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Influence of Economics Teachers' Characteristics and Classroom Practices on Students' Attitudes and Behaviour

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Abstract

Economics education is fundamental as it plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of countries all over the world. However, it appears research on the influence of Economics teachers' characteristics and classroom practices on learning outcomes of students in higher education has not received much attention. This study investigated the influence of Economics teachers' characteristics and classroom practices on students' attitudes and behaviour. The research employed the cross-sectional survey design. Four hundred and three (403) students from four public universities in Ghana participated in the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument employed to collect the data. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling techniques. The results indicated that planning and preparation, classroom management, instructional scaffolding and classroom learning environment had insignificant influence on students' attitudes and behaviour. The influence of Economics teachers' communication effectiveness on students' attitudes and behaviour was however found to be significant and positive. The results further revealed that Economics teachers' show of compassion, friendliness, creativity, enthusiasm, sense of humour, fairness and optimism strongly predicted students' attitudes and behaviour. The study recommends that university authorities should place premium on teachers' personality attributes in the recruitment and training of Economics teachers since such attributes have a direct bearing on the development of positive attitudes and behaviour of students. The study further recommends a longitudinal study of how students' attitudes and behaviour can be transformed by university teaching and learning environment over the 4-year study period.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Classroom Practices, Economics, Students' Attitudes, Instructional Scaffolding

Introduction

Higher education has been identified as an instrument for human capital growth and development. Research evidence (Mamuli, 2020) shows that human capital is a major

determinant of the competitiveness of countries. Advanced countries such as the USA and UK attained their advanced status due to the accumulation of human capital. Quality human capital depends on higher education (Olaseni & Alade, 2012). Thus, higher education seems to be the driver for national transformation, and no country can attain a high level of socio-economic development without higher education.

Evaluation of Higher education appears contentious. The first issue of contention has to do with the conception of the outcomes of teaching and learning, and how to measure them. Most of the studies that addressed the issue of quality teaching focused on students' cognitive learning as an outcome measure (Blazar, 2017; Campbel et al., 2011). Campbel et al. (2011) observed that "studies on teaching quality take achievement against standardised tests as the benchmark for an outcome measure with the implication that these tests stand as a proxy for other kinds of learning" (p.512). Research evidence (Blazar, 2017) however suggests that students' learning attainment is multifaceted (consisting of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning achievements). The implication of this is that research on students' learning outcomes should focus on the three outcomes and not only on the cognitive domain.

Campbell et al. (2002) contend that within the context of contemporary higher education, various additional modes of learning such as independent learning, developing meta-cognitive skills, and solving problems also matter. According to Blazar (2016), these skills, attitudes and behaviours of students, rather than exam scores, are more predictive of specific long-term outcomes. Campbel et al. (2011) also suggest that there is a growing interest in understanding whether and how higher education affects a far wider set of these outcomes, many of which are attitudinal in focus. According to the authors, behavioural and attitudinal changes do not just have consequences for the individuals involved; in many cases, they also matter for society as a whole. Consequently, teachers are required to engage in classroom practices that nurture students' attitudes and behaviour in addition to their cognitive talents (Cohen, 2011; Lampert, 2001; Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

The way and manner in which higher education teachers' characteristics and classroom practices influence students' attitudes and behaviour seems to be lacking. Knowledge about how the teacher's personality and classroom practices contribute in transforming attitudes and behaviour of students matters since students' attitudes and behaviour have long-term implications on labour market outcomes (Cohen, 2011). On the strength of the arguments raised by the researches of Cohen (2011), Lampert (2001), Pianta and Hamre (2009), and owing to the apparent absence of studies that focused on the predictive power of classroom practices and teacher personality attributes on Economics students' behaviour and attitudes, this study sought to ascertain the influence that classroom practices and teachers' characteristics have on students' attitudes and behaviour.

Purpose of the Study

This descriptive cross-sectional research sought to determine the influence of classroom instructional practices and Economics teachers' characteristics on students' attitudes and behaviour.

