a cumbersome application process, layers of bureaucracy, inadequate customer service, poor data systems, late budget timetables, and seniority-based teacher transfer rules all undermined the ability of the districts to place qualified candidates in classrooms (New Teacher Project, 2004).

Swanzy (2007) in his study to identify the challenges associated with the implementation of vocational and technical programmes in senior secondary schools in the Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis found that lack of competent teachers affects the effective delivery of the programme. The study revealed that majority of the teachers were on part time appointment and this seriously inhibits the implementation process. Rowan (1997) speculates that advanced academic training may substitute for pedagogical training meaning that those with advanced subject-matter degrees may have completed little or no pedagogical course work. Graduate level study may produce teachers who cannot simplify their advanced understanding of the subject matter, at least for students at the elementary and middle school levels.

However, Monk (1994) notes that degree level and number of content-area courses taken are not highly correlated and suggests that 'the simple accumulation of credits with no regard for the subject being taught does not improve student achievement' (p. 142). In Ghana, the qualification of most trained basic school teachers is the Teacher's Certificate 'A'. This is obtained after going through an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programme in a teacher training college. Gimeno and Ibanez (1981) classified such colleges as 'secondary level' ITT colleges. The programmes offered by these training colleges lead to 'certificates in teaching', which they described as equivalent to School Certificate in Secondary Education (or GCE 'O' Level) qualification. Thus the academic qualifications of the majority of teachers in basic schools are low. In spite of their low qualifications, teachers after completing their training receive very little in-service education and training (INSET). Even in places where these have been organized, the participants did not take it seriously because they counted very little towards the upgrading or promotion of the teacher (Mereku, 1995). As a result of their low academic qualifications and the lack of in-service education, the social status of these teachers has sunk very low. Even though other factors like the social origins of teachers, the size of the teaching force, and the teacher's relationship with clients, also account for their low status, the influence of their low academic qualifications and the lack of opportunities for their further education and upgrading is considerable.

Üstüner (2004) in his research draws attention to problems encountered in training of teachers with desired qualifications in recent years. There may be various reasons underlying the observed deficiency in teacher quality. One of the most important reasons is thought to be the inadequate number of qualified teaching staff members' at teacher training institutions and the teacher candidates' lack of professional experience, which should be gained alongside effective teachers. He observed that both teacher candidates and experienced teachers improved their pedagogic knowledge, teaching skills and positive behaviors.

Cavalluzzo (2004) finds that National Board Certified Teachers with higher licensure test scores have a marginal positive impact on middle school mathematics achievement. However, because National Board Certified teachers, as a group, have higher licensure test scores than teachers without the distinction, it is not clear whether (or to what extent) National Board Certification or teachers' test scores (or both) contribute to increased student achievement.

Several studies indicate that certain types of professional development contribute to teacher quality and student achievement. Specifically, professional development that is sustained, aligned with the curriculum, and focused on instruction is shown to positively influence school-level achievement in mathematics and science at both the elementary and high school levels (Cohen & Hill, 1998; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Wenglinsky, 2000, 2002). Although Harbison and Hanushek (1992) find no beneficial relationship between professional development and student achievement in rural Brazilian schools, they speculate that this finding may be the result of targeting particularly underqualified teachers for participation in the professional development programs studied

Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) made several suggestions about how to provide quality teachers in the face of growing teacher shortages. Because distributional problems, as well as shortages of qualified management, resources, syllabus, and salary. They reported that most research related teacher variables to the teaching situation and that "All studies assumed relationships to be unidirectional, from teacher to pupils, as well as linear" (p. 32). A few of their key findings are summarized below:

1. Training and certification were found to have an effect on student achievement, and "training was also found to be important in producing teacher behavioural changes assumed or empirically attested to be positively related to achievement" (p. 2).
2. The effect of higher qualifications (university graduates versus teachers with fewer years of study) was not clear, with well-designed studies finding a positive effect in some countries and not in others.

3. Some methods of teacher training—including microteaching, simulation, role playing, and the use of case studies—were consistently reported to be effective in promoting changes in teaching techniques.

