

Effects of Self-Directed Instructional Method on Secondary School Students' Achievement in Social Studies

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Abstract

This paper focused on determining the effects of self-directed instructional method on secondary school achievement in Social studies. Since Social studies is an area of school curriculum specifically designed for study of man and how he fits into the society by utilizing the necessary attitudes. Values and skills at his reach, there is a need to find out a means of making its classroom interaction more practical, interesting and students' centered so that students will no longer be contented to accept what their teacher offers blindly but can learn ways of contributing towards changes. Thus the focus of this paper is to determine the best method(s) of teaching Social studies. The researchers adopted quasi-experimental research design using JSSII students randomly selected into one experimental and one control groups. One research question and one null hypothesis were formulated that guided the study. Data were collected using 34 items test and data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research question while ancova was used for the null hypothesis. The study revealed that students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method performed better with the average mean score of 83.92 and the standard deviation of 5.81 than the students taught Social studies with conventional instructional method with the average mean score of 55.76 and the standard deviation of 7.03 and that there is a significant difference between the mean achievement of students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method and those taught with orthodox/traditional methods of teaching. Based on these findings, some recommendations were made.

INTRODUCTION

The institutionalization of Social studies as a school subject rose out of the realization that the study of man and his society was not adequately covered by single discipline in the Social Sciences. It is on this note that Federal Government of Nigeria in her national policy on education recognized the subject (Social studies) as one of the compulsory subjects in primary, post-primary institutions in Nigeria, it is also studied in some higher institutions of learning, (Federal Republic Nigeria, 2004).

Despite the above recognition, Onyabe in Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2011:266) observed that "Social studies has been part of educational curriculum in the United States of America (USA) for many year before it was introduced into Nigeria educational curriculum in early 60s yet its philosophy, scope, content and methods of teaching have remained vague both to scholar and to school teachers". The vagueness of Social studies according to Bozimo and Ikwumelu

(2008) does not end with the school teachers and scholars; parents, educational administrators, and even the government seem to be confused about the scope, objectives and instructional methods of the discipline. Thus “opinions about what Social studies is or should be vary from country to country, even within a single nation experts are divided on the question of the definition” (Wronski, 1981:22). In support of this view, Ikwumelu (2002) noted that the subject (Social studies) has been described different by different persons. According to him, it is has been described as an extended civics, elementary Social science, and general studies.

Social studies according to Kisko (1981:3) is a “program of study which the society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions which it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves”. Edozie (2001:39) added that “Social studies is a dynamic, systematic and integrated discipline for generating knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours necessary for dealing with contemporary life issues, for understanding man and the factors which influence his relationship issues, for understanding man and the factors which influence his relationship with himself in particular and his society generally in a sustainable manner”. This implies that it (Social studies) is a means through which a society propagates its acceptable norms, attitudes, values and behaviours. Jarolimek (1977:4) on the other hand saw Social studies as a discipline, which focuses on people, their actions and inaction. According to him, it concerns itself with

Learning about people, how and where they live how they form and structure societies, how they govern themselves and provide for their material and psychological needs, how and why they love and hate each other, how they use and misuse the resources of the planet that is their home.

In Social studies therefore, man is viewed as being at the centre while his physical, political, cultural, psychological and socio-economic environments encircle him. This probably explains why Nigeria Education Research Council (NERC) in Fadeyiye (2005) held that Social studies focuses on the relationship between man, and his physical and social environments as well as his relationship with science and technology. Social studies can thus help Nigerian citizens generally to develop the ability to respect the worth and national unity, instill in man a disposition for acceptance of attitudinal change or re-branding in order to tame the tide of corruption which has enveloped all sectors of life in Nigeria. In the same line of thought, Awe in Oyibe and Mbang (2013:106) maintained that “... Social studies is a discipline if properly programmed and effectively taught should help to solve social problems that are facing developing countries like ours (Nigeria) where the old norms are fast losing their grips and without any effective substitute to replace them”.