Research Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following hypotheses?
Research Hypothesis
H_0: Classroom instructional practices significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviour.
H_0: Teacher characteristics significantly explain students' attitudes and behaviour

Literature Review

Theoretical perspectives related to the effect of classroom practices and teacher personality attributes on students' behaviour and attitudes served as a foundation for this research study. Blazar (2016) found that students' attitudes and behaviour were predicted by classroom emotional support and organisation. He thus argued that teachers were expected to provide emotionally supportive environments that contribute to students' social and emotional development. Similarly, Astin (1993) theorized that higher education students were more likely to experience significant changes in values and attitudes during their stay in the university. Researchers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) contended that many students deviated from their racial, religious and ethnic values when they experienced higher education, and most of these attitudinal and behavioural changes were as a result of students experience with teachers (Blazar, 2016).

Pascarella (1985) formulated a theoretical model to explain student attitudinal change during college, by arguing that "many potential influences that should be controlled for when examining the relationship between college experiences and college outcomes, including students' background characteristics, teachers' attitudes and behaviour, institutional contexts and environments, interactions with agents of socialization, and the quality of student effort all have the potential to influence students' attitudinal change in college and subsequent college outcomes". In a related development, Sidanius et al. (2008) propounded a theory known as 'Symbolic Politics Theory'. This theory explains the acquisition of attitudes and behaviour over time across one's lifespan. It indicates the prevalence of different strengths of political predispositions among individuals that range from "symbolic predispositions" (i.e., strong proclivity to racial and ethnic attitudes) to "non-attitudes" (i.e., weak proclivity to racial and ethnic attitudes). This framework underscores the notion of lifelong learning moments that impact individuals' values, attitudes, and beliefs about diversity, race, and

ethnicity. This study applied these theoretical underpinnings to conceptualize the causal relationships between Economics teachers' personality attributes and classroom practices on one hand, and Economics students' behaviour and attitudes on the other.

Researchers have reported on the influence of classroom practices and teachers' personality attributes on attitudes and behaviour. Cohen (2011) found out that quality classroom teaching provided emotionally-supportive environment that contributes to students' social and emotional development. Blazar (2016) discovered that teachers' classroom organisation and emotionally-supportive environment contributed to students' attitudes and behaviour. Hence, the need to investigate this implication. Amartey and Yalley's (2020) research further emphasised classroom climate and its quality as an important dimension that affected quality of teaching and student academic achievements.

There is also a research tradition that seeks to link teachers' personality attributes with students' attitudes and behaviour. Chetty et al. (2011) observes that teachers' personality attributes contribute to students' learning outcomes, including behaviour and attitudes. Blazar (2016) contends that teachers differ significantly in their ability to impact students' attitudes and behaviour. He later found out that upper-elementary teachers had significant influence on self-reported measures of students' self-efficacy, happiness in class, and attitudes. The question on which specific teachers' personality attributes predict students' attitudes and behaviour in higher education remains unanswered.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study of the literature uncovered a number of aspects of effective teaching in higher education that contributes to students' attitudinal and behavioural development. Following their assessments, the researchers developed a conceptual model to guide the study. Components of the model include planning and preparation, classroom management, classroom learning environment, communication, teachers' characteristics/ personality attributes, effective teaching, and students' attitudes and behaviour. The Conceptual Framework is presented in Figure 1.

