

## EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study investigated effects of individualized instructional method on secondary school students' achievement in Social Studies. Two research questions and null hypotheses. The design of the study was quasi-experimental research design and the area of the study was Onueke education zone of Ebonyi State. The population of the study comprised two thousand seven hundred and ninety-three (2,793) junior secondary school two (JSS II) students drawn from public secondary schools in Onueke education zone of Ebonyi State. The instrument used for data collection was Social Studies Achievement Test (SOSAT), data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for all research questions, and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that the mean achievement scores of secondary school students taught Social Studies using individualized instructional method was higher than the mean achievement scores of those taught Social Studies using conventional methods, female secondary school students taught Social Studies using individualized instructional method obtained higher mean scores than male students taught Social studies using conventional method. The findings of the study also revealed that there were significant effects of individualized instructional method on mean achievement of students in Social Studies in urban and rural secondary schools in Onueke education zone. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that Social studies teachers should re-assess their classroom instructional practice because there is a need for them to shift from instructional practice, which makes learners passive listeners to the practice that engages learners actively in the instructional processes.*

**KEYWORD:** Social Studies, Individualized Instructional Method and Students' Achievement

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### INTRODUCTION

Social Studies as a school subject is comparatively new in the Nigerian academic scene. The institutionalization of Social Studies as a curriculum subject rose out of the realization that the subject study of man and his society was not adequately covered by one discipline in either Social Science or Humanities. Presently in Nigeria, Social Studies is one of the core subjects in primary and junior secondary school curricula (Federal Republic Nigeria, 2004). This implies that Social Studies is compulsory for all students in these categories of Nigerian schools. Agreeing with the above view, Mkpa (2005) stated that the fact that Social Studies enjoys the recognition of a core subject at the categories of schools mentioned above in Nigeria means that the subject is perceived as a very important and worthy of being studied by all categories students in Nigerian schools.

This recognition accorded to Social Studies is derived from the potential of the subject for achieving certain desirable goals for general education in Nigeria. Mkpa (2009) maintained that the extent to which the subject succeed in achieving the desirable goals depends to the large extent to which the teachers of Social Studies possess the right conception of the subject

and the methodology applied in the teaching and learning of the subject in the classroom. This is true because, understanding the conception of the subject and application of right instructional methods in its teaching and learning determine how the subject is taught as well as the achievement of its instructional and programme objectives.

Despite the recognition attributed to Social Studies in the Nigeria school curriculum and its potential for achieving certain desirable goals for general education in Nigeria, Onyabe in Oyibe and Oketa (2012: 63) observed that; Social Studies has been part of educational curricula in the United States of America (USA) for many years before it was introduced into Nigeria educational curriculum in early 60s yet its philosophy, content, and methods of teaching and learning of the subject have remained vague both to scholars and to school teachers. Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2014) added that the vagueness of Social Studies does not end with the school teachers and scholars, even the parents, educational administrators and the government seems to be confused about the scope, objectives and instructional methods of the discipline.

Social Studies as a discipline in Nigeria's educational system has over the years been subjected to variety of definitions, which in most cases have been, quiet restrictive in focus and content. No wonder, (Bozimo and Ikwumelu, 2009) asserted that, while some educators believe that Social Studies is just another way of studying Geography and History in a more digestible form, some others believed that it is simply another name for civics. "Opinions about what Social Studies is or should be vary from country to country, even within a single nation experts are divided on the question of the definition" (Wronski, 1981:22). In reaction to the above, (Bozimo and Ikwumelu 2008:136) maintained that since there is no agreement as to what Social Studies is or should be, it is natural that the same amount of controversy could surround the issue of formulation of Social Studies goals and objectives, selection of content, and methodologies.

The conflict and confusion that characterize the scholarly definitions of Social Studies education made Barr, Earth, and Shemis (1977:1) to lamented that; "the field of Social Studies is so caught up in ambiguity, inconsistency and contradiction that it represents a complex educational enigma... it (Social Studies) is a schizophrenic bastard child". In a further thought, Ikwumelu (1993) noted that Social Studies has been described differently by different persons. According to him, it has been described as an extended civics, elementary Social Science, and general studies. Though at present there is no universally accepted definition of Social Studies but there are definitions which are acceptable at various places, occasions and for different purposes (Ikwumelu, 2003). For instance, Jarolimek (1977:4) defined Social Studies as a discipline that concerns itself with;

learning about people, how and where they live, how they form and structure societies, how they govern themselves and provide for their material and psychological needs, how and why they love and hate each other, how they use and misuse the resources of the planet that is their home.

