

**SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARD
COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
PORT HARCOURT LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated social studies teachers and students attitudes toward Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Port Harcourt Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State, Nigeria. The quasi-experimental design was used. A total of 240 JSS II students with an average age of 12 years and 11 social studies teachers participated in the study. Two validated 10-item instruments, Students Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method Scale (SATCLMS) and Teachers Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method Scale (TATCLMS) were used for data collection. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instruments to obtain reliability indices of 0.78 and 0.86 for SATCLMS and TATCLMS respectively. Two research questions guided the exploration. Percentages and frequency were used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study were that both teachers and students had positive attitudes towards CLM, however, teachers had more positive attitudes toward CLM than the students. It was recommended among others that teachers of social studies should adopt the CLM in their instructions in the classroom so as to impact on the attitudes of the students.*

KEYWORDS: Social studies, teacher, student, attitude, cooperative learning method, junior secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Social studies as a school subject strongly emphasizes on the development of the affective domain that can guarantee the promotion of unity in diversity. It tends to inculcate in students the ideal of values (honesty, integrity etc.), national consciousness, awareness, positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation despite diversities in race, desires, beliefs, aspirations, religion etc. (FRN, 2004; Omo-Ojugo, Ibhafidon & Otote, 2009).

In order to attain these objectives, the Federal Government requires teachers (as role models) take the lead in changing the focus of social studies lessons from academic to socialisation function. Through the verbal presentation of instructions or information to junior secondary students who expectedly are to develop a common set of understanding, appropriate skills, competencies,

attitudes and actions that increase human interaction, coexistence, relationship and societal development (FRN, 2004; Olubor & Ogonor, 2007)

However, the interdisciplinary approach in social studies programmes which prompted the drafting of social studies teachers from composite disciplines (like Government, Geography etc.) has heightened the plurality of instructional methods, unclear duties/roles and ambiguity of assignment that hampers an indebt teaching of concepts, modes of thinking and analysis of contemporary issues. Additionally, the limited sources of information and materials, ever-expanding scope and controversial nature of current events or contemporary affairs attempts to make social studies difficult to teach (Ezegbe, 1999).

The above less interactive teacher-mediated instructional technique presents some teaching and learning challenges, which heightens the inability of social studies teachers to inculcate good citizenship values on students whose poor attitude, poor self-concept and poor academic achievement stems from their perception that social studies lessons are difficult (Ezegbe, 1999; Joof & Amadi, 1994). This therefore, prompted attention to now be shifted to another learning approach and teaching method (other than the teacher-dominated instructional method) that will enhance active learning as a social activity capable of effectively improving junior secondary students' attitude, productivity, efficiency, high attainment, attendance to class and academic achievement in social studies. This revolutionary teaching approach is the cooperative learning method (CLM).

Cooperative learning is an instructional method that actively engages students in the learning process and seeks to improve their critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills (Borich, 2011 citing Greeno, 2006 and Jacobs, Power, & Loh, 2002). Borich, (2011) stated that establishing a task structure for a cooperative learning activity initiated by the teacher include: specifying the goal of the activity, structuring the task, teaching and evaluating the collaborative process, monitoring group performance and debriefing. In cooperative learning students gain more experience, improve better attitudes toward the subject matter, develop their social skills, and learn to respect different points of views (Kose, Abdurrahman, Aysegul& Kutret, 2010)

The teacher's job at the start of a cooperative learning activity is to set a cooperative tone, assign roles (researcher, runner, recorder and summarizer), decide on the group size (say four to six members), identify the outcome, check for understanding and time needed to complete the end product. The actualization of these goals depends on the attitudes and values inculcated in students whose interaction constitutes the majority of time and activity during cooperative learning (Cohen, 1994; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 2002).

Furthermore, the teacher creates the atmosphere in which students are able to construct knowledge, reflect on what they are learning, practice good citizenship, and build one another up in an academically and socially supportive environment (Ellis (2009). This enables students to gradually take responsibility for each other's learning by complementing and sometimes reinforcing the skills acquired in the other. Thus, the feedback, reinforcement and support come from student peers in the groups, not the teacher (Borich, 2011).

Affizal and Rafidah (2009) stressed that teacher-student attachment and teachers' attitudes towards work are critical in promoting and maintaining positive teacher behaviour and communication that connects students with teachers thereby improving classroom atmosphere. Apparently, teachers who communicate and interact effectively with their students can give them appropriate and helpful feedback needed for effective implementation of the curriculum and a successful school relationship that impacts on the experience, achievement and continuing educational development (Afolabi, 2009).

Social studies teachers' attitude enhances the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural action, intent, disposition and capacity to consistently and rationally respond towards a need, situation, idea or concept which in turn influences the achievement of junior secondary students in social studies (Adesoji, 2002). Therefore, teachers' activities and attitude are crucial in propelling the attitude, psychology and emotion which significantly influence junior secondary students' achievement in social studies (Afolabi & Audu, 2007; Afolabi, 2009).

Statement of the problem

Social studies lessons orientate and impact the requisite skills and attitude that increases junior secondary students understanding and actions to both human and societal problems. However, the dearth of trained social studies teachers and the drafting of teachers from composite disciplines (like Government, Geography etc.) due to its interdisciplinary approach, Alongside limited sources of information and materials, ever-expanding scope and controversial nature of current events or contemporary affairs heightened the plurality of instructional methods, the difficulty and swallow teaching of social studies concepts.

