

# Soft Skills and Other Influences in Teaching Related To Work Experience at College of Health Technology, Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:-** Continuous improvement in the teaching profession is garnered over the years of work experience and further learning. However, good teaching is beyond qualifications and experiences because other than hard skills evaluated through behavioural objectives, there are soft skills that cannot be measured but are necessary traits that are essential for effective learning experience. The conditions that affect student performance are not limited to lecturers' abilities but also certain school factors. Thirty-four (34) lecturers of the college of Health Technology, Pankshin were administered questionnaires. The main questions were related to soft skills, hard skills, competencies and student abilities. The questions imputed into SPSS 21.0 was analysed by Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) to ascertain the association of certain variables. There was association between the lecturers' work experience and the student academic performance being proportional to practical experience in their study area with  $p$  value of 0.000, also there was association between the lecturers' work experience and the students always understanding their lecturers with  $p$  value of 0.016 both with  $p$  value < 0.05. It was also learned that more than skills, secondary school background, poor staff strength, inadequate use of mathematical skills and so on disturb learning processes.

**Keywords:-** Soft Skills, Teaching Experience, Hard Skills, Learning, Lecturing.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching involves the use of personal potentials or abilities for quality dispensation of learning experiences. These potentials are called soft skills and are important in the professional development of teaching [1]. Tang *et al* [2] asserted that soft skills acquisition contributes to enhancement of teacher quality. Such soft skills identified are communication skills, teamwork, leadership skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills. The hard skills are cognitive learning like knowledge and comprehension while the soft skills amongst the earlier mentioned include establishing inclusion, developing a positive learning attitude, amplifying content and engendering competence

and respect to students [3]. Burns also mentioned other soft skills that can contribute to productive learning to include practice. It is important for teachers/lecturers to obtain the soft skills during their own training. Yusuf and Yinusa [4] found out that attitude of teachers, teaching style of teachers, in addition to teachers' qualification and experience were all significantly related to junior secondary school performance. It may not differ even at higher levels. A study of such advantage was carried in the teaching of mathematics and it was found that mathematical hard skills acquisition and improvement in secondary school students who received value-and-character-based learning was better than students who were treated with conventional learning. Also, mathematical soft skills of secondary school students taught with value-and-character-based learning were better than those of students receiving conventional learning [5]. Therefore, the implementation of value-and-character based learning is important in teaching mathematics.

It is important that a teacher acquires sufficient education and /or experience so that he or she can in confidence teach others. The study by Yusuf and Dada [6] proves that students taught by teachers with 6-15 years teaching experience do better than those taught by teachers with 1-5 years teaching experience. Ewetan and Ewetan [7] based on their study of Mathematics and English Language as taught subjects affirmed that teachers with more than ten years of experience in the teaching turned out students with higher academic performance in the subjects than students taught by teachers with lower years of teaching experience. This is ascribed to the fact that these teachers are able to blend the thoughts and feelings of their students in class and this yields better educational achievement. The work of Harris and Sass [8] informs that good teachers are not only known through their experience and attainment of advanced degrees but there are factors that may be more useful and known as value added like teacher intelligence, subject knowledge and teaching skills. In another study, it has been shown that experience is a less important indicator for enhanced productivity [9]. This can be accounted for by the experienced teacher not being conversant with the newest curricular and pedagogy advances. Teachers must have special characteristics other than their qualifications that

make them important in teaching with auspicious outcomes.

The role of teachers also includes stimulating students' interaction and offering an organization of course content by getting involved in activities or participating directly or indirectly [10]. Such roles of teachers are aimed at increasing the attainment of learning objectives. Based on studies, career growth of the teacher improves the student performance reasonably than the initial teacher qualification [11] [12]. This is most likely connected to teachers' satisfaction consequent to being more dedicated to work. It is known that lecturers' competencies alone do not inspire better student academic performance. Factors like learning facilities, student motivation, and economic background, family background, parent's role, previous education and peer influence are major contributors [13].

