

Teacher Characteristics as Correlates of Students Achievement in Social Studies: A Case Study in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study on teacher characteristics and students achievement in social Studies in Nigeria is geared towards investigating and determining the relationship between teachers' characteristics and students achievement in social studies in Nigeria. The main purpose of the study is to determine if there is relationship between certain teacher characteristics and students achievement in social studies. The study is important because it will help teachers identify some variables that constitute teacher characteristics for effective students achievement. The methodology used is correlational study techniques. The principal instrument used is questionnaire and students social studies score. The population used was the entire senior secondary school SS1 in Aniocha North Local Government and the sample size was 400 sss1 students made up of 40 from each of the 10 schools sampled. Kendall tau's correlation coefficient was used in data analysis and findings were discussed. It was found that teacher characteristics have relationship with students achievement. The researcher also recommended that teachers diversify teaching strategies that will suit individual learners in the learning process and improve student's achievement in social studies in Aniocha North Local Governments Area of Delta State.

Keywords: Teacher characteristics, Achievement, Teacher Experience, Teacher Qualification, Teacher behavior, Pedagogical content knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Social studies is defined as an integration of experience and knowledge concerning human relations for the purpose of citizenship education. Barth and Shermis (2013), defined social studies as a field of study that deals with the integration of knowledge, experience and effective use of resources for the purpose of citizenship education. Social studies is an interdisciplinary subject which has potential capabilities to achieve the aims of education than any other fields of learning. It is a subject which is expected to help in the promotion of consciousness and knowledge of and pride in the child's local culture as well as an understanding of other cultures both within and outside their national boundary (Makinde, 1999).

Another important role of social studies is that it aims at inculcating in the child the facts that bribery and corruption, nepotism and other allied evils are far from what Nigerians bargained for when demanding and achieving self-governance (FGN, 2004). The subject, according to Makinde (1999), should assist the child to develop a patriotic attitude towards the welfare, fundamental human rights and development of the community and that of the country for a sustainable national development. Powerful social studies teaching helps students develop enduring understanding in the core content areas of civics, economics, geography and history, and assures their readiness and willingness to assume citizenship responsibilities. Social studies learning leads to a well-informed and civic-minded citizenry that can sustain and build on democratic traditions.

The introduction of social studies into the Nigerian school system was based on certain philosophical considerations. One of which is to address social issues and man's problems of life in their interrelatedness, as they appear in real life situations instead of addressing them in an uninterrelated manner as those learnt through separate disciplines like geography, religion, sociology among others. Social studies according to Ezegebe (2005) was therefore introduced as an integrated discipline to make education real to life.

The realization of this objective through social studies is possible since the subject is an integrated programme which is taught and learnt in schools at all aspects of the life of the child in the society. It is therefore, better equipped to properly socialize the child to become a sound and effective citizen. It is further stated in the National policy on education (2004) that education is to achieve the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

Teaching social studies present teachers with a unique set of challenges not always found in other disciplines. Students tend to see social studies in general, as a subject matter that is least relevant to their current lives and their future needs. Therefore, to build on democratic principles and make social studies relevant according to Lazar (2012), social studies teachers need to understand that they teach students and not content, if they are to be effective. The use of relevant and appropriate textbooks, visual and audio-visual materials like globes, charts, slides, maps, information communication technology among others, by the teacher are of paramount necessity in the teaching-learning process. Audio-visual materials supplement and consolidate what is used in textbooks and journals. They make the contents of the instructions more practical and less vague (Esu and Inyang-Abia, 2004). Appreciating activities in the classroom is also an important issue in the teaching of

social studies. Teachers need to know that not everyone will express things in the same way, and that not everyone will move at the same rate in the same direction. Based on the findings of the research conducted by Brophy on Effective classroom management (1983:1), it is highly probable that teachers who approach classroom management, as a process of establishing and maintaining effective teaching environment, tend to be more successful and achieving than teachers who place more emphasis on their roles as authority figures or disciplinarians. A teacher's experience in creating a conducive classroom climate has a major impact on students' motivation and attitude towards learning; that is to say for teachers, having been equipped with pedagogical and professional characteristics would not be enough to establish a positively, learnable, and teachable classroom climate. Specifically, the factors that best facilitate student learning are considered to be the ones that are described as being purposeful, task-oriented, relaxed, warm, and supportive and has a sense of order and humor in an integrated sense (Uche and Erukoha, 2012). Radmacher and Martin (2001) submitted the characteristics of teachers as, experiences, professional, pedagogical and personal attributes as factors that will produce better learning atmosphere as well as self-assured students' engagement in the learning process.