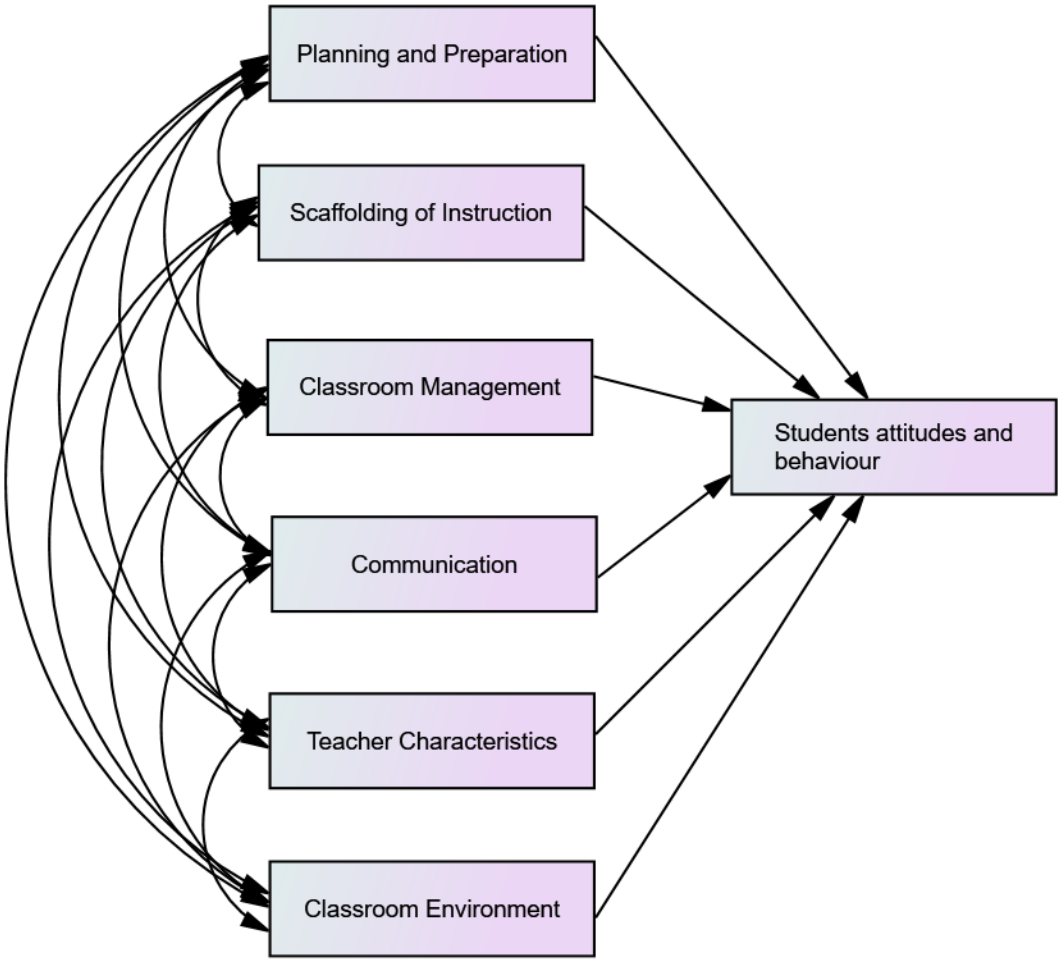

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

The model in Figure 1 depicts the influence of planning and preparation, scaffolding of instruction, classroom management, communication, teacher characteristics and classroom learning environment on effective teaching. Planning and preparation is an important dimension of effective teaching of Economics in higher education. Economics teachers are expected to make adequate planning and preparations by way of research and advance reading before taking up Economics lessons. Research evidence (Saroyan et al., 2004; Dees, 2007) suggests that effective planning and preparation has direct impact on classroom instructional flow, communication, classroom learning environment and classroom management. Going by this finding, this study argues that instructional planning and preparation will most likely influence the attitudes and behaviour of students in the classroom in areas such as timeliness, independent

learning, critical thinking, cooperation and cohesiveness among students in the classroom. The model also hypothesises that planning and preparation positively co-varies with scaffolding of instruction, classroom management, communication and teacher characteristics.

Research evidence (Ahfeldt, Mehta, & Sellnow, 2005) demonstrates that classroom instructional scaffolding predicts both student learning outcomes and effective teaching. Instructional scaffolding enhances the participation of students in the teaching and learning activities. Through scaffolding of instruction, both the teacher and the students co-construct knowledge, and this makes both sides partners in knowledge acquisition. Apart from its direct contribution to teaching and teacher effectiveness, this study argues that instructional scaffolding has the potential of building positive attitudes and behaviour of students in areas such as self-confidence, cooperation, tolerance of divergent opinion, creativity, critical thinking, independent learning and problem solving (Moosavian & Ali, 2015). Studies (Phillips et al., 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 2005) confirm this relationship.

Additionally, available research evidence (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) indicates a positive two-way relationship between classroom learning environment on the one hand and communication, scaffolding of instruction, classroom management, and planning and preparation on the other. Liberante (2012) contends that the psychosocial environment of the classroom has a significant influence on the types of classroom instructional practices that occur. Hughes and Chen (2011) also discovered that the teacher-student relationship served as the bedrock of the social environment in which learning took place. Liberante (2012), in a similar spirit, believes that the teacher-student relationship is not only productive, but it also acts as the basis for the social environment in which learning occurs. There is also overwhelming evidence (Hamre & Pianta 2004) that strong and supportive interactions between instructors and students are essential in molding positive attitudes and behaviour of students. Blazar (2017) found out that the teacher's classroom management style had an effect on the psychosocial environment in the classroom, which in turn predicted students' attitudes and behaviour. Thus, the model hypothesises a direct influence of the classroom learning environment on students' attitudes and behaviour.

