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CERTAIN EDUCATORY FACTORS AS INDICATES OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

A crucial criterion for evaluating the caliber and efficacy of college or university is intellectual development. Concerns regarding graduates' level of intellectual engagement, analytical proficiency, and inventive ability continue to exist in Nigerian public universities, prompting inquiries into the educatory factors that support intellectual development. This paper investigates the calibre of faculty and connection between caliber of faculty and students' intellectual development in Nigerian public universities. The study used a quantitative, correlational survey design with a population of all undergraduate and faculty at 135 Nigerian public universities. The sample comprised 1,200 respondents selected through multi-stage sampling technique from six selected public universities in the country. Questionnaire titled Educatory Factors Assessment Questionnaire (EFAQ) with reliability index of 0.87. and 0.91 reliability for faculty calibre and Intellectual Development Scale (IDS) respectively index was used to elevate responses from the respondents. The study found majority of faculty in Nigerian public universities are holders of PhD, followed by master's or M.Phil. while very few are holders of bachelor's degree. In addition, a statistically significant, robust, and positive relationships was established between faculty calibre and student intellectual development. The study concluded that teaching experience and faculty credentials accurately predict students' intellectual development, which in turn improves critical thinking, problem-solving, reflective judgment, engagement, and self-directed learning. These factors have a direct impact on academic success in public universities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Student Intellectual Development, Faculty Calibre, Educatory Factors: Faculty Educational Qualifications, University Teaching Experience

Introduction

Universities are essential for expanding knowledge, encouraging creativity, and developing the intellectual abilities of people who support both domestic and international competitiveness. Beyond granting degrees, the main goal of university is to help students improve their critical thinking, problem-solving, cognitive, and independent capabilities to make decision. This duty is especially important in Nigeria since the nation aims to produce graduates who can handle the intricate socio-economic and technological issues of the twenty-first century.

Even while intellectual development is crucial to higher education, questions have been raised about how well Nigerian public universities are doing this. According to business feedback and national quality assurance assessments, many Nigerian graduates lack profound intellectual engagement, analytical competence, and inventiveness. For example, a comprehensive evaluation revealed that just 37% of graduates passed critical reasoning examination, whereas 66% passed numerical reasoning tests. This suggests significant deficiencies in the problem-solving and decision-making abilities required for the profession (Ekugo, 2025). Employers also frequently criticize university graduates for lacking critical soft skills and being unprepared for the demands of the real world, labeling the discrepancy between knowledge and competence a systematic failure (Ogunlowo, 2025).

This discrepancy between the competencies demonstrated by graduates and the desired results of university education begs crucial questions regarding the institutional elements affecting students' intellectual development.

Kolo et al. (2023), noted that numerous educational characteristics that can have a major impact on intellectual growth have been uncovered by research conducted in a variety of educational situations. Administrative efficiency, which reflects the promptness and openness of institutional procedures; the calibre of teaching staff, which includes academic credentials, university teaching experience; and the campus learning environment's suitability, which includes infrastructure quality, safety, and academic culture. Undergraduates' intellectual development may be aided or hindered by the way these factors interact.

According to Iweh et al. (2021), there is a noticeable lack of empirical research that focuses only on Nigerian public universities, even if studies conducted in other nations have looked at similar aspects in connection to student results. The majority of current research only looks at these factors separately, failing to provide a thorough, quantitative analysis of their combined effects on intellectual development. Closing this disparity is essential to creating focused, research-based interventions that can improve academic quality and better equip graduates to meet the demands of contemporary society.

Therefore, this study examines a few educational parameters as markers of intellectual development in public universities in Nigeria. It seeks to ascertain the caliber of the teaching staff, and the relationship of the faculty calibre with intellectual development of the students. It is anticipated that the results would give stakeholders, university officials, and education law makers practical advice on how to improve the intellectual development of students in public universities in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Universities are hubs for intellectual development, turning out graduates who can solve issues, think critically, be academically proficient, and make independent decision. This is essential for Nigerian public universities to remain globally competitive. The success of the higher education system is called into question, though, as reports, employer feedback, and evaluations reveal a discrepancy between predicted graduate capacities and professional performance, with employers pointing to shortcomings in reasoning, creativity, and independent thought. Students' intellectual development is influenced by a number of institutional elements, including as the educational qualifications and university teaching experience of faculty in public universities in Nigeria. However, students' chances for intellectual development are hampered by a lack of qualified, competent and experienced faculty.