Kissock (1981:3) seems to adopt a similar line of thought when he defines Social Studies as a "programme of study which a society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves". The above definitions focus on man, his physical and social environments. Man is at centre while his psychological, physical, political, and socio-economic needs are at the periphery.

As a discipline of study in Nigeria educational system, Social Studies is presented by educators as a preparation ground for citizenship education, education for cultural integration and education for living. This position has influenced the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) to adopt its official definition of the subject, “the integrated study of social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence and help young people to develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions as a citizens of a culturally, diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world”, (NCSS, 1992:92). In the same vein, Uche in Osakwe (2010) maintained that Social Studies provides knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable people to understand their physical and human environment in order to act or behave as responsible citizens.

Viewing Social Studies from global perspectives, Adeyemi (2000: 253) defined it as "an integrated course which enables human beings to participate effectively and rationally in the affairs of their local, national and international communities in a manner that will make the overall global society a better place than they met it". Whether there are the differences or variations in the definitions of Social Studies, one agrees that the central theme of Social Studies is man- the study of man- his past, present, and future and the extent to which his physical and human environments influence his way of life and vice versa.

Teaching and learning of Social Studies extends beyond the study of man and his social and physical environments rather they cut across almost all the social science courses and even some elements of natural science in trying to solve man's problems. Obanya (2002) comments that this goes to some extent to affect the implementation of the discipline's curriculum. For some years now, students of Social Studies have not been performing well in their external examinations. The statistics for nearly a decade have proved that over 50% of the candidates who sat for the junior secondary school examination in the study area fail to pass the subject at credit level, and this is a thing of utmost concern to parents, school teachers, and Social Studies educationists, (Oyibe and Nnamani, 2014). This is as a result of lack of understanding of the demands of some questions/misinterpretation of questions, shallow and poor answers to the questions as result of poor students' interest in the subject, misconceptions and poor/bad time management led to their failure to attempt the required number of questions

Furthermore, the chief examiner's reports of junior secondary school external examination in the study area, laments that it is disheartening to hear and watch the candidates fail the spelling of their own home country (Ebonyi State Secondary Education Board Abakaliki, 2015). This ugly trend seem to has been a thing of concern to parents, teachers, Social Studies educationists and the society as a whole, and it could be related to some variables such as poor professional backgrounds of the handling of the subject which connote improper selection and utilization of instructional methods in teaching the subject in secondary schools.

Considering the importance of Social Studies as discussed above, Adeniji (2004), suggests that all the teachers of Social Studies at all levels of education need to be familiar with the content and methods of teaching the subject in order to interpret the content of Social Studies correctly and encourage its learning. This is mainly because when Social Studies instructional methods were related to the content, learning will cease to be fragmentary and memorization of unrelated facts and concepts will end.

Unfortunately, as observed by Downey and Kelly in Ikwumelu (2002:3), that “social awareness and social understanding are still not being developed, students still consider either to take for granted what their teachers offer or to reject it out of hand”, probably as a result of application of inappropriate instructional methods. Mbakwem (2005:261) added that, “whether a subject

is effective or not depends on the nature and quality of the learning experiences that are associated with it". And Oyibe and Nnamani (2014: 15) are of the view that "it is not only the content that determines effectiveness of a subject but also the quality of learning experiences which in some cases are dependent upon teachers' effective application of instructional methods that will enhance active participation of the students in the classroom". They then advocate for the application of instructional methods in teaching and learning of Social Studies which individualized method is one of them for better actualization of Social Studies instructional and programme objectives in the classroom since the method focuses mainly on making students to go beyond the content given by their teacher in the classroom and accept responsibility for their own learning.

Many educators (Mbakwem, 2001; Oleabhielle, 2011; Oyibe and Nnamani, 2014) support the effectiveness of individualized instructional method in teaching and learning of Social Studies. Oleabhielle (2011) for example is of the view that proper use of individualized instructional method in teaching and learning of Social Studies will encourage skills acquisition and development of values. Oyibe and Nnamani (2014) on their own view held that the use of individualized instruction in teaching Social Studies in secondary schools enables the teachers to see each learner as a unique being that possesses certain peculiar traits, potentials and abilities.