Teachers' ability to organise classrooms and manage divergent students' behaviour is critical for achieving this educational outcome (Blazar, 2017). The study theorizes that classroom management also positively impacts instructional scaffolding in that it ensures easy flow of instructions without disruptions (Moosavian & Ali, 2015). The kind of classroom management practices that the teacher adopts is further influenced by his or her unique characteristics such as training and experience, personality attributes and his knowledge about learners (Blazar, 2016).

There have been a large number of studies (Freeman, Anderman & Jensen, 2007; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Winters, 2014) undertaken to recognize the significance of

communication between students and teachers in the classroom. The building of interpersonal relationships through communication is not limited to students, since this sharing of knowledge and connections occurs between instructors and students as well, which is one of the essential components of effective teaching and learning. Economics teachers' role requires them to comprehend and break down complex information, to communicate it clearly to students (through both verbal and written resources), to present it in a way that maintains their attention, and to listen to and resolve their questions or problems. When students are actively engaged in the teaching and learning processes, it goes a long way to enhance cooperation, tolerance, sharing of ideas, effective classroom management and control (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Frisby & Martin, 2010).

Evidence gleaned from research (Blazar, 2017; Danielson, 2007) indicates a positive bidirectional relationship between teacher characteristics, planning and preparation, instructional scaffolding, classroom management, classroom communication, and the classroom learning environment on the one hand, and effective teaching on the other. Teacher characteristics also impact students' attitudes and behaviour.

Research Methods

Research Design

The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed to carry out the study. The choice of this research design was influenced by the contention of Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012) who argue that a common goal of cross-sectional research is to examine how a large group of individuals feel and behave towards a given subject or problem throughout the course of time. Additionally, the research design was chosen following the recommendation of Leedy and Ormrod (2016) that it enables the researcher to solicit information about the perceptions of a specific phenomenon. Further, Amedahe (2002) is of the opinion that in descriptive cross-sectional research, the assumptions or relationships to be described should exist, and that valid description of activities, objects, processes and persons is the objective. Since the interest of the researcher was to give a valid and objective description of students' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of Economics teachers without manipulating the variables, the cross-sectional survey method was preferred.

Population

The population comprised 1, 984 Economics students who were in their final-year during the 2020/2021 academic year. This cohort was deemed appropriate for the study since they had been at the university for close to four years and were familiar with the effectiveness of Economics teachers. Four public universities: namely, University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and

Technology and University of Education Winneba participated in the study. The four public universities were purposefully sampled because they offer all relevant Economics courses from year one to year four in a consistent manner, allowing students to cover a wide range of content areas in Economics.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study was 485. This sample was determined using Singh and Masuku (2014) table of sample size determination. According to the authors, a population of 1, 984 would give a sample size of 333. However, because the researcher wanted to increase external validity and to avoid sampling errors so as to increase return rate, the sample size of 333 was increased by 15% to 485. This sample size was deemed necessary for generalisations of the findings, because according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), in a descriptive survey, a sample size of about 400 is enough for generalisations.

The multi-stage sampling approach was used to obtain the sample. First, the purposive sampling technique was adopted to purposefully select four public universities to take part in the study. They were purposefully selected because they were the oldest public universities in Ghana, and most of the complaints about poor academic achievements of Economics students emanated from those universities.

Secondly, the proportionate sampling technique was adopted to determine sample sizes for each of the universities. The researcher first defined the boundaries or clusters, and the population of each cluster. The boundaries (clusters) in this example were the traditional universities. After determining the clusters and the population, the number of students to be sampled from each cluster (university) was calculated as a proportion of the sample frame. The next step was to calculate the number of male and female students to be drawn from the clusters. The same proportionate sampling technique was used. It was calculated based on the number of individuals in each sex group and as a proportion of the cluster sample size.

The final phase of the multi-stage sampling procedure was the employment of a systematic random sampling approach to sample individual students from the population. The names of all final-year Economics students were gathered from the various department heads and classified as male and female. They were then serially coded, for example, 001 to 292 for male students at the University of Ghana. Every third number was chosen, and the appropriate students were selected. For example, 3, 6, 9, 12, and so on until the researcher obtained the requisite number of 77 students. The technique was repeated for the remaining clusters until the whole sample was acquired.

