
**SOCIAL VARIABLES AS A DETERMINING FACTOR FOR IMPROVED
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN NIGERIAN
SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT: *This research paper examined the social variables as a determining factor for improved academic performance of students in social studies in Nigerian's schools. This was informed by ineffective utilization of some variables such as instructional materials, quality assurance control, staff and student's welfare, the school curriculum and other related school policies. It has been discovered that most of these factors are either inadequate or not effectively utilized towards an improved academic achievement of students in social studies. The paper concludes that the discouraging students' performance in social studies is dependent upon these social variables. It is recommended that for students' academic performance in social studies to improve, modern teaching gadgets should be provided, provision for staff and students' welfare should be enhanced and qualified social studies teachers should be employed.*

KEYWORDS: curriculum, quality assurance control, teaching, instructional materials.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary goal of education is to provide an equal educational opportunity for students no matter the level of intelligence or aptitude of previous performance. Educators like Ajewole (2005), Clement, John and Orim (2017), recognized the need to individualize social variables so as to cope with individual differences. Social variables such as instructional materials, staff and students welfare, quality assurance control, curriculum, good public communication and frequent evaluation of students determine academic performance of students in Social Studies. These social variables can help us to achieve the aims of social Studies education and therefore a great concern to nations that desire to improve academically. When a Social Studies teacher possesses these variables, it will spur the students up and encourage their reading and studying skills which invariably determines performance and academic excellence (Akeke&Aluko, 2017).

Teaching of Social Studies aimed at achieving some objectives which typically manifest into social products or students' academic performance. For instance, Social Studies is a core subject that candidates need to pass before gaining admission into most post-secondary schools in Nigeria. According to the West African Examination Council (WAEC) (2018), 50 percent of students could not obtain grades between A1 to C6 in Senior Secondary School Social Studies Examination. It therefore becomes imperative to determine whether the observable trend of students' performance in Social Studies is traceable to the prevailing social variables in Nigeria. The concept of Social Studies has caught the attention of education stakeholders (Mezieobi, 2011). It is through this parameter that the school has strategized performance by analyzing a streamlined strength, weakness, threat and opportunities, and then recommend on efforts suitable for piloting the educational interest in the subject. There is no globally accepted definition of the concept of Social Studies among Social Studies educators. The definition of

the concept of the subject arise from the value placed on the concept and the role the social educator(s) want the concept to play. Some of the definitions in Nigeria are borne out of the desire of the authorities to use Social Studies to address and solve certain national problems and challenges in the society. This explains why the definitions of Social Studies vary greatly between countries among social educators.

Egunjobi (2010) defined Social Studies as the study of man in his environment. Mezieobi (2011) affirms that it is a way of life, a practice of living effectively within one's immediate cultural environment and the modern world at large. It is the application of relevant knowledge and skills from the social sciences for better living (Edinyang&Effiom, 2014) Unima, Adie, Essien and Agbor (2017) defines Social Studies as an organized, interrelated study of man and his environment and desirable attitudes and actions for the purpose of producing effective citizens. Danladi, Onuorah and Ahmed (2012) sums the definition of Social Studies as the study of man and his environment and a programme through which society imparts knowledge, values and desirable attitudes considered worthwhile. Social Studies education like any other field has its instructional materials.

Instructional materials

The concepts nature of instructional technologies in teaching and learning have made transmission of information and instruction to students more complex. This has made the role of the teacher in promoting learning more challenging. The new role does not just involve mere transmission of information to students but also include looking at the problems associated with learning and instruction so that students can gain maximally from teaching and learning process. Computers are now used where there is a lot of data to be manipulated, where complex tasks must be managed or where there is need for real time access to centralize information from arbitrary locations such as in education, telemedicine, telecommunication in several other areas (Olaniyonu, Adekoya&Gbenu, 2014). It is believed that teaching of Social Studies in general and business subjects are faced with several problems (Adamu, 2008). The slow pace of learning and application of computer had been attributed to this. Effective teaching of Social Studies will not only stimulate student's performance in the subject but also enhance their achievement in the examination (Mathew &Onyejebu, 2013). To achieve effective teaching and learning process, there is the need for use of instructional materials.