Few studies have looked at these factors' individually and relationship on intellectual growth at Nigerian public universities, despite the fact that studies elsewhere have looked at their effects on educational outcomes. Without a thorough knowledge of how these elements interact to impact students' intellectual development, reforms become fragmented, reactive, and ineffectual, impeding evidence-based initiatives. Hence the study investigated the calibre of faculty and connection between caliber of faculty and students' intellectual development in Nigerian public universities.

Intellectual Development in the University

The expansion of a child's capacity for thought and reasoning is known as intellectual development generally. It has to do with how individuals arrange their thoughts, ideas, and minds in order to make sense of the world they live in. Many times, the phrases cognitive and intellectual development are used interchangeably. Although intellectual development goes beyond the development of particular cognitive structures and functions to include concerns about the efficacy, efficiency, and productivity of a living system attempting to accomplish its objectives in a complex and occasionally dangerous environment. Intellectual development is obviously linked to gaining information through formal education and experience, but it also refers to the development of a mind that is more universal and transferable than knowledge, skills, or expertise that are strictly defined. The term "intellectual development" describes how a person's ability to think, reason, relate, judge, conceptualize, and so on evolves as a result of growth and experience. To David (2010), intellectual development is the process by which people acquire higher mental functions that enable them to successfully navigate life's obstacles and lead fulfilling lives, such as comprehending abstract concepts, developing sophisticated skills, organizing their thoughts logically, and solving new problems.

All university faculty have a fundamental responsibility to foster the intellectual development of their students. They are in charge of helping students reach their full potential in relation to the competencies required by the university, supporting the delivery of the curriculum, and giving them the chance to become experts in the courses they have chosen. Intellectual development, according to Kuh (2008) and Biggs (2014), includes the development of higher-order thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity as well as dispositions like self-regulated

learning, curiosity, and reflective judgment. Students' intellectual development is significantly influenced by university teaching variables and is not just a result of their personal aptitude.

Intellectual development is increasingly framed, according to King and Kitchener (2004), as the process of moving toward reflective judgment, where students acknowledge the tentative nature of knowledge, synthesize various viewpoints, and draw well-founded conclusions that demonstrate a sophisticated and nuanced way of thinking. Intellectual development, according to Rose and Moore (2024), is a process that allows students to move from dualistic thinking to contextual relativism, where they are able to critically assess other points of view within particular situations, use autonomous judgment, and acquire self-awareness.

Calibre of Faculty and Intellectual Development

University facultys' calibre is complex and includes both professional competence and professional integrity in their dealings with students (Ngeno, 2019). According to recent research, this definition is expanded to encompass multi-faceted competences, particularly digital literacy, which has grown in importance in post-pandemic higher education (Macfarlane, 2022). According to Li and Zhang (2023), effective teaching staff not only deliver content but also cultivate transformative learning through rigorous evaluation procedures, well-defined goals, and strong teacher-student connections. Additionally, they actively incorporate student feedback and use educational technologies to improve learning outcomes and the efficacy of instruction (Brown & Martins, 2021).

Since faculty are the main instructors who help students acquire higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and reflective judgment, the caliber of the faculty at public institutions has a significant impact on how students develop intellectually. Students are challenged to examine, synthesize, and evaluate knowledge in intellectually challenging environments created by faculty professionals who possess great topic mastery and excellent instructional practices. On the other hand, students' chances of moving beyond surface learning to in-depth, critical inquiry may be restricted by insufficient qualifications, antiquated teaching strategies, or low interest. To Ahmad and Parween (2021), improving the caliber of faculty personnel is not only a question of institutional performance but also a strategic necessity for national development in settings such as Nigerian public universities, where intellectual development is crucial for generating graduates who are globally competitive.

The intellectual development of university students, especially in the development of critical thinking, has been continuously associated with the caliber of the faculty. Innovative pedagogical approaches like problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, and interactive teaching greatly improved students' critical thinking, according to Rosati and Lizzio (2022). This effect was further amplified by instructors' experience in teaching. Similarly, Tong (2024) showed that in a university statistics course, a well-planned teaching strategy resulted in quantifiable improvements in students' analytical and evaluative abilities. Even in situations where students had restricted screen time, Okoro and Eze (2022). demonstrated that instructor-facilitated interactive learning environments enhanced students' critical thinking skills.

