

STUDENTS' INTEREST IN SOCIAL STUDIES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

Essien, Essien Ekpenyong¹; Akpan, Okon Edem² & Obot, Imo Martin³

1. Department Of Curriculum And Teaching, University Of Calabar
2. Department Of Curriculum And Instructional Technology, Cross River University Of Technology, Calabar
3. Department Of Educational Foundation, Guidance And Counseling, University Of Calabar

ABSTRACT: *This research examined students' interest in social studies and academic achievement in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, one hypothesis was formulated to direct the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of seven hundred and fifty-three (753) students was randomly selected for the study. The instruments for data collection were the Students' Interest in social Studies Questionnaire (SISSQ) and Social Studies Achievement Test (SOSAT) developed by the researchers were subjected to validation by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability estimate of the instruments was established through the split-half reliability method and it associate Spearman Brown prophecy formula. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was adopted to test the hypothesis at.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that students' interest in social studies significantly relate to their academic achievement in the subject. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that teachers/facilitators should explain all subject matter in away that each student can comprehend in order to arouse their interest in the subject among others.*

KEYWORDS: **Students' Interest, Social Studies, Academic Achievement, Tertiary Institutions, Cross River State, Nigeria**

INTRODUCTION

Interest could be defined as the focusing of the sense organs on or giving attention to some person, activity, situation or object. It is an outcome of experience rather than gift. It could either result or cause motivation. It could also be regarded as a pre-determinant of one's perceptions that is, what aspect of the world one is mostly likely to see always (McClnermey, Dowson, Young and Nelson, 2005). It could also be viewed as a condition in which an individual associates the essence of certain things or situation with his needs or wants. Schiefele (1998) maintained that one's interest is enkindled or killed through participation, experience, familiarity, study and work. It is what one perceives in these engagements that shape interest.

Interest according to Schiefele (1998) is a feeling of identification with a person and some conditions, things or other persons. It has been variously defined as a kind of consciousness accompanying and stimulating attention, a feeling, pleasant or painful directing attention, the pleasurable or painful aspect of a process of attention, and as identical with attention of itself (Schiefele and Krapp, 1996). Thus it may be said, "I attend to what interests me". The term is also used to indicate a permanent mental disposition (Schiefele and Krapp, 1996).

However, interest is defined and whether it be described as a cause of attention, an aspect of attention or as identical with attention, its special significance lies in its intimate connection with the mental activity or attention. Interest is the focusing of the sense organs on or giving attention to some person, activity, situation or object. It is an outcome of experience rather than a gift. It could either result or cause motivation. It could also be regarded as a pre-determinant of one's perceptions that is, what aspect of the world one is mostly likely to see always (McCInermey, Dowson, Young and Nelson, 2005). It could be a temporary or permanent feeling of preference. It could also be viewed as a condition in which an individual associates the essence of certain things or situation with his needs or wants.

McCInermey, Dowson Young and Nelson (2005) asserted that genuine interest is the accomplishment of the identification, through action of the self with some object or idea. They further stated that this is necessary because of the necessity of that object or idea, for maintenance of a self-initiated activity. Interest according to them is a name for the fact that a course of action, an occupation or pursuit absorbs the power of an individual in a thorough going way. Going by this definition, interest thus seems particularly useful as the relationship between identification, absorption and the maintenance of a self-initiated activity which offers a straight forward way to analyze classroom activities. According to Schiefele (1991) interest is a content-specific motivation of characteristics composed of intrinsic feeling-related and value-related initiatives with an organized force. Schiefele has distinguished two conceptions of interest: Individual and situations interest Individual interest is understood as a long-term direction of an individual towards a type of object, activity or area of knowledge. It is defined as a relatively stable evaluative orientation towards certain domains (Schiefele, 1998:93) or towards particular classes of objects, event or ideas (Krapp, 2000). Individual interest have personal significance and are usually associated with high levels of significance and value, positive emotions and increased reference value (Krapp, Hidi and Renninger 1992). In this framework, individual interest developed and remains a stable and enduring factor in one's learning over an extended period of time.

Schiefele (1991:302) conversely posited that the basis of situational interest is an external locus, and it is defined as "an emotional state brought about by situational stimuli". This form of interest is also referred to as interestingness. Alexander and Jetton (1996) stated that this type of interest tends to be more short-lived and superficial than individual interest and is generally aroused by specific features of an activity or task (Schiefele, 1998).

Hidi (1990), Hidi and Anderson, (1992) opined that interest most often is directly tied to the content or instruction, and it also directs and enhances learning. Most researchers like Krapp, Hidi and Renninger (1992) believed that interest emerges from an individual's interaction with his or her environment.

Many researchers now have adopted the distinction between situational and individual (or personal) interest. The personal interest approach tends to focus on individual differences whereas the situations interest approach centers on creating appropriate environmental settings to stimulate and motivate learning (Hidi and Baired 1996; Mitchell 1993). Whereas individual interest is considered more of a psychological trait, situational interest is by definition, more state-specific. Renninger (1992) by definition therefore classifies interest in schooling as situational because it increases attention, concentration, willingness to learn and

acquire knowledge. McCInerney, Dowson, Young and Nelson (2005) conducted a study with high school students in the United States (N=1078, 47% boys) responded to survey items on their self esteem and interest in school work, their expectancy of high school completion, and their perceived support from parents, teachers and peers for their expectancy. Their GPA and days absence from school were collected from school records. Personal expectancy, parents' teachers and peer support all had significant positive impacts on students' interest in school work and on GPA of all the significant factors considered, support from teachers has the strongest impact on interest and GPA in the high school sub-samples. The researchers indicated that teachers are the most influential agent in promoting interest and academic performance in the school context. Most empirical researches in educational psychology have been devoted to finding out how interest influences leaning and academic achievement.