Mbakwem (2001) opined that individualized instruction is an instructional mode that is tailored to the need and ability of individual learners. It is an individual-oriented method which seeks to identify the needs of individual, be it physical, social, emotional or intellectual. Individualized instruction means giving suitable instruction to each student. It is not teacher centered, and different students-centered and the purpose is helping students learn what they need using their own learning style and at their own pace (Altman, 1972).

Individualized instructional method promotes maximum interaction between and among Social Studies students to enhance efficient decision making while discussing and analyzing social issues. Oyibe and Nnamani (2014: 14) stated that "the method encourages the development of critical thinking and inquiry spirit through interaction, negotiations and clarifications of basic content or ideas because through individualized learning, students enjoy the liberty to advance their own ideas and to benefit from the ideas and views of others". The use of individualized instruction in teaching Social Studies in secondary schools enables the teachers to see each learner as a unique being that possesses certain peculiar traits, potentials, and abilities. Therefore, it is expected that the teacher should ensure that the unique qualities are carefully put into consideration in the teaching/learning process.

Oyibe and Nnamani (2014) are of the view that individualized instruction just like self directed learning is materialized when learners under the guidance of a teacher, direct and regulate their own learning process and experience individual learner's self-actualization through deciding on the materials, methods, and goals of learning. Taking a great deal of initiative in their own learning, learners can choose learning strategies independently of their teachers. To have a developed self, it is highly recommended that learners manage their own learning process through engagement in individualized learning. Smith (1992:3) stated that the use of individualized instruction in teaching of Social Studies in secondary schools enables the learners to;

- Learn at their own pace
- Reduce the rate of failures and dropouts in the school system

- Provide an opportunity for every students/learners to develop good study habits
- Be creative and enjoy learning activities
- Be independent and more actively involved in their own learning
- Take more responsibility for themselves

According to Schangel and Smink (2001:12) “Individualized instruction provides the opportunity for students to learn at their own pace and their own way, and be successful”. Instruction in Social Studies in the future will be much more varied than it is now. Students’ need and interest in studying social issues will also be more varied. Therefore, it would be necessary to give appropriate instruction to each student, and to individualize instruction based on the needs and ability of the individual learner.

Lending support to individualized instructional method, Barr (2001) maintained that students’ inability to comprehend is due to the fact that teachers over dominate the teaching and learning process by talking too much thus, assuming the centre-stage-role. He argued that the burden of learning should be placed in where it rightly belongs, that is teaching and learning situations should be students-centered. In addition, when classroom instructions become students-centered and students are permitted to learn through active participation in the teaching and learning process, they are more likely to retain information so acquired and to apply them to new situations. This should therefore, be an integral part of every teacher’s instructional method since it promotes learners’ self-esteem, positive perception and instills in the students the essential skills and basis to accept responsibility for their own learning (Borich and Hao, 2007). Unfortunately, some Social Studies teachers fall back to orthodox/traditional instructional methods as means of delivering Social Studies instruction in the classroom and this does no good to the teaching and learning of the subject as it may impede academic achievement of secondary school students in Social Studies (Bozimo and Ikwumelu, 2009).

It is therefore pertinent to acknowledge that effective teaching and learning of Social Studies deserves judicious application of practical oriented and learner-centered instructional methods. The need to reconcile the Social Studies teachers’ habit of applying orthodox or traditional instructional methods with the new concepts in the teaching and learning became imperative as such may help teachers, learners, curriculum planners, government, education agencies, researchers, parents and even the general public to assess and appreciate the importance of Social Studies.

Also, it was observed at the time of this study that, effective application of individualized instructional method were hampered by some certain factors such as location of schools and teachers’ teaching experiences; the aggregated by number of years in job. It is the number of years in service that determines the experience and inexperience teachers. In most cases, the application of certain instructional method (s) depend wooly on the availability of instructional materials to be used and the availability of such depend on the location of the school which is narrowed to urban and rural schools. It was also noticed that effective application of such instructional methods as individualized method is affect by location of school and the learning environment, which has to do with space as concerning classroom space, seat arrangement and number of students in each classroom. Most schools in the urban areas are characterized by overcrowded classroom that did not permit effective interaction while the schools located at rural areas lack competent teachers, school library and learning materials that make classroom interaction interesting, concrete and participatory.