Considering the importance of Social studies in above discourse, Adeniji (2004), suggested that all the teachers of Social studies at all levels of education need to be familiar with the content and methods of teaching the subject in order to interpret the content of Social studies correctly and encourage its learning. This is mainly because when Social studies instructional methods are related to the content, learning will cease to be fragmentary and memorization of unrelated facts and concepts will end. Wheeler in Mbakwem (2005:261) maintained that “whether a subject is effective or not depends on the nature and quality of the learning experiences that are associated with it”. This implies that it is not only the content that determines effectiveness of a subject but also the quality of learning experiences which in some cases are dependent upon teachers’ effective application of instructional methods that will enhance active participation of the students in the classroom. In effect, Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2011) advocated the application of self-Directed instructional method in teaching and learning of Social studies for better actualization of Social studies instructional and programme objectives in the classroom since the method focuses mainly on making students to go beyond the content given by their teacher in the classroom and accept responsibility for their own learning (Mbakwem, 2005).

Many educators (Mkpa, 2009; Ley, 2010) and Borich, (2011) support that self-directed instructional method is effective in teaching and learning of Social studies. Ley (2010) for example was of the view that proper application of self-directed instructional method in teaching and learning of Social studies will encourage skills acquisition and development of values. On his own part, Borich (2011:328) opined that “self-directed instructional method is the method used in teaching and learning situations which involves getting students to unleash their imaginative and intuitive capacities through learning”. He the outlined the reasons for the application of the self-directed instructional method in the teaching and learning situations to include;

- i. to get students to unleash their imaginative and intuitive capacities through self-directed learning.
- ii. to get students to accept responsibility for their own learning
- iii. to teach students to go beyond the content given, to think critically, reason and problem solving
- iv. to engage students in project-based learning strategy and
- v. to promote the goals of self-directed learning using differentiated instruction.

Self-directed instructional method promotes maximum interaction between and among Social studies students to enhance efficient decision making while discussing and analyzing social issues. The method encourages the development of critical thinking through discussion, negotiations and clarification of basic content or ideas because in self-directed learning students enjoy the liberty to advance their own ideas and to benefit from the ideas and views of others. Teo (2006) asserted that self-directed instructional methods involves students in making connections between new and already known ideas of facts, engaging in dialogues in which hypotheses are formed, predictions are made, doubt expressed, uncertainties subsequently clarified and the orthodox/traditional views modified by new ideas.

Azer (2008) claimed that self-directed learning is an adult learning process that makes use of feedback to fulfill the detected learning needs. This brings about learner’s intended use of a fond of learning resources to overwhelm the inadequately of knowledge, skills, or professional improvements. Efficacious time management, self-evaluation skills, and critical appraisal skills are requisites of operative self-directed learning. Self-directed learning inspires learners to frame their attitudes by scrutinizing feedback, getting results, comparing viewpoints, and posing questions.

Costa and Kallick (2004) stated that a self-directed person can be described as being self-managing: feeling disposed to be engaged in activities with awareness of the results, their weight, and essential information, and subsequently making use of prior experiences, looking forward to signs of achievement, and generating substitutes for attainment of self-monitoring: having adequate self-recognition about what is effective, employing conscious metacognitive strategies to assess the effectiveness of the strategic plan, and to help in the decision-making processes of changing the plan and selecting the appropriate tasks and techniques. A self-directed learner is self-modifying: scrutinizing social issues, pondering over it, assessing, and constructing meaning from experience and utilizing his knowledge for future tasks, and activities. Lending support to above statement, Azer (2008:183) was of the view that, the characteristics possessed by self-directed learners are that:

They are inclined to consider various facets that pertain to a novel notion, draw upon separate resources to glean data, can recall their postgraduate experiences, don’t have to be confined to one special resources, can recall prior knowledge, can give good reasons for their opinions and cope with ambiguity thinking, they can also take control of their own learning process and they are eager for their learning attainments.

In support of the above view, Borich (2011:324) maintained that “self-directed learners utilized available techniques to determine the objectives of learning, apply a hypothesis-driven approach to their learning, can discuss various opinions and can make use of feedback and acquired in other positions by choosing their own learning materials”.