In another study seeking to investigate the relation between interest and ability, Benton, Corkill, Sharp, Downey, and Khramstova (1995) found out a significant interaction between interest and academic achievement ($r=.53$). This result, the researchers claimed was consistent with Renninger's (1995) view regarding interest-Knowledge relationship. Alexander Jetton and Kulikowich (1995) using a science subject also found out three unique cluster of students that tended to conform to predictions of the domain learning model. Individual's knowledge, interest and recall of immunology concepts generally paralleled their performance of Physics, this result agrees with that of Rolf-thus and Ackerman (1996) that there is a positive correlation between Mathematics and Physical Sciences,' knowledge and interest.

In a study investigating some student-personal variables as predictors of Mathematics achievement in secondary schools in Central Cross River State, Obo (2005) used a sample of 550 students drawn from a population of 7,360 students. He used a 36-item student-response questionnaire (SRQ) and Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT) as instruments for data collection. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. The result indicated that of the seven student-personal variables measured two of them, interest and achievement motivation of the subjects had a significant linear relationship with the students' Mathematics achievement.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It is necessary that one has an in sight into the background of theories that support a particular study and from where the problem may be identified and hypothesis formulated. The researchers examined the social system theory since the study dealt with relationships and interactions between variables within a social system (in this context, the tertiary institutions). According to Kinbrough and Nunnery (1983) scholars in the late 1950s who were concerned with the organization of complex organizations began to view organization as a system. The underlying thesis was that, to understand the phenomenon, the whole must be recognized as being greater than the sum of the parts. Hall and Fegen (1968) defined a system as a set of objects together with relationship between the objects and between their attributes, whereas Choforas (1965) view a system as a group of interdependent element acting together to accomplish a predetermined goal.

Educational institutions according to Peretomode (1999) are formulations of systems and sub-systems in which the components among others include people. A system is made up of inputs and the external environment. These inputs include raw materials, human resources and

capital that may transform them into outputs. The external environment reacts on these outputs through a feedback loop and this becomes an input for the cycle of the system. Although the system theory has some limitations as opined by Silver (1983) and Lipham and Hoeh (1974), its implication for this study is very important because it concerns the efficiency and effectiveness of input and process and these are the areas in which this study is focused. Given the system theory, it sounds logical to expect variations in the inputs to be reflected in variations in output. Specifically, does input variable such as students' interest in social studies relate to a system output such as academic achievement?

Hypothesis

The under stated hypothesis was formulated in pursuance of the objective of this study. There is no significant relationship between students' interest in social studies and academic achievement.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for this study was ex-post facto because the researchers had no direct control of the independent variable as their manifestations had already occurred. The study was carried out in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population was made up on NCE 2 students in the College of Education, Akamkpa and the Federal College of Education, Obudu offering social studies totaling 1,343. The sample drawn from the study consisted of 753 students from the 2 tertiary institutions a breakdown shows 480 representing 60% from Obudu while 273 students were selected from Akamkpa representing 50% through simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection comprised a set of questionnaire and social studies achievement test designed by the researchers. In terms of validity three experts in educational measurement and evaluation and psychology, affirmed with 94% agreement that the entire instruments were suitable for measuring what it purported to measure. Using the split-half reliability method and its associate Spearman Brown. The reliability index of the instrument was found to be 0.94.

DATA ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

The data collected were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance and 751 degree of freedom.

TABLE 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between students' interest in Social Studies and academic achievement (N=753)

Variable	X	SD	r-value
Students interest	21.53	1.58	0.15*
Academic achievement	21.23	1.85	

* Significant at .05, critical $r = .062$, $df = 751$

The result of the analysis revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.15 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 751 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between students' interest

in Social Studies and academic achievement was rejected. This result implies that, students' interest in Social Studies has a significant positive relationship with their academic achievement. The positive r implied that the higher the students' interest towards Social Studies, the higher their academic achievement tends to be. On the other hand the lower their interest towards the subject the lower their academic achievement tends to be.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding of this hypothesis is in agreement with the findings of Shiefele (1991) who noted that interest is a content-specific motivation of characteristics composed of intrinsic feeling-related and value-related initiatives with an organized force. He has distinguished two conceptions of interest: Individual and situations interest Individual interest is understood as a long-term direction of an individual towards a type of object, activity or area of knowledge. It is defined as a relatively stable evaluative orientation towards certain domains or towards particular classes of objects, event or ideas. And that individual interest have personal significance and are usually associated with high levels of significance and value, positive emotions and increased reference value.

This finding is in line with Schiefele (1998) who see interest as a feeling of identification with a person and some condition, thing or other person. It has been variously defined as a kind of consciousness accompanying and stimulating attention, a feeling, pleasant or painful directing attention, the pleasurable or painful aspect of a process of attention, and as identical with attention of itself. However, interest is defined and whether it be described as a cause of attention, an aspect of attention or as identical with attention, its special significance lies in its intimate connection with the mental activity or attention. That interest is the focusing of the sense organs on or giving attention to some person, activity, situation or object. It is an outcome of experience rather than a gift. It could either result or cause motivation. It could also be regarded as a pre-determinant of one's perceptions that is, what aspect of the world one is mostly likely to see. It could be a temporary or permanent feeling of preference. It could also be viewed as a condition in which an individual associated the essence of certain things or situation with his needs or wants.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that students' interest in social studies significantly relate to their academic achievement in the subject. Based on the conclusion of the study it was recommended that;

1. The teachers/facilitators should explain all subject matter in away that each student can comprehend in order to arouse their interest in the subject.
2. The teacher should device a means of making the lesson interesting to the students by using variety of methods while delivering the lesson.

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