

Attitude of Junior Secondary School Students towards the Learning of Social Studies in Developing Culture

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the attitude of Junior Secondary School students towards the learning of Social Studies developing culture. Social Studies, though relatively new compared to other subjects such as psychology, civics, religion, history and geography that have been in the school curriculum before it was introduced in 1905 in the United States of America. The study is guided by the following questions: to what extent does the newness of Social Studies in the school affects the attitude of students towards the learning of new culture? To what extent does lack of instructional materials in teaching the students affect the attitude of the students? To what extent do the teaching approaches used in teaching the students affect the attitude of the students? The specific purpose of the study is to examine the various approaches in learning the subject. The approaches include number classification, activity classification and orientation. The theoretical framework of the study hinged on the psychological view of the students towards the learning of Social Studies at the Junior Secondary School level. The following recommendations were made based on the outcome of the study. The students should be given orientation only by Social Studies specialists. Social Studies specialists only should teach the students at this level. Teachers from other related subject areas should not be allowed to serve as resource persons at this level. Conclusion was drawn based on the finding of the study.

Keywords: *Attitude, Junior Secondary School Students, Learning, Social Studies*

INTRODUCTION

Students' attitude towards some school subjects are measured based on their academic performance. Students whose performance are low, lack positive attitude towards such subjects and do not show interest in the subject. Similarly, some studies linked poor academic performance of students to their attitude towards the subjects. In analyzing the factors that contribute to students'

indifferent attitude in Social Studies as a school subject, Makinde (2006) asserts that teachers' approaches of teaching Social Studies are complex whereby making the comprehension of the subject difficult. The unavailability of instructional materials in teaching the subject stands as barriers to the level of their attitude. Social Studies teachers should use the recommended teaching approach and styles in teaching the student Social Studies as a subject. Studies on students' attitude towards the teaching of Social Studies are non-availability of instructional materials. In schools where there are non-availability of instructional materials, students comprehension becomes a tedious task and this affect students attitude. Thus, students attitude tend to increase in subjects taught with instructional materials and therefore understanding the subject help the students to internalize knowledge.

Students' attitude towards a school subject according to Onyema (2008) tends to increase due to the approaches of teaching the subject; availability of instructional materials and clear definition of the subjects by the subject experts. Though, Social Studies a relatively new subject in the school curriculum of study, it was introduced in 1960 into Nigeria school system. Markinde (2006) opines that its concepts are of social relevance, secular in nature and integrated. However, there is the general awareness of the fact that knowledge is more meaningfully thought and comprehended when integrated. In other words, knowledge is understood and internalized when integrated but not compartmentalized (Okobiah, 2008).

There has been the need for urgent upsurge in the awareness level of Social Studies among the secondary school students. In order to achieve this goal, students should be made to appreciate the subject. This will enhance their attitude and interest towards the subject. Teachers of Social Studies should employ teaching methods that will make the subject gain more attention than ever before. One basic problem that would make students to probably have indifferent and lack of enthusiasms in Social Studies in the secondary school is the apathy of the individuals, lack of instructional materials and the integrated nature of the subject. These are some of the reasons why students have indifferent attitude towards Social Studies as a secondary subject in the school curriculum.

The Concept of Attitude

Psychologists have diverse views about the concept of attitude and this has led to the problem of lack of unanimity on the concept with different individuals defining the concept. According to Balogun (2005), attitude is a particular tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour. To him, attitude is a response to stimuli that is positive

or negative. He added further that attitude is a psychological tendency to act in a situation demanding for actions. Balogun (2005), posits that psychological tendency is a state that is internal of evaluative response, whether overt or covert; cognitive; affective and psychomotor behaviour. Psychological tendency are regarded as a type of bias that people put forward as responses which are positive or negative. He opined that attitude is biased because it is self-centred. This is because individual does not have attitude until he responds evaluative to entity on affective, cognitive and psychomotor basis. Attitude to him is similar to character.

Attitude is the way of individual acts or reacts to stimulus. It is a part of individual characteristics. Thus, attitude is a part of characters. Characters are long-lasting and develop over time, attitude occurs within a short time frame. Character cannot be identified within a short period of interaction but attitude can be ascertained shortly. Attitude is action towards event or reaction that is from the manner individual acts, reacts, speaks or behaves within the first contact; his attitude can be identified and evaluated to be acceptable or rejected. In addition, Bavis (2004) is of the opinion that evaluative responses whether overt or covert can have and produce psychological tendency to respond with a particular degree of evaluation with an attitude or object. If the tendency to respond is established, the person has formed positive attitude towards the object. Therefore, the concept of attitude is a conscious effort and behaviour towards an entity or object. In terms of definition, attitude is one of the basic constructs used by psychologists hypothetically. Attitudes like other hypothetical constructs are not directly observable responses. But attitude is one of the numerous implicit state of mind or disposition that psychologists have constructed to explain why people reaction in certain manner in presence of certain stimuli. Therefore refer to attitude as a tendency that last for a short period of time. To him, individual attitude towards an object overtime implies some level of interest that is been possess for the object.