4. Female teachers were generally reported to be “better-adjusted and more job-satisfied” (p. 34).

Staiger (2006) used data from the city’s Department of Education covering the 1998–99 to 2004–05 school years, in grades four through eight. The study sample included about 10,000 teachers classified as certified, uncertified, Teach for America (TFA), New York City Teaching Fellow (an alternative certification program), or international hire (certified teacher from another country). In reading, students of certified teachers did better than those of teaching fellows. In contrast, no difference was found between certified teachers and teaching fellows or uncertified teachers in their impact on math achievement. Students of international hires scored lower in math than those assigned to certified teachers, while students of Teach for America (TFA) teachers achieved higher scores in math. Teaching effectiveness was found to improve during the first few years of experience. Teaching fellows and traditionally certified teachers left teaching at similar rates; in contrast, Teach for America (TFA) teachers usually left after completing their two-year commitment. A key finding is the extremely large variation within groups, as compared with the relatively small differences between them. He concluded by recommending that greater attention be given to attracting and keeping high-quality teachers, and to evaluating them carefully in their first few years in order to remove ineffective teachers from the teaching force before they are given tenure.

## 2. METHODS

This research which was non-experimental in nature sought to explore and describe the impart of teachers level of qualification on their lessons delivery by tutors who teach geography component of the social studies curriculum at the Colleges of Education, in the Central, Eastern and Ashanti Regions of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was employed to help observe and describe the state of affairs regarding the teaching of the geographical aspect of the social studies curriculum. This descriptive study was a cross-sectional survey in which aggregated data were collected from different respondents at different points in time. A survey design was used because of its flexibility as expose by Babbie (2007); He states that surveys are flexible and hence allows many questions to be asked on a given topic. Descriptive studies look at individuals, groups, institutions, methods and materials in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyse and interpret the entities and the events that constitute their various fields of inquiry” (p. 205). Similarly, other researchers (Pilot & Hungler, 1995; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000) hypothesise that descriptive studies describe a given state of affair of phenomenon as fully and carefully as possible by asking the same set of questions from a large number of individuals. This design helps to produce a good amount of responses from a wide range of people. The target population for the study comprised 62 social studies tutors in the 12 Colleges of Education in the Ashanti and Central Regions of Ghana. Out of the total number of 62 tutors, 10 social studies tutors were teaching in three private institutions while the remaining 52 social studies tutors were teaching in nine public Colleges of Education. The target group was made up of both male and female social studies tutors who have been teaching the subject in their various colleges for a number of years and hence possessed relevant information on factors that affect the teaching and learning of the geography component of the social studies curriculum at the college level. The sample size that was used to conduct this study consisted of 62 social studies tutors in the Colleges of Education.

### INSTRUMENT;

Self-developed questionnaires and attitude a scale was used for the study. The questionnaire was made up of both closed and open-ended items. The closed ended items provided check-mark responses which were structured with the use of 5-point Likert-type scale. The use of the questionnaire also allowed the respondents to complete it at their own convenient time, and they were offered a greater assurance of anonymity with regard to whatever information they provided. Although the questionnaire did not offer any opportunity for probing and motivation on the part of the respondents, the instrument tended not to be “affected by problems of no-contact” (Sarantakos, 1998, p.224).

## 3. KEY FINDINGS

The study revealed that 32 respondents representing 51.6% of the 62 geography tutors who have major in geography and the remaining 30 are without major in geography. The respondents agreed that (M=3.13, SD=0.78) geography tutors with a major in the subject area are able to teach better than tutors without a major in it. The findings further posits that tutors academic and professional qualification helps them to effectively teach all aspects of geography (M=2.81, SD=0.88).

Tutors were affirmative ( $M=3.48$ ,  $SD= 0.54$ ) that students taught by trained geography teachers have higher level of understanding than those taught by non-trained geography teachers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that tutors who have master's degree in their subject area are better respected and reverend by their students than their counterparts. Tutors agreed with the researcher that tutors who have masters in their subject teach better and well than those who have certificates, diploma, and first degrees. The study concluded that students who have been taught and handled by tutors with higher degrees turned to understand concepts, facts, principles and generalization better and are in position to repeat what have been taught in class. The study revealed that tutors academic and professional qualifications help them to teach well and better in all aspect of the geography lessons.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATION

The government and other bodies should help to upgrade the knowledge and skills of all geography tutors, particularly those who do not possess the minimum academic and professional requirement. This would enable such tutors to become competent and qualified geography tutors. Seminars, refresher courses, workshops and other professional development sessions or opportunities should be made readily available so that all geography tutors will have the chance to sharpen their academic and professional competencies. This would have a long term effects on teacher trainees.

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