Data Collection Instrument

The researcher used questionnaire as the main data collection instrument for the study. Although a number of instruments could have been used for data collection, but according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005), the questionnaire is widely used and is a useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, numerical data and can be administered without the presence of the researcher.

The instrument was in 9 main sections. Section A of the questionnaire dealt with the demographic or background data of respondents, that is, age, gender and religious affiliation. Sections B to F dealt with classroom instructional practices which included planning and preparation, instructional scaffolding, classroom management, communication and classroom learning environment. The last two sections dealt with teacher characteristics and students' attitudes and behaviour respectively. All the items under each section were made up of close-ended statements using the Likert Scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) format to ensure easy and quick responses to the items.

Instrument Validation

All the 52 items measuring the various dimensions of teacher characteristics and students' attitudes and behaviour were condensed into 7 factors. Consequently, the 52 items were subjected to a preliminary exploratory factor analysis. The data were first of all screened for univariate outliers; none of extreme univariate outliers was found. The minimum amount of data for factor analysis was satisfied, with a final sample size of 306. The determinant of the correlation matrix was 7.857E-088, indicating good multicolinearity over the lower threshold of 0.0001(Field, 2018). Additionally, sample size adequacy was measured by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test at .601, which was somewhat higher than the often proposed value of .6 (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013), and the significance of the Bartlett's test of sphericity was found (2 (3240)=59035.545, p =.001). It was also found out that the anti-image correlation matrix's diagonals were all greater than 0 which showed that each item in the constructs had some common variance. Lastly, the communalities were all greater that than .5 (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013). The seven-factor model was, therefore, deemed fit for further structural analysis.

The seven factors were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by the use of Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). Figure 2 presents the 7-factor model**.** Table 1 presents its fit indices.

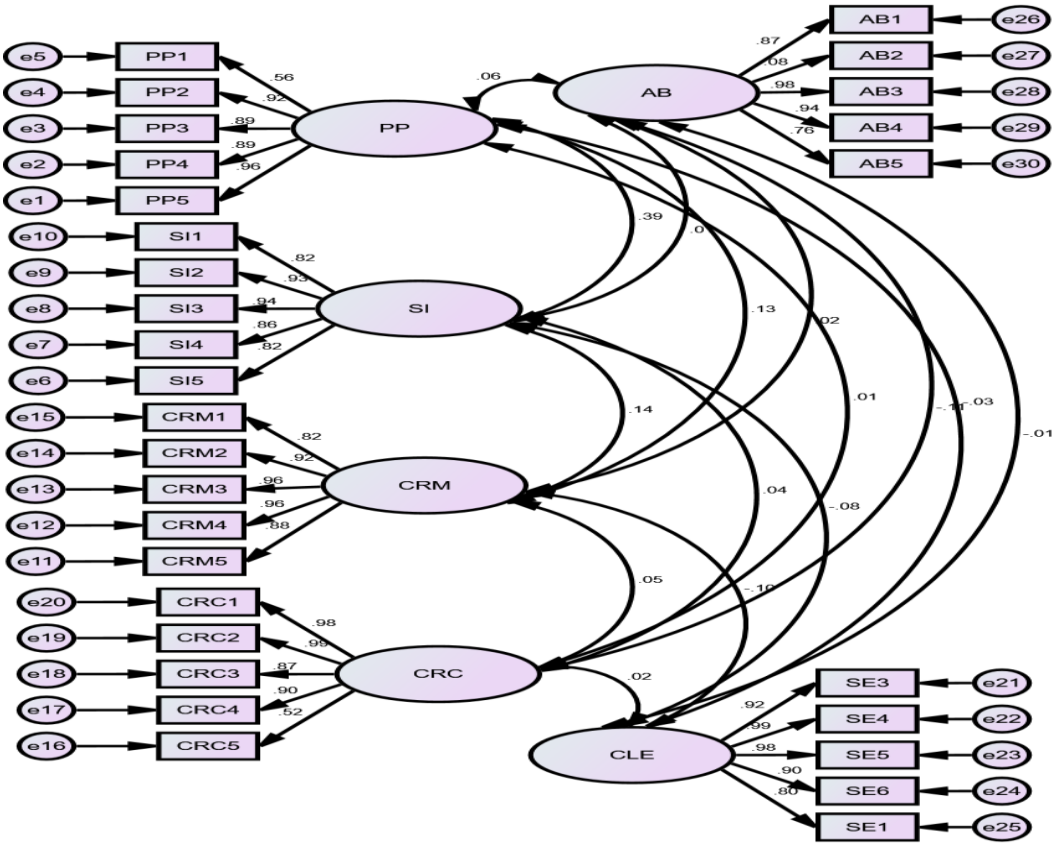

Figure 2: 7-factor measurement model of effect of classroom practices and teacher characteristics on students' attitudes and behaviour