Social Studies

The term Social Studies was used in 1905, when a committee of Thomas Jessa first used it to include economics, sociology, anthropology, political science and geography. In 1956, history was included. Igbogbor (2000), views Social Studies as an integrative subject that contained social sciences that are of societal based. He added that Social Studies is targeted at producing better individuals for better society. Social Studies is about man's overall aspects of life; that which include social, economic and political activities. Social Studies therefore address man holistically. It is concerned with making individual an integrative being in the society that man founds himself.

Ijimi (2004) states that the purpose of Social Studies is double sided: that is making the society meaningful to man. Principally, the content of Social Studies is derived from subjects such as economics, geography, history, political science, sociology, anthropology and psychology. Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) are of the view that the main goal of Social Studies is the development of desirable socio-civic and personal behaviours that the society require to thrive. They added that people must behave in manner that is required to further development of the society. They are of the opinion that most peoples' behaviours tend to reflect the values, ideas, beliefs, custom, norms and attitude which they accept.

In addition, Social Studies simply put is concerned with the development of appropriate attitudes. A subject of this quality should be taught with all emphasis in our schools and even be made compulsory. Their studies showed that Social Studies are an inter-disciplinary subject in nature and content. Its focus is on man, their problems, survival, how they influence their environment and how environment in turn influence man. Social Studies examine human problems from holistic perspective. It combines the contributions of various subjects indicated above to solve human problems. As cited above, the contents of Social Studies are drawn from the social science subjects.

According to McCarthy (2001), the idea that Social Studies should not be seen as a mere amalgam of the Social Sciences as most of the content are from Social Sciences. It is the integration of the objective, purpose and aims of the various social science subjects. In short, Social Studies are in responses to goal oriented edification that is geared towards sensitizing young people to solving personal and community-related problems. The scope of Social Studies is not fixed but dynamic in nature. It is ever-changing to accommodate man's many problems of life.

Approaches in Teaching Social Studies

The subject matter of Social Studies is concentrated on societal improvement through the development of individual who are the composition of the society. Therefore, the concept of Social Studies should be taught systematically using the following four approaches at the secondary school level.

- i. Classification Approach,
- ii. Number classification Approach,
- iii. Activity classification Approach, and
- iv. Place classification Approach.

Classification Approach: Social Studies classification approach is based on the teachers communicating skills of passing ideas to the students. There

are two basic approaches. These are inductive and deductive approaches. With these approaches, the teacher begins with what is known to the children from the environment to the distant, concrete to abstract, facts to ideas, simple to complex, easy to hard, real to imaginative, the examples as explained approaches to teaching Social Studies. While the deductive is the direct opposite of inductive, the inductive builds its foundations and encourages students to advance in critical thinking and discovery that is relevant to the learning of Social Studies.

Number Classification Approach: This is an approach of teaching Social Studies that considers the number of students being handled at a particular time by the teacher. The students can either be grouped or individualized. Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) see the grouping as when a number of students are grouped together for the purpose of instruction. This is useful in a formal system of learning. Students are placed in classes for the purpose of effective teaching and learning. The selection for the grouping is based on assumed learning ability of the students. Grouping entails classroom teaching such as lecture, project, seminar and tutorial. On the contrary, individualized approach contains the idea of instructing a student at a given time. This approach of teaching is found in informal training system. Though more effective but expensive in terms of time and finance.

Activity Classification Approach: Activity classification approach is carried out through the means of activity in teaching. Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) view activity as an approach of teaching during teaching and learning process in the normal classroom situation. The teacher who performs the activity influences the name of the approach. The activity approach comprises two means: student-centred and teacher-centred. The student-centred means encouraging students' independent learning, and therefore stimulates discovering while the teacher centered approach enables the teacher to direct teaching and learning process and therefore ensured that the objectives of teaching are fulfilled in the school situation.

Place Classification Approach: The Place classification approach of teaching Social Studies is based on the place of the teaching and learning process. Ijimi (2004) opines that placing students in appropriate learning environment will facilitate comprehension and ensure compatibility of study. Similarly, this is the classification of teaching based on where the learning holds. Two ways of classification are involved. They are classroom and out-of-classroom classification depending on the subject-matter and the teacher that is involved.

Social Studies Instructional Materials

Teaching Social Studies successfully in school depends on the use of instructional materials to ensure that students' behavioural changes are realized. Some of the instructional materials that are required include textual such as books, audiovisual and human resources that are used individually or collectively in any meaningful Social Studies teaching and learning situation. Instructional materials themselves are not self instructing. They are intended to be used to supplement normal teaching activities as directed by the teacher (Osakwe and Itedjere, 2005).