Barr (2001) asserted that Social studies students’ inability to comprehend is due to the fact that teachers over dominate the teaching and learning process by talking too much thus, assuming the centre-stage-role. He argued that the burden of learning should be placed in where it rightly belongs, that is teaching and learning situations should be students-centred. In addition, when classroom instructions become students-centered and students are permitted to learn through active participation in the teaching and learning process, they are more likely to retain information so acquired and to apply them to new situations. Self-directed instructional method should therefore, be an integral part of every teacher’s instructional method since it promotes self-esteem and instills in the students the essential skills and basis to accept responsibility for their own learning (Borich and Hao, 2007). Unfortunately, some Social studies teachers fall back to orthodox/traditional instructional methods as means of delivering Social studies instruction in the classroom and this does no good to the teaching and learning of the subject as it will impede academic achievement of secondary school students in Social studies.

It is therefore pertinent to acknowledge that effective teaching and learning of Social studies deserve judicious application of practical oriented and learner-centered instructional methods. The need to reconcile the Social studies teachers’ habit of applying orthodox/traditional instructional methods with the new concepts in the teaching and learning became imperative as such will help teachers, learners, curriculum planners, government, education agencies, researchers, parents and even the general public to assess and appreciate the importance of Social studies.

In Nigeria today, Social studies educators recognize the subject as a well focused broad curriculum offering, conceptualized as an integrated area of study designed to produce effective citizens (Baden and Mayor, 2004), and by its very nature as an interdisciplinary subject, Social studies educators found concrete expression in its usefulness for national integration, socio-economic development as well as the development of right attitudes and values (Ezeudu and Ezegbe, 2005). It is hoped that the right attitudes and values will be used to set in motion the machinery for fighting social problems such as poverty, environmental degradation, terrorism, corruption, cultism, prostitution, over-population, stealing, kidnapping, drug abuse, armed robbery, inter and intra community conflicts, rape, examination malpractices and disrespect for elders. Okobia (2003:46) observed that “it is in the bid to solve these kinds of problems that Social studies as a course was recognized as a powerful instrument whose objective is to develop good citizenship traits with a focus on the teaching and inculcation of desirable values, norms, and attitudes in the young people”. Unfortunately, the afore-mentioned problems persist despite the fact that Social studies has been part of core curricular offering subjects in Nigeria for over forty years, (Anadi, Egboka and Ikwumelu, 2008).

Results of researches have testified to the fact that it is common to find students displaying disrespect for teachers, aggression to fellow students, involving themselves in the stealing, smoking, examination malpractices, rape, cultism and several other types of social ills (Iyamu, 2002 and Okobia, 2003). This implies that all is not well with Social studies as a core curricular offering subject or its instructional methods. Supporting this view, Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2011) opined that Social studies education in Nigeria for long had been criticized for not quite preparing students for effective living in the society as result of inappropriate utilization of recommended instructional methods in Social studies classroom. According to them, the inability of Social studies education to actualize its expected goals of preparing students for

worthy living is proved beyond reasonable doubt by the low level of achievement of Social studies students in external examination.

Since Social studies records poor results even in this area of study, there is the need to revisit the teaching and learning of the discipline, including the methods applied by the teachers in classroom interaction as research has shown that successful teaching and learning dependent upon the application of appropriate teaching method (s) in the classroom, (Mbakwem, 2005). The thrust of this paper is therefore on the 'effect of self-directed instructional method on secondary school students' academic achievement in Social studies?

Research Question and Null Hypothesis

One research question and one hypothesis tested at alpha level of 0.05 were formulated that guided the conduct of this study. The research question is:

1. What is the effects of self-directed instructional methods on the mean achievement scores of secondary school students in Social studies? While the null hypothesis:
2. There is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method and those taught using conventional method.

Research Method

This study adopted the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest. Intact classes were used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all JSS II students in Abakaliki education zone of Ebonyi State. Due to high number of JSS II students in the education zone, the researcher used 265 students who were selected randomly from different arms of JSS II in public secondary schools in the study area. Out of 265 students used for the study, 131 were assigned to control group while 134 were assigned for treatment group. The students in the control group were taught Social studies using conventional method while those in treatment were taught Social studies using self-directed method.

The instrument used for data collection was an achievement test titled "Social Studies Achievement Test Items" (SOSATI) constructed by the researchers. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research question and analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) for hypothesis tested at an alpha level of 0.05.

Results

Research question

What is the effect of self-directed instructional method on the mean achievement scores of secondary school students in Social studies?