Table 1: Goodness of fit indices

Fit Indices	Estimates	Threshold	Reference
X^2	96.813	> 0.5	Hair, et al., (2006)
CMIN/DF	1.773	< 3	Bentler (2008)
GFI	.873	≥.90	Bentler (2008),
CFI	.961	≥.90	In'nami and Koizumi (2011)
NFI	.932	≥.90	Kline (2013)
TLI	.94	≥.90	Kline (2013)
RMSEA	.054	≤.05	Schreiber et al. (2006).

Source: Field data, 2021

Table 1 shows the ratio of CMIN/DF, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation

(RMSEA). The model fit indices are all within specifications (Hair, et al., 2006). CMIN/DF is 1.773; p = 0.093 (spec. < 3.0), GFI = 0.873 (spec. > 0.90), NFI = 0.932 (spec. > 0.90), CFI = .961 (spec. > 0.90), and RMSEA = 0.054 (spec. < 0.05). By implication, the teacher effectiveness model was deemed a good fit model and therefore could be used to do further analysis of the structural relationships between the latent exogenous and the latent endogenous variables. The item loadings, AVEs and reliability are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Standardised loadings and Aves of teacher effectiveness constructs

Latent Variable	Indicator	Loading	AVE	Cronbach
PP1	Planning and Preparation	.568		
PP2	Planning and Preparation	.912		
PP3	Planning and Preparation	.866		
PP4	Planning and Preparation	.8910	.7363	.935
PP5	Planning and Preparation	.9513		
PP6	Planning and Preparation	.905		
SI1	Scaffolding of Instruction	.769		
SI2	Scaffolding of Instruction	.885		
SI3	Scaffolding of Instruction	.879		
SI4	Scaffolding of Instruction	.915	.7689	.953
SI5	Scaffolding of Instruction	.896		
SI6	Scaffolding of Instruction	.891		
CRM1	Classroom Management	.869		
CRM2	Classroom Management	.921		
CRM3	Classroom Management	.936		
CRM4	Classroom Management	.946	.8181	.958
CRM5	Classroom Management	.9116		
CRM6	Classroom Management	.835		
CRC1	Communication	.942		
CRC2	Communication	.952		
CRC3	Communication	.916	.6921	.887
CRC4	Communication	.908		
CRC5	Communication	.662		
CRC6	Communication	.507		
CLE1	Classroom learning environment	.962		
CLE2	Classroom learning environment	.875	.8881	.997
CLE3	Classroom learning environment	.958		

CLE4	Classroom learning environment	.963	
CLE5	Classroom learning environment	.951	
TCH1	Teacher Characteristics	.867	
TCH2	Teacher Characteristics	.892	
TCH3	Teacher Characteristics	.853	.7196 .920
TCH4	Teacher Characteristics	.798	
TCH5	Teacher Characteristics	.908	
TCH6	Teacher Characteristics	.766	
AB3	Students Attitudes and behaviour	.896	
AB4	Students Attitudes and behaviour	.893	.6219 .8920
AB5	Students Attitudes and behaviour	.863	
AB6	Students Attitudes and behaviour	.661	
AB7	Students Attitudes and behaviour	.733.	
AB8	Students Attitudes and behaviour	.922	
AB9	Students Attitudes and behaviour	.17	

Source: Field data, 2021

As seen in Table 2, the AVEs of each of the constructs are more than .05. This suggests strong convergent validity of the various constructs and their indicators. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability test results also suggest strong internal consistency of each of the items. All the Alpha values as seen in Table 2 are above the .75 threshold (Hair et al., 2006).