Audio-Visual Aids as Social Studies Instructional Materials: Audio-visual aids serve as catalyst to the teacher for teaching Social Studies in schools. They are sources of endless opportunities to enrich teaching-learning process especially when the aids can be used appropriately and economically by the teacher. They are actually aids to facilitate learning among students. Audio-visual aids according to Igbogbor (2000), are still-pictures, television, slides, film-strips, recordings, graphs, charts, motion pictures, maps, tables, cartoons, models and so on. Fabian and Kingston (2007) posit that teaching and learning activities become more meaningful and interesting for knowledge internalization when students learn with all sense organs simultaneously. While auditory materials are concentrated on the sense of hearing, motion pictures and slides are centred on the use of the sight organ.

Resources Persons as Source of Teaching Social Studies in Schools

Resource persons are the most valuable means of teaching; generally in educational arena. The view that students' interest can be stimulated through this avenue (Oditia, 2007). Onyema (2008) opines that without human aspect of teaching in schools, other teaching resources are as good as nothing. Resource persons are human assets that are utilized in enhancing understanding in certain aspects of human field of learning. Resource persons are professionals in all areas of life. Since Social Studies is integrative in scope and nature, specialists in Social Studies alone are of better assistance in Social Studies concepts. The use of resource persons make Social Studies real as much as possible and enhance students' interest and motivation. Therefore, specialists in Social Studies are expected to be sound as much as possible in serving as resource persons to the junior secondary school students.

Some factors responsible for indifferent attitude to Social Studies by Junior Secondary School Students

For the purpose of this study, the following are factors that result to students' indifferent attitude to Social Studies.

- i. Teacher-related factors,
- ii. Subject-related factors,
- iii. School-related factors, and
- iv. Students-related factors.

Teacher-Related Factor: Teachers' personality and competence are regarded as some related factors in school environment. A teacher that is friendly with good social disposition encourages students to learn the subject. Also, qualified and competent teacher utilizes appropriate measures to arouse students' interest during teaching and learning. Similarly, Makinde (2006) is of the view that approaches to teaching by the teacher in the classroom situation can make or mar students' attitude in the subject. For instance, a Social Studies teacher who injects humour during interactive session in the classroom situation can make Social Studies class interesting. There should be no excessive abstract teaching and theorizing but the need for some real-life teaching occasionally to reduce students' boredom in the class.

Subject-Related Factor: In addition to teachers-related factors in the teaching of a subject, are subject-related factors such as personality and competence are regarded as subject related factors. This can reduce students' interest and therefore encourage indifferent attitude in Social Studies. Makinde (2006) is of the strong view that the nature and scope of Social Studies is broad therefore creating inadequacy in teaching the subject sufficiently. In the same vein, the various concepts in Social Studies are equally broad and numerous. Most concepts are too abstract to guide comprehension and understanding. This can discourage students from learning the subject in schools. Consequence upon this fact, Social Studies scheme of work for junior secondary school should be modern in order to remove students' negative attitude in the subject. Students prefer what they can cover-up at their own pace of learning within a short time period.

School-Related Factor: Consequent upon the school related factors stated above that facilitate, students' indifferent attitude towards Social Studies, school-related factors are inclusive. There are several ways school environment encourage or discourage learning of a subject. Dilapidated school buildings cannot make learning interesting among students. For instance, if students learn in shattered and leaked roofs, or in the scotch of the sun's heat, adequate participation in teaching and learning will be difficult especially in subject like Social Studies that has broad scope for study.

Student-Related Factors: There are numerous students' related factors that interfere with students' attitude towards Social Studies learning. Fabian and

Kingston (2007) identify the following that are responsible to students' aspirations; peer group, parents' level of income and educational background. A student who aspires to become a medical doctor may not have much attention to Social Studies. Also, a student whose peer groups do not have much regard for the subject may be influenced negatively towards the learning of Social Studies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social Studies are subjects that teach value, norms, right attitude and skills development. This needs to be emphasized at the junior secondary school. The value of Social Studies as a subject to the students requires better attention and enthusiasm. And to arouse students attention, value, attitude, only specialist teachers of Social Studies should teach the subject at all levels. The Social Studies teachers should employ the approaches enumerated above to enable students participate actively during teaching-learning process. The reason for this is that knowledge can only be internalized adequately when students are involved in learning process. Orientation should be given to students by Social Studies specialists to enlighten them that Social Studies is useful for the overall development of the nation; that no subject is superior to one another. The findings of the study have given rise to the following recommendation:

- i. Only Social Studies specialist teachers should teach the subject.
- ii. During teaching-learning process in the normal classroom situation the approaches as indicated in this study should be used by Social Studies teachers in teaching the students.
- iii. There is the need to overhaul Social Studies curriculum regularly due to societal dynamism.
- iv. Teachers from other subject areas should not be allowed to teach Social Studies at this because they approach the subject from the perception of their subject areas thereby causing boredom and unnecessary negative attitude by the students towards Social Culture.

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