The study aims at the strategic identification of relationships of Lecturers' experience with teaching skill variables and how lecturer's characteristics like soft skills, certain hard skills, lecture planning, admission system and the background of mathematics enable students fare in their academic outcome.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The lecturers of the College of Health Technology, Pankshin in Plateau State, Nigeria were distributed questionnaires. A total of thirty four (34) out of sixty five lecturers were administered questionnaires. Forty-five questionnaires were prepared and sent to the lecturers but only thirty four were filled. The lecturers had twenty-seven (27) males and seven (7) females. The questionnaires were distributed to the lecturers in the school based on their availability in the school premises within the three weeks' time of data collection. Most lecturers had completed their lectures and could not show up in the school within the period of data collection. The questionnaires were divided into two sections, first was the demographic and some quality data including qualifications specific to education and experiences of the respondents. The second part of the questions was given four options based on the rating scale contained twenty one items relating to soft skills and other characteristics that affect student performances. However, the respondents were advised to leave blank any question that they decide it is neutral as an equivalent of 'no response' (NR). Therefore, the rating is Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (DA). The SPSS version 21 was used to test for association between the soft skills related questions and years of experience as well as between three hard skills related questions and years of experience by Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test. A  $p$  value of  $<0.05$  signifies association in the relationship between the compared variables.

## III. RESULTS

| Variable   | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <b>Nature of Lecture Contract</b>                |           |            |
| Permanent Lecturer                               | 11        | 32.4       |
| Part-time Lecturer                               | 9         | 26.5       |
| Voluntary Lecturer                               | 9         | 26.5       |
| Casual Lecturer                                  | 5         | 14.7       |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>34</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Work Experience (Years)</b>                   |           |            |
| 1-5  | 17        | 50         |
| 6-10   | 8         | 23.5       |
| 11-15  | 5         | 14.7       |
| 16-20  | 2         | 5.9        |
| 21-25  | 0         | 0          |
| 26-35  | 2         | 5.9        |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>34</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Qualifications Specific to Education</b>      |           |            |
| Postgraduate / Professional Diploma in Education | 21        | 61.8       |
| Master's Degree in Education                     | 0         | 0          |
| Ph. D. in Education                              | 1         | 2.9        |
| Nil  | 12        | 35.3       |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>34</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 1:- Lecturing Experience and Education Specific Qualifications

| Variable   |    | Duration of work in years |          |          |          |          |           | $\chi^2$ (P) value |
|--|----|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------------|
|  |    | 1-5                       | 6 - 10   | 11-15    | 16-20    | 26-35    | Total     |                    |
| Student academic performance is proportional to practical experience in that area<br><b>(Practical experience or Practice)</b> | SA | 1                         | 4        | 3        | 1        | 0        | <b>9</b>  | 45.076<br>(0.000)  |
|  | A  | 14                        | 4        | 1        | 1        | 0        | <b>20</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 2                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>2</b>  |                    |
|  | SD | 0                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | <b>1</b>  |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>17</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>32</b> |                    |
| Students' academic performance is related to my lecturing skills<br><b>(Abilities/ Aptitudes)</b>                              | SA | 7                         | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>8</b>  | 14.333<br>(0.073)  |
|  | A  | 9                         | 7        | 5        | 2        | 1        | <b>24</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 1                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | <b>2</b>  |                    |
|  | DA | 0                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>0</b>  |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>17</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>34</b> |                    |
| The relationship I have with students is cordial<br><b>(Mutual respect)</b>  | SA | 8                         | 2        | 1        | 0        | 0        | <b>11</b> | 11.910<br>(0.155)  |
|  | A  | 8                         | 6        | 4        | 2        | 1        | <b>21</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 1                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1        | <b>2</b>  |                    |
|  | DA | 0                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>0</b>  |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>17</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>34</b> |                    |
| I lecture in the simplest language possible for students to understand<br><b>(Communication)</b>                               | SA | 7                         | 3        | 1        | 0        | 1        | <b>12</b> | 7.683<br>(0.465)   |
|  | A  | 10                        | 5        | 3        | 2        | 1        | <b>21</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 0                         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | <b>1</b>  |                    |
|  | DA | 0                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>0</b>  |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>17</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>34</b> |                    |
| I have been modifying my lecturing methods over the years<br><b>(Improvement)</b>  | SA | 8                         | 2        | 1        | 1        | 0        | <b>12</b> | 9.020<br>(0.341)   |
|  | A  | 8                         | 6        | 3        | 1        | 2        | <b>20</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 0                         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | <b>1</b>  |                    |
|  | DA | 0                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>0</b>  |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>16</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>33</b> |                    |
| I motivate the students during lecture<br><b>(Positive motivation)</b>   | SA | 4                         | 3        | 1        | 0        | 0        | <b>8</b>  | 4.280<br>(0.831)   |
|  | A  | 11                        | 5        | 3        | 2        | 2        | <b>23</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 2                         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | <b>3</b>  |                    |
|  | DA | 0                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>0</b>  |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>17</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>34</b> |                    |
| I give relevant punishment to erring students during or after lectures<br><b>(Negative motivation)</b>                         | SA | 1                         | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | <b>3</b>  | 5.715<br>(0.679)   |
|  | A  | 11                        | 7        | 3        | 2        | 2        | <b>25</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 5                         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0        | <b>6</b>  |                    |
|  | DA | 0                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>0</b>  |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>17</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>34</b> |                    |
| The lecturing method unlike teaching does not necessarily require mastery of the topic one should teach                        | SA | 3                         | 2        | 0        | 0        | 0        | <b>5</b>  | 13.746<br>(0.317)  |
|  | A  | 10                        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 1        | <b>13</b> |                    |
|  | D  | 3                         | 5        | 4        | 2        | 1        |           |                    |
|  | DA | 1                         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |           |                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |    | <b>17</b>                 | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>34</b> |                    |