Review of literature

In a study conducted by the Education sector analysis study (2005) on selected secondary school teachers in Nigeria by qualification and genders revealed that the bulk of secondary school teachers, (N=69,787) are with first or higher degree where, 43,073 were male and 26,714 were female revealed that the unqualified teachers proportion affected the quality of teaching and learning delivery of social studies in the sampled schools. Also, Ehrenberg and Brewer (2000) and Ferguson (2000) asserted that students learn more from teachers with strong academic skills. According to these researchers, teacher's assignments depend on their qualification on the subject(s) being taught. Middle and high school social studies students learn more from teachers who hold Bachelors or Masters degree in the subjects they teach and from experience ones. Kanno and Onyechia (2009) assumed that teachers' teaching behaviour or style has a lot to do with the students' performance if practiced systematically. In line with this, Ugwu (2005) and Adiele (2005) opined that such teaching behaviour as set induction, communication and time management enables teachers and students to exchange ideas with their peers from outside the classroom especially if technological facilities like internet are used. Ekpo, Akpan, Essian and Imo-Obot (2009) in their study on classroom climate and students' achievement in social studies in Cross River state, discovered that physical layout of the classroom, teachers' teaching behaviour and instructional material utilization jointly relate to students' academic achievement. A study conducted by Rockoff (2004) on the impact of individual social studies teachers on students' achievement in California, found that teaching experience of ten or more years positively influenced students' achievement in civic activity, social learning and behaviour. Along the line, he concluded that experienced teachers are more effective in elementary and middle school social studies. According to Zuzovsky (2008), there is a positive relationship between teacher's effectiveness and their years of experience on students' achievement. Inexperienced teachers are less effective than the experienced teachers. This chapter of literature dealt on variables that constitute teachers' characteristics and its relationship to students' achievement. In teaching social studies, it demands that teachers be qualified to teach, if students' achievement must increase in their understanding of the concepts of social studies. The review also showed that teachers' teaching behaviour is very important in the teaching of social studies. However, the experience of the teacher cannot be left out as Rockoff (2004) stated in his study that teaching experience of ten or more years positively influenced students' achievement in civic activity, social learning and behaviour.

Statement of purpose:

Specifically, this study is to:

1. Determine if teachers' qualification influence students' achievement in social studies.
2. Determine if teachers' teaching behaviour influence students' achievement in social studies.
3. Determine if teachers' teaching experience influence students' achievement in social studies.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the research work.

1. Is there any relationship between teacher's qualification and students' achievement in social studies?
2. Is there any relationship between teachers' teaching behaviour and students' achievement in social studies?
3. Is there any relationship between teachers' teaching experience and students' achievement in social studies?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' qualification and students' achievement in social studies.
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers' teaching behaviour and students' achievement in social studies.

3. There is no significant relationship between teachers' teaching experience and students' achievement in social studies.

METHODOLOGY

The research design employed in this study is descriptive survey involving the use of questionnaire and students score.

Sampling and sampling techniques

The population of this study included the entire 19 secondary school in the area under study of the state made up of 7760 students. A total of 10 schools with 400 students were selected using the multi-stage sampling technique.

INSTRUMENTATION

The questionnaire and students score were used for data collection. The instrument has two sections. Section A elicited responses on personal data of respondents. Section B considered teacher characteristics on teacher qualification, teacher behaviour and teacher experience. The instrument (questionnaire) was validated by the project supervisor and two other experts to validate the content of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient formula was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Reliability coefficient shows an r-value of .924. The result implied high reliability.

Method of data analysis

The data collected was analysed using Kendall Tau rank correlation coefficient to determine the extent of relationship between teachers characteristics and students achievement in social studies.

All decisions to retain or not to retain null hypothesis was made at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

H₀: There is no significant relationship between teachers qualification and students achievement in social studies.

Table one shows the number of respondents (N=400), a correlation value of 1.00 and a P-value of 0.92 tested at a probability level of 0.05 ($\alpha=0.05$) from the result obtained, the correlation value was higher than the p-value therefore the null hypothesis that says that there is no significant relationship between teachers qualification and students achievement in social studies is rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers teaching behaviour and students achievement in social studies

Table 2 showed number of respondent (N=400), a correlation value of 1.00 and a p-value of 0.93 tested at a probability level of 0.05 ($\alpha=0.05$). From the result obtained, the correlation value was higher than the p-value therefore the null hypothesis that says that there is no significant relationship between teachers teaching behaviour and students achievement in social studies is rejected.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between teachers teaching experience and students achievement in social studies.