With regard to discriminant validity, the indices were determined by computing the square root of the AVEs. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of each construct's AVE must be higher than its correlation with another construct for discriminant validity to be established. Results of discriminant validity test are also presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Results of discriminant validity test

Construct	PP	SI	CRM	CRC	CLE	TCH	AB
PP	.8580*						
SI	.042	.8768*					
CRM	.31	.36	.9045*				
CRC	.24	.14	.063	.8319*			
CLE	.063	.056	.083	.34	.9424*		
TCH	.033	.124	.033	.073	.007	.8483*	
ABA	.081	.57	.67	.09	.091	.157	.7883*

Source: Field data, 202

As seen in Table 3, the constructs' discriminant validity has been established; the square root of each construct's AVE is higher than its correlation with another construct, and each item loads highest on its associated construct. The results show that all the square roots of AVEs were more than the correlation among various constructs indicating strong discriminant validity. On the basis of this, the study concluded that discriminant validity was established.

Data Processing and Analysis

The answered questionnaires were screened to identify and eliminate incomplete and void questionnaire items. After this, the data were coded and entered into the Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS) Version 20 for procession. There was a specific code assigned to each filled questionnaire. For this purpose, the data input into the computer was linked to the questionnaire that was used to collect the data.

The analysis was done using structural equation modeling (SEM), technique. SEM is a statistical approach family that comprises confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), structural regression, path, growth, multiple-groups, and multi-trait multimethod models. SEM techniques have been used in language testing for a variety of purposes, including assessing the internal structure of a test (or other measure) (Gu, 2014; In'nami & Koizumi, 2012), assessing the effect of test methods on test performance (Llosa, 2007; Sawaki, 2007), assessing the equivalency of models for different populations (Shin, 2005) Language assessment academics have also utilized SEM to explore the features of questionnaires. Additionally, SEM has been proven to be a valid measure of structural relationships (Ockey, 2011), hence its usage to analyse the structural relationship among classroom practices, teachers' personality attributes and students' attitudes and behaviour.

Results

Hypothesis 1

H1: Classroom practices significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviour
The hypothesis sought to determine whether teachers' classroom practices will influence students' attitudes and behaviour. The structural equation modeling technique was used to answer this question. Table 5 presents the significance of the path model

Table 4: Regression model of classroom instructional practices and students behaviour and attitudes

Model	B	Standard Error	CR	Sig.
Constant	36.5	3.665	9.944	.001
Planning and Preparation	.05	.099	.496	.620
Scaffolding of Instructions	.03	.079	.435	.664
Classroom Management	.02	.062	.329	.742
Communication	.19	.084	-2.239	.025
Classroom learning environment	.10	.110	.930	.352

Significant, p< 0.05, R = .33, R2 =.11, at 95% confidence level

The results in Table 4 show that planning and preparation, scaffolding of instruction, classroom communication, classroom management and classroom learning environment explain 11% of the variance in students' attitudes and behaviour. The results further reveal that only communication (B = .19), $p < 0.05$ was a significant predictor of students' attitudes and behaviour. This implies that improvement in Economics teachers' communication effectiveness significantly and positively improves students' attitudes and behaviour. However. Planning and preparation (B = .05, p> .05), scaffolding of instruction (B = .03, p > .05), classroom management (B = .02, p > .05), and classroom learning environment (B = .10, p > .05) were not significant predictors of students' behaviour and attitudes. The implication of this is that though students' attitudes and behaviour improves positively as Economics teachers improve upon these classroom practices, the level of improvement is not significant.

Hypothesis 2

H1: Teacher characteristics significantly explain students' attitudes and behaviour.

The hypothesis sought to determine whether teacher characteristics will influence students' attitudes and behaviour. Structural equation modeling was used to answer this question. The exogenous (predictor) variables were teacher being friendly, respectful, creative, tolerant, fair, enthusiastic, and optimistic, and having sense of humour. The endogenous variable was students' attitudes and behaviour. The results are

presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Model of Teacher Characteristics and Students Behaviour and Attitudes

Model	B	Standard Error	CR	Sig.
Constant	36.5	.099	9.944	.001
Respectful	.026	.268	0.097	.796
Compassionate	.924	.771	1.1984	.045
Friendly	.826	.362	2.282	.022
Creative	.283	.612	.462	.644
Enthusiastic	.698	.674	1.036	.012
Fair	.743	.746	.996	.0319
Optimistic/positive	1.032	.845	1.221	.022
Sense of Humour	.584	.351	1.664	.001

Significant, $p< 0.05$, $R = .42$, $R^2 = .17$

The results in Table 5 show that Economics teachers' characteristics explain 17% of the variance in students' attitudes and behaviour. The results further revealed that being compassionate (B =.9424, $p < .05$); being friendly (B = .826, $p < .05$); being creative (B = .283, $p < .05$), being enthusiastic (B = .698, $p< .05$), having a great sense of humour (B = .584, $p < .05$), being fair (B = .743, $p <.05$); and being optimistic (B =1.032, $p < .05$) were significant predictors of students' attitudes and behaviour. However, being respectful (B = .026, $p > .05$) was not a significant predictor of students' attitudes and behaviour.