Table 2:- Relating Lecturer's Work Experience to Soft Skills Teaching Performance (Chi square and P Value)

| Variable   |    | Years of Working Experience (years) |        |       |       |       | $\chi^2$ (P) value |
|--|----|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|
|  |    | 1-5                                 | 6 – 10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 26-35 |                    |
| <b>(Affective domain of learning)</b><br>Students are always willing to learn      | SA | 0                                   | 1      | 0     | 0     | 0     | 10.341<br>(0.242)  |
|  | A  | 14                                  | 5      | 4     | 0     | 1     |                    |
|  | D  | 3                                   | 2      | 1     | 2     | 1     |                    |
|  | SD | 0                                   | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0     |                    |
| <b>(Cognitive domain – comprehension)</b><br>Students always understand my lecture | SA | 2                                   | 2      | 0     | 0     | 0     | 24.749<br>(0.016)  |
|  | A  | 11                                  | 6      | 2     | 1     | 1     |                    |
|  | D  | 4                                   | 0      | 3     | 1     | 0     |                    |
|  | DA | 0                                   | 0      | 0     | 0     | 1     |                    |
| <b>(Cognitive domain – evaluation)</b> Less than 20 % of students fail my course   | SA | 0                                   | 2      | 0     | 0     | 0     | 19.643<br>(0.074)  |
|  | A  | 13                                  | 5      | 1     | 1     | 1     |                    |
|  | D  | 2                                   | 1      | 3     | 1     | 0     |                    |
|  | DA | 1                                   | 0      | 1     | 0     | 1     |                    |

Table 3:- Relating Lecturer's Work Experience to Hard Skills Teaching Methods (Chi-square and P Value)

| S/N | Questions  | Response to Questions (Frequency [%]) |             |             |           |           |            |
|-----|--|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|     |  | SA                                    | A           | DA          | SD        | NR        | Total      |
| 1   | The secondary school background of students affects their performance in the college   | 18<br>52.9%                           | 13<br>38.2% | 3<br>8.8%   | 0<br>0%   | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 2   | There are many students admitted by faulty admission process that I teach              | 15<br>44.1%                           | 16<br>47.1% | 3<br>8.8%   | 0<br>0%   | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 3   | Faulty admission process is responsible for poor academic performance of many students | 19<br>55.9%                           | 14<br>41.2% | 1<br>2.9%   | 0<br>0%   | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 4   | Students tend not to understand my lectures when they become more acquainted with me   | 6<br>17.6%                            | 14<br>41.2% | 14<br>41.2% | 0<br>0%   | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 5   | I have more responsibilities than I should due to poor staff in lecturing              | 8<br>23.5%                            | 26<br>76.5% | 0<br>0%     | 0<br>0%   | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 6   | There is no need to always use instructional materials available during lecturing      | 3<br>8.8%                             | 16<br>47.1% | 13<br>38.2% | 2<br>5.9% | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 7   | I always prepare lesson plans during lectures  | 18<br>52.9%                           | 15<br>44.1% | 1<br>2.9%   | 0<br>0%   | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 8   | The academic calendar is not always followed   | 5<br>14.7%                            | 25<br>73.5% | 3<br>8.8%   | 1<br>2.9% | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |
| 9   | Mathematical skills are important in the course(s) I lecture                           | 13<br>38.2%                           | 15<br>44.1% | 4<br>11.8%  | 1<br>2.9% | 1<br>2.9% | 34<br>100% |
| 10  | Most students I teach have sound mathematical skills                                   | 3<br>8.8%                             | 14<br>41.2% | 16<br>47.1% | 1<br>2.9% | 0<br>0%   | 34<br>100% |