Gender has always been an important and controversial issue in the teaching and learning processes. Novak and Musonda (1991) thus observe that gender bias from the society has permeated the school environment, curriculum, pedagogy, instructional materials, among others to influence the attitudes of the teachers in favour of the boys. Though, boys and girls have similar abilities and capabilities, learn in the same school, taught by the same teacher using the same syllabus, girls in the end still perform very poorly in Social Studies classroom. Consequently, this is to be attributed to teaching and learning situation that the classroom teachers assume the teaching business alone while the students were mere receivers of what the teachers offered. This therefore led to a study on the effects of individualized instructional method on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Social Studies in Onueke educational zone of Ebonyi State.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions and one hypothesis tested at alpha level of 0.05 were formulated that guided the conduct of this study. The research questions are:

1. What is the effect of individualized instructional methods on the mean achievement scores of secondary school students in Social Studies?
2. What is the effect of individualized instructional method on the mean achievement of male and female secondary school students in Social Studies in Onueke education zone of Ebonyi State?

### **Null Hypothesis:**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant main effect of individualized instructional method on the mean achievement of Social Studies students in urban and rural secondary schools.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopted quasi-experimental research design, involving a pre-test and post-test and was carried out in Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The population of this study comprised two thousand seven hundred ninety-three (2,793) junior secondary school II (JSS II) students drawn from all public secondary schools in Onueke Education Zone. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw four (4) secondary schools that have existing intact classes with the sample size of two hundred and five (205) junior secondary school II students in Onueke education zone for this study. Out of these four schools, two schools were assigned to the experimental group while the remaining two schools were assigned to the control group using simple random sampling technique by balloting. In addition, out of two hundred and five (205) students, one hundred and eleven (111) students were in two schools used for experimental group who were taught Social Studies using individualized instructional method and ninety-four (94) students in the remaining two schools used for control group were taught using conventional instructional method.

The instrument used for data collection was Social Studies Achievement Test (SOSAT) constructed by the researcher with initially forty (40) multiple-choice items with option A-D. The items of the instrument were validated by two other experts from Social Studies Education and two specialists in Measurement and Evaluation in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki for relevance, clarity, proper wording and adequacy of items in addressing the objectives of the

study and were further treated to item analysis of difficulty index and discrimination power, After item analysis, six (6) out of the forty (40) items were dropped, leaving behind thirty-four (34) question items. The instrument with thirty-four (34) question items were treated to determination of reliability using thirty-five (35) students and Kinder Richardson 20 (KR-20) statistics. By this analysis, a reliability coefficient of 0.98 was obtained which showed a high internal consistency; thereby making the instrument suitable for use for the study. In order to extraneous variables, Social studies teachers of the four secondary schools were used as the research assistants and a pre-experimental training programme that lasted for two weeks was organized for the teachers of the experimental group while the teachers for the control group were not trained since they were already familiar with conventional method. The teachers were exposed to various procedures and steps involved in the instructional packages and the packages with instructional materials were distributed to both the teachers of experimental group and only lesson plan was giving to teachers of the control group. Following the procedure of the experiment that lasted six weeks, at the beginning, Social Studies teachers of the four secondary schools who were the research assistants administered pre-test to the students and at the end post test were administered and data were collected by the teachers which were handed over to the researcher. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for all research questions while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at an alpha 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Question 1

What is the effect of individualized instructional method on students' mean achievement in Social Studies in Onueke education zone of Ebonyi State? Data collected from Social Studies Achievement Test (SOSAT) were used to answer the research question and mean scores obtained from pre-test and posttest were statistically adjusted to take care of the group difference. Summary of data analysis were presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Effects of individualized instructional method on students' mean achievement in Social Studies**

Method	Mean	SD	Cases
Individualized Method	72.144	10.505	111
Conventional method	69.709	13.347	93

The results of data analysis presented in table 1 above revealed that individualized instructional method is better than the conventional method in enhancing secondary school students' achievement in Social Studies. From the results presented in table 1, it was observed that the experimental group (individualized method) obtained a high mean score of 72.144 and standard deviation of 10.505 against the control group (conventional method) that obtained low mean score of 69.709 and standard deviation of 13.347. This implies that application of individualized instructional method enhanced students' achievement in Social Studies more than the use of conventional method. The finding of this study is in line with the observation of Mbakwem (2001) that individualized instruction is an instructional mode that is tailored to the need and ability of individual learners. This implies that the use of individualized instruction in teaching Social Studies in secondary schools enables the teachers to see each learner as a unique being that possesses certain peculiar traits, potentials and abilities.