Instructional materials refer to all necessary equipment, tools and facilities that help teachers in the teaching/learning process (Udidi&Ibet, 2017). Instructional support variables to teachers at all levels of education are the foundation and bedrock of quality education in the society (Clark, 2006). The use of instructional materials forms an integral part of successful teaching and learning. Consequently, teacher's role and tasks are dependent on the kind of support given to them by school administrators, that is the principals and vice principals. The absence of the administrators' instructional materials in schools could invariably affect academic performance.

Vegas and Umansky (2005) outlined such instructional variables as materials such as: Teacher guides, classroom charts, copy books, pencils chalk and electronic boards and safe storage for materials, supervisor: observation, feedback and coaching, teacher training: classroom management, materials used, lesson preparation, test administration, and career opportunities, master teacher, Principal and supervisor. Obi (2005) stated well equipped laboratory and adequate library facilities are primary for the teaching and learning of Social Studies by

students. These authors maintained that one can hardly function effectively without the other. In his contribution, Achuonye (2014) emphasized that instructional materials invaluable form the heart of instructional process because they are information sources designed to meet the obligation of teaching and learning processes. According to Adeboyeje (2010) and Emetaron (2008), school facilities are the physical enablers of teaching and learning which will increase the performance of students.

Udida and Ibet (2017) stated that instructional materials are next to the teacher in importance of educational process. Instructional materials according to the author is an integral part of an individualized learning system in our increasing number of classrooms. Offorma (2012) noted that learning resources include all forms of information sources that can be used to promote and encourage effective teaching and learning activities. They could be in form of textbooks, reference books, journals, posters, charts and programme texts, non-printed materials such as films, tapes models, and pictures and so on. The author further classifies instructional materials into human and materials resources. The material resources according to the author are further classified into tangible resources. The tangible resources consists of methods and techniques of instruction. The human resource consist of the teacher, the learners, the resource person, and the tutorial and non-tutorial staff (Offorma, 2012). An appropriate instructional material for a topic will help the intended learning to take place. Instructional material therefore, enhances communication between the teacher and learners. They are the channels through which the teacher effectively transmits his message to the learners. Social Studies teachers seem to exhibit poor communication skills, creative ability, failure to use feedback mechanism, inability to be resourceful and failure to create an active learning environment may lead to ineffectiveness in teaching/learning. This is manifesting in the low achievement of Social Studies teachers hence, most students develop cold feet towards learning Social Studies which invariably affect their understanding of the course content and hence overall performance in the subject.

In other to achieve viable instructional variable of Social Studies, quality control assurers must work together with the teachers almost on regular basis to improve on academic performance.

Quality assurance control

For the nation to rise to standard worthy of national development and to compete favourably with the league of nations, such a school must ensure high quality in her education and it must be attained and sustained, thus bringing about quality assurance control in the nation (Onuh&Agbu, 2017). However, quality assurance control according to Salvi and Kerke (2020) is the degree to which product is likely to meet the desired specification and limits given by the construction agency. This control ensures that the work done must be of required quality and durability. This can be achieved by conducting inspection from the source of supply of material up to the finished production. Onuh and Agbu (2017) noted that quality assurance control is a two-way system, that is, it involves the whole school on the one hand and quality assurer (that is inspectors) on the other. The work together to achieve a continuous improvement in standard and not minimum standard as intended by inspection system, in quality assurance control, all stakeholders are involved and carried along, that is students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents, government and the community, (here the community includes the opinion leaders, traditional and religious leaders as well as the corporate bodies). Quality assurance control looks at the education improvement from the environment and involves the process of achieving higher standard.

