

EFFECTS OF STUDY QUESTIONS ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT: *This study is on effects of study questions on students' achievement in Literature-in-English. The study was carried out in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The design of the study is quasi experimental of pre-test-posttest, non-equivalent control group. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The population of the study was 6053 senior secondary school, class II (SS II) students in thirty-nine co-educational secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The sample was SS II Literature-in-English students in four co-educational secondary schools in the Zone, which was drawn using simple random sampling technique. Two of the schools formed treatment group, while two formed control group. Intact classes were used for the study. A researcher-made instrument titled Literature-in-English Achievement Test (LAT) was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using statistical mean, standard deviation, and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The result of the study showed that the treatment group taught Literature-in-English with study questions performed better than the control group taught with conventional method. The gender aspect of the study revealed that girls performed better than boys in both treatment, and control groups. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Literature-in-English teachers should issue study questions on every topic taught to their students; and that authors of literature texts should also produce workbooks which will guided study of main texts with relevant study questions.*

KEYWORDS: Study Questions, Students' Achievement, Literature-In-English

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development of any nation depends largely on the quality and level of education obtained by the human resource of that nation. Many governments of the nations of the world depend strongly on the school and educators in particular to help solve some nagging developmental problems facing them.

One of the major concerns among educationist in our contemporary world therefore is how to add quality in teaching-learning process for effective learning. This concern has predicated a lot of researches, conferences, seminars, and workshops on quality assurance in education for sustainable development. Educators therefore have not rested on their oars in trying to map out strategies for quality teaching and learning process. Their untiring effort to raise the standard of education through quality teaching of their subjects is based on the fact that it is through the different school subjects that the objectives of education can be achieved (Mkpa, 1985).

Every subject taught in school contributes something towards the attainment of educational objectives and the development of the nation. Literature as a subject taught in school,

contributes immensely to the development of human resources of a nation. Literature is an imaginative literary composition with artistic merits which expresses life and arouses certain emotions in the reader. According to Ayoola (2007), Literature employs imagination and resource of language to present important facts of life to both present and future generations. This implies that it has the potential of producing capable people with great resourcefulness of imagination to tackle both familiar and unfamiliar problems, analyzing them in order to propound feasible and coherent solution. Literature influences the lives of a people, gives them inspiration and sensitizes them to take positive actions that will improve their condition. Literature therefore serves as a weapon for social change.

Owing to the important roles literature plays in developing the human resource for sustainable development, teachers of Literature-in-English are worried over the incessant poor performance of students in the subject. West African Examination Council (WEAC) reports over a number of years in recent time indicate mass failure of Nigerian students in literature-in-English. The ugly trend is blamed mostly on the teaching approach used by the teachers. It has been observed that literature teachers in Nigeria use mostly conventional teaching approach which involves reading of recommended texts, Summarizing of passages; rules of grammar and rote learning. These methods are declared in effective and problematic by both earlier and current authors (Uwaifo, 1980; Johnson & Johnson, 1993; Routman, 1996; Maduabuchi, 2006). There is therefore need for better teaching methods and strategies to be elicited for effective, teaching and learning of Literature-in-English. There are speculations among educationists that giving students study questions on learning content aids students' understanding of the learning material and consequently improves students' achievement. According to Dillon (2004), questions define tasks, express problems and delineate issues, stressing that it is only the students who have questions that are really thinking and studying. Ademu-Awuja (2004) states that the skill of questioning is a powerful, intelligent academic weapon calculatively designed to arouse curiosity and keep learners mentally alert. The main purpose of this study therefore, is to determine the effects of study questions on students' achievement in Literature-in-English.

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of study questions on students' mean achievement scores in Literature-in-English compared with those taught with conventional method
2. What are the effects of study questions on the mean achievement scores of male and female students in Literature-in-English and those taught with conventional method.

Hypotheses

- Ho₁ There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students exposed to study questions and those not exposed to study questions in Literature-in-English
- Ho₂ There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught Literature-in-English with study questions and those taught without study questions.