The implementation of blended and flipped educational methods by qualified teaching staff resulted in significant improvements in higher-order thinking in the majority of assessed research, according to a systematic review by Bamidele et al. (2024). Furthermore, a multi-case study by Kolo et al. (2023) found that changes in the attitudes and methods of college faculty regarding the instruction of critical thinking had a direct impact on the level of intellectual engagement that students had. When taken as a whole, these studies highlight how important teaching staff members' professional ability, are in supporting university students' intellectual development.

Since educational qualifications capture the academic preparation, topic understanding, and pedagogical competence required for effective teaching and research, they continue to be a crucial metric for evaluating the caliber of lecturers in public universities. Holding advanced degrees, especially a Ph.D., is a sign of a lecturer's ability to incorporate current disciplinary knowledge into classroom instruction in Nigerian universities. It also serves as a benchmark for fulfilling the National Universities Commission's (NUC, 2022) minimum academic standards to teach in the university (Okebukola, 2021).

Educational qualification is the official acknowledgement of knowledge and proficiency gained via organized instruction or training, typically provided by an approved and accredited educational institutions. The National Universities Commission. (2022), states that academic degrees, certificates, or professional certifications are frequently used to demonstrate the degree of knowledge, abilities, and competencies that an individual has obtained. In a university setting, educational qualification refers to the academic credentials that a student or faculty member holds and that establish their eligibility for specific positions, duties, or additional education. Academic qualifications are officially recognized credentials such as be certificates, diplomas, or degrees that indicate the achievement of specific academic requirements. These credentials are granted by accredited institutions upon successful completion of structured higher education programs (Yakubu, 2024)

Since higher qualifications are associated with better academic performance, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities across universities and colleges of education, recent empirical evidence from Yakubu (2024), and Adeyemi and Adewale (2023), institutions consistently demonstrates that lecturers' academic qualifications greatly enhance students' intellectual development. The academic qualifications and associated experience of lecturers have a significant and positive impact on students' academic performance and related intellectual outcomes, according to empirical studies conducted by Muhammad and Oguejiofor, (2025), Kolo et al., (2023) and Apampa et al. (2025) across Nigerian tertiary institutions in the fields of business education, computer science, and chemistry. Higher degrees, according to academics, improve lecturers' capacity to use a variety of teaching techniques that encourage students to think critically, solve problems, and exercise reflective judgment (Adegbesan, 2020). Furthermore, research demonstrates that instructors with doctoral and postgraduate degrees have a positive impact on students' intellectual growth by promoting independent study, deeper engagement with the material, and the modelling of scholarly behaviours (Muhammad & Oguejiofor, 2025; Kolo et al. 2023).

Given its significant impact on teaching quality and student learning outcomes, university teaching experience is frequently cited in higher education studies as a crucial metric for evaluating lecturers' caliber. A lecturer's university classroom experience gives them the pedagogical repertoire, topic knowledge, and flexible approaches they need to address the various intellectual demands of their students (Darling-Hammond et al. 2020). According to studies, instructors with more years of experience tend to support deeper learning, create more challenging coursework, and employ a variety of assessment techniques that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ogunyinka & Adedoyin, 2021). Additionally, a lecturer with a lot of teaching experience is better able to mentor students, direct independent study, and set an example of reflective disciplinary thinking, skills that are closely related to students' intellectual growth (Kpolovie & Awusaku, 2022).

The experience gained from years of teaching becomes a vital asset in improving intellectual development in Nigerian public universities, where instructors frequently struggle with huge class sizes, diverse student preparation, and insufficient instructional resources. As a result, teaching experience serves as both a gauge of lecturer quality and a crucial indicator of how well institutions are able to fulfill their mission of turning out graduates with sophisticated analytical abilities and sound judgment.

Methodology

Research Design

In order to investigate the calibre of faculty and connections between specific educational characteristics and the intellectual development of students in Nigerian public universities, this study used a quantitative, correlational survey design. Since it allows for the measurement of naturally existing variables and the identification of the direction and intensity of connections without requiring the research environment to be altered, this approach was selected.