Table 4:- Lecturer's Perceptions and Attitudes to Other Influences on Learning

#### IV. DISCUSSION

There is association between the lecturers' work experience and the soft skill 'academic performance being proportional to practical experience'. There are no associations between the lecturers' work experience and soft skills like students' academic performance is related to lecturing skills, cordial relationship with students, communication in the simplest possible language for student understanding, lecture modification over the years, positive and negative motivations, lecturing method not requiring topic mastery. There is association between the lecturers' work experience and the hard skill 'students always understand (cognitive domain of learning) the lecturer's lecture'. There are no associations between the lecturers' work experience and hard skills like students always willing to learn (affective domain of learning) and student evaluation of less than 20% fail the lecturer's course (cognitive domain of learning). This evaluation as a response is one of the highest component of the cognitive domain of learning based on assessment according Bloom's classification [14].

The lecturers believe practice helps students perform academically. The health sector training cannot be done without practical attachment or clinical experience. It is the period where students learn ethics and clinical conduct for those whose practice takes place in the clinic. This is in agreement with the finding that in medical education, learning cannot be limited to the classroom but clinical experience where feedback is required, intensive repetitive evaluation in clinic count significantly. It has been recommended that such undergraduate medical students should go through different clinical and non-clinical experience frequently to shape the students' attitudes towards patients and their relations [15].

A 26.5 % and a 58.8 % for strongly agree and agree shows 85.3% of total affirmative responses. 94.1 % of lecturers affirmed that student academic performance is related to lecturing skills. The same 94.1 % believe that they have cordial relationship with their students. There are several factors that influence student academic performance including student interactions with peers as well as with their lecturers. This can be related to the findings of Okello [16] in the teaching and learning of college algebra where relationships with respect to learning and student-lecturer relationships as well as peer relationships facilitate learning. The lecturers also believe that students are always willing to learn as 2.9 % strongly agreed while 70.6 % agreed. Comprehension (understanding) like evaluation as a component of the cognitive domain of learning is a tool in gauging performance. If 4 out of 34 and 21 out of 34 strongly agreed and agreed that their students always understand them, then 26.4 % who gave negative responses counts much because it is expected that all students understand their lecturers always. A competent lecturer must have control of the class, take responsibility of materials in their possession, identify the best learning objections, plan and achieve them; and meeting the student requirements[17]. Less than 20 % failing is equivalent to

more than 80 % passing the course which forms a good assessment level. According to the results, significant responses from lecturers that less than 20% fail their courses, the 29.4% negative response is a way not too low. These negative responses are most likely attributed to the teaching skills, attention to practice skills, relationship with students, and students' willingness to study or other reasons in this study.

Communication is an important soft skill in teaching and it significantly determines the comprehension of students in teaching or lecturing. Since 35.3 % strongly agreed and 61.8 % agreed that they lecture in the simplest language possible, it shows that high level of comprehension is expected. It has been demonstrated in a study that most primary school teachers established that communication is essential in learning progression and instruction [18]. Elegbe [19] supports that interpersonal communication is needed in interpersonal relationships and it is good remedy for good lecturers-students' relationships. Students improve in their studies through motivation influenced by interpersonal interactions between lecturers and students. The lecturers also significantly agreed that they have been modifying their lecture methods over the years. The modification of lecture method is towards improving the skills based on experience to enhance the dispensation of knowledge or gaining learning experience.

As much as 41.2 % of the lecturers disagree that students tend not to understand their lecture after acquaintance with them. It is normal for students to understand their lecturers better over time as they get acquainted with them. Accent, style, mannerisms and attitudes may affect learning experiences but with time, these characteristics are understood over time. It seems contrary to known situation that 17.6 % and 41.2 % strongly agreed and agreed respectively that students tend not to understand their lecturers after acquaintance. Excessive responsibilities affect lecturers' duty performance and consequent student academic performance. The results completely inform us that the lecturers have more responsibilities than they should because the staff strength is inadequate.