Table 3 showed number of respondents (N=400), a correlation value of 1.00 and a p-value of 0.91 tested at a probability level of 0.05 ($\alpha=0.05$). From the result obtained, the correlation value was higher than the p-value therefore the null hypothesis that says that "there is no significant relationship between teachers teaching experience and students' achievement in social studies is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the data collected and the statistical analysis done using the correlation method, Table 1 was used to answer the question on the relationship between teachers' academic qualification and students' achievement in social studies. From the statistical analysis, the 400 respondents gave a correlation value (r) of 1.00 and a p-value of 0.92 at a probability level of 0.05 ($\alpha=0.05$) which shows that there is significant relationship between teachers academic qualification and students achievement in social studies. This result corresponds with the views of Rice 2003, when he said that teacher qualification is the most important school related factor influencing students achievement. Igwegui 2002 in his view opined that when teachers are well qualified, get training in professional programme, attend seminars, then, the students learning abilities and achievement will improve. Therefore, it is now a known and proven fact that there is a relationship between teachers academic qualification and students achievement in social studies.

Table II

In answering research question II which looks at the relationship between teachers teaching behaviour and students achievement in social studies, the 400 respondents gave a correlation value of 1.00 and a p-value of 0.93 at 0.05 probability level. This shows a significant relationship between teacher teaching behaviour and students achievement in social studies. The result is in line with Okebukola (2004) who noted that the process of

curriculum implementation which is facilitated by the teacher teaching behaviour is very pertinent if students' achievement must improve. Esu et al (2009) also agreed that for effective social studies curriculum implementation, teachers mastery of the subject matter, teacher effectiveness in classroom communication skills and teachers ability to introduce various teaching approaches must be given a priority thought and consideration which shows that teachers teaching behaviour as a characteristics has a vital role to play in effective social studies curriculum implementation and student academic achievement in social studies.

In discussing research question III which looks at the relationship between teacher teaching experience and students achievement in social studies, the 400 respondents gave a correlation value (r) of 1.00 and a p -value of 0.91 at 0.05 probability level which indicate a significant relationship between teachers teaching behaviour and students achievement in social studies. This is in line with Ochuba and Ifedili (2008) who was of the opinion that teachers are the core implementer of education programs and constitute a critical resource in the provision of quality education to the citizen. Falter (2008) also affirms this when he said that the only indicator that is systematically linked to student achievement in schools is teacher experience. In his work, Rockoff (2004) found that teaching experience of ten years or more years positively influenced students' achievement in civic activity, social learning and behaviour. From all these, it can be seen that the view of the different scholars cited above underscores the importance of teachers teaching experience in bringing up students of high achievers.

CONCLUSION

1. That teacher qualification is the most important school related factor influencing student's achievement and that unqualified teachers affect the learning/achievement of the students they teach. Besides, teacher qualification such as having a B.sc or an Msc. in social studies can be enhanced by teacher participation in In-service training programme which also can improve teacher's classroom interaction pattern and improve student's achievement level in social studies.
2. That the different strategies, style and methods employed by the teacher will help to improve students learning and achievements in social studies. The methods, styles, and strategies a teacher employ in teaching, define his behaviour and aids students' achievement in social studies.
3. That the teacher is the core implementer of educational programmes and constitute critical resources in the provision of quality education to the citizenry. The only indicator that is systematically linked to students' achievement in schools is teacher experience and that such experience positively influences students' achievement in social studies.

RECOMMENDATION

If social studies was introduced into the Nigerian School system to help achieve one of the philosophies of Nigerian Education as indicated in the National policy on education which is the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and also to help achieve the inculcation of National consciousness and National unity; the inculcation of the right type of value and attitude for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society, then the teachers' characteristics must be taken seriously.

From the findings of the study, the following recommendation may be useful to the teaching and learning of social studies in our secondary school with a view to ensuring high level achievement in social studies examinations.

The teacher educators have a responsibility to produce for the nation very high quality teachers by admitting good candidates to their programmes, while the government and training institution must endeavour to provide the necessary facilities and environment conducive for the production of competent and conscientious teachers.

Teachers should endeavour to up their level of teaching by making use of relevant and appropriate teaching materials that will help transmit knowledge more meaningfully to the learner.

Teachers should join professional associations and attend conferences. Such associations as social studies association of Nigeria (**SOSAN**), National Council for social studies (**NCSS**), amongst others will help to increase teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

In addition, teachers' should be well paid to enable them stay long in the profession and gather knowledge and experience that will enable them impact meaningfully towards the achievement of students in the teaching and learning of social studies.

Social studies teachers must encourage students to speculate, think critically and make personal and civic decisions based on information from multiple perspectives. It is believed that this will surely enhance student achievement in the teaching of social studies both for internal and external examinations.

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Table I: Relationship between teachers qualification and students achievement in social studies

Variable	N	r	P- value
Teacher qualification and students achievement in social studies	40	1.0	0.92

a=.05, p>.05

Table 2: Relationship between teachers teaching behaviour and students achievement in social studies.

Variable	N	r	P- value
Teacher teaching behaviour and students achievement in social studies	40	1.0	0.93

a=.05, p>.05

Table 3: Relationship between teachers teaching experience and student achievement in social studies

Variable	N	r	P- value
Teacher teaching experience and students achievement in social studies	40	1.0	0.91

a=.05, p>.05