METHOD

The design of the study is quasi experimental design of pretest, posttest non-equivalent control group. The population of the study was made up of 6053 students in senior secondary class 2 (SS II students) in thirty-nine co-educational secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample size 120 SS II students offering Literature-in-English in four co-educational secondary schools. A toss of the coin method was used to allocate two of the schools to treatment group (TG), and two to control group (CG). Intact classes were used for the study. The instrument used for the study was a researcher-made objective test titled Literature-in-English Achievement Test (LAT). It was made up of thirty-five items separated into three sections-A to C. Section A was made up of fourteen items on African prose; Section B was made up of thirteen items on African drama, and section C, consists of eight items on African poetry. The instrument was validated by three specialists in Literature-in-English, three in language Education, and three in Measurement and Evaluation. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to thirty SS II students offering Literature-in-English in a secondary school outside the area of the study. A reliability co-efficient of 0.89 was obtained using Richardson formular (KR. 20). Statistical mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Experimental Procedure

Pretest was administered to the experimental groups at the onset. The treatment groups were issued study questions on each topic taught and asked to come up with written answers of the questions next class. The control groups were not issued any study questions. The experiment lasted for six weeks, after which a posttest was administered, having the items in the instrument reshuffled and typed on a different colour of paper.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of students taught Literature-in-English with study questions

S/No	Group	Variables	\bar{x}	SD	N
1.	Treatment Group	Study Questions	88.17	9.75	60
2.	Control Group	Conventional method	48.03	8.56	60

Table 1 above indicates that students taught Literature-in-English with study questions (Treatment group) performed better than those taught without study questions, that is with conventional method (Control group). The treatment group had mean achievement score of 88.17 and standard deviation of 9.75; while those taught with conventional method had mean achievement score of 48.03, and standard deviation of 8.56.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores of students according to gender

S/N	Group	Variables	Male			Female		
			\bar{x}	SD	N	\bar{x}	SD	N
1.	Treatment Group	Study Questions	87.55	9.56	34	88.96	10.12	26
2.	Control Group	Conventional method	47.21	8.23	32	48.96	8.97	28

Table 2 shows that in the treatment group, males had mean achievement score of 87.55, and standard deviation of 9.56, while the females had mean achievement score of 88.96 with standard deviation of 10.12. The table also shows that in the control group, males had mean achievement score of 47.21 with standard deviation of 8:23, while the females had mean achievement score of 48.96 and standard deviation of 8.97.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANCOVA) of Posttest Scores Based on Teaching Strategy

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-ratio	p-value	Decision
Covariates Pretest 3	4915.319	1	4915.319	58.223	.000	
	4915.319	1	4915.319	58.223	.000	
Main Effects Methods 3	43475.576	1	43475.576	514.974	.000	
	43475.576	1	43475.576	514.974	.000	Rejected
Explained	48390.895	2	24195.447	286.598	.000	
Residual	9877.472	117	84.423			
Total	58268.367	119	489.650			

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows an f-value of 514.974 and a p-value of 0.000 which is less than $p < 0.05$. Since the p-value is less than $p < 0.05$, it indicates that there is significant main effect of method on treatment group. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Table 4: Analysis of variance (ANCOVA) based on gender

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-ratio	p-value	Decision
Covariates Pretest 3	4915.319	1	4915.319	10.832	.001	
	4915.319	1	4915.319	10.832	.001	
Main Effects Gender 3	262.801	1	262.801	.579	.448	
	262.801	1	262.801	.579	.448	Accepted
Explained	5178.120	2	2589.060	5.706	.004	
Residual	53090.247	117	453.763			
Total	58268.367	119	489.650			

Not Significant at $p > 0.05$

Table 4 shows an f-value of 0.579 and p-value of 0.448. The p-value is greater than $p > 0.05$, indicating that there is a significant main effect of gender on method. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

DISCUSSION

The result of this study showed that the treatment group who were given study questions on each topic taught in Literature-in-English performed significantly better than the control group that was not given study questions. This finding agrees with earlier findings of Mkpa (1985), Eze (1992), and that of Mdel, Concepio, Candid, and Antoni (2007) who in their studies with study questions, found that students exposed to study questions performed better than those not exposed to study questions. This finding also lends support to Dillon (2004)

who stipulates that good questions and questioning techniques lead to the development of reflective thinking and intelligent manipulation of instructional materials.

The students exposed to study questions could have performed better than those not so exposed as a result of having clearer clue to what the test would be like, and studying and working out the answers to the questions. They could have formed study groups in which they discussed the questions and learnt from one another. This then gives support to Ademu-Awuja (2004) who sees the skills of questioning as an academic weapon which keeps learners mentally alert; and Dillon (2004) who states that questions make students think, and learn effectively.

In the gender aspect of the study, the result showed that females performed better than the males in both the treatment group and the control group. This finding tends to support the perception that girls perform better than boys in arts and languages (Denga, 1986). However, the test of significant difference in the study (Table 4) indicates that the mean achievement scores of male and female students in the treatment group is not significant.

CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to ascertain the effects of study questions in students' performance in Literature-in-English. The result of the study revealed that study questions enhance learning and achievement in Literature-in English.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Literature-in-English teachers should give their students study question on each topic taught.
2. Authors of Literature-in-English texts should also produce workbooks which guide the study of the main texts with appropriate and relevant study questions.

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