The lecturing method will depend on the topic or course to account for the use of instructional materials. The lecturers mostly agreed that the use of instructional materials is not necessary during lecturing as only 38.2% did not affirm to that with another 5.9% strongly disagreed.

The motivations lecturers have for students are either negative or positive motivations. Positive motivations serve as encouragement while negative motivations are intended as disciplinary measures or to caution students to be of good conduct. Being of good conduct helps students to concentrate on studies or pay attention to learning. Only 8.8% of lecturers do not motivate students, the remaining 91.2% confirmed either strongly or just agreeing that they positively motivate students. On the other hand, 17.6% only do not negatively motivate students when they do wrong. As much as 52.9% strongly agreed to give relevant

punishment and another 44.1% agreed based on the likert's scale rating. It is known that the positive motivations include praise and appreciation, knowledge of grades while negative motivation used includes constructive criticism [20]. Others learned were posing of questions, rightly walking erring student out of class, giving the class assessment assignment and so on.

Lesson plans are important guides to enable successful delivery of lectures to students. Only 2.9% do not always prepare lesson plans according to the result analysed. Emphasis on lesson plan methods in teaching and micro-teaching has been verified to influence the level of preparedness in delivering effective learning outcome. In lecturing, lesson plans provide the right direction for quality learning experience [21].

The other influences on performance other than teaching skills of the lecturer include Secondary school background of the students and the school admission process whether it is faulty or based on merit. A very significant number of the lecturers acknowledged that the secondary school background affects students' performance. Similarly, the lecturers confirmed that there are students admitted by faulty processes. Furthermore, they affirmed that faulty admission accounts for poor student performance.

Another reason for reduced performance in schools is the epileptic academic calendar. When schools shut down due to strike actions, student demonstrations or unplanned holidays, it affects normal academic activities and most likely negative academic influence. 73.5% of lecturers agreed and another 14.7% strongly agreed that academic calendar is not always followed. The insignificant 8.8% that disagreed and 2.9% that strongly disagreed that the academic calendar is not always followed do not count in this situation. The challenges of higher education in Nigeria as explained by Jaja [22] include declined funding by proprietors due to essentially depreciating oil performance, intimidation in schools which depresses the students' marketability, poor implementation of course outlines, insufficient capable teachers, disruption of academic activities as a result of intermittent strikes, compromised morality of students because of poor reading habits, lack of utility of the appropriate channels of administration and so on.

In a science based curriculum, the mathematical background is eminent. The health sector training requires a lot of fundamentals in mathematics. It may not be complex mathematics as required in engineering but sufficient enough for most healthcare calculations. 38.2% strongly agreed and 44.1% agreed that mathematical skills are required in the course they lecture while 11.8% disagreed and 2.9% strongly disagreed with 2.9% not responding. The assessment of the students taught mostly having sound mathematical skills met a balance of average of negative and positive responses. The actual rating was 8.8% strongly agreed and 41.2% agreed (total of 50% of positive

responses) against 47.1% disagreed and 2.9% strongly agreed (total of 50% negative responses).

The grasp or mastery of the topic to teach is important in whatever method one uses. This is usually done during preparation for the teaching including lesson plan and lesson notes. As 14.7% strongly agreed and 38.2% agreed that the lecture method does not necessarily require mastery of the topic means these lecturers need orientation in teaching. For one to have authority during lecture or teaching in general, one must master the topic. The 44.1% that agreed and 2.9% that strongly disagreed seem to be in agreement with teaching requirement.

## V. CONCLUSION

Although there is significant number of lecturers trained in the area of professional education, it is important that all lecturers in the institution of learning acquire qualifications in the area of professional education. It has been demonstrated that teachers need some years of probation and training before qualifying as teachers in higher education [23]. Majority of the lecturers have few years of teaching experience and mostly are not permanent lecturers. In general terms, the teachers in the entire school irrespective of age, qualifications or work experience indicated good performance in skills and techniques of teaching. Soft skills like effective communication, critical thinking, and respect to students and so on should be encouraged amongst all teaching / lecturing staff to aid in dispensation of teaching tasks. The school should ensure that admission of students is done strictly based on merit against the current practice. As practical experience and practice was found a vital part of training in the institution, standard laboratories should be constructed and well equipped to encourage practical learning and practice in institutions like healthcare facilities should be restricted to places with well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable personnel that will tutor the students at work place learning, ethics and discipline.

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