Population of the Study

All undergraduate and faculty at 135 Nigerian public universities (69 Federal and 66 State) as at March, 2025 made up the population. **Six public universities, three from each of the 69 federal and 66 state universities were chosen for the study's manageability in order to guarantee institutional variety.**

Sample and Sampling Technique

One thousand, two hundred respondents were sampled for the study through multi-stage sampling procedure. All the 135 public universities were first of all stratified according to ownership i.e. federal and state government owned. Thereafter, purposive sampling techniques was adopted to select three general universities each from the federal and state-owned. After which, disproportional sampling technique was used to select 150 undergraduates and 50 faculty as respondents randomly sampled from each of the six selected institutions irrespective of the total number of their faculty and undergraduate. Thus, the total number of respondents for the study comprised 900 undergraduate (150 from each of the selected universities) and 300 faulty (50 from each of the selected universities). Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size formula was used to calculate this, guaranteeing adequate statistical power for regression and correlation analyses.

Research Instruments

Data was gathered using Educatory Factors Assessment Questionnaire (EFAQ) and Intellectual Development Scale (IDS) designed by the researcher: The EFAQ was designed to assess the caliber of teaching personnel by employing indicators such as years of university teaching experience, and educational qualifications of faculty. Critical thinking, analytical reasoning, originality, research abilities, and academic involvement were among the

markers used by the Intellectual Development Scale (IDS) to measure the dependent variable. Contextualized for the Nigerian university context, the items were modified from the Watson–Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal and other validated scales.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Three Professors of Educational Management and Measurement & Evaluation conducted an expert review to determine the content validity. Their observations and suggestions are considered in producing the final copies administered. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test with 75 students and 25 lecturers was carried out on respondents at the University of Ibadan. According to the instruments' Cronbach alpha coefficient, there is good internal consistency and reliability for the following: Calibre of Faculty Staff = 0.87, and Intellectual Development Scale = 0.91.

Data Collection Procedure

Twelve weeks were allotted for the collection of data. To maximize participation, research assistants received training on how to administer the instruments both in-person and virtually. All participants gave their informed consent, and confidentiality was rigorously upheld

Method of Data Analysis

Percentage and mean of the descriptive statistics were used to provide answer to the calibre of faculty members while Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between *calibre of faculty* members and students' *Intellectual Development* in Nigerian public universities

Results and Discussion

The use of percentage and mean of descriptive statistics were used to proffer solution to the calibre of the faculty staff at the public universities in Nigeria as contained in Tables 1 and 2

Table 1: Caliber of the Faculty Staff at Public Universities in Nigeria

Academic Qualifications	Percentage	Frequency	Population Sampled
Ph.D Holders	63.3	95	150
Master's / M.Phil Holders	26.7	40	150
Bachelor's Degree Holder	10	15	150

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2: Teaching Experience of Faculty in Nigeria Public Universities

Statistics	Value
Mean years of university teaching experience	17.3 years (SD = 7.4; range = 1–35 years)
Proportion with >10 years' experience	43.3% (n = 65/150)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

According to findings in Table 1, the majority of faculty (63.3%) in Nigerian public universities have doctorates, followed by master's or M.Phil. holders (26.7%) and bachelor's degree holders (10%). In line with recent empirical findings that higher qualifications are linked to improved academic performance, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills across Nigerian higher education institutions, this distribution shows a significant presence of highly qualified lecturers (Yakubu, 2024; Adeyemi & Adewale, 2023, and Álvarez-Sández 2023). It has been demonstrated that lecturers' educational backgrounds and related teaching experiences significantly improve students' academic performance and associated intellectual outcomes (Muhammad & Oguejiofor, 2025; Kolo et al., 2023; Apampa et al. 2025). In addition to increasing lecturers' proficiency in their field, advanced degrees also help them employ a wider range of instructional strategies that inspire students to solve issues, think critically, and utilize reflective judgment (Adegbesan, 2020). Furthermore, independent study, deeper engagement with learning materials, and modelling of scholarly behaviours, all of which are directly related to intellectual development, are more likely to be encouraged by lecturers who hold doctoral and postgraduate degrees (Muhammad & Oguejiofor, 2025; Kolo et al. 2023)

The ability to participate in high-level intellectual activity is further supported by the teaching experience profile found in Table 2. Public universities in Nigeria have access to a large pool of experienced teachers, with a mean of 17.3 years of university teaching experience and 43.3% of lecturers having more than ten years of experience. According to empirical study, lecturers with extensive teaching experience are better able to mentor students,

adjust their pedagogy, and create engaging courses (Ogunyinka & Adedoyin, 2021; Kpolovie & Awusaku, 2022). Along with having strong academic credentials, this kind of experience enables teachers to support students' development of higher-order thinking, contextual problem-solving, and reflective judgment—all essential components of intellectual development.

Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient was computed to establish the relationship between *calibre of faculty* and students' *Intellectual Development* in Nigerian public universities.

Table 3: Calibre of Faculty in Nigerian public universities **and Students' Intellectual Development**

Correlation Between Calibre of Faculty and Intellectual Development (N = 1,050)

Variable	1	2	M	SD
1. Calibre of Faculty	—		2.98	0.61
2. Intellectual Development	.72**	—	3.03	0.63

Note. p < .01 (2-tailed).

Findings, as displayed in Table 3, showed a statistically significant, robust, and positive relationships. $r = .72$, $p < .001$. This suggests that students in Nigerian public universities have higher levels of intellectual development when they perceive their instructors to be of higher caliber. These findings are in line with an increasing amount of empirical data that shows a connection between students' growth of critical thinking and higher-order cognitive skills and the caliber of faculty members, both in terms of their academic credentials and teaching experience. For instance, Rosati and Lizzio (2022), discovered that students' critical thinking abilities were greatly improved by innovative pedagogical approaches like problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, and interactive teaching. The influence was further reinforced by the instructors' extensive teaching experience. According to Tong (2024), a well-planned teaching strategy in a university statistics course resulted in quantifiable gains in students' analytical and evaluative skills. Li and Zhang (2023), showed that instructor-facilitated interactive learning settings might significantly enhance students' critical thinking abilities even in the face of restricted resources, such as screen time. The current study's conclusion that a top-notch faculty enhances content delivery and fosters the intellectual environment required for deep learning, problem-solving, and reflective judgment among undergraduates in Nigerian public universities is supported by these convergent lines of evidence.

Conclusion

According to this study, some educational characteristics, more especially, the educational qualifications and university teaching experience of faculty, are important predictors of students' intellectual development at Nigerian public universities. The results show that improved critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflective judgment abilities among students are highly correlated with higher academic credentials, especially doctoral and postgraduate degrees. Similarly, faculty with more university teaching experience have access to a wider range of pedagogical techniques, which empowers them to design thought-provoking classrooms that encourage greater participation and self-directed learning. These elements work together to provide a crucial part of instructor quality, which has a direct impact on students' academic achievement and intellectual development. According to the data, making strategic investments in faculty development, through ongoing professional development, obtaining advanced degrees, and keeping on board seasoned instructors, can be a potent lever for raising graduates' intellectual development and, consequently, the standard of Nigeria's public universities as a whole.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that, the National University Commission (NUC) and Nigerian public universities should implement measures to improve the academic standards of their faculty. First, in order to guarantee that a higher percentage of lecturers possess doctoral degrees, especially for senior posts, the minimum qualifications needed for academic employment should be reconsidered. This will improve students' comprehension of the material in greater detail and help them develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving abilities. Universities should also implement Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs that are required. Innovative pedagogies like problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, and the use of educational technology to actively engage students and promote independent learning should be the main focus of such programs.

Universities should also put strong plans in place to keep on board seasoned academics. To lessen academic drain, this entails offering competitive compensation packages, transparent promotion procedures, and access to research funds. Students are guaranteed to gain from both subject-matter competence and intellectual growth, promoting mentoring when qualified lecturers with substantial teaching experience are retained. Universities

might be encouraged to give human capital development first priority as a way to enhance educational outcomes by tying faculty qualifications and teaching experience to performance-based funding.

Policy Implications

These suggestions are in line with Nigeria's current plan for reforming higher education, especially the Federal Ministry of Education's Strategic Education Policy and the Blueprint for the Rapid Revitalization of University Education in Nigeria (2022–2030). By boosting the percentage of PhD holders in the university system, raising the minimum qualification requirements directly advances the national objective of enhancing research capacity and teaching quality. Academic staff turnover and skill gaps are structural issues that are addressed by incorporating CPD and retention strategies into institutional policies.

Last but not least, tying funding to faculty performance is a reflection of international best practices and guarantees that the goal of creating graduates prepared for a knowledge-driven economy keeps the caliber of teaching staff at the forefront.

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