

CLASSROOM SOCIAL CLIMATE: ENHANCING TEACHING STRATEGY IN BUSINESS STUDIES

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to investigate classroom climate as enhancing teaching strategy in junior secondary schools business studies. There is no gain-saying the fact that a positive stimulating learning environment is one of the determinants of students performance in schools subjects in which business studies is one. Two research questions were raised to guide the study and two hypotheses were also formulated. A quasi-experimental research designed was employed and eighty (80) respondents were selected from three schools representing the entire population of one thousand, eight hundred and sixty five (1,865) students offering business studies in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State to form the sample using purposive random sampling technique. T- Test of significance was used to analyze the data generated from the experiment. The study revealed a positive outcome that there is a significance difference in the performance of students in an interactive, participatory and classroom social climate and those in the docile, passive and conventional classroom environment. It is however recommended among other things that group work instructional strategy and Peer interaction should be encouraged or even form part of the curriculum of business related subjects at the junior secondary school level of education.*

KEYWORDS: *classroom climate, teaching strategy, learning environment, students performance*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers and school-based administrators alike have searched to find ways to increase students achievement in their schools. Several widely known and discussed strategies include using data to drive instruction, employing highly qualified teachers, and improving school leadership. Additionally, positive student engagement in the classroom is another compelling factor—but not as widely discussed—that research has reported to be critical in enhancing student achievement (Akey, 2006; Heller, Calderon, & Medrich, 2003; Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005). Positive student engagement is not an easy term to define, yet we know it when we see it. Students are engaged when they “devote substantial time and effort to a task, when they care about the quality of their work, and when they commit themselves because the work seems to have significance beyond its personal instrumental value” (Newmann, 1986). Engaged students also are more likely to perform well academically. Therefore, teachers need a large inventory of instructional strategies to engage a variety of students (Garcia-Reid 2005).

Classroom climate is sometimes referred to as the learning environment in which the student interact with one another (Adelman and Taylor, 2002) and the classroom can affect a student's

motivation, interest and performance. There is strong association between performance levels and classrooms that are perceived as having a greater cohesion and goal directions and less disorganization and conflict, (Adelman and Taylor 2002). Classroom climate is the classroom environment, the social climate, the emotional, and the physical aspect of the classroom. It's the idea that teachers influence student growth and behavior. The student's behavior affects peer interaction, and the responsibility of influencing these behaviors is placed with the Instructor. The way the instructor organizes the classroom should lead to a positive environment rather than a destructive and/or an environment that is not conducive to learning, (Karen, 2011).

Amborse (2010) defined classroom climate as “the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn. Climate is determined by a constellation of interacting factors that include faculty-student interaction, the tone instructors set, instances of stereotyping or tokenism, the course demographics (for example, relative size of racial and other social groups enrolled in the course), student-student interaction, and the range of perspectives represented in the course content and materials”

The broader body of research on organization climate does suggest that increasing demands for higher achievement test scores and reliance on social and tangible rewards to control behavior and motivate performance contributes to a classroom climate that is relative and over controlling (Mahony and Hextall, 2002). It is not an overstatement to say that in a stimulating environment, a lot of learning takes place when social relations take precedence over other factors. Motivation plays a vital role in the process of socialization; motivation is actually a dynamic and active process which determines the way in which individual relates to the environment around. The personality and approach of the teacher; classroom atmosphere; nature of the learning task and characteristics of individual students can influence motivation. Also, students' motivation can be influenced by two aspects of teacher interaction. This include: the nature of learning task and instructional/assessment/strategies based on certain inborn traits common to all.

Optimal learning of business studies can only be guaranteed when classroom climate is positive, supportive and the behaviour of the teacher is transactional/relational more than any individual or sets in the classroom. Teacher can most readily often influence classroom climate by focusing on aspects of classroom interactions. There are a number of factors that can influence meaningful learning of business studies. It includes individual differences; previous business/quantitative experiences; extra study and language method; teaching pedagogy of the teacher and others which if geared towards a negative direction pose a threatening and repulsive learning environment. Students academic performance, effective adjustment and interest in learning are predetermined by classroom climate (Leull and Wlens, 2005; Ryan and Patrick, 2001; Sweetland and Hoy, 2000). Moreover, students experience gains in both academic achievement and self concepts as teachers seek to develop students academic agency (Jackson, 2005). He further posited by describing students academic agency as instructional approaches that are “identity sensitive” attaining high level of academic performance may be more likely within a classroom that is intentional and needs satisfy (Shindle, 2003). Given the importance of classroom climate, the establishment and maintenance of a positive climate in business studies classroom must be a central focus of all business studies teachers. A much heralded approach therefore is to change the focus of the classroom from teacher- dominated, docile and passive one to students-oriented, active and more

participatory using classroom social climate approach. Conducting this present study to address this will therefore, not only be appropriate, but indeed worthwhile.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recent outcry of interactive classroom environment as an effective enhancing strategy, business studies teachers do not give regard to it. The conventional, docile, passive and teacher-centered approach is still been preferred. This in no small measure has led to the continuing dwindling interest and performance of students in the subject. Business studies teacher must therefore employ interactive classroom environment in teaching the subject. Hence, this study sought to find out the extent to which classroom social climate can enhance the strategy of teaching business studies.