Quality assurance control is a self-assessment where the teachers ask the questions like why am I here? Where am I going?. All these questions are asked vis-à-vis the standard of learning because quality assurance is learner centered. In the same vein, teachers are important instruments in education. They are also the point on which the educational process hangs. Teachers play a major role in the whims and caprices of the educational system. They can influence the teaching-learning outcomes either positively or negatively because they determine the quality of instructional delivery and influence quality education when it comes to implementation of the curriculum and educational policies. The field of quality assurance control is multi-directional like testing of materials to be incorporated, field and laboratory tests on mixed materials and proper knowledge of methods/techniques to execute staff/contractor precautions to be taken periodically. Various tests materials to be incorporated in works should be confirming to specifications required. The important step towards the quality of work is to ensure that all materials and fittings incorporated in the work are up to the standards laid down in the contract.

Staff and students welfare

Staff and students welfare are benefits enjoyed by the employees and students from the employer which include, provision of housing scheme, in-service training for staff, free transportation to and from work, overtime allowance etc. This is regarded as valued payment made to employees based on the amount of output or results achieved (Felix & Mercy, 2017). Alternatively, it could be payment made with the aim of pushing both staff and students performance towards higher targets (Banjoko, 2006). It could also be referred to as compensation other than basic wages or salaries that fluctuates according to employee's attainment of some standard such as pre-established formula, individual or group goals, or organizational earnings (Felix & Mercy, 2017). The teacher is someone who instructs others or provide activities, materials and guidance that facilitate learning in either formal or informal situations. A teacher is an individual whose profession includes teaching, instructing, imparting worthwhile knowledge, creativity and innovations and guiding learners to pass through the learning process (Majasan, 2005). Teachers play a major role in the whims and caprices of the educational system. They can influence the teaching-learning outcomes either positively or negatively because they determine the quality of instructional delivery and influence quality education when it comes to implementation of the curriculum and education policies (Bossart, Doumen, Buyse&Verschueren, 2011). Teachers engage themselves in a systematic, rational and organized process of transmitting knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and what is worthwhile in accordance with certain professional principles.

The issues surrounding staff and students welfare life used in productive activities but, denied basic social and economic incentives to improve their quality of life are becoming more challenging and controversial these days (Bowen, 2013). Non-provision of these welfare services often result to conflicts which may culminate into strike actions or lock-out. Staff and students' welfare is a corporate commitment reflected in the expressed care for both staff and students. Management and labour are conscious of the implications of performance on the economy. It is believed that, labour needs to be improved first before we could have increased performance. Staff and students' welfare have the following objectives.

- (i) It improves the loyalty and morale of the employees and students
- (ii) It reduces labour turnover and absenteeism
- (iii) Welfare services help to improve goodwill and public image of organization

Social Studies has for more than 60 years been included in the Nigerian Schools Curriculum and is taken as a full subject in Nigerian Schools Curriculum. However, due to its challenges as enumerated above, it has been observed that its curriculum is faulty, hence the need for it to be improved upon.

The Curriculum and other school policies

Social Studies education is a social science subject which uses integrated disciplinary approach in its study of man and his environment. Social Studies education deals with methodologies, concepts, ideas, principles, values, attitudes in other discipline to build up its own content and knowledge centered on man and his environment. Fadeyiye (2010) noted that Social Studies education centres on materials, methods and concepts of social science subjects which help to present a complete body of knowledge about man and his environment.

The delivery of Social Studies education, which is a key aspect of pedagogy embraces curriculum and methods of delivery among others. The curriculum of Social Studies education must have its contents reflective of the labour market demands of the contemporary global society. Therefore, Social Studies education curriculum for students programme must reflect the following components:

(a) General education component, (b) General Studies component, (c) Theoretical component and (d) specialized (occupational) Social Studies components.