Oleabhiele (2011) for example also observed that proper use of individualized instructional method in teaching and learning of Social Studies will encourage skills acquisition and development of values.

## Research Question 2

What is the effect of individualized instructional method on the mean achievement of male and female secondary school students in Social Studies in Onueke education zone of Ebonyi State? The mean scores of male and female students taught Social Studies using individualized instructional method for pretest and posttest for the experimental group (self-directed) were used to answer the research question. Summary of results of data analysis were presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Mean scores of male and female secondary school students taught Social Studies using individualized instructional method**

Gender	Mean	SD	Cases
Male	71.218	9.575	55
Female	73.053	11.357	56

The results of data analysis presented in table 2 above revealed that individualized instructional method seemed to have much differential effect on female students. This is because female students had a mean score of 73.053 and a standard deviation score of 11.357 while the male students had a mean score of 71.218 and a standard deviation score of 9.575. This implies that female students perform better than the male students in Social Studies when individualized method is used in the classroom. The findings of this study disagreed with the finding of Oleabhiele (2011) who held that male students perform better than female students in any classroom instructional activities that involve calculation. Ajaegbu (1999) on the other hand seems to also disagree with the findings of this study since he observed that female students perform better in languages and arts while male students perform better in Mathematics and related Science subjects. Social Studies is one of the Social Science subject which implies, with the observations of Oleabhiele and Ajaegbu, male students supposed to perform better than the female students but the reverse is the case in this study probably because of the method applied by the teacher. This also shows that effectiveness of individualized instructional method in improving students' achievement in Social Studies.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of individualized instructional method on the mean achievement of Social Studies students in urban and rural secondary schools.

**Table 3: Analysis of Co-variance for students' achievement based on instructional method and location**

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Df	Mean of Square	F	Sig of F
Covariates	12903.578	1	12903.578	332.205	.000
Pretest	12903.578	1	12903.578	332.205	.000
Main Effects	9.081	2	4.540	.117	.980
Method	2029.109	1	2029.109	41.606	.000
Location	8.651	1	8.651	.233	.847
2-way Interactions	60.388	1	60.388	1.555	.216
Method location	60.388	1	60.388	1.555	.216 Explained
	12973.047	4	3243.262	83.498	.000
Residual	3418.115	106	38.842		
Total	16391.161	110	178.165		

Significant at P < 0.05



In the ANCOVA table, the summary of result of hypothesis 1 presented in table 3 showed that the value of F-cal (1.555) is greater than F-sig (0.216) at 0.05 alpha level significance, this indicated that hypothesis 1 was rejected on the ground that the decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis when the calculated value is greater than the significant value at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there were significant effects of individualized instructional method on mean achievement of students in Social Studies in urban and rural secondary schools in Onueke education zone of Ebonyi State. The finding is in line with the observation of Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2011) which stated that effective utilization of instructional method (s) in teaching and learning of Social Studies depends on the location of school. They maintained that location of school is one of the determining factors considered for selection and utilization of instructional methods in teaching and learning of Social Studies. According to them, some instructional methods required the availability of electricity and some required other commercial instructional aides for their application but if the school is located in rural area where accessibility of these materials are impossible, application of such method (s) will also be impossible.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that students taught Social Studies using individualized instructional method performed better than those taught Social Studies using conventional instructional method. The study also proved that female students in both experimental and control groups performed better compared to the performance of male students in Social Studies classroom instruction. Finally, the study revealed that there were significant effects of individualized instructional method on mean achievement of students in Social Studies in urban and rural secondary schools in Onueke education zone of Ebonyi State which proved that application of individualized instructional method in the teaching and learning of the Social Studies improves secondary school students' achievement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government through its educational agencies should lay more emphasis on utilization of individualized instructional method by secondary school teachers in Social Studies classroom instructional delivery,
2. Government and private individuals should also assist in providing some basic facilities necessary for effective application of individualized instructional method in teaching and learning of Social Studies and,
3. Social studies teachers should re-assess their classroom instructional practice because there is a need for a shift from instructional practice, which makes learners passive listeners to the practice that engages learners actively in the instructional processes.

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