Research Questions

1. Is there any significant different in the academic performance of students in an interactive classroom social climate and passive/conventional classroom environment?
2. Is there any significant gender difference in academic performance of students in an interactive classroom social climate?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in academic performance of students in an interactive classroom social climate and those in a conventional classroom environment.
2. There is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of students in a business studies interactive classroom social climate.

METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study is to investigate classroom social climate as enhancing teaching strategy in business studies. A quasi experimental design was employed which involved treatment group (interactive classroom) and control group (conventional/passive classroom). The population comprised all the junior secondary school (class 2) students offering business studies in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. Three schools were selected as sample with one used for pilot study and the other two totaling eighty (80) candidates were used for the main study. Purposive random sampling was adopted because selection of schools depend on the availability of business studies teachers; comparability of the performance of the schools in business studies at the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (JSSCE) in the past two years and willingness of school principals and teachers to cooperate and participate in the study. A business studies performance test (BSPT) was developed and validated by two experts in business studies assessment at the junior secondary education level with a c o-efficient alpha of 0.65 returned using split-half method for its reliability. A pre-test, post-test technique was used for data collection and the t-test of significance was used to analyze the data collected for the study.

FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in academic performance of students in an interactive classroom social climate and those in a conventional classroom environment.

Table 1: Difference in the performance of students in an interactive classroom social climate and those in conventional classroom environment.

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-critical
Interactive classroom social climate	40	48.4	4.4	3.08	1.96
Passive classroom environment	40	36.7	3.6		

The finding from the above table revealed a significant outcome. The mean performance of the experimental group (48.4) is greater than the mean performance of the control group (36.7). Also, the t-calculated value (3.08) is greater than the t-critical value of (1.96). Hence, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. There is therefore a significant difference in the academic performance of students in an interactive classroom social climate and a passive classroom environment.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of students in a business studies interactive classroom social climate.

Table 2: Gender difference in the academic performance of students in a business studies interactive classroom social climate.

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-critical
Male	35	44.6	4.0	2.52	1.96
Female	45	40.5	3.6		

The findings from table 2 showed a significant outcome. The t-calculated value of 2.52 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that a significant gender difference exists in the academic performance of students in a business studies interactive classroom.

DISCUSSION

The result from the tested hypothesis one revealed a positive outcome. The result showed that a significant difference exists in the performance of students in interactive classroom social climate and a passive classroom environment. This finding negate the study of Laurel (2000) and David, Roger and Edith (2007) who posited that in a competitive learning environment, there is a negative interdependence among goal achievement; students perceived that they can obtain their goals if only if the other students in the class fail to obtain theirs. The main goal of students in a competitive classroom is to do better than their classmates, unfortunately, this is how most of today's students perceive school, students either work hard to do better than their classmates or take it easy because they do not believe they have a chance to win.

The results of tested hypothesis two revealed a positive outcome that a significant gender difference exists in the performance of students in business studies interactive classroom. This

finding corroborates the finding of (Laurel, 2000, Weng 2003) where interactive classroom of group learning was emphasized. Group learning was proved to be very effective in improving students' psychological motivated domain because they had more chances to practice and to demonstrate what they had learned in the classroom. It also supported the findings of Quincy (2005) who posited that positive inter-dependence is essential to fostering significant achievement goals. The classroom constitutes a pleasant environment where students learn to enjoy working and they are more supportive of their classmates. This aspect of the learning environment as a contributor to students performance in any subject is the vacuum this study had attempted to fill.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has provided empirical evidence to show that classroom social climate is an enhancing strategy in teaching business studies. It is however recommended that:

- Features of classroom social climate such as cooperative goal structure; heterogeneous team and team reward should be emphasized in an interactive classroom environment
- Group work instructional strategy and Peer interaction should be encouraged or even form part of the curriculum of business related subjects at the junior secondary school level of education
- Interdependent relationship which leads to strong motivation to complete a common task should be encouraged.

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