Discussion

This study sought to determine the influence of classroom practices and teachers' characteristics on students' attitudes and behaviour. The findings suggest that planning and preparation, instructional scaffolding, classroom management, and classroom learning environment do not significantly explain students' attitudes and behaviour. The implication is that, though these classroom instructional practices contribute positively to improve students' attitudes and behaviour, their contribution is not significant. The only variable that positively and significantly influences students' attitudes and behaviour is communication. This means that as Economics teachers' improve upon their communication effectiveness, students' attitudes and behaviour improves positively and significantly. A previous research (Hafen et al., 2015; Hamre et al., 2013) similarly discovered that a variety of classroom practices, including teachers' social and emotional interactions with students, communication effectiveness, classroom management practices, and their instructional support during delivery, all contribute significantly to

students' attitudes and behaviour. The results are consistent with a long-held contention (Blazar, 2016) that these classroom practices, including teachers' interactions with students, classroom organization, and emphasis on critical thinking within specific content areas, aim to support students' development in areas beyond their core academic skill. Blazar (2016) further found out that those improvements in upper-elementary students' attitudes and behaviour were predicted by general teaching practices classroom.

The results further suggest that teacher characteristics influence students' attitudes and behaviour. The findings confirm Pianta and Hamre's (2009) argument that emotional support from teachers in the classroom and organizational approaches are both important in the development of students' attitudes and behaviour. According to the authors, students become more self-reliant when teachers provide "emotional support and a predictable, consistent, and safe environment." They further claim that through modeling effective organisational and management systems, teachers help students develop their own ability to self-regulate. Blazar (2016) investigated the impact of teachers and teaching on students' attitudes and behaviour. His findings similarly show that upper-elementary teachers' characteristics have a significant effect on self-reported measures of children's mathematical self-efficacy, as well as happiness and classroom behaviour. Chen (2011) similarly found out that a teacher-student connection was a sort of interaction between a teacher and a student that could be manifested as friendship, affection, collaboration, and open communication. The implication is that it takes a teacher with positive traits or characteristics of being friendly, compassionate and approachable to build that classroom learning environment that is characterized by friendship, affection, collaboration and open communication. Through this conducive learning environment students learning outcomes could be enhanced.

The results of this research generally suggest that Economics teachers can help develop positive attitudes and behaviour that are important for success in life among their students. Thus, the results can help inform policy and practice in several key ways. Beginning first with policy, the findings may generate interest among some policymakers to incorporate teacher effect estimates on students' attitudes and behaviours into high-stakes personnel decisions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the effect of classroom practices and teacher characteristics on students' attitudes and behaviour. It extends an emerging body of research examining the effect of teacher characteristics on student learning outcomes beyond test scores. The outcome of this study in many ways, align with conclusions drawn from previous studies that also identify classroom practices and teacher effects on students' attitudes and behaviors (Jennings & DiPrete, 2010; Kraft & Grace, 2016). The

researchers believe that this study is the first to identify teacher characteristics and classroom practices on Economics students' attitudes and behaviour. By interpreting the effect of teacher characteristics alongside effects of classroom practices, the researchers also provided strong face and construct validity for the teacher effect estimates. Specifically, the researchers find out and conclude that improvements in students' attitudes and behaviours are predicted by teachers' show of compassion, friendliness, creativity, enthusiasiasm, sense of humour fairness and optimism. Correlations between classroom practices and student attitudes and behaviour are weaker than correlations between effect of teacher characteristics and on students' attitudes and behaviour.

Since teachers' personality attributes have a direct bearing on students' attitudes and behaviour, higher education authorities should place premium on positive personality attributes of teachers when they are being recruited to teach Economics in higher education. Again, university authorities should feature teacher characteristics prominently in evaluation of teachers for quality assurance purposes. Future research should focus on longitudinal study of how students' attitudes and behaviour are transformed over the period of study in the university (the 4-year period) by the university teaching and learning environment as a whole.

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