This further undermines the efficacy of social studies as an affective (rather than cognitive) education which provides opportunities, adequate skills and attitude that promote pro-social behaviours and the formation of bonding among students who interact and actively work together in cooperative learning groups. Which success depends on the teacher's communication of role expectations and responsibilities of students in the groups. These problems which affect social studies teachers' possession of an attitude that could stimulate junior secondary students' inculcation of values, skills and attitude required in social studies defeats the purpose of cooperative learning. It is based on the foregoing that this study intends to investigate the attitudes towards cooperative learning method in junior secondary schools among teachers and students in Port Harcourt LGA

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the attitudes towards cooperative learning method in junior secondary schools among teachers and students in Port Harcourt LGA. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. determine the attitude of junior secondary school students towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM).
2. establish the attitude of junior secondary school students towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM).

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the attitude of junior secondary school students toward Cooperative Learning Method (CLM)?
2. What is the attitude of Social Studies teachers toward Cooperative Learning Method (CLM)?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The design of the study was quasi-experimental.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

All the teachers and students in the junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt LGA formed the population of the study. A total of 240 JSS II students with an average age of 12 years and 11 social studies teachers participated in the study. Firstly, simple random sampling technique was used to select four schools from the 13 government owned junior secondary school in Port Harcourt LGA. From each of the selected four schools, one arm of JSS II was selected randomly and two classes/schools were assigned to experimental groups and the other two groups were assigned to the control groups. There was a total of 120 JSSII students in the experimental and control groups respectively which gave a total of 240 respondents. Secondly, on the part of the teachers, 11 teachers of social studies in the four schools selected were also randomly selected for the study out of a total of 15 of them in the four school selected for this study.

Instrumentation

Two validated 10-item instruments, Students Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method Scale (SATCLMS) and Teachers Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method Scale (TATCLMS) were used for data collection. These instruments elicited information on the Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method amongst the teachers and students and it consists of two parts each. The first part takes care of the demographic data of the respondents while the second part consists of ten (10) items each and elicited information on respondents Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method. Furthermore, on these scales the modified four-point Likert response format of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) were used. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instruments to obtain reliability indices of 0.78 and 0.86 for SATCLMS and TATCLMS respectively.

Experimental procedures

Before the commencement of the experiment copies of SATCLMS and TATCLMS were administered to all the students and teachers all the groups before the instructions began. The cooperative learning method was used to teach the experimental groups whereas lecture method was used to teach the students in the control group. At the end of the treatment period using both methods, a post- test of the SATCLMS and TATCLMS were administered to both groups. The data obtained in the pre-test and post-test were subjected to statistical analysis. Only the data on the post-test of the respondents were presented in this study.

Data analysis

Percentages and frequency were used to answer the research questions.

RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the attitude of junior secondary school students toward Cooperative Learning Method (CLM)?

Table 1: Junior Secondary School Students' Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM)

Attitude	Number	Percentage (%)
Positive	128	53.33
Negative	112	46.67
Total	240	100

Table 1 shows that 53.33 percent of the students have a positive attitude towards CLM while only 46.67 percent of the students have a negative attitude towards CLM. The result is that a moderate number of the students have a positive attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM).

Research question 2: What is the attitude of Social Studies teachers toward Cooperative Learning Method (CLM)?

Table 2: Teachers Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM)

Attitude	Number	Percentage (%)
Positive	7	63.64
Negative	4	36.36
Total	11	100

Table 2 shows that 63.64 percent of the teachers have a positive attitude towards CLM while only 36.36 percent of the teachers have a negative attitude towards CLM. The result is that majority of the teachers have a positive attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**Attitude of junior secondary school students toward Cooperative Learning Method**

The result as shown in Table 1 showed that a moderate number (53.33%) of the students had a positive attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method whereas only 46.67% of them had a negative attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method. It is worthy of note that those who had a negative attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method were 112 in number. This figure may have been mostly those who were in the control group who had no treatment on the use of CLM. The present result is consistent with some earlier studies which established that in cooperative learning students gain more experience, improve better attitudes toward the subject matter, develop their social skills, and learn to respect different points of views (Kose, Abdurrahman, Aysegul& Kutret, 2010).

Teachers Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method

The result as reflected in Table 2 showed that majority of the teachers (63.64%) had a positive attitude towards CLM whereas only few (36.36 %) of the teachers have a negative attitude towards CLM. An earlier exploration indicated that social studies teachers' attitude enhances the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural action, intent, disposition and capacity to consistently and rationally respond towards a need, situation, idea or concept which in turn influences the achievement of junior secondary students in social studies (Adesoji, 2002). In addition, teachers' activities and attitude are crucial in propelling the attitude, psychology and emotion which significantly influence junior secondary students' achievement in social studies (Afolabi & Audu, 2007; Afolabi, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The study established that both teachers and students had positive attitudes towards CLM. The teachers had more positive attitudes towards CLM than the students. The attitude of the teachers towards cooperative learning method has been found to be very important for the improvement of the learning outcomes of the students in social studies. The implication of the established finding is that stakeholders in social studies education should consider engaging in activities that could maintain the attitudes of the teachers positively to concomitantly propel the attitude, psychology and emotions that can impact on the learning outcomes of the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Teachers of social studies should adopt the CLM in their instructions in the classroom so as to impact on the attitudes of the students. This is because the attitudes of the students has a lot to do with their learning outcomes
2. Social studies educators or stakeholders should also try to encourage the teachers of social studies through engagement in teacher professional development programme to enhance their pedagogical skills which has some effects on their attitudes towards the use of an innovative instructional model such as CLM.

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