Table1: Mean achievement result on self-directed and conventional methods

Instructional methods	N	Mean	SD
Self-directed instructional method	134	83.92	5.81
Conventional instructional method	131	55.76	7.03

From table 1, the result of data analysis revealed that the students taught Social Studies using self-directed instructional method performed better with the average mean score of 83.92 and the standard deviation of 5.81 than the students taught Social studies with conventional instructional method with the average mean score of 55.76 and the standard deviation of 7.03. This implies that self-directed instructional method is more effective in the teaching and learning of Social studies than conventional instructional methods.

Null Hypothesis

There is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method and those taught using conventional method

Table 2: ANCOVA Result of Social studies Students' Achievement based on self-directed and conventional instructional methods

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean of square	Fcal	Fcrit
Covariates	324.203	1	32.203	0.481	
Pretest	324.203	1	32.203	0.481	
Main effects	2121.615	2	1057.807	2.825	
Instructional methods	198.979	1	198.979	5.310	3.86
Gender	52.723	1	52.723		
2-way interactions	112.061	1	112.061		
Methods and gender	112.061	1	112.061		
Explained	5693.526	4	1423.382		
Residual	16896.213	125	135.170		
Total	22589.739	129	175.114		

Significant at $P < 0.05$

From table 2, the result of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) revealed that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method and those taught using other conventional instructional methods is rejected since the value of f-cal (5.310) is greater than the value of f-crit (3.86) at $P < 0.05$. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement of students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method and those taught with orthodox or traditional methods of teaching.

Discussion of Findings

The result of data analysis presented in table 1 revealed that the students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method perform better with the average mean score of 83.92 and standard deviation 5.81 than those taught Social studies using other conventional instructional method(s) with the average mean score of 55.76 and standard deviation 7.03. This implies that self-directed instructional method promotes maximum achievement and among Social studies students in a classroom setting to enhance efficient decision making while discussing and analyzing social issues. The above finding of the study is in line with the view of Teo (2006) who asserts that, self-directed instructional method involves students in making connections between new and already known ideas or facts, engaging in dialogues in which hypotheses are formed, predictions are made, doubt expressed, uncertainties subsequently clarified and the orthodox/traditional view modified by new ideas. Therefore, the method encourages the development of critical thinking through discussion, negotiations and clarifications of basic content or ideas because in self-directed learning, students enjoy the liberty to advance their own ideas and to benefit from the ideas and views of others which in turn promote maximum achievement. No wonder Covey (1989) while recognizing the importance of self-directed instructional method, which he called 'proactivity' in teaching and learning maintained that, its application in teaching and learning situation means more than merely taking initiative. It means that as human beings, we are responsible for our own lives. Our behaviour is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. That is to say, we can subordinate feelings to value; we have the initiative and responsibility to make things happen because a touchstone of effective learning is that students are in charge of their own learning: essentially, they direct their own learning process.

In the analysis of co-variance in table 2 revealed that the f-calculated value (5.310) is greater than the f-critical value (3.86) at $P < 0.05$ alpha level of significant. The decision rule rejected the null hypothesis which stated that there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method and those taught using conventional method because the value of f-calculated is greater than the value of f-critical. The researchers therefore concluded based on the result of ANCOVA in table 2 that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Social studies using self-directed instructional method and those taught using conventional method. This finding is supported by Fantuzzo, Davis and Ginsburg (1995) who stated that, self-directed is not just assigning topic for research to students that are effective but the mutual exchange process of receiving and giving instructions by them in a teaching and learning situation. In other words, the result of this suggested that self-directed instructional method has the potential to harness readily available inquiry skill influence to promote both academic achievement and psychological adjustment secondary school students in Social studies.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have revealed that application of self-directed instructional method in teaching and learning of Social studies would enhance students' academic achievement in Social studies. It is the researchers' opinion that, there is a pressing need for Social studies teachers to familiarize themselves with the use of self-directed method as the method has the potential to improve students' achievement in the subject.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. That Social studies teacher should use self-directed instructional method in their classroom interaction since the method has the capability of improving students' study ability and their academic achievement in the subject.
2. That Nigeria government and Ministry of Education should provide enabling and conducive environment in academic activities that will cause the students to go beyond what the classroom teacher tells them in the class. Such enabling and conducive environment includes well equipped school library, adequate classroom, qualified and competent teachers, and instructional materials among others.

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