It is therefore imperative to determine how these components help in the performance of Social Studies skills among students. General Social Studies education components are those courses that are offered by Social Studies students irrespective of areas of specialization. According to Aliyu (2009), government and non-governmental agencies are responsible for implementing any change in Social Studies. These agencies include: Ministers of education, University Institutes of education, Boards of education, Federal Government control bodies, National Teachers Institution (NTI), National Educational Research Development Council (NERDC), Examination Boards, National Universities Commission (NUC) and Foreign aid organization. They plan or assist in the introduction of innovation or change to schools.

Curriculum implementation entails putting to practice the officially prescribed course of study, syllabus and subjects. The process involves helping the learner acquire knowledge or experiences. It is important to note that curriculum implementation cannot take place without the learner. The learner is therefore the central figure in the implementation process.

Available qualified staff

Trained staff determines students' academic performance. Agthenta, as cited by Ijaiya and Adegbesan (2007) agreed that trained or human resources constitute the manpower and personnel that brings about academic performance. This is simply, saying that the number of educated citizens is equal to the number of qualified workforce that contribute to a nation's development. The quality of the workforce in Nigeria post-secondary school's system presupposes the quality of the school output, that is, the human resources that will be available for the state and nation at large. In post-secondary school system, some determinants of high-quality education include goals of education, quality of the inputs as well as a well-organized school system that ensures the articulation and effective coordination of all aspects of school life.

An available qualified staff is a staff who has undergone training and development programmes. These training and development programmes help the teaching staff increase their capacity to perform their duties without direct supervision. Training and development of staff or teachers is to acquire new skills, knowledge and competences to enhance their performance and increase their loyalty to the school (Okoi, 2010). The task of supervising teachers rests on principals as educational managers. He/she needs to visit teachers in the class to ascertain their level of compliance with teaching standards and to make sure they have affected the corrections made on their lesson notes of lessons by the principals. A qualified teacher may be a researcher, and a distributor of knowledge (Modebelu&Kalu-Uche, 2013). Such a teacher is a helper, a facilitator, a guide, a counselor, a motivator, a leader, a model as well as a manager. He/she must be painstaking in preparing notes of lesson, maintaining an organized classroom, employing mutual learning techniques, participating in team work and contributing to decision making of the school. Such a teacher does not overlook co-curricular activities and students assessment (Modebelu&Kalu-Uche, 2013, Sonny &Edogi, 2017).

A qualified teacher requires excellent communication skill, concise and understandable expressions and explanation during lesson delivery, Modebelu (2013), has presented a good account of the teachers' roles in the classroom, thus a teacher is a communicator, a manager and organizer of students in a manner to assist them meet set objectives and act as a monitor of students' performance. Listening, speaking, writing, reading and interpersonal communication skills are needed to facilitate teaching/learning and to enable the teacher to accomplish their goals which is to attain effectiveness evident in the students' performance.

CONCLUSION

The research was conducted to determine the social variables required by Social Studies for improved academic performance of students in Nigeria. Specifically, the research aimed at determining if instructional materials, quality assurance control, staff and student welfare and good public communication are required for improved academic performance of students in Social Studies in Nigerian schools. The study shows that the social variables mentioned contribute immensely towards an improved academic performance of students in Social Studies. It gives the students the opportunity to see, feel and touch and understand the lesson more when these variables are available and effectively considered.

Recommendations

Based on the discoveries or findings of this paper, the following recommendations were made:

1. That instructional materials in the form of modern teaching gadgets should be provided to Social Studies teachers to aid their teaching and foster greater understanding amongst the Social Studies students.
2. That the quality control assurers must work together with the teachers almost on a regular basis to improve on academic performance.
3. That government should provide staff and students welfare (housing scheme, good learning environment, encouraging salaries, good working conditions) at a subsidized rate to ameliorate their suffering and enhance good academic performance.
4. That those facilitating the Social Studies curriculum should be competent in the use of variety of teaching methods during instruction.
5. That government at all levels should employ qualified staff (teachers) to enhance students' academic performance.

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